



**MINUTES OF THE HERTFORD AND OUTER LONDON RESIDENT PANEL MEETING
HELD ON 09 JANUARY 2023
MEETING HELD AT PRIORY HALL, WARE**

PRESENT	AD	Hertford Panel Chair and Customer Service Committee Member
	ZH	Hertford Panel Member
	JJH	Hertford Panel Member
	IQ	Hertford Panel Member
	DC	Hertford Panel Member
	CR	Councillor & Independent Hertford Panel Member
	SR	Councillor & Independent Hertford Panel Member
IN ATTENDANCE	SH	Resident Engagement Manager
	JR	Executive Director of People, Partnerships and Sustainability
	SA	Business Intelligence Manager
	GY	Head of Rent Accounting
	CT	ITT Project and Change Lead
	JM	Central Complaints Manager
	EC	Resident Engagement Officer
APOLOGIES	PL	Hertford Panel Member
MINUTE TAKER	EC	Resident Engagement Officer

1	Welcome and Apologies	AD
1.01	The chair welcomed the panel	
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.	
2.02	SH noted that the Resident Engagement Team haven't received any declarations of interest however due to the paper attached to Agenda Item 11, Involved Resident incentives involving information on remuneration there is some level of interest from Panel members, however nothing to declare.	
3	Matters arising – Action Log	SH
3.01	SH introduced the item and explained the use of the Panel Pit Stop to ensure the meeting is kept to the agenda and any personal issues are discussed out of the meeting	
3.02	Section 5.04 regarding the vice chair tenure opened a conversation into what the Vice Chair role looks like in alignment with the National Housing Federation Code of Governance, the Resident Engagement Team had a discussion with the Company Secretary and confirmed that if we specify that a maximum of 2 3 year terms, a maximum of 6 years then the vice chair will be able to sit as they	

	will be applying for the role of chair. MM will be looking into this further and has shared the document with the chairs of both panels for comment. Once the documents are approved by the chairs and the customer services committee, we will be able to close the item on the action log.	
3.03	SH summarised all completed actions and gave an explanation on any pending updates.	
3.04	ZH asked that it be noted to make sure we don't only cover new builds but also older buildings and ensuring they're energy efficient regarding action 8.09.	
3.05	SH confirmed that any house below EPC Grade C will be prioritised, irrespective of the year the house was built.	
3.06	SH noted that our biggest challenge is the engagement with residents, our latest pilot project Tallarna we targeted 200 homes in the Hertford region to identify how the homes are performing in terms of energy efficiency, and only received responses from 2 residents, even though the project was incentivised.	
3.07	JR confirmed that the target for 2030 is to get all homes to EPC Grade C.	
3.08	ZH queried how often Network Homes checks the energy ratings.	
3.09	JR confirmed the stock condition survey is completed every time a property is let.	
3.10	AD questioned if residents can view their EPC rating.	
3.11	JR confirmed anyone can view their rating via the government website through the link below: https://find-energy-certificate.service.gov.uk/find-a-certificate/search-by-postcode?lang=en&property_type=domestic	
3.12	ZH asked how up to date the EPC is as some residents have lived in their properties for 10+ years, as lots can change over the years and something that was energy efficient over 10 years ago may not be the same today. If you're a long-term tenant how is this recorded?	
3.13	JR confirmed we have EPC ratings for 94% of Network Properties, as nothing has changed in the methodology of the EPC ratings, if nothing has drastically changed then the energy rating will be the same.	
4	Panel Business	ALL
4.01	AD noted that the panel members were unable to discuss their plans for the coming year as there was an issue with the initial pre-meeting link. Tracy Hanks was able to make another link, but Panel members will meet again in February to discuss the upcoming meetings.	AD
4.02	ZH questioned why the performance percentage on trust has dropped down to 78%	

