



Report to:	STOCKPORT HOMES MEMBER COMMITTEE		
	<i>12 February 2024</i>		
Report of:	DIRECTOR OF HOUSING PLUS		
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Type of Report	<i>Consultation</i>		
Title of Report:	CUSTOMER VOICE AND INFLUENCE STRATEGY 2024-2027		
Purpose of Report:	To present the updated Customer Voice and Influence Strategy.		
Recommendation(s):	That Member Committee note and comment on the Strategy.		
Confidentiality	Non-Confidential		
Resource Implications	The majority of actions within the Strategy can be delivered using existing resources. Developing new digital methods of engagement may require additional resource which would be prioritised and agreed by SHG.		
Impact on Risk Appetite and Risk Register	SHG has defined its risk appetite for legal and regulatory requirements as 'averse,' not wishing to take risks which would lead to a breach of regulatory requirements. This Strategy supports SHG's preparedness for the new regulatory regime.		
	Risk Number	Risk Description	Risk Mitigation
	<i>Risk #5</i>	SHG does not deliver excellent customer services in the way that customers require	Having a culture and processes that encourage customer engagement and

		<p>them and does not maintain a strong, positive reputation where stakeholders have trust and confidence in SHG.</p>	<p>insight in service delivery and design ensures decision making is informed by the needs of customers, reducing the likelihood of complaints and regulatory interventions that would undermine SHG's reputation and standing in the sector and with its customers.</p>
	<p><i>Risk #10</i></p>	<p>SHG's governance and co-regulatory structures are not fit for purpose / are ineffective and there are not the necessary skills to properly hold SHG to account SHG is not adequately prepared for proactive regulation by the Regulator of Social Housing.</p>	<p>The actions in the Strategy support the continued development of SHG's Accountability Framework, through customer assurance models and a refreshed scrutiny function to ensure it remains robust in providing accountability and transparency to customers and satisfies the regulatory requirements.</p>
	<p><i>Risk #11</i></p>	<p>SHG is not adequately prepared for proactive regulation by the Regulator of Social Housing.</p>	<p>The Strategy actions address the recommendations from the Tpas Accreditation of Engagement completed in 2023 which is based on</p>

		the regulatory requirements.
Customer Voice	<p>Customers have been consulted on the engagement framework and opportunities to be involved and their feedback has informed the Strategy actions. Successful delivery of the Strategy will further strengthen customer voice in service planning and decision making through inclusive engagement that is responsive to needs, formal and informal feedback and utilising customer insight.</p> <p>Together with more formal and strategic methods of engagement, engaging with customers in their community remains a key focus and SHG will continue to work in partnership with other organisations and through local networks to pool resources, support shared aims and maximise opportunities to reach and engage with customers at a local level.</p> <p>The delivery and outcomes from this Strategy will be monitored by the Customer Assurance Panel and Customer Focus Committee.</p>	
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion implications	<p>An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken on this Strategy which identified actions that have been included. This included reviewing organisations in Stockport that support people from ethnic minority backgrounds, the LGBTQ+ community and people living with disabilities to forward plan and maximise the benefits of partnership working to reach and hear more from people who may be less likely to engage in other ways or face barriers to engagement. This is an action in Objective Two. Actions focused on ensuring engagement is representative of SHG’s customer base and responsive to needs are included in Objectives One and Four.</p>	
Regulatory compliance	<p>The Customer Voice and Influence Strategy supports SHG in demonstrating compliance with regulatory standards including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Regulator of Social Housing’s Consumer Standards, specifically engagement with tenants within the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard. • The Building Safety Act and regulatory requirements for Resident Engagement in Building Safety. 	

- **The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.**

Comments of the Stockport Homes Monitoring Group at the meeting held 30 January 2024:

The move towards the feedback mechanism of 'You said, we are doing' was commended as customers felt that this method keeps customers up to date with progress of implementing improvements, rather than only on what has already happened.

While there are many avenues of engagement that customers can explore, it was felt that it is still common for customers to be unaware of the various ways they can engage with SHG and therefore focus should continue to be directed towards promoting those opportunities throughout the community.

It was felt that customers should be contacted via the methods that they prefer, as some will much prefer a text or email, as opposed to letters or social media.

