

Minutes

Plymouth Community Homes
Customer Focus Committee
7th May 2021, 10:00am
Virtual Meeting – Microsoft Teams

Present:

Lavinia Porfir (LP) Chair Debbie Roche (DR) Ember Wolffire (EW) Kelly Wilding (KW) Nick Lewis (NL) (part)

Also in attendance:

Carl Brazier (CB) Director of Homes and Neighbourhoods
Liz Phillips (LPh) Head of Income, Commercial and Home Ownership
Angie Edwards-Jones (AEJ) Head of Customer Experience & Assurance
Helen Ryan (HR) Head of Communities and Supported Housing (part)
Louise Jarvis (LJ) Customer Experience Manager (part)
Jonathan Quinn (JQ) Asset Manager
Angie Scott (AS) Head of Communications & Marketing
Charlotte Edwards (CE) Head of Strategy, Performance and Policy
Laura Moss (LM) Governance Assistant – Minutes

Apologies:

Tina Tuohy (TT)
Valerie Lee (VL)
Graham Clayton (GC)

1	Welcome and Introductions: Confirm Quorum	Action By
01/05/21	The meeting started at 10:02am	

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	LP welcomed the Committee and attendees. Whilst the meeting was not quorate there were no decisions to be made. NL will also be joining the meeting later as a substitute Committee Member.	
	LP welcomed KW and EW who have both returned from a Leave of Absence.	
2	Apologies for Absence	
02/05/21	Apologies were received from Valerie Lee, Graham Clayton and Tina Tuohy.	
3	Declarations of Interest	
03/05/21	The guidance provided to Committee members on declaring an interest was noted.	
	LP and DR have standing declarations as Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) tenants however this does not relate directly to any items on the agenda.	
4	Minutes of previous meeting (5 th February 2021)	
04/05/21	The minutes of the previous Committee meeting were discussed, and it was	
	confirmed that the minutes were a correct record of the meeting and that	
	they could be electronically signed by the Chair.	
5	Chair's Urgent Business	
05/05/21	There was no Chair's urgent business.	
	LP reminded Committee members of the meeting on 21 st May 2021 at 2pm to begin the commission of a review with an independent adviser as detailed within the Committee's Terms of Reference. The review subject will be selected by the Committee to be benchmarked against peers within the sector, establish any enhancements to be made and where necessary provide reassurance and validation of the work already undertaken by PCH.	
	LP requested that Committee members consider potential review subjects in advance of the meeting to be forwarded by email to the Governance Team to collate.	LM/CFC Members
6	Matters Arising	
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06/05/21	A list of all on-going and completed actions from previous meetings, with updates, was uploaded to Boardpacks ahead of the meeting for the Committee to review.	
07/05/21	The Committee noted the Minute Action Log. An update was provided on the two open actions related to the Wakefield and District Housing Trust. CB and colleagues from PCH and LiveWell are part of a focus group to review the options and priorities associated with the older persons housing strategy and supported persons strategy and are looking to engage support from Public Health and Plymouth City Council. The focus group are aiming to develop a number of immediately deliverable actions as well as longer term objectives. It is anticipated that a further update will be available in November 2021. The Committee offered their support if required.	
08/05/21	An update was also provided on the inclusion of resident participation in new or revised policy documents. It was confirmed that all future policies presented to the Committee will detail resident involvement going forward. A broader review of policy frameworks will also be taking place which is anticipated to be completed in 2022.	
7	Decisions since last meeting	
09/05/21	There have been no Urgent or Efficient Decisions since the last meeting.	
8	Asset Management Q4 Performance Update	
10/05/21	JQ presented the Asset Management Quarter 4 Performance Update to the Committee for monitoring. The report provided an overview of how Asset Management are delivering against the targets which were set out in the Asset Management Update to the PCH Board on 28th July 2020. During the fourth quarter of 2020-21, disruption to performance has continued through the current ways of working, with the restrictions imposed through the various lockdowns and availability of resources. However, the Asset Management Team have continued to deliver investment into residents' homes and enhanced their understanding of the performance of PCH homes. During the past 90 days, there have been some significant highlights for the team including:	