4.03	JR noted that Network Homes largely knows the reason for the trust percentage being lower is down to repair responses and noted that the numbers are likely going to look worse before they get better.	
4.04	ZH asked to see a more in-depth breakdown between London and Hertford as well as the different reasons for the lack of trust, to pinpoint where these issues lie.	SA
4.05	JR in paragraph 13.2 of agenda item 10 it shows the 5 different elements of the trust score and how they're made up as well as the changes over time, showing that repairs have been worse than in previous years.	
4.06	SA noted that it is important to be aware we can't always break the numbers down as sometimes reports are anonymous. Therefore, it is not about being transparent, it's about being able to breakdown the data we collect/receive.	
5	November Board 60 second round up	JR
5.01	JR introduced the item and presented a 60 second presentation on the open board meeting and opened the floor to any questions.	
5.02	MIQ registered for the open board meeting but felt there was no point in attending as residents can only stay for a short time before discussing confidential items.	
5.03	JR clarified there was only one confidential item at this Board meeting and residents stayed for most of the meeting. JR explained the meeting isn't recorded but a VLOG is uploaded after every Board meeting.	
5.04	MIQ felt that the information shared at the board meeting was no different than what had been shared on the website or in newsletters.	
5.05	SH clarified that the newsletters shared with residents usually cover the highlights after a Board decision made and don't always contain the strategic decisions made at board meetings that is shared with Panel Members.	
5.06	JR noted that if you missed the board meeting you can read more about it on the website: https://www.networkhomes.org.uk/news/latest-news/2022-news/watch-jamies-vlog-from-november-2022-board-meeting/	
6	The Better Social Housing Review	JR
6.01	JR introduced the item and gave an overview of the external report and the 7 recommendations.	
6.02	MIQ expressed that when she joined the panel, she thought it was an opportunity to raise issues on behalf of our neighbors. However, when she tried to raise issues on behalf of other people, she was told it was dealt with or the local panel wasn't the place to.	
6.03	JR stated that the role of the panel is not to be used to raise individual issues, panel members can bring overall issues to the panel however this isn't the right forum for personal issues.	

6.04	MIQ expressed that she felt the panel is a tick box exercise and the panel doesn't have any say.	
6.05	SH explained there was a conversation held at the panel awayday to make panel members aware that the role of the panel is not to take on personal queries from residents, it's to be the informed voice of residents. The role is also for you to challenge Network Homes when you don't feel we are complying with the consumer standards.	
6.06	SH shared that a role such as a community ambassador can raise things on behalf of another resident if they have authority to represent communal matters, but the role of the panel is to have strategic discussions.	
6.07	AD noted this is a new year, we have the opportunity to change this feeling of the panel being a tick box exercise.	
6.08	CR and ZH expressed that although the review is a wonderful idea, there are too many objectives and queried who would be paying for the recommendations from the paper.	
6.09	CR feels there is a breakdown in communication when dealing with a customer services advisor, you get a sense that no one is accountable if the query is passed.	
6.10	AD and ZH clarified that this report is only talking about damp and mould not wider issues.	
6.11	AD also noted that in the report it is addressed that there are more people equipped to deal with damp and mould.	
6.12	JR stated that he doesn't think the housing officers are the answer to the issue as they're not responsible for repairs, they're more responsible for finding out what is going on.	
6.13	JR shared that he feels the Contact Centre is one of our best performing services within Network Homes, and people consistently give good feedback.	
6.14	DC felt that there is often no co-ordination when handing over between teams. JR explained that overall, the Contact Centre will deal with cases and then will filter the rest to the relevant specialist team.	
6.15	MIQ queried what is the process for when things go wrong and who decides when to fix it.	
6.16	SH explained the majority repairs priorities are preloaded into the housing management system based on a set of criteria to allocate works to emergency, urgent or routine.	
6.17	JM noted that we must accept that sometimes things don't go to plan, and that we can discuss the specific issue outside of the meeting.	

