



**MINUTES OF THE LONDON RESIDENT PANEL MEETING  
HELD ON 17 JANUARY 2023**

<b>PRESENT</b>	PG	London Panel Chair and Customer Service Committee Member
	CJ	London Panel Member
	BM	London Panel Member
	TL	London Panel Member
	TB	London Panel Member
	IA	London Panel Member
<b>IN ATTENDANCE</b>	SH	Resident Engagement Manager
	HE	Chief Executive
	SA	Business Intelligence Manager
	GY	Head of Rent Accounting
	CT	ITT Project and Change Lead
	JM	Central Complaints Manager
	PO	Director of Leasehold, Service Charges and Rent Accounting
	SW	ITT Programme Manager
<b>APOLOGIES</b>	RR	London Panel Member
	GK	London Panel Member
	AS	London Panel Member
<b>NOT PRESENT</b>	FH	London Panel Member
	RT	London Panel Member
	WS	London Panel Member
<b>MINUTE TAKER</b>	EC	Resident Engagement Officer

<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome and Apologies</b> <i>For information</i>	<b>Action</b>
1.01	PG welcomed the panel	
1.02	Apologies have been received from RR, RT, GK, AS.	
1.03	SH made the panel aware that the Resident Engagement Team agreed with the chair to terminate VL's role on the panel due to lack of attendance and no offer of apologies, therefore violating the code of conduct.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Declarations of interest (declarations of interest to have been provided to the Chair)</b> <i>For information</i>	<b>PG</b>
2.01	PG confirmed there were no declarations of interest discussed at the pre-meeting.	

2.02	SH detailed that due to the paper attached to Agenda Item 9 - Involved Resident Incentives, involving information on remuneration there is an interest for all panel members, however nothing to declare.	
<b>3</b>	<b>Matters arising – Action Log</b> <i>For information</i>	<b>EC</b>
3.01	EC introduced the item and reiterated 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	EC confirmed actions <b>3.12, 4.04, 7.06, 7.08, 7.15, 7.25, 9.08</b> are completed and to be removed from the action log, with approval from the chair.	
3.03	PG confirmed all completed actions can be removed from the action log.	
<b>3.04</b>	<b>PG asked that the Resident Engagement Team ensures they inform the panel with any updates provided on actions.</b>	<b>RE Team</b>
<b>3.05</b>	<b>SH stated the Resident Engagement Team will go back to members of staff with uncompleted actions to update them with time speak.</b>	<b>RE Team</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Panel Business &amp; Development</b> <i>For discussion</i>	<b>ALL</b>
4.01	PG introduced the item and handed over to the panel members for discussion.	
4.02	TB asked if it would be possible to come back to this item.	
4.03	SH further explained how the discussion had will help determine the panel agenda forward planning completed annually. The suggestions made will allow the Resident Engagement Team to put together agendas that include the mandatory items but also the topics that panel members wish to hear more about.	
4.04	SH also confirmed that there will be items in the Resident Engagement strategy and action plan where we will ask panel members for more input, however this is an ongoing conversation therefore things may change.	
4.05	TB expressed that in the past the Resident Engagement Team have decided the agenda as panel members hadn't presented any ideas.	
4.06	SH clarified that the agenda is always a proposal to the Chair to be shared more widely, therefore if there are items that panel members wish to remove the Resident Engagement Team can do so.	
<b>4.07</b>	<b>SH noted that there are standing items that must remain on the agenda and suggested that in future we specify this information on the agenda.</b>	<b>RE Team</b>
4.08	BM questioned how are we going to meet your commitment in regards to disabled and chronically ill residents?	
4.09	SH explained that this topic is something that has been discussed previously and it was decided that we wanted to do a review however when the Resident Engagement Team did a call out to residents to be involved the Resident Engagement Team didn't receive any responses.	

