



**MINUTES OF THE HERTFORD AND OUTER LONDON RESIDENT PANEL MEETING
HELD ON 03 APRIL 2023
MEETING HELD AT PRIORY HALL, WARE**

PRESENT	AD	Hertford Panel Chair and Customer Service Committee Member
	CR	Councillor & Independent Hertford Panel Member
	SR	Councillor & Independent Hertford Panel Member
	ZH	Resident Panel Member
IN ATTENDANCE	SH	Resident Engagement Manager
	JR	Executive Director of People, Partnerships and Sustainability
	TH	Resident Engagement Officer
	OSB	Head of ITT Delivery
	LM	Head of Sustainability and Strategic Asset Management
	EL	Service Quality Manager
APOLOGIES	DC	Resident Panel Member
	PL	Resident Panel Member
	JJH	Resident Panel Member
MINUTE TAKER	TH	Resident Engagement Officer

1	Welcome and Apologies	AD
1.01	AD welcomes the panel	
1.02	Apologies were received from PL and DC	
2	Declarations of interest (declarations of interest to have been provided to the Chair)	AD
2.01	There were no declarations of interest from the panel.	
3	Matters arising – Action Log	TH
3.01	TH advised the panel that the papers have been taken as read so a short summary of each action was provided to the panel	
3.02	Action 10.10 was requested to be removed from the action log- this was approved by the chair	
3.03	Updates from all outstanding action updates were given to the panel	
4	Panel Business	ALL

4.01	AD opened the item and opened the section up to the panel for questions regarding the intended merger with Sovereign Housing	
4.02	ZH stated that she had looked Sovereign up online and found that there was negative feedback and comments from their residents and said that it would be good to see some examples of good resident feedback down the line.	
4.03	ZH asked how we see the panels changing once the merger has taken place	
4.04	SH advised that we will still be committed to hearing the local voice, the residents panels we currently have would still be in place as well as the various panels Sovereign currently have until a plan has been discussed after October 2023.	
4.05	SR stated that he was previously aware of Sovereign and noted that he had found that they come across as a reputable organisation but having gone back to research them he noted that there has been a downwards turn in their customer care which he found disappointing.	
4.06	ZH stated that the negative reviews of Network Homes online don't necessarily relate fully to our service, so could the team provide some positive feedback form Sovereign residents to start off in a positive light	RE Team
4.07	ZH also asked for information on the panels and involvement opportunities Sovereign to be shared with the panel	RE Team
4.08	AD stated that she also had the same thoughts and would like to hear more about how the new organisation will work with their panels. AD stated she is aware that we don't have all these answers yet.	
4.09	SH and TH reassured that we would keep the panel in the loop and ensure they are advised as soon as we have information to provide.	
4.10	JR stated that there's been a lot of engagement with colleagues from both organisations- there have been live Q&As with both offices and all colleagues are keen to learn about their future colleagues and practices	
4.11	JR also stated that NH and Sovereign do thing in very different ways, and this won't change. We will be keeping all our local offices and presence. There will be very little change to residents at first.	
4.12	JR also said that throughout the process of designing the resident consultation we will be able to involve residents/panels in the process.	
4.13	JR stated that part of our partnership with East Herts ensures that we have a local presence in the Hertford area.	
4.14	SH stated that there will possibly be an online consultation for end of April/early May- and currently discussing a face-to-face event later in the summer, for Sovereign's involved residents to attend.	