6.18	ZH asked if Network Homes are planning on recruiting contractors specifically to deal with damp and mould.	
6.19	JR explained we haven't got any current plans to put in any specialist damp and mould contractors. However, one of the projects we are looking at implementing is the Plentific pilot, an online portal to distribute work to smaller local tradespeople.	
6.20	ZH shared Network Homes contractors don't have the specific knowledge to deal with mould and damp.	
6.21	SH explained that we are not looking to procure specific contractors to deal with damp and mould, however our current contractors will advise Network Homes of further issues or redistribute the repairs to a specialist subcontractor within their supply chain.	
6.22	MIQ noted that it sounds great on paper, however when it comes to putting it into practice the processes don't work, and that people aren't happy. MIQ added she feels Network Homes manipulate the figures and staff overly congratulate themselves.	
6.23	SH shared that based on the surveys we collect feedback from a variety of methods and areas of service to build an accurate picture of performance. We know we can improve and more often it is the silent majority are receiving a good service, we often hear more from those individuals who came across an issue so feedback may seem more negative.	
6.24	MIQ challenged vigilance of feedback, sharing she receives messages regularly from people about poor service.	
6.25	ZH asked what Network Homes will do in response to recommendations.	
6.26	JR noted that Network Homes have agreed to wait to see what the action plan looks like following the review.	
6.27	AD queried if the panel members can feed into the action plan.	
6.28	JR noted that Network Homes isn't formally involved in creating the action plan, however we can provide updates and once it is published, we can bring it to panel for comments.	
6.29	ZH asked if there is a time frame to review the action plan.	
6.30	JR confirmed that within 6 months the action plan will be produced. Therefore, Network Homes don't want to do anything until we know which direction it is going.	
7	Review NH budgetary changes for following financial year	JR
7.01	JR introduced the item and highlighted the key points.	

7.02	ZH questioned whether the rent increase had been agreed.	
7.03	JR confirmed that the agreed amount is 7% from the government consultation.	
7.04	SH stated it is important to note that Network Homes have come to panel before to share all the different support options available, last year alone the Welfare Team reclaimed £2million to support residents who weren't receiving the support they're entitle to from the government.	
7.05	ZH questioned how much warning residents will get regarding the rent increase.	
7.06	GY confirmed they will receive at least 4 weeks' notice.	
7.07	SH confirmed that information regarding the rent increases has been included in newsletters, on the website to wider residents as well as a TPAS briefing shared with local panel members in the meantime to prepare people in advance.	
7.08	AD noted it would be a good idea to see the impact on the operational margin and to share the action plan once Network Homes has one in place.	JR
7.09	JR noted panel members should think about how they would like to interact with the budget setting process in future.	
7.10	Panel members to discuss how they would like to interact with the budget setting process going forward.	AD
7.11	ZH suggested Network Homes reaches the Residents Associations to see how they are receiving the information, if at all.	
7.12	EC to share the information on rent increase with the chairs of the Residents Associations for them to share with the rest of the Residents Association.	EC
7.13	SH noted that while we are a financially strong organisation, Network Homes' money comes from our rent intake. Therefore, if other costs, such as labour and material costs, are increasing at a higher rate than our rent is, we will need to look at ways we can budget while making our services better and how our services will be impacted by this increase.	
8	Complaints	JM
8.01	JM introduced the item and highlighted the key points included in the report.	
8.02	ZH asked whether Network Homes staff will be attending properties to assess the damp and mould.	
8.03	JR confirmed that trained handypersons from Network Homes will visit the property initially to assess the issue and will then deal with it accordingly.	
8.04	MIQ raised a panel pit stop.	MIQ

