



**Minutes of the Salix Homes Customer Committee Meeting held on  
Tuesday 05 November 2024 via Microsoft Teams**

<b>MEMBERS:</b>	Charlotte Haines (Chair) John Beattie (JBe) Jack Buckley (JBU) Marta Diaz (MD) Rashidah Owoseni (RO) Gareth Evans (GE) Keri Muldoon (KM) Karen Hamilton-Hulse (KH) Cynthia (Bethel) Alloyda (CA)
<b>OFFICERS:</b>	Sian Grant, Executive Director of Customers and Communities (EDCC) Warren Carlon, Director of Communities (DC) Lorraine Butler, Customer Service and Engagement Manager (CSEM) Laura Flint, Complaints Manager (CM) Ed Sidley, Performance and Business Intelligence Manager (PBIM) Christiana O'Brien, Customer Engagement Manager (CEM) Rebecca Airey, Governance and Policy Officer (GPO) (minutes)
<b>ATTENDEES:</b>	Monika Liskiewicz (ML) Mark Beyer (MB)
<b>APOLOGIES:</b>	Jason Marland (JM) Ahmed Abdulmalek (AA)

The meeting commenced at 18:03

<b>ITEM</b>	
<b>1.</b>	<b>Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest</b>
	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.  Apologies were received from JM and AA.  There were no Declarations of Interest.
<b>2.</b>	<b>Minutes of the Meeting held on 03 September 2024</b>
	<b>The Committee approved the minutes from the last meeting held on Tuesday 03 September 2024.</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Matters Arising and Action Tracker</b>
	It was noted that the DC had created a schedule for painting car parking bays and that this was currently being reviewed by the Executive Director of Assets, Growth and Sustainability (EDAGS). DC agreed to share the schedule with members once approved.  The EDCC informed members that the GPO will schedule an online meeting for the first week of December for members to discuss future corporate priorities that were due to be discussed at the Strategy Day.

	<p><b>The Committee noted the changes to the Action Tracker.</b></p> <p><b>Actions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>DC to share the approved schedule for painting car parking bays with members of the Customer Committee.</b></li> <li>• <b>GPO to circulate potential meeting dates to members.</b></li> </ul>
4.	<p><b>Chair's Update</b></p>
	<p>The Chair provided the Committee with an overview of the last Board meeting which took place on 17 September 2024 and the Annual General Meeting (AGM) that took place on 24 September 2024. Key highlights included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Phase 2 report of the Grenfell Tower inquiry was discussed amongst members;</li> <li>• Salix Homes had already made changes to and implemented new processes particularly in relation to the design and approval processes with contractors;</li> <li>• Further discussions are required in relation to Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) but all customers with a disability have an evacuation plan in place;</li> <li>• The Board discussed approved the 2023/24 Annual Review;</li> <li>• The Board reviewed and approved the 2023/24 Financial Statements for the Salix Homes Group;</li> <li>• The Board approved the loan restatement agreement, meaning Salix Homes has an increased borrowing capacity of £10m;</li> <li>• The Board discussed and approved the 2024/25 Modern Slavery Statement;</li> <li>• The Board discussed and approved the Assets and Liabilities Register;</li> <li>• Members were provided with an update on damp, mould and condensation and asked that further information is included in the next report to Board;</li> <li>• New Barracks Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) are performing within target;</li> <li>• Jim Battle, Khalil Rehman and Greg van Enk-Bones all stepped down from their positions at the AGM;</li> <li>• Jason Ridley and Monika Liskiewicz were appointed to the Board;</li> <li>• Martin Warhurst was elected Chair of the Board; and</li> <li>• Paul Martin and Ahmed Abdulmalek were re-elected for their second fixed term period.</li> </ul> <p><i>KM joined the meeting at 18:10.</i></p> <p><b>The Committee noted the Chair's update.</b></p>
5.	<p><b>Sustainability Champion</b></p>
	<p><i>KH joined the meeting at 18:14.</i></p> <p>MB introduced himself as Salix Homes' Sustainability Champion and noted that for the last couple of years he has been looking to see what benefits would be passed to customers through implementing schemes that would reduce energy usage, i.e. cost savings through reduced energy bills.</p>

