



**MINUTES OF THE LONDON RESIDENT PANEL MEETING
HELD ON 18 JULY 2023**

PRESENT	PG	London Panel Chair and Customer Service Committee Member
	CJ	London Panel Member
	RT	London Panel Member
	RR	London Panel Member
	BM	London Panel Member
	IA	London Panel Member
IN ATTENDANCE	MM	Head of Resident Engagement and Customer Insight
	PF	Director of Compliance and Planned Works
	HE	CEO - Chief Exec Office
	EC	Resident Engagement Officer
APOLOGIES	TB	London Panel Member
	JM	Central Complaints Manager
NOT PRESENT	AS	London Panel Member
	GK	London Panel Member
	TL	London Panel Member
	WS	London Panel Member
MINUTE TAKER	EC	Resident Engagement Officer

1	Welcome and Apologies <i>For information</i>	Action
1.01	PG welcomed the panel.	
1.02	PG confirmed that at the time of the meeting she has received apologies from TB and JM.	
2	Declarations of interest (declarations of interest to have been provided to the Chair) <i>For information</i>	PG
2.01	PG confirmed she hasn't received any declarations of interest.	
3	Matters arising – Action Log <i>For information</i>	EC
3.01	EC requested that actions 8.05, 10.02, 10.32, 10.33 and 11.03 are removed from the action log.	
3.02	EC updated the panel on the panel members ID passes to access the Hive building. Our IT team are in the process of printing the passes and programming them to ensure the panel members have the correct access and the passes will be ready for the next panel meeting in October.	EC

3.03	EC provided an updated for action 3.07, explaining there has been no further contact with panel members regarding future scrutiny reviews however SH will contact the panel with an update. SH will also contact the chair of the Continuous Improvement Panel to review the current scrutiny plan.	SH
3.04	EC provided an update for action 11.03, explaining that Onboard doesn't have the facilities to see the analytics at the level of detail requested.	
4	Welcome to new Independent Panel Member <i>For discussion</i>	PG
4.01	PG explained that recruitment has closed for the Independent Panel member position, one of the candidates was recommended to chair however she was unable to meet with the candidate ahead of the meeting. Once she has met with the candidate PG will update the panel to let them know what she thinks.	PG
4.02	MM clarified that the Resident Engagement Team held interviews for the position and decided that there was one candidate who the team thought could be good however weren't 100% sure so suggested to PG that they met and then the decision of whether the candidate should be appointed can be made.	
4.03	BM asked if it is worth appointing someone who doesn't have all the knowledge of housing needed for the role.	
4.04	PG explained she received a breakdown from SH of the applications from the candidate and thought the application looked impressive. PG noted there were gaps in the candidate's knowledge however nothing the really jumped out to her and once she has spoken to the candidate she will feedback to the panel.	
4.05	MM explained that if PG doesn't feel the candidate is not the right fit then she doesn't have to appoint them, we can do another round of recruitment.	
4.06	PG stated she will share the breakdown with the panel members, and they can give their feedback and provide any questions they would like her to ask the candidate when they meet.	PG
4.07	RR asked if the other candidates we're appointable.	
4.08	MM confirmed that the Resident Engagement Team didn't feel the other candidates were the right fit for the panel.	
5	May Customer Services Committee 60 second round up <i>For discussion</i>	
5.01	PG introduced the item and presented the 60 second round up.	
5.02	BM asked why Network Homes signed the contract with MCP if they didn't have the staff to begin with.	