4.15	AD advised she would be interested in being a part of assisting with the resident consultation.	
4.16	ZH asked if current planned projects will still be going ahead, such as the resident online portal.	
4.15	JR advised there will be no changes to planned projects for now- we're carrying on as usual but opportunities to learn or see where change could be possible through normal business would be explored. Updates would be given in business transformation agenda item.	
4.16	AD and CR stated that it's important to keep local/bespoke local services going to keep trust with residents.	
4.17	SH stated that many of the questions asked at colleague Q&A sessions have been very much focused on the impact on residents, e.g how will services be affected? Etc which should help involved residents feel their voice is being championed even when they're not present.	
4.18	SH also stated that the message from senior staff members have been about keeping consistency and ensuring our service levels to minimise disruption.	
5	Panel Member tenure review	SH
5.01	SH stated she is leading the agenda item in place of MM and stated that there was only one panel tenure reviews for the current period, and this panel member had decided to step down from their post.	
5.02	SH also stated that we're currently recruiting for the Hertford Panel. We have contacted residents who have applied to join the panel and advise them that they're applications have been acknowledged and will be contacted regarding the next steps of the recruitment process	
5.03	TH advised that we have had 10 applicants so far, all of which have been acknowledged.	
5.04	SH stated this this number is positive as we have sent text messages, a website article and social media posts to promote. Applicants will be interviewed by the Chair and a member of the RE Team.	
5.05	AD stated that it would be nice to send a card and some flowers to a previous member who has recently stepped down from the panel.	
6	February Customer Services Committee 60 second round up	AD
6.01	AD provided the round-up to the panel. This included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Resident Engagement Strategy (as included in the panel papers) • The ending of the current corporate strategy 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new strategy objectives for years 2023-2028 which is being considered by the board for approval An update on the resident choice project (included in the panel agenda) 	
7	March Board 60 second round up	JR
7.01	<p>JR stated there were 4 main things decided at board. They were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budgeting for year 23/24, which set an overall margin of 20%, which was the minimum that was considered acceptable in terms of showing our financial strength Cost of living pay increase was approved for overall wages for colleagues, which was set at a rise of £2,400, regardless of their role. This was an overall increase of 5% A new building scheme for Northwick Park was approved. This scheme will have 654 homes in Brent of which 323 of these will be affordable rent. JR advised the panel that this will be our largest scheme to date 	
8	Damp and Mould	EL
8.01	EL presented the report	
8.02	EL gave an overview of the new Damp & Mould policy and explained the new processes and extra steps in place.	
8.03	EL also advised that we have a specific team dedicated to resolving damp and mould cases. Before this new policy all damp cases were handled under our responsive repair team	
8.04	EL informed the panel that we have been conducting specialist training for colleagues (technical surveyors, contractors, etc) to better serve residents. EL also advised that after Easter training will also be provided to non-technical staff, ie neighbourhood Officers, etc so they can spot the signs and refer accordingly. Training will also include the up-to-date procedures.	
8.05	ZH advised that she reported and damp/mould case in January 2022- and then an electrician was sent incorrectly. She had someone else come to seemed very knowledgeable, but never came back. Personal item logged via panel pitstop.	
8.06	ZH stated there are still issues with communal guttering in the block- TH stated that she will investigate this for ZH and will log in the panel pit stop	
8.07	CR stated that as a counsellor, there seems to be an ongoing issue with MCP attending but having sent the wrong person for the job- so this dedicated team is good news.	
8.08	EL stated that she will investigate ZH's case and will respond to ZH directly. (Noted in panel pit stop)	
8.09	EL touched on the housing ombudsmans 10 key point plan- these are key points they the ombudsman expect us to check ourselves against- there currently isn't feedback on this but it will be provided to the panel	

8.10	TH advised that she has spoken to the Damp & Mould Teams Lead who stated that residents have one point of contact for their case, all the way through to resolution, and this is having a positive effect on residents	
8.11	EL advised that there will be 80-90 people taking part in the training, so it's a big investment	
8.12	ZH added that its reassuring that this procedure to be in place	
8.13	AD asked how cases of re-occurring mould are handled	
8.14	EL advised that we would send a technical surveyor to inspect, or a damp & mould specialist to attend.	
9	Business Transformation	OSB
9.01	OSB opened the agenda item, taking the papers as read. The presentation was shared	
9.02	OSB advised that the new telephony system used by the Customer Contact Centre will now include social media and email queries. This means that the whole of the Customer Service Centre will now be handling social media and email enquiries, not just one team. This will enhance service to residents	
9.03	OSB stated that there will also be a smart chatbot built into the system. This will enable (whatever tenure they are, general rented, shared owner etc) to pay their rent, raise a repair etc, via the chatbot. OSB said that we are also planning to update our website.	
9.04	OSB also advised the panel that the plan is to reduce the calls into the Customer Contact Centre by 40,000 calls- so residents won't have to wait on the line to get through to an advisor. We'll also be working on a web-chat feature. OSB advised that we will be building it and it'll be a phased approach to rolling it out.	
9.05	OSB asked for the panels feedback on whether they should test it internally (colleague testing), and get it to the launch phase- or would panel members like to be included in testing the system bit by bit as we are building it (which will mean that resident's feedback would have more influence	
9.06	AD responded that fi the testing is in context- so they would know what each test is trying to achieve, it would be good to take the approach of residents testing as its being built. AD would like to take part	
9.07	OSB to contact the panel to offer the testing the system when the time is right in the project.	OSB
9.08	SH advised that part of the resident choice survey asked residents if they'd like to be involved in systems testing, etc. Also, we will be looking at enlisting testing assistance form colleagues who are also residents. This will mean that	

