



**Minutes of Customer Committee Meeting held on 04 February 2025 at  
Diamond House**

<b>MEMBERS:</b>	Charlotte Haines (Chair) Ahmed Abdulmalek (AA) (Virtual) Cynthia (Bethel) Alloyda (CA) Gareth Evans (GE) Jack Buckley (JBu) Keri Muldoon (KM) Marta Diaz (MD) Rashidah Owoseni (RO)
<b>OFFICERS:</b>	Sian Grant, Executive Director of Customers and Communities (EDCC) Lorraine Giddings, Customer Service and Engagement Manager (CSEM) Christiana O'Brien, Customer Engagement Manager (CEM) Sam Foster, Customer Communications Manager (CCM) Nichola Shepard, Director of Governance, Risk & Assurance (DGRA) Jamie Cockerham, Governance and Policy Officer (GPO), (Minutes)
<b>APOLOGIES:</b>	John Beattie (JBe)
The meeting commenced at 18:05.	
<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 John Beattie (JBe).  There were no Declarations of Interest.
<b>2.</b>	<b>Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 December 2024</b>
	<b>The Committee approved the minutes from the last meeting held on 17 December 2024.</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Matters Arising and Action Tracker</b>
	<b>The Committee noted the changes to the Action Tracker.</b>  <b>Actions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>PBIM still progressing access to Power BI for members.</b></li> <li>• <b>Painting of car parking bays to be put forward within budget discussions for 2025 onwards.</b></li> <li>• <b>New policy on high rise signage due to go to SLT for approval.</b></li> </ul>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Chair's Update</b>
	The Chair provided members with the following updates:

- The Chair noted that Jason Marland has stepped down from his role on the Customer Committee
- Sian Grant, the Executive Director of Customers and Communities, will be leaving Salix Homes at the end of the month. The Chair and members expressed thanks for her work and support to the Customer Committee.
- The Chair noted and welcomed Jamie Cockerham joining Salix Homes as the Governance & Policy Officer.
- The Chair noted that committee recruitment will be undertaken to recruit to the current two vacancies in Committee membership. The tenure of 4 members will now be extended to September 2026 as part of the wider succession plan.

In addition, the Chair also took the opportunity to remind members that this meeting represented the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Customer Committee meeting.

The Chair provided the Committee with the key points discussed at the last Board meeting which took place on 28 January 2025. These were:

- Representatives of Salford City Council (SCC) attended the Board meeting to discuss the planned regeneration around Cambridge Street. In depth discussions took place on the nature of the regeneration and the impact on Salix Homes customers in the area. The Chair noted her pride in the Boards responses to SCCs proposals.
- Board approved the updated Rent and Service Charge Setting Policies
- Board discussed and approved the annual rent increase
- Board approved the assumptions and stress testing of the 2025 Business Plan
- Board approved proceeding with the Arrow Street Development to deliver 69 new social rent properties. The development also includes a GP surgery, which will be a benefit to the community.
- Board approved updated Health & Safety Policy and Statement of Intent.
- The meeting schedule and forward agenda for Salix Homes Board and committees was approved up to January 2027, including the dates of Customer Committee meetings.

**The Committee noted the Chair's updates.**

<b>5.</b>	<b>Review of Approach to Customer Scrutiny</b>
	<p>CEM provided a summary of the review of Salix Homes' approach to customer scrutiny. The CEM and EDCC noted the following key points for members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The review of customer scrutiny was undertaken following discussions in the EDI Scrutiny Report at the last Customer Committee meeting, as it had been noted that the area would need to be revisited due to time limitations.</li> <li>• Members are requested to support a reduction in the number of annual customer scrutiny reviews from 4 to 2. This is designed to allow scrutineers to focus on issues in more detail and with less time constraints.</li> <li>• The report also proposes training for scrutiny pool volunteers, to improve the outcome of each individual scrutiny piece.</li> <li>• There would still be capacity to undertake a 3<sup>rd</sup> piece of scrutiny each year by exception, if there was a pressing or unexpected issue.</li> </ul> <p>The following was noted during discussions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following discussions, members supported the reduction in the annual number of scrutiny pieces from 4 to 2.</li> <li>• The CEM noted that the longer time frame per piece of customer scrutiny would allow more data and reports to be discussed on each issue, with more opportunity</li> </ul>

for Customer Committee involvement throughout rather than just during the commissioning and final reporting of the piece.