5.03	PF explained that as part of a contract of this size you would expect teething problems, if another company were to take MCP's place you would expect a similar thing to happen.	
5.04	RT asked how long the contract with MCP is.	
5.05	PF explained the contract is until January 2024 with the option to extend another year.	
5.06	BM asked why we decided to enter a break clause with Wates.	
5.07	PF explained the reason for entering the break clause was due to performance across the board, as well as the relationship with management broke down as they weren't looking to invest in the contract despite Network Homes giving Wates 5-year assurance.	
5.08	RT asked what the complaints rates were when we were with Wates to now with MCP.	
5.09	PF explained he isn't sure what the complaints rate is. JM to find out what the complaints rates were when we were with Wates to now with MCP.	JM
5.10	RT asked when the contract with Wates was meant to end.	
5.11	PF stated we still had 4 years left on the contract.	
5.12	RT asked if Sovereigns in house repairs team will cover Network Homes houses when we merge.	
5.13	PF explained that Sovereigns in house repairs team won't cover Network Homes houses as we both operate in different areas. It is also difficult to have an in-house repairs team within London, having an in-house repairs team will take years to carry out.	
5.14	MM explained that were not saying it will never happen however if the merger goes ahead, we will look at all our options and decide if it is a viable option.	
5.15	PF explained it is not something Network Homes can look at before the proposed merger however we will investigate if the merger goes ahead. We would expect any contractors to have issues/teething issues in the first 6 months of a contract, however they are providing solutions as was stated in the board round up.	
5.16	RT asked if we had to pay to exit the contract with Wates.	
5.17	PF explained that we entered a no-fault break clause, we are currently working through the final account which determines what we owe Wates and what they owe Network Homes.	

5.18	RT asked how concerned Network Homes is in terms of the number of outstanding repairs and what are the priorities of these repairs.	
5.19	PF explained we have good visibility on the outstanding repairs, and we are utilising other contractors to help reduce the number of outstanding repairs.	
5.20	BM asked why Network Homes continues to defend contractors when they know the contractors are causing issues and are planning to end the contract with them.	
5.21	PF explained we don't get it right all the time, there are a large portion of our complaints that we look at and are justified and we do our best to get the issues resolved in a timely fashion and compensate the residents where needed. Our other contractors are now under pressure as MCP are struggling to recruit.	
5.22	BM explained she doesn't understand why repairs make it to stage 2 and aren't dealt with properly at stage 1 and asked if residents can be on the complaints panel.	
5.23	MM explained that we don't have a complaints panel anymore.	
5.24	BM expressed that she feels Network Homes would benefit from having residents review complaints.	
5.25	MM explained we could make that suggestion to JM to see how we can involve residents in the complaints process.	RE Team
5.26	RT asked if it would be possible for panel members to sit in on calls and advise on complaints to prevent them from going to a stage 2 complaint.	
5.27	MM explained she's not sure if that would be possible due to the volume of complaints and the impact that may have on panel members time however MM will talk to JM about how we can involve panel members or involved residents in the complaints process.	
5.28	RR explained that it would be good to do some spot checks to see if everything Network Homes is saying they're doing is happening in practice.	
5.29	MM suggested that we do a scrutiny review to investigate why complaints go from a stage 1 to a stage 2.	RE Team
5.30	RT explained she would like to do a scrutiny review on complaints.	
6	May Board 60 second round up <i>For discussion</i>	HE
6.01	HE introduced the item and gave a quick summary of the most recent board meeting and opened the conversation to questions from the panel.	
6.02	RT asked if the 1000 repair jobs given to Plentific are the serious ones.	

6.03	HE explained that the cases given to Plentific are the single trade orders as they are the easiest to put through the Plentific framework.	
6.04	PF explained that by definition that will build some capacity and alleviate some of the smaller repairs to allow MCP to focus on the more complex cases.	
7	Complaints <i>For discussion</i>	JM
7.01	PG explained that as JM isn't available to answer any questions however PF was able to answer most questions that the panel members had regarding complaints.	
7.02	RT asked that as Network Homes defines what a complaint is have Network Homes considered having a dedicated complaints phone line.	
7.03	HE explained that we have a complaints mailbox however staffing a phone line will be difficult, there is a strain on the customer services team already.	
7.04	RT asked who is deciding what is a complaint, do staff have training to identify what is a complaint and what is a service request.	
7.05	HE explained that generally if a resident says it is a complaint, we take it as a complaint however there are some cases where we won't deem them as a complaint. For instance, if someone who complains isn't a resident, we won't take this as a complaint, we will still deal with the issue however it won't be deemed a complaint. We follow the complaints handling guide set out by the housing ombudsman which sets out the definition of what is and what isn't a complaint. The other exception is a service charge issues, as if someone is disputing a service charge, they will need to follow the designated process for service charge disputes.	
7.06	IA asked how residents know how to contact the complaints team.	
7.07	HE explained the email address is on our website and is included in our resident newsletter. As well as this, if residents call the contact centre to raise a complaint a customer services advisor will raise the complaint and send it straight to the complaints team.	
7.08	RR asked if there are exercises in place to monitor the complaints process as people may interpret the complaints process differently.	
7.09	HE explained that the general guidance is that if a resident says it is a complaint, even if you're not sure to send the case to complaints who will decide whether it is a complaint or not.	
7.10	RR asked what training Network Homes staff have on handling complaints.	
7.11	MM explained that staff don't receive training on handling complaint which is why it is always good practice to pass complaints on to the complaints team who will have the appropriate training to handle complaints.	