4.10	<b>SH also noted there is another resident on the Hertford and Out of London panel who is interested proposed a suggestion to get in contact with the two residents to hear their thoughts.</b>	<b>SH</b>
4.11	HE commented that the Better Social Housing review didn't directly address commitments to disabled and chronically ill residents.	
4.12	IA also added she would like to hear about repairs and cyclical work.	
4.13	<b>SH explained these topics are in the Strategic Asset management plan so we can ensure the topics mentioned are discussed.</b>	<b>RE Team</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>The Better Social Housing Review</b> <i>For discussion</i>	<b>HE</b>
5.01	HE introduced the item and gave an overview of the 7 recommendation from the Better Social Housing Review.	
5.02	HE shared that she doesn't necessarily agree with all of the information included in the review which seemed to overly simplify housing associations social purpose and realistic timescales to review all homes.	
5.03	HE explained how housing associations should focus their efforts on people who are on housing waiting lists alongside those who are currently in social housing who already have a home.	
5.04	BM agrees however mentioned it is important to note that sometimes the houses offered to those in social housing are not fit for the families/residents Network Homes is trying to house. For instance, a lot of new builds especially in London are high rise with little to no parking and no spaces for children to play.	
5.05	HE agreed these are good observations however Network Homes has no trouble renting the homes we provide. In London there is an almost overwhelming demand for housing and we will therefore never have difficulty renting homes.	
5.06	HE also mentioned that on the whole, people don't like car free developments and asked panel members if they knew where the restrictions for car free developments come from.	
5.07	IA mentioned that car free developments create issues for when residents have visitors and asked if there is any way for housing associations to put pressure on local councils.	
5.08	HE expressed this a national planning policy, in line with commitments about air quality and traffic. Network Homes do provide Zip cars for those in car free developments and there are areas designated to emergency services.	
5.09	IA noted that if a carpark is managed by a private contractor, it often presents too many issue when trying to cater for visitors.	
<b>5.10</b>	<b>RE Team to investigate providing more information to those living in schemes without parking.</b>	<b>RE Team</b>

5.11	HE agreed that there are lots of issues attached to car free developments however the issue remains that there is an overwhelming demand for housing and people are willing to rent these houses. Network Homes doesn't want all the aggravation that comes with car free developments however we don't have an option to not build these houses.	
5.12	HE summarised that the overall view is that too much focus has been put into new developments and not enough in maintaining our existing homes, the balance between the two is swinging as if we focus more on Network Homes existing homes then the work to build new homes slows down and the waiting list for houses gets longer.	
5.13	TL expressed that it is important to maintain a level of quality homes rather than high quantity.	
5.14	HE explained the second recommendation from the better social housing review.	
5.15	BM expressed that completing an audit of all social housing properties would be beneficial as it would tell us who is living in properties, for instance subletting.	
5.16	HE noted that we have a Tenancy Fraud officer who works closely with Brent council tenancy fraud team among others and their workload has grown exponentially in the last few years. Network Homes is pursuing people who are subletting their homes for illegal profit orders. Network Homes are not only aiming to get the home back but also to recover the money owed.	
5.17	IA expressed that gathering data and audits will take up resources from Network Homes, and asked where the money will come from to fund this – will we be selling more homes to pick up this service.	
5.18	HE confirmed that we do build more homes to sell in order to cross subsidise the building of new homes to rent. However, we don't use the proceeds from sales to subsidise services.	
5.19	IA enquired if Network Homes are expecting residents to report houses they feel are inadequate.	
5.20	HE confirmed we will encourage residents to report houses that are dissatisfactory.	
5.21	HE summarised the third recommendation.	
5.22	SH reminded the panel of the Plentific pilot that Network Homes has been trialling, depending on the success of this pilot there could be many subcontractors used to carry out repairs.	
5.23	HE summarised the fourth recommendation and asked the panel if they feel the standardised tests work for everyone.	
5.24	BM stated that to a certain degree the standard tests do work however felt a lot of people are experiencing burnout. Therefore, no matter how qualified the individual is they won't be good at their job.	

5.25	HE agreed that some officers can become desensitised to their job but still technically competent. At Network Homes we employ a lot of people through our Contact Centre and upskill them with on-the-job training.	
5.26	SH also stated these Chartered Institute of Housing courses are also very expensive and don't necessarily mean that a person is qualified to do the job with practical application and also need to ensure as an investment the knowledge and skills are retained.	
5.27	TL expressed that having the face-to-face contact is vital and this has reduced significantly in the past few years. TL asked if this isn't available, what can we offer residents.	
5.28	HE stated that this is a work model issue. Network Homes doesn't operate on that model anymore. The Contact Centre is our primary point of contact, we use face-to-face contact when we have issues. The reason it fell out of favour is due to having a person of contact at each scheme is unmanageable.	
5.29	TL expressed that it's not as simple as just having housing officers at schemes, it's more about making the process more personable.	
5.30	TB stated housing officers do quarterly visits but they're often intimidated or overwhelmed, as there is only one of them against multiple residents who all want to raise their issues.	
5.31	TL explained that in the past Network Homes has put on workshops where people can go in and discuss their issues with a specialist, potentially having something along these lines would be more effective than having a housing officer present.	
5.32	HE expressed that there are pros and cons to all methods.	
5.33	HE summarised recommendation 7.	
5.34	IA expressed that she feels Network Homes needs to get people proud and interested in where they live. If residents feel their home is stable then they're more inclined to get involved with different initiatives.	
5.35	SH stated that people have noticed that since Covid people are more disconnected from their communities. The Resident Engagement team are piloting a project called Community Organising with Brent Citizens to enable residents to take ownership of their areas.	
5.36	IA expressed that the issue of people engaging with their neighbours isn't one that Network Homes can solve. Housing associations to are primarily housing providers, therefore it's more about how we make people proud of their homes.	
5.37	IA suggested group project where residents get to work on areas of their development as a way of getting people to engage in their homes.	
5.38	HE stated the community organising project will address this.	

