Resident Led Scrutiny

FINAL REPORT

Resident Review: ‘The Standard of PCH Shared Spaces’

September 2024 – March 2025

1. Introduction

This report presents the full findings and recommendations of the Review Team who scrutinised the topic 'The standard of PCH shared spaces'.

There were 11 resident members of the review team.

One resident withdrew following session 2 of the review [redacted], and three residents have contributed virtually, with this process allowing for varying methods of involvement.

2. Activities Undertaken

Meeting with Sustainability Lead	**Key Points:** - Provided the team with a working copy of the Communal and green spaces strategy - Discussed with the review team his role, and how this impacts the considerations PCH takes across all areas of the business. Attended sessions 1 & 2 to provide answers to review team questions
Meeting with Leasehold Team	The Leasehold team provided the team with a comprehensive overview on how charges, leases, and their relationship with PCH both differs and compares to PCH residents. This provided clarity around the financial aspect, but also around where responsibility lies for services received and what leaseholders are liable for.
Meeting with Asset Team	- The team provided an overview of their team and their contributions to PCH operations. - They provided a range of answers to the review teams questions that included the topics of: Short-term repairs, public and resident consultations, design considerations, and how ASB is considered within this.
Meeting with the Head of Commercial – formerly named Property, Safety, and Environmental Services	Louise attended the first review session, providing context around what the Environmental Services team are responsible for, and how they operate – much like a contractor for the organisation to deliver on what they are tasked to.
Meeting with the Executive Director of Homes and Communities	**Key Points:** The group were keen to understand their viewpoint on shared spaces and the work they are doing.

	- It was felt promoting ownership of spaces, to foster a sense of community and responsibility was key. - Visibility, presence, and relationship building will help with engagement and addressing issues. - Understanding and addressing motivations for Resident Engagement will be key in promoting ownership and community
Meeting with Senior Communities Worker	- Provided the review team with information on the Fly-Tipping project he is overseeing in Stonehouse. - A focussed survey has gone out to residents in the area to ascertain reasons for fly tipping, and barriers, to provide focus for his project. - The focus is working with local residents, providing information on waste disposal services, and improving communication all round on how to dispose of waste, and how to report those causing the issue.
Meeting with Finance Team	**Key Points:** - The team were given an extensive overview of the Service Charge setting process, this included the framework for setting charges, the governance that goes into the charge setting, and how calculations are made and reviewed to ensure PCH tenants and leaseholders receive services that are good value for money
Resident Survey	429/440 answered that their top priority for their PCH shared spaces were: **SAFETY/SECURITY – 34%** **CLEANLINESS - 26%** **GOOD STATE OF REPAIR - 22%** - 100/439 stated they weren't aware of what services they were being charged for, with 47/439 stating they would like more information - Of the respondents that are affected by Service charges – 48% felt that they did not offer good value for money. - 48% of respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with how PCH maintains the communal areas around their homes - 37% of respondents either did not know or weren't sure who was responsible for

	maintaining the shared areas around their home. - 57% of resident respondents stated they felt safe in the communal areas around their homes either all or most of the time. - 42% of resident respondents stated they hadn't joined a Community Walkabout as they were unaware of them. And 23.5% stating they haven't due to health reasons. - When asked what would encourage them to join a Community Walkabout – 36% stated more information on dates/times, with 21% stating knowing what difference they made.
Staff Survey	- 72 staff responded to this survey (Staff from 'Neighbourhoods', and 'Repairs, voids and compliance' making up 49% of responses) - 64% of **staff** respondents stated it would be beneficial to have simpler access to Land Ownership maps, with 71% of **resident** respondents stating the same - 41% of **staff** respondents felt that PCH does not make best uses of its shared spaces, with 41% of **residents** that responded feeling that resident should have more opportunities to have responsibility for communal areas. - 90% of staff respondents that work in the community, stated they 'Always', or 'usually' felt safe when working in the community
Site visit to Flora Court (5 x Rangers, 1 x Environmental Services Team Leader)	**Key Points:** - Met with static team, and mobile team covering the wider Stonehouse area - Fly Tipping and bins were the primary issues raised by all staff. These were both very time consuming and took up a large portion of their week - Stairwells that are not on scheduled cleaning cycles, are particularly bad by comparison to those that are cleaned. - It remains unclear to both staff and residents, who owns what land in the area.
Site visit to Wolseley Road Flats (1 x Ranger, and 1 x Environmental Services Chargehand)	**Key Points:** - Large portion of time dedicated to sorting, and moving large bins and presenting them to kerbside - The time spent is unscheduled and takes up to 2 days of the staff's week.