7.12	PF explained that the housing Ombudsman could change the guidance surrounding complaints, the specialist team will be trained on these changes, however if you attempted to train 400 staff on the changes to the guidance it could take months. Therefore, it is best to so having all cases go to the complaints team then they can decide based on the most current guidance.	
7.13	PG asked for JM to share the guidance on what makes something a complaint.	JM
8	Building Safety <i>For discussion</i>	
8.01	PF introduced the item and recapped the highlights of the report.	
8.02	PG explained she lives in a high rise building and noted that she raised at a past panel meeting that she hadn't seen information regarding the stay put fire safety policy and has since seen information regarding the policy and what it means for residents.	
8.03	PF updated the panel on the new door inspection programme for buildings that are 11 meters and above, the policy is part of the new fire safety regulations that came into effect in January 2023. Due to this policy the fire safety team have had to up their communication with residents as we need to gain access to residents' properties to inspect both sides of the door. Network Homes is also going to be doing some mass communication ahead of the proposed merger with the information on fire safety as it is a part of the new Fire Safety regulations.	
8.04	EC to share the documents on fire safety to the Readers Group for reviewed.	EC
8.05	BM asked if street properties' fire doors will be reviewed.	
8.06	PF explained that if the building is over 11 meters, then residents will have received a letter however currently we aren't reviewing the buildings under 11 meters.	
8.07	IA asked if once Network Homes have reviewed all the buildings over 11 meters we will go back and review the buildings under 11 meters.	
8.08	PF explained that at the moment we won't, as we are focusing on what regulation has said we need to do first. This is not to say we won't in the future but currently we are working on the buildings we need to work on first.	
9	Resident Engagement update <i>For discussion</i>	
9.01	MM introduced the item and opened the discussion to any questions on the paper.	
9.02	BM asked if we know how the Resident Engagement Team is going to operate in the future regarding the proposed merger.	
9.03	HE explained that on 1 October nothing will change, there will be a process where we consider how each team works in Network Homes and in Sovereign, and then	

	how and when to bring the two teams together. However, the Resident Engagement is a core part of service delivery and it's a regulatory requirement therefore that will continue.	
9.04	MM explained that we're unable to say there won't be any changes, however we will work closely with our counterparts to make sure that resident engagement is as effective as it can be.	
10	Panel Business <i>For discussion</i>	
10.01	PG introduced the item and gave the two key points, panel appraisals and the agenda for the October panel meeting.	
10.02	PG asked for the panel members to provide feedback on the appraisal process.	
10.03	IA explained that she felt the appraisal form the panel members had to fill out felt very corporate and some panel members don't have any experience in a corporate setting therefore she didn't fully understand what was expected of her when filling in the form.	
10.04	RT explained she felt the same way and she felt as if she was an employee rather than a volunteer. In addition, the form went on for too long and it was quite taxing.	
10.05	MM explained that the template she used was the same one as the customer services committee and was approved by both panel chairs. In the future we can adapt the template to meet the panel members needs however this was the first time we have done panel member appraisals so there may be a few things to change.	
10.06	RR explained it may have been quite overwhelming for newer panel members.	
10.07	IA explained that the sections where it asked for concrete examples felt unnecessary as she couldn't remember back that far. The panel only meets every quarter, and it is unlikely she will remember things from previous meetings.	
10.08	BM expressed that she feels panel members are constantly learning and would benefit from training.	
10.09	RT explained she enjoyed the meeting with the panel chair and came away feeling positive about the panel and suggested in the future panel members have the appraisal without the form.	
10.10	RR agreed and explained that sometimes there are things she would like to raise to chair but there isn't enough time in the meetings, so it was good to have a one-on-one conversation.	

