

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Report of the Meeting held on Thursday, 15th June, 2023 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr M.D. Smith (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs. D.B. Bedford (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr K. Dibble (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr A. Adeola
Cllr Gaynor Austin
Cllr Jessica Auton
Cllr Jules Crossley
Cllr Mara Makunura
Cllr S.J. Masterson
Cllr S. Trussler

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr Sophie Porter.

Cllr Gareth Williams attended the meeting as Standing Deputy.

1. APPOINTMENT OF VICE - CHAIRMEN

RESOLVED: That Cllrs. Mrs D.B. Bedford and K. Dibble be appointed as Vice-Chairmen of the Committee for the 2023/24 Municipal Year.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 30th March, 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

3. REGISTERED PROVIDERS TASK AND FINISH GROUP - ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

The Committee welcomed Tim Mills, Executive Head of Property and Growth, and Sarah Clark, Strategic Housing Officer, who were in attendance at the meeting to provide Report No. PG2307 on the work of the Registered Providers Task and Finish Group during the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

It was advised that three Registered Providers (RP) had been reviewed during 2022/23, these included:

- (1) **SOUTHERN HOUSING GROUP** – key points noted from the review included, a planned Hardship Fund budget of £250,000 for 2023/24 , a new rent management system to help monitor residents arrears, that 93% of emergency repairs were completed within target, London and Quadrant

housing stock to be transferred over to VIVID would be added to the planned maintenance programme and antisocial behaviour (ASB) complaints were now triaged dependant of risk level

- (2) **GRAINGER TRUST** – key points noted from the review included, that Grainger did not currently have a damp and mould policy, a further 821 properties were in the development pipeline, support services had been invested in to deal with increasing rent arrears and plans for a permanent play area and community centre would be submitted in 2023.
- (3) **VIVID HOMES** - key points noted from the review included, that all rent increases would be capped at 7%, the specialist Damp and Mould team would be expanded in 2023/24, acknowledgment had been given that the repairs services had not been performing well for residents – a plan had been in place to increase staffing levels in 2023/24 with an aim to get all backlogged repairs completed by September 2023 and a Decarbonisation Fund had been secured to improve 550 properties, of which the majority would be in Farnborough.

In addition to the report, it was advised that a proposal had been made to invite Vivo/Pinnacle (property/repairs management for MOD Properties) to be reviewed every year due to the size and concerns over the condition of the stock portfolio.

The Committee discussed the report and raised a number of queries, these included:

- The lack of a Damp and Mould Policy at Grainger - it was requested that the Group discuss this with Grainger representatives and strongly recommend that they implement a policy to address this matter directly
- VIVID response times – The Committee expressed concern regarding the waiting times for residents in gaining a response to their issues following reports being made, it was noted that the minimum residents should expect is a timely response to, at least, acknowledge the reported issue
- Decarbonisation – it was proposed that a question regarding RP investment for decarbonisation schemes could be asked as part of the review process

ACTION:

What	By Whom	When
VIVID's commitment to ensure all backlogged repairs completed by September 2023 – A request was made to follow up on this and report back to the Committee post September 2023 regarding the situation	Strategic Housing Team	September 2023

The Committee **ENDORSED** the programme of work carried out in 2022/23 and authorised the Group to prepare a programme of reviews for 2023/24.

The Chairman thanked the Strategic Housing Team and the Registered Providers Task and Finish Group Members for their work during 2022/23.

4. CUSTOMER SERVICES CONTACT INDICATORS - UPDATE

The Committee welcomed Marybeth Quaintmere, Service Manager – Customer Services and Mary Timmins, Customer Service Team Leader, who were in attendance to provide an update on contact indicators within the Customer Services Unit (CSU) since the meeting in July 2022, following a number of changes within the service and the implications thereof.

Cllr Jonathan Canty, Customer Experience, Transformation and Corporate Portfolio Holder was also in attendance to support the item.