	 Implementation of quality assurance checks on fire doors to PCH high rise (over 18m) and sheltered flats, which have communal areas Funding application for Marlborough House Two significant Modernisation Projects starting on site Significant delivery of works on both Capital and Revenue budgets A breakdown of the work carried out during Q4 of 2020-21 was presented along with areas of focus for each of the teams that contribute to Regeneration: Asset Data team, Surveying team, Fire Safety team and the Programme Delivery team.	
11/05/21	As a result of questions the following was clarified:	JQ
12/05/21		
13/05/21	It was explained that there is a robust communication process in place to contact the Leaseholder explaining the health and safety implications to their neighbours and property. The Leasehold Team collate evidence to take legal proceedings against long overdue actions where applicable. When an application is made to the court the Leaseholder will be liable for the associated costs. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic there are court backlogs at present so the timeframe to resolve such matters will experience delays. The Committee requested an overview of the process to contact Leaseholders in relation to fire safety to be included in the next report.	JQ/LP
14/05/21	The Committee were informed that should a Leasehold property require remedial works to become compliant with fire safety measures, the	

	Leaseholder is liable for the costs. However, this can be dependent on the lease.	
15/02/21	NL joined the meeting at 10:30am	
16/05/21	The Committee queried whether the impact on residents following the modernisation to Frankfort Gate had been surveyed. It was explained that the STAR Survey which is completed every two years measures resident satisfaction of the area in which they live.	
17/05/21	It was agreed that consideration would be given to explore the possibility of conducting surveys with residents prior to embarking on a modernisation project in their community and upon completion to measure satisfaction. The survey could support the objective in tackling social housing stigma and assist in measuring social value. It was predicted that an update on this could be provided to the Committee in November 2021.	JQ
18/05/21	The Committee also requested an overview of the housing stock survey process to gain a deeper understanding of the work undertaken.	JQ
19/05/21	The Customer Focus Committee noted the Asset Management Q4 Performance Update.	
9	Resident Review Update	
20/05/21	HR provided a verbal update on the Resident Review to the Committee for monitoring. Following a review conducted by members of the Resident Scrutiny Team it was agreed that the scrutiny process needed to be adapted to involve more tenants. In late 2019, the first scrutiny review commenced using the new process called Resident Review as a trial. The review subject was 'Contacting the right person at PCH'.	
	The new process involves a Task and Finish Group which are a group of residents who have direct experience of the service area being reviewed. The Group's meetings are facilitated by an independent adviser and following the review the Group will create a report and recommendations on how the service area could make adjustments and improvements.	
	The Scrutiny Steering Group (SSG) which are another group of residents will oversee the scrutiny process. The SSG will also monitor completion of the	

recommendations made by the Task and Finish Group once PCH have responded and set timescales for completion.

The Task and Finish Group had created their report in January 2020 however the Covid-19 pandemic began shortly after which caused a delay. Now the national pandemic lockdown restrictions are easing, work has recommenced and the Task and Finish Group have met virtually to review the report to ensure the recommendations are still fit for purpose following their experiences during the pandemic. The report and recommendations are now to be circulated to PCH for response. Once responses have been received and reviewed by the Task and Finish Group and Scrutiny Steering Group, the report and a recommendation action plan will be presented to the Committee.

A second review using the new Resident Review process is now underway following the Scrutiny Steering Group meeting virtually to establish a list of potential review topics. A survey was conducted with 127 residents voting on their preferred review topic. The next review subject selected by 64.52% of these residents was 'PCH Contractors – Review communications between key PCH contractors and residents – are there issues and how could this be improved?'

As part of the survey residents were asked if they would like to be involved in the review and 41 residents have volunteered. The Communities Team will be looking to recruit 8-10 residents for the new Task and Finish Group which will begin shortly with a view to the next review taking place over the Summer.

21/05/21 As a result of questions the following was clarified:

The Committee were informed that residents are able to become involved through a variety of channels. The pandemic has also encouraged residents and PCH staff to explore virtual meetings which will also broaden tenant involvement going forward. The survey providing a list of potential review topics was circulated by post, email, text message, social media and on the PCH website.

The diversity of the 127 residents who took part in the survey were provided to the Committee. Of the 127 residents, 121 residents were tenants, 2 were leaseholders and 4 were shared owners:

23/05/21 14% were 65 years and over – this was an encouraging outcome showing that younger residents are becoming involved