MB provided members with an overview of the key areas that he has discussed with the Executive Team since becoming the Sustainability Champion, these included:

- Net zero discussion groups and publications;
- Alternative heating systems that are mainly electric – moving away from any gas so the power supply is from renewable sources;
- Pushing back on the use of hydrogen for heating – cost and safety issues are clear despite various government and big businesses' support;
- Moving away from gas may mean some air and ground source heat pump systems are required – these will need to be well installed and Salix Homes will need to ensure customers are properly instructed/briefed, providing support where necessary;
- Improving the insulation of properties via grants;
- New insulation techniques CorkSol has been trialled – this is where renewable cork is sprayed to improve insulation rating and also reduce damp, mould and condensation due to its anti-bacterial properties. Customers have found this to be too intrusive but the team is keeping a watching brief as it develops;
- The move to improve the EPC rating of Salix Homes' properties to 'C' has been driven by the Sustainability Manager and the organisation is well on track to achieve the 2030 deadline.

Looking ahead, MB informed the Committee that he will be attending the Greater Manchester Green Summit at the Lowry on 09 December 2024 to listen to key speakers on net zero and ways forward for Salix Homes to investigate.

MB asked members why they think it might be difficult to engage with customers in relation to assessing and retrofitting properties and how Salix Homes might best approach these potential barriers.

KM noted that some customers view Salix Homes as a nuisance and would prefer to be left alone.

CA noted that a potential barrier is customers' lack of knowledge and awareness so this would be a good place to start. CA suggested that Salix Homes organise an awareness campaign about how retrofitting measures feeds into sustainability in the long-term but that the focus should be on how all of this will benefit the customer in terms of energy bills and savings.

MB suggested that the Customer Committee could help with the awareness campaign and that he recently shared an informative leaflet with the Chair that may be of interest to the Committee. The Chair agreed to share the leaflet with members.

GE suggested that there should be an option for visits to be scheduled outside of core working hours as more people are likely to be home to answer.

JBe noted that some customers may not grant Salix Homes access as they do not want the condition of their property to be judged, and action taken against them if it is not to standard.

Ensuring customers understand the purpose of the visit ahead of time could improve access rates.

The Chair noted that some customers may be reluctant to certain changes such as replacing a gas cooker with an electric hob due to cultural cooking techniques. The Chair added that Salix Homes will need to educate teams on cultural differences to best navigate these conversations.

In response to a query about Salix Homes' autonomy to retrofit properties, MB informed members that the UK Government provides Salix Homes with funding but that it is the decision of the Board and the Executive Team on how these grants are used. MB added that some properties are harder to remediate due to their age and condition so there may be conversations in the future on how best to manage these properties.

The Chair thanked MB for attending the meeting and asked members to send any additional questions over to either herself or MB.

**The Committee noted the Sustainability Champion update.**

**Actions:**

- **The Chair to circulate the sustainability leaflet with members following the meeting.**

*MB left the meeting at 18:31.*

**6. Customer Feedback and Complaints Q1 & Q2 2024-25**

The CM provided members with an overview of the customer feedback and complaints received between 01 April 2024 and 30 September 2024 (Q1 and Q2 2024/25). Key points for members to note included:

- 109 complaints were received in Q1, of which 13 were escalated to Stage 2;
- 93 complaints were received in Q2, of which 15 were escalated to Stage 2;
- Most customers are satisfied with how their complaints are dealt with at Stage 1 due to the low proportion that are escalated for review;
- In both quarters, the Repairs Team received the highest number of complaints;
- There is a direct link between the increase in the percentage of complaints responded to within 10 working days from acknowledgement, and the introduction of the new complaints team;
- The CM has monthly meetings with Service Managers to explore their team's complaints and whether there are any trends/themes or learning;
- There were determinations on 4 complaint cases from the Housing Ombudsman with 1 finding of maladministration, 1 finding of service failure, 1 was not investigated as the complaint was outside their jurisdiction and 1 found no maladministration;
- There were 75 lessons learned captured by complaint investigators (43 in Q1 and 32 in Q2);
- 157 compliments were received, 90 by the Customer Service Centre and 49 by the Repairs Team;
- 77% of compliments related to the standard of service; and

- Kwest have been commissioned to investigate the complaint handling service at Salix Homes to better understand why Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) are consistently low.