- KM queried whether the proposed training would prolong and increase the cost of the scrutiny process. The CEM responded that training from an external provider such as TPAS could cost £850 for 16 scrutiny pool members for a one-day course, but that this will improve understanding of the scrutiny process and the overall outcome of each piece. The CSEM noted that external training is important to ensure that customer scrutiny is impartial.
- MD queried how many scrutineers were expected to be in the pool. The CEM responded that there are currently 12 scrutineers remaining within the pool, all of whom had been involved in the EDI Report or another recent piece of scrutiny. The proposal is to continue working with the pool on a task and finish basis, with around 6 scrutineers per piece being the optimal number to take on the work involved.
- RO queried how engagement would be maintained among the pool of scrutineers. The CEM responded that initial recruitment would be important to attract suitable candidates with the desired skills set to fit the scrutiny work and noted that she would be going on Salford City Radio with the Chair to raise awareness of the work.
- The Chair noted that some providers had changed the name of their customer scrutiny to service review and suggested that this may help local people to better understand the process and make it more accessible.

**The Committee resolved to approve the changes in the approach to Customer Scrutiny, as set out in the report.**

**6. Customer Persona Update**

CCM provided an update on the work being undertaken by MEL Research regarding Customer Segmentation and Persona. The CCM noted the following key points for members:

- MEL Research had undertaken research on customer segmentation and proposed a survey, included in the report, to be used to better understand Salix's customer base.
- The questions within the proposed survey were about general behaviour rather than specific housing issues to better make generalisations about Salix's customer base.
- The next step is to use the survey to gather information on a larger sample of customers.
- Although it is recognised that the survey is lengthy, this will help to build a clear picture of behaviours. A chance to win rewards upon completion would be offered to increase response rates.
- CCM invited members' comments on what should be included in or removed from the survey.

The following was noted during discussions:

- KM noted that it is a long survey and requested that it be reviewed to see where questions could be combined. The CCM also noted that there will be an opportunity to save the responses, so customers could complete the survey over time.
- KM queried whether more personal questions would better enable Salix to understand customers' personal circumstances. CCM responded that the focus on behavioural information was important to make generalisations about sections of

the customer base as, while specific attitudes could change depending on things like financial circumstances, customer behaviours were more fixed.

- Members agreed that the offered rewards for the survey should support practical issues such as support with energy bills rather than gift vouchers. It was agreed that any reward should not impact on benefit payments for the recipient.
- CA queried how the gathered data would be used to inform decision making. CCM responded that it would depend on what information was gathered, but that as an example it could be used for more targeted customer communication. For instance, using targeted communications for customers who are busiest would prove more effective.
- KM queried whether the survey could be done in-person in face-to-face interactions with customers. CCM confirmed that paper copies could be available in Diamond House and Housing Officers could take them out to complete on meetings with customers.
- Members expressed concern about GDPR, and ensuring customer data was not passed on to other organisations, as this may be a barrier to completion of the survey. The CCM confirmed that the comms campaign will make it clear what the information is being used for. The DGRA added that consent is required from customers to use the data for other purposes, and that we do not pass data over to other organisations. It was further noted that we recognise that we may be asking repeat questions of customers and we try to not overload customers with repetitive questions. EDCC noted that affordability was a key consideration for Salix in data gathering, as we can not run the same size of campaign as larger organisations.
- MD suggested that more branching questions could be used within the survey to reduce the overall length.
- AA suggested that the survey be available on the website so that for those customers whose first language was not English could complete using the translation tools available. It was also suggested to review the Privacy Notice.
- CA suggested the use of images (e.g. smiley face) for some responses, that more personable questions could be used to ease respondents into the survey, and that there should be options for preferring not to answer certain questions.
- GE suggested that the survey be timed in some way as to ensure full and accurate responses were given, rather than respondent clicking through to enter the prize draw.
- The Chair suggested that some questions may need more negative answer options to ensure that answers fully reflected customers' views.
- Members were invited to send any further suggestions on the survey to the CCM by Friday 7 February.