The Committee reviewed the presentation and noted a number of key points:

- Call volumes had remains in line with the same period (January – May) in the previous year
- The rate of abandoned calls had increased to 11% in 2023, the same period last year had recorded a 4% abandoned call rate. Interactions had taken longer due to the changes within the service, these included, amongst others, the new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, extra workload (parking/annual billing) and a 1.5 reduction in staffing as a result of the Outcomes Based Budgeting (OBB).
- New CRM (8x8) – the Committee were advised of some of the capabilities of the new system, which had gone live in January 2023. It was noted that the system allowed for the creation of customer databases, to keep track of previous contact. It also provided work queues for email and webform contact and provided real time information to enable decisions to be made around work patterns within the team.
- Customer feedback – it was noted that customers were given the opportunity to provide feedback after their phone call. The rating system was one to five (one the lowest – five the highest) and comments could be left if customers had scored one to four. It was noted that 188 out of 20,701 customer had chosen to leave feedback and consideration would be given to improving this number.
- Reception – Since 1st April, 2023, it was noted that the reception area had reduced its opening hours to between 09:00 and 14:00. The Committee were advised that the Council was still open to customers, by appointment, between 08:30 – 17:00 (Mon-Thurs) and 08:30 – 16:30 (Fri). In addition, a Nepali speaking telephone line had been opened for residents. Customer demand times had followed the same patterns as when open from 08:30 to 17:00 pre April 2023, with the peak remaining at about 10:00. Overall demand had not seen any significant change following the new opening hours with casual callers presenting in the highest numbers both before and after the

change. It was advised that a doorbell was currently used for out of hours callers, should the bell ring a CSU Officer would go and speak with the customer and deal with their concerns. An intercom system would be fitted shortly to replace the doorbell.

- Dedicated Nepali speaking phone - It was noted that there were three Nepali speakers within the CSU team. Demand was gradually increasing and a wider range of enquiries had been received. The team were currently considering how best to promote the new service.

The Committee discussed the presentation, in particular, call waiting times. It was noted that the transition period with the new CRM, changes to the service provision and reductions in staff had meant that calls were taking longer. However, through time, staff had become more familiar with the changes to the ways in which they were working, staff were no longer just taking payments, but discussing challenges with customers, which took more time.

It was noted that a meeting had been arranged with the telephony consultant to look at improving the messages customers heard whilst waiting to remove repetition and direct them to online services.

It was also noted that when the reception area closed, the staff members were re-deployed to undertake back office work, such as post room duties and answering email queries and webforms.

A request had been made for a further update in the Autumn.

ACTION:

What	By Whom	When
Data on call waiting times and email interactions to be share	Mary Timmins, Customer Service Team leader	July , 2023
Attend Progress Group in Late Autumn to provide an update	Marybeth Quintmere, Service Manager - Customer Services	October/November 2023

The Chairman thanked Ms' Quintmere and Timmins for their presentation.

5. APPOINTMENTS 2023/24

RESOLVED: That the following Members be appointed to serve on the following Groups for the 2023/24 Municipal Year:

Overview and Scrutiny Progress Group

Chairman	Cllr M.D. Smith
Vice-Chairmen	Cllr Mrs D.B. Bedford Cllr K. Dibble
Conservative Group	Cllr S.J. Masterson Cllr S. Trussler
Labour Group	Cllr Gaynor Austin

Council Tax Support Task and Finish Group

Chairman	Cllr M.D. Smith
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Mrs D.B. Bedford
Conservative Group	Cllr S. J. Masterson Cllr S. Trussler
Labour Group	Cllr Christine Guinness Cllr M.J. Roberts

Farnborough Airport Task and Finish Group

Vice-Chairmen	Cllr Mrs D.B. Bedford
Conservative Group	Cllr Jess Auton Cllr Mara Makunura Cllr Calum Stewart
Labour Group	Cllr Gaynor Austin Cllr Jules Crossley

Review of Registered Providers Task and Finish Group

Chairman	Cllr M.D. Smith
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Mrs D.B. Bedford
Conservative Group	Cllr Ade Adeola Cllr S.J. Masterson
Labour Group	Cllr K. Dibble Cllr Sophie Porter

6. WORK PLAN

It was advised that the next meeting of the Committee was scheduled for 20th July, 2023. A date for the first Progress Group would therefore be set in early July, 2023.

Following discussion it was noted that an item would be scheduled for a further Customer Contact Indicator – update, in late Autumn/early Winter 2023.

Additional items to be considered at the Progress Group, included:

- Community Safety and the Police
- Business Plan Monitoring

- Climate Change
- Communications – consultation responses
- Arts and Culture
- Communication links with Local County Councillors

The Committee noted the current Work Plan.

The meeting closed at 9.12 pm.