The Committee were informed that the system changes to CRM had gone live today to reflect the changes to the Complaints Team.

In relation to next steps in complaints handling, members were informed that the team will:

- Continue to work with managers to identify previous learning from complaints to establish the impact and analyse the effectiveness of the actions;
- Continue to work with the Complaints Oversight Group (COG) to implement feedback on analysis of individual complaint responses; and
- Continue with the analysis of complaint handling satisfaction surveys following Kwest's deep-dive.

KM noted that some of the issues with the repairs service at Salix Homes can feel repetitive and may make customers feel that the team is not learning from complaints or customer communications, particularly in relation to missed appointments. KM informed the Committee that Salix Homes' repairs service consistently makes appointments during her working hours despite informing them of this and raising a number of complaints. The EDCC informed members that the Repairs Team are currently in the process of recruiting to trade posts so that they can offer extended and weekend hours to customers. Once the team is in place, this will be rolled out across the business.

CA congratulated the Complaints Team for the positive improvement in performance.

CA queried whether responding to complaints within 10 working days was a realistic target and suggested that Salix Homes extends the timescale to 14 days so that the team has adequate time for cross-department collaboration. CA added that this would better manage customers' expectations and improve performance outcomes.

CM informed members that the timescales set out at 2.2.1 are set by the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code and Salix Homes are required to comply with and assess themselves against the code. The CM added that the day the complaint is received by Salix Homes is considered day 0, and the team has 5 working days following this to acknowledge the complaint. Salix Homes then has a further 10 working days to respond to the customer following acknowledgement. Members were informed that if Salix Homes cannot respond within 10 days, the team will provide a justifiable reason and supply the customer with a new deadline. It was noted that Salix Homes receives a similar number of complaints when compared with other Registered Providers (RPs) and that the team will continue to monitor the volume of complaints received.

The CM informed members that all complaints are triaged when they are received by Salix Homes to determine whether they meet the criteria for a complaint or whether they should be recategorised as an anti-social behaviour case, a garden condition case or a repairs issue, for example.

In response to a query from CM about customers who consistently complain, the Committee were informed that the team is looking into recurring complainants and whether they should implement steps around 'nuisance to landlord' should the submissions become excessive.

JBu informed the Committee of an instance where one customer raised a complaint on behalf of Artifex and was solely provided with Salix Homes' response as the complainant. JBu queried whether the complaints procedure needed to include an extra step so that any lessons learned from a complaint relating to a communal issue are effectively communicated to the wider customer base.

CM noted that the lessons learned, and remedial actions should have been communicated to all Artifex residents and that this has now been picked up by the Communications Team. The CM added that they will ensure wider communications to customers continues to be implemented going forward.

In relation to the Housing Ombudsman's service failure determination, RO asked for clarification as to why Salix Homes did not provide the customer with financial compensation in this instance. The CM informed members that Salix Homes did not uphold the customers' complaint and so did not provide any compensation; the Housing Ombudsman agreed with this decision and how the complaint was handled. However, the Housing Ombudsman determined the case was a service failure as it felt Salix Homes should have signposted the customer to specific legal advice so that they could file a personal injury claim against the organisation. The EDCC informed members that they will ensure to signpost customers to legal advice going forward where relevant.

**The Committee noted the contents of the Customer Feedback and Complaints Q1 & Q2 2024-25 report.**

**Actions:**

- **GPO to circulate presentation slides with members following the meeting.**

*CM left the meeting at 19:07.*

**7. Performance Half-Year Report including TSMs**

The PBIM informed members that there are 41 performance indicators (PIs) that are split between TSMs (21), Board (15) and the Senior Management Team (SMT) (5). It was noted that the majority of PIs are at or above expected levels, and there had been a steady improvement in September 2024 when compared with July and August 2024.