24/05/21	68% were female – this is a traditional outcome for resident surveys 92.6% were white British - this is reflective of PCH residents 46% were in employment – this was a positive outcome as this demographic shows that PCH are not creating barriers to working residents becoming involved The Committee were advised that a further update on Resident Review will	
24/03/21	be available for presentation at the meeting in November 2021.	HR
25/05/21	The Customer Focus Committee noted the Resident Review Update.	
10	Update on MyPCH Portal	
26/05/21	AS provided a verbal update on the MyPCH Portal to the Committee for monitoring. At the end of March 2021, there were 6457 subscribers to My PCH which is an increase in the number of active accounts by 298. To date this means 45% of PCH residents have an active MyPCH account – the target remains at 60%. As part of Phase Two of the MyPCH portal project, work is underway to vastly improve reporting functions. This will help to improve understanding of how many people are using the portal and the transactions that are being carried out. This should also help to highlight areas where improvement to a service may be required to encourage higher usage. As a result of this ongoing work, the first user analytics from the portal between 23rd March 2021 to 22nd April 2021 are: 7,545 logins - meaning that users are logging in more than once per month 442 password resets - this supports feedback received through the Hotjar surveys and means the login process requires improvement. This is being reviewed with the developer to ensure data security but make the log-in process easier for residents. 457 repairs reported - this equates to 6% of portal activity so is an area PCH would like to encourage higher usage 12,321 rent statement views - this means people are viewing their rent statement more than once per visit 2,417 payment clicks - this shows that residents are using the portal to make rent payments	
	HouseMark have recently begun benchmarking digital services provided by registered providers across the sector.	

27/05/21	As a result of questions the following was clarified:	
	It was confirmed that only routine repairs can be arranged through the portal at present. This is to ensure the service provided through the portal is completely reliable and effective before including emergency repairs.	
28/05/21	A mobile application version of the portal is on the roadmap as part of the development of MyPCH however this will be longer-term to enable the website to be fully operational beforehand.	
29/05/21	It was agreed that a briefing note with the information from the verbal update would be shared with the Committee following the meeting.	AS/LM
30/05/21	The Customer Focus Committee noted the Update on the MyPCH Portal.	
11	Customer Service Excellence Accreditation	
11	Customer Service Excellence Accreditation	
31/05/21	AEJ presented the Customer Service Excellence Accreditation report to the Committee for information. PCH started their preparation for the Customer Service Excellence Award	
	during 2019/20, and despite the onset of Covid-19, and the many changes in working practices, continued their direction of travel, which enabled a pre-assessment to take place virtually in December 2020. This review enabled the assessor to gain an understanding of how the organisation met the requirements of the standard. There were an initial 57 elements which required evidence to be provided, and this was a fantastic effort given the circumstances by a number of colleagues across the organisation.	
	Following the outcome of the pre-assessment, a full remote assessment was organised for January/February 2021. Due to the strong evidence that had been submitted at the pre-assessment, there were a total of 5 elements that required further consideration by the assessor. This was conducted through reviewing practice as well as speaking to staff, partners, and customers. Evidence was shared electronically and assessment interviews and observations took place over the telephone and online, mainly via Microsoft Teams.	
	Following the assessment, PCH were found to have a deep understanding of, and commitment to, Customer Service Excellence. The commitment was displayed from Senior Management levels through to operations and front	

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	line staff. The outcome was therefore that the award of the Customer	
	Service Excellence standard is to be recommended.	
32/05/21	As a result of questions the following was clarified:	
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	The Committee requested that their congratulations and gratitude be passed	
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	onto all staff involved in the accreditation being awarded. The Customer	LM/AEJ
	Service Excellence Award is a renowned Government recognised	
	accreditation.	
	The Customer Service Excellence Award is reviewed by third party auditors	
	annually for assurance of maintenance of the required standard. PCH will	
33/05/21	undertake a full certification assessment again in three years.	
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34/05/21	The Customer Focus Committee noted the Customer Service Excellence	
J -1 /UJ/Z 1	Accreditation report.	
	Accreditation report.	
12	Complaints Report (Including annual figures)	
35/05/21	LJ presented the Complaints Report, covering performance information for	
	the period January - March 2021 (Quarter 4), to the Committee for	
	monitoring. The report also included an annual summary of complaints from	
	April 2020 – March 2021.	
	7 (p.m. 2020 - ma.c.) 2021)	
	The Quarter 4 figures show an increase in Stage 1 complaints from the	
	previous volumes recorded in Quarter 3 2020/21. The three top highest	
	grossing complaint categories were: Contractors – Staff/Work, Repairs and	
	Tenancy Management.	
	In Quarter 4, there were 4 complaints escalated to Stage 2. From these	
	complaints, 1 was 'upheld', 2 were 'partially upheld' and 1 is still being	
	investigated.	
	There have also been two complaints escalated to Stage 3 in Quarter 4. One	
	Stage 3 complaint meeting has already taken place virtually with a resolution	
	being reached. The other Stage 3 complaint has been organised however	
	has been postponed until May 2021	
	The report included a new table which has been created to display the	
	volumes of complaints that have required a holding letter to be sent. This is	
	due to the complaint needing longer than PCH's 10 working day timescale	
	to resolve. There were 3 complaints recorded out of a total of 78 complaints	
	to resolve. There were a complaints recorded out of a total of 70 complaints	