	- Fly tipping is a constant issue despite CCTV being present. - Parts were clean and very tidy (where children played), other non-exclusive use areas were where fly tipping seemed to be common - Environmental Services staff felt not properly consulted on regarding works. i.e. recent refurb to flooring has made their job more challenging due to the materials used. - CCTV is not utilised, with only Tenancy Management Staff having access, but not the time to utilise this effectively. - Large 'laundry' area with hanging lines was outdated and underused – with residents choosing to use balconies or alternatives instead. - Shared space aesthetics were poor – railings with paint peeling, faded paint in hallways, concrete areas at varying levels Etc.
Community Walkabout shadowing/Meet with Tenancy Management Team	**Key Points:** - Regular non-attendance from Repairs representatives at Community Walkabout has a profound impact when a lot of issues need to be raised or followed up from previous walkabouts. - Community Walkabouts are administratively heavy, with a lack of suitable technology available to access, log and update information effectively and efficiently. The follow-up administrative process is also inefficient and time-consuming. - Communal area aesthetics were poor – peeling paint, chipped/missing paintwork on bannisters/railings Etc.

Additional Tasks:

Reviewed complaints information, and documents including the developing green spaces strategy, tenant satisfaction measures, Service Charge Information, Development documents, Jannet articles, and Fly Tipping information.

3. Early Implementations/Ongoing works

3.1 There is an ongoing project (mentioned above) into the causes and methodologies to reduce fly tipping in Stonehouse. The review team would like to encourage the initiation of similar projects in areas where fly tipping is a major concern, utilising lessons learnt from the existing project and with emphasis on PCH addressing the causes of fly tipping and investing in methods to reduce its impacts upon PCH, it's residents and the surrounding communities. Environmental Services are in communication with Plymouth City Council regarding solution proposals for the identified issues around bin collections. The Review team would also like to offer its endorsement of this due to the impact this is having on service provision for PCH residents, as identified on site visits.

3.2 As of March 2025, PCH are undertaking a 6-month trial of certain Repairs, Tenancy Management, and Environmental Services staff using bodycams while working on estates. The Review team support all different methods that can be utilised to promote safety and security for staff.

3.3 Housing Choices are in the process of updating/amending their pre-tenancy work to include 'training' modules that are required to be completed prior to sign up.

4. Observations for improvement

4.1 Materials used for cosmetic maintenance to be more hard wearing and durable

- To provide staff with easier and more consistent methods of rectifying any damage or vandalism by being able to clean, rather than redecorate – reducing time, cost, and materials.

4.2 PCH staff and residents would benefit from a simpler process in accessing land ownership maps

- Respondents from both surveys indicated that there was a desire to be able to identify what land belongs to PCH.

4.3 PCH staff whose role may potentially be impacted by works should be more involved with consultations on project design and implementation.

- Contract Tender processes could include staff from the organisation that would be impacted by the works – to provide better frontline insight to the impact of the specified works.

4.4 Pre-tenancy 'education' should be expanded

- This should include fire safety and waste disposal as mandatory, as well as service charge education where applicable. Works are already ongoing but could include further consultation on what is needed.

4.5 Tenancy Management staff to be provided with appropriate technology

- All staff should have adequate technology to undertake all parts of their role whilst mobile – notably Tenancy Management staff during Community Walkabouts as an example.

4.6 The Service Charge working/steering group to be diversified if possible

- To include residents and staff from varying parts of the organisation to provide alternative perspectives – where appropriate.

4.7 Staff to be educated on Service Charges

- Education/training for all relevant staff (community based) and engaged residents (CFC and Board for example), to advise and inform of what service charges are, how they're calculated, and how the charges are applied so this can be shared, when required, with residents.

4.8 Prioritisation for repairs of communal spaces

- An assessment of the impact of communal space repairs should be undertaken to determine the priority of **fully** completing repairs in relation to communal spaces- notably those related to safety/security, as there is little ownership of these at present.

4.9 PCH Website to amend its fly-tipping reporting page

- The current page only allows image uploads of 3MB (Many basic photos are bigger than this in size), and no video upload facility.

4.10 Communal Space Aesthetics

- Communal space aesthetic features were identified to be run down, requiring works to bring them up to a basic standard. Raising the aesthetic standard of these spaces will help to create a sense of

ownership, improve reputations, and reinforce the pride PCH residents take in their homes and communities as previously identified in the PCH signage consultation.

4.11 Increase in security lighting

- Qualitative survey responses indicated a desire for an increase in security lighting. This correlates with residents' top priority from their shared spaces being safety/security

5. Resident Review Process Update

This Review carried out the revised version of the new process implemented in 2023 following feedback from residents. Residents asked for more time and information at the front end of the process, and this was delivered as per the revised structure. This was a positive experience for those involved, however does still require further stress testing once more 'new' residents are involved.