The Committee was provided with an overview of TSM perception measures, TSM operational measures, Board and SMT PIs.

RO noted that customer satisfaction with time taken to complete repairs is a recurring theme and that the introduction of the new Complaints Team will hopefully improve the underperforming PI as the team looks to implement lessons learned from complaints.

	<p>MD added that improved communication between the Repairs Team and customers will significantly improve customers' satisfaction with the service.</p> <p>The EDCC informed members that they will invite the Repairs Team to give a presentation at the December meeting so that members can discuss and challenge the changes that are being implemented.</p> <p><b>The Committee noted the Performance half-year report.</b></p> <p><b>Actions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Repairs Team to attend the next Customer Committee meeting in December.</b></li> </ul> <p><i>PBIM left the meeting at 19:18.</i></p>
8.	<p><b>Customer Service Strategy Update</b></p>
	<p>The CSEM provided the Committee with a progress update on the Customer Service Strategy action plan and highlighted that Salix Homes are making good progress on the four key strategic objectives. Key points for members to note include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress has been made in relation to gaining accurate insight into Salix Homes' customers, notably in gathering customer information as part of the Getting to Know You (GTKY) survey;</li> <li>• A new Reasonable Adjustment Policy has been implemented - service managers attended sessions to test the approach before it was rolled out;</li> <li>• Various actions have been undertaken to improve customer communication;</li> <li>• The new online reporting tool for repairs has been tested by staff and will be tested by customers from this week;</li> <li>• It is vital that Salix Homes is proactive in terms of customer communication to build trust and increase satisfaction; and</li> <li>• There has been significant progress against the agreed performance measures which have improved through the year.</li> </ul> <p>RO noted that the Switchee devices require internet access and queried whether Salix Homes actively reach out to customers who have had the devices installed, but where data may not be being collected as the customer has turned off the device or internet to save money. The CSEM confirmed that the Switchee data is being actively monitored and that the team will investigate any instances where the data is unusual or absent to see where Salix Homes can offer additional support.</p> <p><b>The Committee noted the progress of the Customer Service Strategy year one action plan.</b></p>
9.	<p><b>Springboard Update</b></p>
	<p>The DP informed members that Salix Homes has been providing community grants via Springboard since 2016, and that the purpose of the grants is to support local groups and projects that boost community spirit, promote health and wellbeing, reduce isolation and improve the environment. It was noted that the annual Springboard budget is £33k and that there is no set limit on individual applications.</p>

	<p>The Committee was informed that the total spend on projects at the end of Q2 was £18.2k, covering 14 projects. This is approximately in line with the annual budget.</p> <p>The DP added that Salix Homes runs an annual Springboard Hero initiative to further reward people and groups who make a real difference in their communities and that the 2024/25 winners will be announced in Spring 2025.</p> <p>KM queried whether the Springboard grant would consider an application for outdoor safety lighting on properties. The DP informed members that it would not qualify for funding as it did not fall within the remit of the scheme and that the installation of fittings such as safety lighting would fall under target hardening measures.</p> <p>In response to a query from RO about whether there were any groups that applied each year, the DP confirmed that there were and that they provided a real benefit to the community. The DP added that the team review all applications and would investigate any applicants who they thought were misusing the scheme but that there had been no instances of misuse to date.</p> <p><b>The Committee noted the Springboard update.</b></p>
10.	<p><b>Scrutiny Action Tracker</b></p>
	<p>The EDCC informed the Committee that Salix Homes has been working on several actions for some time from the ASB scrutiny which have been on hold while they reviewed the organisation’s approach to managing noise. It was noted that the consultation has now concluded and that the actions will be completed once all ASB cases have moved into the new ReACT system.</p> <p>The CEM noted that a Customer Committee working group will be created to develop customer service standards bespoke to each department which will help define and measure performance.</p> <p>Members were informed that customer service training is currently underway, and key teams will have received training before the end of December.</p> <p>A new section on Environmental Service recommendations has been included since the last report, and owners have been notified. The CEM confirmed that the team will monitor and track these actions with the relevant owners.</p> <p><b>The Committee noted the Scrutiny Action Tracker.</b></p> <p><b>Actions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The CEM to circulate the new Stock Condition Survey comms update to members.</b></li> </ul>
11.	<p><b>Sub-Group Minutes</b></p>
	<p>The CEM provided members with a brief overview of the sub-group minutes. Key highlights included:</p>