	logged during Quarter 4. An explanation was provided for each case as to	
	why this was necessary.	
	At a recent Housing Ombudsman seminar, attendees were encouraged to discuss best practises and what was working well within their organisation. PCH's Stage 2 meeting process was shared within a break out session and later brought to the attention of the Housing Ombudsman facilitators who thought this was an excellent idea and confirmed they are going to site our Stage 2 meetings as good practise in up and coming sessions.	
	Complaint training sessions will be commencing in due course to enable staff to understand the new internal Customer Complaint and Comments Policy which links into the new Complaint Code and the new Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. In the meantime, step by step guidance documents are being developed.	
36/05/21	As a result of questions the following was clarified:	
00/00/21	no a rocale or queetiene the renowing was claimed.	
	It was explained that when a resident submits a complaint on the website, the resident is informed by an automated response that a resolution to their complaint will be received within 10 working days. Should a complaint require longer than this timescale, the Head of Customer Experience and Assurance will review the case and the resident will be contacted to provide an explanation for the delay and a date by when the response will be given. However, this date must not exceed a further 10 working days without good reason. This is a requirement from the new Complaint Code, and the new PCH Customer Complaints and Comments policy.	
37/05/21	Should a complaint be raised in respect of a contractor, details of the complaint are forwarded onto the Contract Manager within PCH for them to investigate and liaise with the contractor. Workshops can be held with contractors to ensure they are working to the required standard in accordance with their contract.	
38/05/21	Any complaints raised through social media channels are followed up with a private message on the social media service or another form of contact where possible. In addition, a public response will be made to the initial comment on social media explaining that PCH will be in touch with the resident in a private setting thus to avoid any reputational damage.	
39/05/21	The Customer Focus Committee noted the Complaints Report (Including annual figures).	

	annual figures).	
14	Customer Satisfaction on Complaints (Including annual figures)	
	LJ presented the Customer Satisfaction on Complaints Report, covering performance information for the period January – March 2021 (Quarter 4), to the Committee for monitoring. The report also included an annual summary of customer satisfaction on complaints from April 2020 – March 2021.	
	In Quarter 4, 81 complaints were raised and of these, 37 complainants were eligible to be contacted to complete the customer satisfaction survey. Overall a total of 26 customers completed the survey which is 32% of the original sample.	
	There were no surveys completed in Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 of 2020/21 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and customers receiving numerous other calls from within PCH to check on their wellbeing. Quarter 4 has recorded an increase compared to Quarter 3 in 2020/21 in all areas.	
	A detailed breakdown of responses received to each question of the customer satisfaction survey was provided within the report. All negative responses were investigated with the findings also presented. Feedback is given to relevant members of staff to ensure complaints continue to be completed effectively and efficiently.	
	The data recorded showed the response rate to text messaging, which is used if unable to contact residents through telephone calls, to be extremely low. As a result, sending out paper surveys will be trialled for a period of 6 months to be able to offer the customer satisfaction survey in an alternative method. This has been actioned in other departments and the response rate has been very effective.	
	The Customer Focus Committee noted the Customer Satisfaction on Complaints (Including annual figures).	
46/05/21	LJ left the meeting at 11:41	
15	Welfare Reform Update	
47/05/21	LPh presented the Welfare Reform Update to the Committee for monitoring.	

At the end of March 2021, there were 3,958 PCH tenants receiving Universal Credit (UC). Of these, 1,093 were in rent arrears. The arrears figure for those on UC was 1.45%, compared with 1.36% for PCH's overall current rent arrears. This is an excellent position given the challenges of the last year.

Over the year to the end of March 2021, 1,466 new PCH UC cases have been added to the portal, which represents an increase of almost 60% over the one year. This means the Team have been extremely busy as every tenant moving onto UC is contacted and offered support.

The Committee were informed that the £20 per week uplift in UC which was applied at the beginning of the pandemic has has now been extended to the end of September 2021. Other changes implemented from April 2021 include that new claimants will now have a maximum of 24 months to repay advance payments, rather than the previous 12 month limit, and that the maximum rate at which deductions can be taken has been reduced from 30% to 25%.

At the end of March 2021, the number of 'bedroom tax' cases had reduced to 870. Whilst in previous years, this number had been usually stable or showed a decrease, this represents an increase from 803 at the end of March 2020. In total, up to March 2020, PCH had assisted 701 tenants to downsize. Over the last year to March 2021, PCH have assisted a further 57 tenants, making a total of 758 since the bedroom tax has been in place from April 2013.

At the end of March 2020, there were 90 PCH tenants affected by the benefit cap. This reduced to 81 at the end of March 2021.