**The Committee noted the Customer Persona Programme update.**

**7. Knowing Our Customers Update**

EDCC provided members with an update on the Knowing Our Customers Programme, and noted the following key points:

- 4109 responses to the Getting to Know You census had been collected to date using both online and postal surveys. Going forward, there is a focus on collecting this information at sign-up and tenancy audits.
- Power BI reports are being used to identify gaps in the data collected to date - for instance to address disparities in the percentage of questions answered in relation to disability. An update on progressing the data set will be provided at a future meeting.
- Following the maladministration, changes have been made to CRM and how the information is presented to colleagues – in particular relating to service adjustment

	<p>requirements. Training is being rolled out to colleagues on how to use the new CRM system and how to engage with customers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Tenancy Audit programme has been introduced. This had a 57% successful completion rate in the first 6 months of 2024 despite vacancies in the team, and work is being done to target those properties that they were unable to access. 48 cases were opened for action on CRM as a result of the tenancy audits.</li> </ul> <p>The following was noted during discussions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members suggested that Salix publish customer and Salix responsibilities on the website to remind customers of their areas of responsibility (e.g. gardens). The CCM noted that the Customer Persona Survey could include questions relating to this to better understand customers' understanding of Salix's responsibilities. Responsibilities can also be picked up in a social media campaign.</li> <li>• Members suggested that involving Community Connectors or other involved customers in community/ neighbourhood events which may help in increasing engagement.</li> <li>• The Chair queried who would be replacing the EDCC on the Customer Committee. The EDCC noted that Sue Sutton would be filling in until the role had successfully been recruited to. The DGRA also noted that the Governance Team would be supporting the Customer Committee going forward – so any queries, apologies etc should be made via the Governance Manager or the Governance and Policy Officer in the first instance. It was recognised that there is a period of change, however, officers regularly supporting the meeting would remain the same.</li> </ul> <p><b>The Committee noted the Knowing Our Customers update.</b></p>
8.	<p><b>Scrutiny Action Tracker</b></p>
	<p>CEM noted that implementation of customer service training for frontline colleagues was underway and that a thorough update on environmental services items would be provided at the next meeting. CEM noted that the creation of a Customer Committee working group would be discussed under AOB.</p> <p><b>The Committee noted the scrutiny action tracker.</b></p>
9.	<p><b>2025 Meeting Schedule and Forward Plan</b></p>
	<p>EDCC noted that the Board and committee meeting schedule and forward agenda had been approved by the Board through to January 2027. She noted that Customer Committee meetings had been scheduled in accordance with the majority of members' preferences to follow a pattern of 2 virtual meetings for each 1 in-person meeting, with strategy days remaining in-person.</p> <p>The following was noted during discussions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MD queried if the 3 June 2025 meeting date could be moved to fall outside of school half-term holidays. The Chair requested that the meeting remain on 3 June and noted that she would be happy for members to join meetings virtually in exceptional cases where they could not attend.</li> <li>• DGRA noted that, considering the frequency of Customer Committee meetings, it was difficult to avoid some events (e.g. school holidays) if there are other meetings also taking place in the month and it was understood that members may not be able to attend all meetings.</li> <li>• Members agreed to retain 6pm start times for virtual meetings, instead of the proposed 5pm start time, to ensure maximum possible attendance for members with other work commitments.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>The Committee resolved to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Note the Schedule of Meetings and Agenda Forward Plan as set out, subject to changing the start time of virtual meetings to 6pm.</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Actions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Amend the Meeting Schedule to retain 6pm start time for both in-person and virtual meetings.</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>COG and ALF chairs</b></li> </ul> <p>CSEM requested members to express their interest to her in chairing the Complaints and Oversight Group or Apartment Living Forum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Service standards working group volunteers</b></li> </ul> <p>CSEM requested members to express their interest to her if they wished to volunteer to be part of the Service Standards Working Group.</p> <p>JBu requested further information on this and other opportunities for involvement for members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cambridge Area Regeneration – meeting date and time</b></li> </ul> <p>The Chair noted that an additional meeting of the Customer Committee had been scheduled for Wednesday 26 February 2025 to discuss the Cambridge Street Area Regeneration. The Chair noted that it is important for Customer Committee members to have the opportunity to question representatives of Salford City Council on this matter, and given the importance of the meeting, an in-person meeting was preferred.</p> <p>Members agreed for the meeting to take place in-person at Diamond House at 6pm on Wednesday 26 February 2025.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Customer Committee Recruitment – interest in recruitment panel</b></li> </ul> <p>The DGRA requested that any members who were interested in volunteering for being involved in the upcoming Customer Committee recruitment to contact the GM or GPO as soon as possible.</p>
<p><b>Date of Next Meeting</b></p>	
	<p>Wednesday 26 February 2025 (Diamond House)</p>
<p>The meeting closed at 20:06.</p>	