<p><b>Procurement Pannel (PP):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Procurement Manager, Paul Nugent, has left the organisation and Faye Gunson is now in post as the interim lead for procurement.</li> <li>• A key project for the sub-group is the procurement of electrical testing.</li> </ul> <p><b>ALF:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The car parking pilot has been deemed a good success.</li> <li>• The Pet Policy is due to be rolled out soon.</li> <li>• A number of drop-ins at have been planned for each of Salix Homes’ blocks to increase customer engagement at a more local community level.</li> </ul> <p><b>COG:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The group approve of the new complaints letters which were developed as a result of the Customer Communications Review.</li> </ul> <p>The Chair queried sub-group attendance levels and whether Salix Homes needed to readvertise membership to get more customers involved. The CEM informed the Committee that attendance has been low across all sub-groups and that the team is looking to review the Terms of Reference, tenure of participants and the possibility of a recruitment drive. The CEM added that it is good to refresh membership as new members bring fresh perspectives to discussions.</p> <p>The CSEM noted that they will reach out to current members asking if they would still like to be involved as the sub-groups gain a lot of initial interest but it can be difficult to engage with members.</p> <p>KH informed the Committee that only two members attended the COG meeting in September and that she had not received any responses to her emailing asking if they were still interested.</p> <p>MD noted that it can be difficult for people who work to attend sub-group meetings as they are often scheduled during typical working hours (9am-5pm). The Chair noted that the team need to take this into consideration when reviewing the sub-groups.</p> <p>JBe noted that Diamond House can be difficult to access via public transport and queried whether Salix Homes could hold meetings in more centralised locations if not on Microsoft Teams. The EDCC noted that this was a good idea and that the team will look into it.</p> <p><b>The Committee resolved to note the:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>PP minutes from 18 September 2024.</b></li> <li>• <b>COG minutes from 20 September 2024.</b></li> <li>• <b>ALF minutes from 15 October 2024.</b></li> </ul>
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<b>12.</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>
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<p>The CSEM asked members whether anyone needed additional support with Salix Homes’ IT equipment and/or further guidance on how to use One Advanced. It was noted that an in-person One Advanced training session and IT equipment support had been scheduled in advance of today’s meeting but that this had been postponed due to the meeting having moved online.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CA agreed to attend Diamond House so that ICT can issue her with a new device and log her into all the required accounts.</li> <li>• JBe and RO asked for further One Advanced training.</li> <li>• JBe noted that his tablet runs slowly and may require another device.</li> </ul>
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- GE noted that he is locked out of his Salix Homes' account and that IT has been unable to resolve the issue remotely. GE will struggle to attend Diamond House to rectify this due to other commitments but said he would be nearby tomorrow around 11am.
- MD noted that her access to One Advanced and Salix Homes email account is intermittent, and sometimes she receives an error message telling her to 'contact your administrator' when the system locks her out.
- KH noted that she requires a new device and asked if IT can log her into all her accounts. KH cannot easily attend Diamond House.

The CSEM thanked members for their feedback and noted that there are ongoing conversations within the IT department about whether the current Board and Committee Member IT device offer is fit for purpose.

ML thanked members for today's meeting and noted that it has provided her with a great insight into Salix Homes' customer voice.

Members asked that events and festivals such as Bonfire Night are taken into consideration when creating future forward schedules.

**Actions:**

- **CSEM and GPO to arrange One Advanced training with members.**
- **CSEM to look into IT equipment support for members.**

<b>13.</b>	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>
	Tuesday 17 December 2024 (Virtual)

The meeting closed at 20:03