The customers were pleased that customers have been kept informed about the forthcoming changes to Housing Ombudsman policies.

The landlord accreditation with TPAS was seen as a very positive step, which should give SHG confidence about what they are delivering in tenant engagement.

The customers eagerly anticipated the formation of the ASPIRE Panel and felt that it will be a positive step forward in the customer engagement framework.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Stockport Homes Group (SHG) Customer Voice and Influence (CV&I) Strategy 2023-2026 aims to ensure that SHG continues to provide excellent opportunities for customers to engage with the organisation at all levels, from being kept informed to opting-in, to co-creating to decision making. Maintaining and continuing to enhance SHG's culture of inclusive engagement, listening to customers and learning and acting on feedback is at the heart of this Strategy's aims.
- 1.2 There has been and continues to be a much stronger focus on customer voice in the social housing sector, with providers preparing to demonstrate that they meet the new regulatory standards from April 2024.
- 1.3 This Strategy recognises the challenge of demonstrating transparency and accountability to customers and builds upon the existing Accountability Framework and wider community development activities, whilst continuing to raise the visibility and value of customer voice and engagement across the organisation.

2 CUSTOMER VOICE AND INFLUENCE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 Delivery of the objectives and actions in this Strategy will continue to develop SHG's customer voice journey and satisfy the expected regulatory requirements for engagement with tenants. Progress against the action plan will be reported annually to Member Committee.
- 2.2 Objective One: Opportunities and Accountability
This objective focuses on continuing to develop SHG's established and varied engagement offer and creating new opportunities for customers to hold the organisation to account on compliance with the regulatory standards.
- 2.3 Objective Two: Access and Community Engagement
This objective focuses on providing accessible support that meets the diverse needs of tenants to enable engagement along with continuing to offer a range of opportunities for face-to-face engagement and collaboration with communities.
- 2.4 Objective Three: Visible Customer Voice and Engagement
This objective focuses on keeping customer voice at the forefront of the organisation's service delivery as part of everyone's role, supported by on-going activity and internal communications at all levels of the organisation.
- 2.5 Objective Four: Insight and Impact
This objective focuses on capturing and utilising insight to inform decision making, tracking and evidencing the outcomes of engagement and sharing these with customers.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Most actions within the Strategy can be delivered using existing resources. Developing new digital methods of engagement may require additional resource which would be prioritised and agreed by SHG.

4 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

- 4.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken on this Strategy which identified actions that have been included. This included reviewing organisations in Stockport that support people from ethnic minority backgrounds, the LGBTQ+ community and people living with disabilities to forward plan and maximise the benefits of partnership working to reach and hear more from people who may be less likely to engage in other ways or face barriers to engagement. This is an action in Objective Two. Actions focused on ensuring engagement is representative of SHG's customer base and responsive to needs are included in Objectives One and Four.

5 REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

- 5.1 From April 2023, the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) will have new responsibilities and powers. Engagement with tenants sits within the Regulator's proposed new Transparency, Influence and Accountability Consumer Standard, with the required outcome that registered providers must demonstrate that they take tenants' views into account in their decision making about how landlord services are delivered.
- 5.2 Specific expectations within the Standard include giving tenants a wide range of meaningful opportunities to influence and scrutinise their landlord's strategies, policies and services including assisting tenant-led activities; providing accessible support that meets the diverse needs of tenants to enable engagement and working with tenants to improve and tailor services.
- 5.3 This Strategy supports SHG's preparedness for the new regulatory regime.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 A wide range of customer insight and consultation has been undertaken to shape the Strategy. This includes the findings and recommendations from the Tpas Landlord Accreditation of Engagement in 2023, a workshop with SHG's Board, two customer focus groups and an online survey.
- 6.2 Feedback showed that most customers want to be kept informed and have opportunities to occasionally contribute via surveys and service reviews. The learning from these consultation activities has informed the actions in this Strategy.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 SHG has an existing and well embedded menu of engagement which offers a broad range of opportunities for customers to be involved at all levels of the organisation. Delivery of the actions in the Strategy will further enhance this offer, providing new opportunities for customers to hold the organisation to account and maintaining a focus on providing accessible engagement that supports everyone to be able to be involved in a way that meets their needs, including through community connections.

8 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 That Member Committee note and comment on the Strategy.