10.11	CJ explained she didn't feel the form was meant for us and also needed more time to reflect on the information she included on the form.	
10.12	RR suggested we call the appraisal something else as it carries negative connotations.	
10.13	MM said we will look at the feedback and adapt the form for next year. Maybe have the form as more of a thought-provoking exercise than one panel members need to fill out.	
10.14	IA agreed and said it would be handy to have a list of things to think about going into the appraisal rather than questions to have an answer to.	
10.15	PG asked for JM to bring examples of complaints to the next panel meeting.	JM
10.16	RT explained she felt the complaints paper was confusing, and it would be worth having a list of abbreviations to refer to when reading the papers.	JM
10.17	IA agreed stating that panel members aren't corporate employees so may not know the abbreviations used by some teams.	
10.18	MM confirmed JM is working on some examples, and we can share with them with you.	
10.19	BM asked if PF will be able to attend the next panel meeting to give an update on the repairs contract with MCP.	
10.20	PF said he can however he may not be the best person to give that update so will talk to the director of repairs.	PF
10.21	IA asked if the panel can have an update on the fireworks policy and communications plan.	
10.22	PF confirmed he will provide an update on the communications plan for firework safety in Octobers panel meeting.	PF
10.23	BM stated there have been quite a few murders reported in the media recently and asked how Network Homes would deal with it if it happened in one of their homes.	
10.24	HE explained that if it were to happen, we would assess the situation and see if there's anything we can do to support the residents. However, we are only a housing association and not the government or the police.	
10.25	MM explained we would more likely signpost the resident affected to our support services and other organisations we already work with to support them.	

10.26	RT asked about the damp and mould leaflet that was due to be circulated after the last panel meeting.	
10.27	Resident Engagement team to recirculate the damp and mould leaflet with panel members.	RE Team
11	Network Homes' Performance Report <i>For discussion</i>	
11.01	PG asked if the budget for the panel is government funded and if it isn't what it means for panel members expenses.	
11.02	MM explained that the panel isn't government funded and the budget sits under the Resident Engagement budget. In terms of expenses, we have an expenses policy which we can recirculate if people would find it useful.	RE Team
11.03	PG explained that in the past there used to be a money pot and panel members would bring their receipts to panel meetings and would get the money back at the next meeting.	
11.04	MM explained that this happened when Network Homes had petty cash however now it is done via your rent account and residents can choose how they want to receive the money.	
11.05	RR asked that there is a process that can be put in place to remind panel members that they need to submit their expenses.	
11.06	MM explained that in the past when we have provided refreshments, most of the food went to waste, so we pared back on the food however we can revisit the topic if panel members want to.	
11.07	RR asked if there can be a request system where panel members message the Resident Engagement team to provide food for the panel members who were unable to get food before the meeting.	
11.08	RR asked for an update on the continuous improvement panel.	
11.09	MM explained that SH would be the best person to provide an update however in terms of scrutiny we have tried many ways of reaching out to residents regarding the scrutiny reviews but there is a lack of uptake.	
11.10	RR asked if we talk to other housing association who have successfully set up a scrutiny panel for advice.	
11.11	MM explained we used TPAS to help us set up the continuous improvement panel and we also are a part of the G15 group who we speak to regularly and they all have similar issues when attracting residents to join the scrutiny panel as it is quite time consuming and takes a lot more work.	
11.12	MM will put the scrutiny panel as an agenda item for the next panel meeting and SH will provide an update for the panel.	SH

11.13	RT wanted to thank EL and AI for the venerable persons policy review, it was a great review, they listened and have adapted the policy based on our feedback.	
12	Minutes from the meeting of 11 April 2023 <i>For information – not to be discussed unless so requested</i>	
13	Network Homes’ Performance Report <i>For information – not to be discussed unless so requested</i>	
14	Building safety <i>For information – not to be discussed unless so requested</i>	
15	Housing sector hot topics <i>For information – not to be discussed unless so requested</i>	
16	Continuous Improvement Panel Update <i>For information – not to be discussed unless so requested</i>	
	Meeting closed at 7:50pm	

The next meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday 17 October 2023

Chair: PG

Date: 04/08/2023