The team stress the importance of reviewing and evolving the process to make it more accessible to residents before the next review with the view of newly engaged residents performing the review with members of the existing panel there for support, if needed. Much of this review team were involved in the previous review therefore had a good understanding already, so this must be considered for future reviews.

The review team note that increasing awareness of the Resident Review - both internally and externally, as well as its outcomes, will help to promote engagement from both staff and residents. The team also noted that resident reviewers should have suitable IT equipment made available for those that need it at the start of the process. The team feel that having residents involved in any evaluation process is imperative to ensure that this process is truly a means of listening and acting to resident's voices.

6. Resident Review recommendations for Improvements to the standard of PCH shared spaces

6.1 Commissioned work to assess how land/buildings can be re-purposed

A project should be undertaken to identify PCH owned land that can be re-purposed to benefit PCH, as well as the residents that surround these plots of land.

This could:

- Reduce maintenance costs
- Reduce time commitments of Environmental Services staff
- Increase the quality of services delivered locally
- Improve the landscape
- provide sites that can better serve the local people

Examples of such re-purposing might include adding a bin store for a block that is better for collection and monitoring, and more difficult to vandalise and fly-tip within; or a community gathering space where there exists an under-utilised and poorly used washing-line courtyard; or the re-purposing of any of PCH's garage stock.

6.2 Community Walkabouts

6.2.1 Attendance from a defined set of staff should be mandatory (to include at least Tenancy Management, Environmental Services, and Repairs) to increase efficiency in the reporting of issues, and that the correctly trained personnel are identifying and reporting those issues whilst ensuring that standards are being met across all teams.

6.2.2 Work is required around resident engagement in Community Walkabouts – primarily being around promotion, communication, and accessibility. It must be clearer for residents to know when these are taking place rather than just being published on the website or included in the In Touch. This could include area-specific communications prior to a walkabout taking place.

6.2.3 A 'Rebranding' of Community Walkabouts to a more inclusive and accessible name may assist in increasing resident engagement. Many residents (23.5%) stated that they could not engage due to health reasons. This could partly be due to the inhibitory nature of the word "walkabout" in the title.

6.2.4 More publication of Community Walkabout results to aid transparency for PCH – highlighting what work is picked up and actioned, whilst providing PCH residents with assurance that Walkabouts are taking place and making a difference to their communities.

The Review team feel that this targeted work should be undertaken over a determined timeframe (the suggestion is over a 12-month period).

6.2.4 If a continued lack of engagement occurs, then it is recommended that the Community Walkabout programme is restructured and split into a staff only walkabout, and a variety of 'drop-in' style events carried out as an opportunity for resident engagement in its place – to provide opportunities for residents to feed back without the need to 'walk' about. This could be in the form of a 'Come and speak to your Housing Officer', or a Multi-Agency (PCH, Cllrs, Police, NHS, Etc) drop-in style meeting for example.

6.3 Service Charge communication

Providing all affected residents and leaseholders clearer and more concise communication relating to Service Charges. This should include what services they should be receiving, how they are calculated, and how they can challenge this process. Clearer transparency in a way that is 'resident friendly' is key to ensuring that residents understand what they are receiving and why, and is felt by the review team would address the current misconception amongst the resident base that they do not receive a service that is equitable and which provides value for their money.

To achieve this, the review team would urge that resident focus groups be held to design a clearer, and more user-friendly version of the annual communications currently received by residents on this topic, as well as educational programmes offering education to residents and staff on the topic of service charges and how they are calculated. This programme should utilise a variety of methodologies to ensure maximal engagement and be designed by residents themselves. Although not the topic of this review, the review team would also like to see the topic of rent letters and calculations included within this programme.

6.4 QR Codes

6.4.1 PCH to investigate the utilisation of creative methods (QR Codes) to provide opportunities for residents to engage – such as: reporting fly-tipping, reporting anti-social behaviour, reporting repairs, reporting overgrown trees/shrubs, accessing land ownership maps for specific areas, and providing feedback for what would be communicated on Community Walkabouts etc.

6.4.2 PCH may wish to consider installation of QR codes within properties (much like the sticker used to locate electric/gas/water meters), and to signpost to relevant information- such as: Damp & Mould information, tenants handbook, fire safety etc

6.4.3 This could be utilised within a range of shared spaces for residents to check against what work has been completed by environmental staff. For example, to provide records of job completion against services residents are charged for within a block.

6.5 CCTV

6.5.1 More Community-based staff (where appropriate) to have training on, and access to CCTV reviewing facilities to effectively utilise those facilities that are already in place to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour.

6.5.2 A review into further CCTV options that can be installed permanently or temporarily on a rotation basis, so that it can be fully utilised to combat Anti-Social Behaviour of all kinds and increase security in areas of concern.