48/05/21 As a result of questions the following was clarified:

The Chief Executive, through his involvement with the National Housing Federation (NHF), has expressed support of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) decision to extend the requirement for landlords to give a 6-month notice period to tenants before starting possession proceedings for a further 12 months, except in the most serious circumstances.

The Committee were informed that letters were sent to residents as a reminder to contact Universal Credit (UC) to inform them of any rent changes which took place from April 2021. The Incomes Team can offer support to

	vulnerable residents by updating their information on the UC portal on the resident's behalf which was sanctioned by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). The DWP have also confirmed that face to face interviews were reintroduced for Universal Credit claimants from 12 th April 2021.	
50/05/21	The Customer Focus Committee noted the Welfare Reform Update.	
40	Bufferman In Product	
16	Performance Indicators	
51/05/21	CE presented the Performance Indicator report to the Committee for monitoring. An additional document entitled 'Landlord and Resident Health and Safety Report' was also shared with Committee members by email and uploaded to Boardpacks prior to the meeting.	
	The Performance Indicator report presented a suite of performance measures most relevant to the areas of responsibility falling within the remit of the Committee, covering the period to 1 st April 2021.	
	The report showed that overall the organisation continues to perform well as the nation emerges from the third round of lockdown and towards a more business as usual way of working. The majority of the indicators are either within target or marginally off target, with the variances detailed in the report.	
	Asset Management (New KPI title – was previously Repairs and Regeneration) – 3 performance indicators were outside of target but within 10% and 1 was more than 10% outside of target. 6 performance indicators were on target.	
	 This area of performance information also included a number of new measures: Contractor performance for planned maintenance were all on target. Contractor performance in respect of block refurbishments for Budshead Road/Ipswich Close, Teats Hill/Artillery Place and Keat Street were all showing as completed with expenditure as anticipated. Statutory fire risk assessments have been completed 100% against the programme of work. 	
	Housing Management – 3 performance indicators were on target.	
	Voids and Lettings – 1 performance indicator was on target and 10 performance indicators were more than 10% outside of target. (These 10	

17	Forward Plan	
56/05/21	HR left the meeting at 11:56	
55/05/21	The Customer Focus Committee noted the Performance Indicators report.	
54/05/21	The Director of Homes and Neighbourhoods is developing a working group to deliver focussed performance improvements in the Voids and Lettings area, and wishes to engage Committee Members. A further update on this would be available at the next Committee meeting.	СВ
53/05/21	It is anticipated that the new Performance Indicator report would be presented to the Committee in November 2021, then onto the PCH Board for collective feedback, with easy to follow information graphics where possible. It was requested that a different colour key of symbols is used to help distinguish between the various levels of performance.	
	It was noted that the number of homes with an out of date gas safety certificate as at the end of March 2021 was 7 and not 11 as detailed in the report. This is because gas safety certificates for 4 homes have since been received. The remaining 7 properties are now subject to the organisation's no-access procedures. The Committee requested a further breakdown to explain the reasons for no access such as a vulnerable resident or a history of the resident not engaging. The Committee also asked for an overview of the no access procedure.	CE
52/05/21	As a result of questions the following was clarified:	
	be engaged through the Communities Team to ascertain how PCH can gauge their experience, especially with regards to feeling safe in their home. A review across all the performance measures has commenced and the Committee were invited to comment on the shape and format of the report moving forward.	
	The Landlord and Resident Health and Safety report showed PCH's performance on a range of health and safety indicators towards meeting the requirements of the Together with Tenants Charter and the Social Housing White Paper. The Committee were informed that this was the first publication and the content of the report will evolve as further work is undertaken with delivering the Charter and White Paper. Residents will also	
	indicators take into account the current Covid-19 situation and have been marked under the agreed new 'pale' version of the red target.)	

57/05/21	The Forward Plan was reviewed by the Committee which detailed items that	
	were due to be reported at the remaining meetings of 2021.	
	An item would be added for the next meeting to present a Complaint Case	
	Study to show the timeline of a complaint from Stage 1 through to Stage 3.	
	This was raised as an action at the meeting in November 2020 and was set	
	a target date for completion of June 2021 to allow the new Complaint Code	
	and Social Housing White Paper updates to become embedded.	LM
58/05/21	The Customer Focus Committee noted the Forward Plan.	
18	Date of Next Meeting	
59/05/21	The next Customer Focus Committee meeting is scheduled for 6 th August	
	2021 at 10am.	
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60/05/21	The meeting ended at 12:04pm	

Name	Lavinia Porfir			
Signature				
Date				
Certified as a true copy Belinda Pascoe, Head of Governance				
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