5.39	TB queried if Network Homes still host events.	
5.40	SH stated that in 2022 we held 2 events however we struggled to engage residents without door knocking. In the future we will be working with other companies and teams in Network Homes who may have more to offer to residents and already have a relationship with the residents in the scheme.	
5.41	TL stated that if you stay consistent then you will build trust.	
5.42	HE summarised the last 2 recommendations.	
5.43	HE confirmed when the action plan is produced it can be shared with the panel.	
5.44	IA asked if the government involved in the report.	
5.45	HE confirmed they were not consulted on for this report however they are not legislating.	
<b>6</b>	<b>Review NH budgetary changes for following financial year</b> <i>For discussion</i>	<b>HE</b>
6.01	HE advised this item is moved to the end of the meeting to allow others time to present their reports.	
6.02	HE introduced the item and gave an overview of the key points.	
6.03	SH shared that it is worth noting that we're still a financially strong organisation.	
6.04	BM asked that Network Homes communicates with residents when certain work is unable to be done due to budgetary cuts.	
6.05	HE explained that we had a dedicated post in the Fire Safety team for communications and now that we have completed the main work the post will be moving back to the Marketing and Communication team and we will be taking what we have learned from the building safety team.	
6.06	HE also made the panel aware that for 2023 we will have a very tight repair budget.	
6.07	SH asked if other organisations are further behind on their building safety remediation work due to this decision.	
6.08	HE confirmed we accelerated Network Homes remediation plan from 12 years to 10 and then down to 6 years. The shorter the period the higher the cost in that period. The caveat to this is there are some buildings Network Homes haven't looked at yet (below 18m), we have addressed all the high priority buildings.	
<b>6.09</b>	<b><i>IA raised a panel pit stop.</i></b>	<b>IA</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Complaints</b> <i>For discussion</i>	<b>JM</b>
7.01	JM introduced the item and recapped the key points.	

7.02	TB asked what the process is for recurring damp and mould issues.	
7.03	JM explained that previously the reason for reoccurring damp and mould issues was due to them not being treated properly the first time round. Previously a contractor would be sent out to assess the issue however they weren't always specialists. Now our teams have had further and more specific training. Then a handyperson will diagnose the issue and the surveyor will resolve it. As the damp and mould is properly treated the first time there will be a loss likely chance it will return.	
7.04	JM expressed that in an ideal world Network Homes would send a surveyor to assess the area in 6 months however this isn't feasible.	
7.05	BM expressed that Network Homes needs to review the language used when talking about damp and mould as it is still coming across as if you're blaming the residents for their living conditions when this often can't be controlled.	
7.06	JM agreed, stating we need to be mindful when talking to residents to not come across accusatory and we also need to educate residents in how they can prevent damp and mould from occurring.	
7.07	TL asked if it is possible to have a time frame of when the new process will be in place.	
7.08	JM confirmed that Network Homes is currently working on a policy.	
7.09	SH stated this policy will be the 3 <sup>rd</sup> iteration of the damp and mould policy in a year. The previous policy was reviewed by a resident focus group in 2022.	
7.10	TL expressed that when there are time frames in place it enables residents to hold Network Homes to account.	
7.11	IA expressed that it would be helpful to see a case study of someone who has experienced a sever mould and damp issue and how it was delt with. In addition to this having a look at two cases, one before the new process was put in place and one after.	
<b>7.12</b>	<b>JM to share case studies with the panel members to review.</b>	<b>JM</b>
7.13	PL asked if Network Homes are offering advice to residents when they first report an issue, for instance opening windows.	
7.14	JM confirmed we do offer initial advice however we don't stop there, we look to diagnose the issue and provide a solution which we haven't done in the past.	
7.15	PL asked if it is the tenants responsibility to redecorate as with the current climate residents may not be able to afford it to redecorate their property following damp remediation works.	
7.16	JM stated that this is a delicate topic due to the current climate, we do expect residents to cover the cost of redecorating however it is dependent on the individual situation. We are able to offer decorating vouchers or help where needed.	