	we will get the viewpoint and feedback from someone who knows both sides of interactions- as a colleague but also as a resident	
9.09	OSB advised that when the chatbot is active in the system, it will be continually worked on to improve it, so the chatbot becomes smarter.	
9.10	OSB lastly mentioned that the team are looking to revise the KPI's (Key Performance Indicators), and there are 5 areas they want to look at. Rather than just the 40,000-call reduction the team are looking at the following 5 categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer satisfaction • Self-service usage • Response time • Reduction rate • Cost saving 	
9.11	The findings to these KPI's will be monitored via feedback surveys, and core analysis drawn from transactions	
9.12	AD questioned the way this will be done- for example, if a resident still needed to speak with an advisor, will we look at why the query wasn't able to be resolved by using the chatbot	
9.13	OSB stated that this is correct and that there is an element to the system that will help us to understand transactions further	
10	Repairs, maintenance, and planned works	JR/LM
10.01	JR opened the agenda item and gave a summary of the item report	
10.02	JR added that over the last 10 years we have spent £60 million on stock in the Hertford Region- this was on responsive repairs, and larger investment into the properties	
10.03	JR also added that over the next 10 years we're planning on spending £127 million on this. And over the next 10 years we'll be spending £80million on new builds	
10.04	ZH asked about one of our social media posts about the government de-carbonisation fund. ZH asked if any of the work included in the fund will be in the Hertford /Ware Region- where the properties are older	
10.05	LM stated that the origins of the Social Housing de-carbonisation fund came from the 2019 conservative manifesto where there was a proposal to have £3 billion to improve the efficiency of socially rented homes.	
10.06	LM advised it will always be subject to spending reviews and explained that Network Homes has been successful in gaining £9.8million	

10.07	ZH asked if this will include the Hertford region and how much of the fund will the region see	
10.08	LM responded that the way we've split it is over 2000 properties- 1000 in the London Region and 1000 in the Hertford & out Of London Region	
10.09	LM explained the areas we are obliged to display that we are monitoring the way the fund is being spent.	
10.10	AD asked when this retrofitting work can start on properties	
10.11	LM advised that we're going through our due diligence and we're trying to gain entry to residents' homes to carry out surveys and inspections- so it's important for us to be able to carry these out, as it enables us to do the work, so we don't have a set start date just yet	
10.12	ZH asked if the communal roof in her block could have thermal imaging installed- as residents can see daylight through the loft hatch, and it leads to leakage inside	
10.13	LM has advised that she will respond to ZH outside of the meeting (Noted in panel pit stop)	
10.14	JR advised that there has been more budget put into building safety than in repairs and maintenance, as this has been a larger concern	
10.15	AD and ZH stated that this is understandable	
10.16	AD asked if we could see this changing, or if the building safety overtaking the normal repairs expenditure is permanent	
10.17	JR responded that it isn't permanent- we are still carrying out planned works and repairs, we hope to catch up in the next 3 years. And send spend significantly more on the repairs budget	
10.18	JR also advised that in the last 10 years we've spent £2-3 million per year on planned maintenance works in the Hertford region. This year we'll spend just over £3 million. Next year we anticipate spending £16 million.	
11	Annual procurement plan	SH
11.01	SH advised that the papers are being taken as read, SH referenced the report summary of what we will be procuring over the next two years	
11.02	SH advised that the two main things we think residents will have an interest in are a pest control contact procurement and a car parking contact- as residents may want to have some input there	
11.03	SH advised that colleagues in our procurement team feel that it would be beneficial to have residents form schemes where parking permits are already in place- as they will have the experience to know what does and doesn't work well	

11.04	SH advised that we must have a pest control contract in place, but residents influence on the contract won't have as much of an impact on the service delivery- as the objective will always be just to eradicate pests from the property. But we would like residents' input on 1) the service itself and 2) how do residents feel about having these contractors in their homes, etc- so resident input is still valuable.	
11.05	SH stated that for these reasons, it would be great to have some questions set by residents to be included in the procurement process- so we get it right for residents. SH asked the panel how we can encourage residents to take part in procurement exercises	
11.06	AD said that's she agrees we should have a set of customer care questions provided by residents for the process	
11.07	AD asked what the next step is?	
11.08	SH responded that we'll be able to share the dates and details for the projects coming up in far as advance as possible	
12	Any Other Business	ALL
12.01	SH stated that in the Continuous Improvement Panel paper (that was under Resident Engagement Update) it stated that there was a scrutiny with a meeting held on 28 March 2023	
12.02	SH updated that panel that 24 residents signed up to attend the meeting – but only 1 person attended. This person had taken part in a scrutiny some years ago but didn't want to take part in one that wasn't specific to where they lived. SH asked the panel members if there was anyone interested in taking part on a scrutiny- going forward	
12.03	DR and AD said that this was disappointing	
12.04	SH asked the panel who has an iPad provided from NH- as we are trying to monitor who is reading the papers on Onboard. We want to know how to support panel members develop skills.	
12.05	The chair closed the meeting at 20:05	
13	Network Homes' Performance Report	
	<i>For Information, not to be discussed unless so requested</i>	
14	Charitable Fund update	
	<i>For Information, not to be discussed unless so requested</i>	
15	Continuous Improvement Panel Update	
	<i>For Information, not to be discussed unless so requested</i>	
16	Resident engagement update	

	<i>For Information, not to be discussed unless so requested</i>	
17	Minutes from the meeting of 09 January 2023	
	<i>For Information - Not to be discussed unless so requested</i>	
18	Building Safety	
	<i>For Information - Not to be discussed unless so requested</i>	

Next Meeting Scheduled for 10 July 2023

AD	--/04/2023
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Chair	Date