8.05	MIQ asked when this new process of sending out handymen to properties will start.	
8.06	JR confirmed the new process is in place already and one of the team will look into it to see if the case has already been raised.	
8.07	DC noted that it was to be expected that there would be an increase in concern from residents rather than specifically logging as complaints, therefore, as the number of cases reported went up so will the support from Network Homes.	
8.08	DC also shared that his personal experience with the new process has been very good, the turnaround has been very quick so it's good to see the new approach working.	
8.09	ZH stated that it is important that Network Homes educates residents, handymen and surveyors when dealing with cases of damp and mould.	
8.10	JR shared that a resident newsletter was produced with information on damp and mould.	
8.11	SR noted that damp and mould isn't only caused by lifestyle but also how the property is built.	
8.12	JM stated that this is one of the points the Housing Ombudsman addressed, we are not blaming residents for damp and mould. Network Homes' approach is twofold, we need to address the current cases and educate residents on how they can prevent future damp and mould.	
8.13	JM emphasised that handymen now have the training to know identify and deal with these issues quicker.	
8.14	AD asked for the noise aspect of the paper be moved to the next agenda.	JM
9	PayPoint	CT/GY
9.01	CT and GY introduced themselves to the panel and presented the item, highlighting the key points from the presentation.	
9.02	ZH asked if the payments will be in real time and if details will be remembered in the payment app.	
9.03	GY confirmed that there will be some delay in the payment showing on the account however you will receive a receipt to confirmed you've paid. Details will also remain in the payment app.	
9.04	ZH asked when PayPoint will be implemented.	
9.05	GY confirmed from 1 April 2023.	
10	Network Homes' Performance Report	SA
10.01	SA introduced the item and highlighted the key points.	

10.02	AD noted that the voids time is quite lengthy and this impacts Network Homes revenue.	
10.03	SA noted that in the paper it was highlighted there is a new head of Voids and Lettings since the end of December which may improve the time taken. There will also been a change in contractors with may have an impact.	
10.04	ZH queried only 2 properties were up to date with the gas safety certificate.	
10.05	SA clarified that all properties now have an up-to-date gas safety certificate – 2 were out of date.	
10.06	ZH also noted that in October 2022 the trust score went down to 69.7%.	
10.07	SA noted that we can make subtle changes and see how this impacts the trust score, however wholistic changes aren't feasible. We are currently monitoring our performance on a monthly basis.	
10.08	<i>ZH raised a personal query.</i>	<i>EC</i>
11	Involved Resident Incentives	
11.01	SH introduced the item and opened the discussion to the panel.	
11.02	MIQ said she is happy to continue receiving vouchers.	
11.03	ZH noted that someone who feels valued will be more committed to helping.	
11.04	ZH also noted she doesn't expect a wage however the vouchers are nice incentive.	
11.05	ZH stated she enjoyed when the Resident Engagement Team held a dinner in 2019 for panel members.	
11.06	JH stated there was no mention of payment when the current panel members joined so the panel members are not looking to do this for money however it is appreciated.	
11.07	SH added that if panel members are paid it may diversify the panel.	
11.08	MIQ noted that by paying people it may change the dynamic of the panel.	
11.09	AD asked if it is possible to pilot paying panel members.	
11.10	SH noted that it would be complicated, as if people join and aren't privy to the pilot it may end up with some being paid and others aren't.	
12	Resident Engagement and Transparency strategy	
12.01	SH noted that the appendix wasn't shared when the initial document was uploaded in December and therefore asked the panel to review the document after the meeting.	

12.02	SH to send out key questions regarding the Resident Engagement and Transparency strategy to panel members for comment.	SH
13	Resident Engagement update	
13.01	SH introduced the item and briefly detailed the key updates.	
13.02	ZH noted that in the Residents Association it was mentioned that the interaction with a Resident Engagement Officer has been missed since covid hit and could be the reason the trust has gone down.	
13.03	ZH asked if we could set up a virtual meeting to meet the Resident Liaison Officers.	
13.04	SH confirmed this has already happened however few panel members attended the meeting.	
13.05	SH noted she is happy to take comments via email.	
13.06	AD closed the meeting.	
14	Any Other Business	
	<i>For Information, not to be discussed unless so requested</i>	
15	Minutes from the meeting of 03 October 2022	
	<i>For Information, not to be discussed unless so requested</i>	
16	Building Safety	
	<i>For Information, not to be discussed unless so requested</i>	
17	Housing Sector hot topics	
	<i>For Information - Not to be discussed unless so requested</i>	

Next Meeting Scheduled for 3 April 2023

AD

24/01/2023

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Chair

Date