<b>8</b>	<b>Paypoint</b> <i>For discussion</i>	<b>CT/GY</b>
8.01	CT and GY introduced the item of replacing Allpay with PayPoint and highlighted the key points from a PowerPoint presentation.	
8.02	CJ asked if those who currently pay via direct debit are able to continue to do so.	
8.03	GY confirmed residents will still be able to pay via direct debit. We are not taking away any services, simply making them more efficient enabling a saving £70,000.	
8.04	TL asked if there will be support for those who want to transition from card payment to direct debit.	
8.05	GY confirmed there will be support, we will analyse all the current payment channels and assess how we can best support residents.	
8.06	CT added that at older person schemes the scheme managers will be able to offer support.	
8.07	BM expressed it is important to be aware that some people may not want to share their banking information as it is a sensitive topic.	
8.08	GY confirmed we will ensure representatives from Network Homes are sensitive when addressing this and would only be consent based to review bank account before taking payment. This could support residents not having bank fees if the don't have sufficient funds in their bank for their payment.	
8.09	CJ asked if it is possible to can you print barcodes on rent statements.	
8.10	PO confirmed this is being investigated by TriPartum.	
<b>8.11</b>	<b>PO to provide an update for the July Panel meeting of whether PayPoint barcodes can be printed on rent statements.</b>	<b>PO</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Involved Resident incentives</b> <i>For discussion</i>	<b>SH</b>
9.01	SH introduced the item and opened the discussion to panel members.	
9.02	IA stated that a lot of volunteer roles are mainly filled by women, with society becoming more equal she felt panel members should be paid. Attending panel meetings is a lot of work as it is not just attending the meeting, panel members must read the papers, join pre-meetings and sharing feedback. Vouchers aren't the same as being paid, being paid may make panel members feel more valued.	
<b>9.03</b>	<b>SH stated that it is important to note that many organisations use vouchers as a way of avoiding impacting panel members pay is they're eligible for benefits. SH stated she needs to discuss this further with HR to confirm if it will impact panel members being seen as employees.</b>	<b>SH</b>
9.04	IA stated she would feel highly valued if being a panel member was a paid role.	



9.05	BM asked why can't vouchers and payment can't work alongside one another, that way panel members have a choice.	
9.06	PG stated at the last panel meeting it was mentioned that some panel members may want to donate their vouchers to charity.	
9.07	PG also stated that incentivising the role may make the panel more diverse and offer the opportunity to more marginalised and underrepresented communities.	
<b>10</b>	<b>Resident Engagement and Transparency strategy</b> <i>For discussion</i>	<b>SH</b>
10.01	PG asked for item 10 to be moved to email.	
<b>10.02</b>	<b>SH to share the report and gain feedback via email.</b>	<b>SH</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Network Homes' Performance Report</b> <i>For discussion</i>	<b>SA</b>
11.01	SA introduced the item and gave a brief overview of the key points with one highlight being increased rent arrears.	
11.02	BM expressed that the utility companies are trying to get in before others therefore residents don't have any money to spend on other bills.	
11.03	SH stated that many people know that the process of getting evicted will take a lot longer than your electricity being cut off if you didn't pay the bill.	
11.04	BM asked how Network Homes is going to manage the arrears.	
11.05	SA explained that there are many support systems in place to support residents. Our income team will direct you to the Welfare Reform team or the charitable fund for further support. The Income also has new software to help.	
11.06	BM stated the people who are struggling aren't necessarily those who are entitled to benefits.	
11.07	HE confirmed we can direct residents to debt services and budgetary advice if it is needed and the charitable fund is there to assist on a one off occasions.	
11.08	SA stated that when reporting on these topics Network Homes is trying to be as honest as possible, not sugar coating.	
11.09	BM suggested writing a standard letter to all residents, detailing what people can do if they need support.	
11.10	SH confirmed we still send out quarterly newsletters, those who don't have access to view them online have the option to request the paper version however these aren't standard.	
11.11	TB suggested we include this information on the back of our rent statements.	
11.12	SH confirmed we are including more information on the rent statement, and we've been promoting the advice more in the newsletter. Alongside this we've updated	

	the website and will be sharing more information on the advice and support pages as well as reminding residents that we have the charitable fund.	
11.13	TB asked what we are saying to residents to help people not bury their head in the sand.	
11.14	SH confirmed we are reminding people Network Homes is an option to contact for advice.	
11.15	TB expressed that some residents may find it hard to contact their housing provider as they fear they will lose their home.	
11.16	HE reminded panel members that it is an absolute last resort to take a residents home.	
11.17	BM asked what advice Network Homes is offering struggling staff members.	
11.18	HE shared that Network Homes employees have always had access to season tickets loans and the financial wellbeing support from our Employee Assistance Programme.	
11.19	SH shared that support has been discussed at staff forums and a lot of information has been shared, we are currently having financial support webinars which we are hoping to share with residents. Our welfare team has also said that if people are struggling, they're able to have a conversation. Network Homes recognises that as staff members we are also paying rent so we also have access to Perkbox which offers discounts.	
11.20	SA shared from personal experience at other organisations, Network Homes' service is excellent, having the support is vital. Often the housing provider is seen as the enemy as they're collecting money however we have a lot of support to offer.	
11.21	SH expressed that we have seen an influx of our contractors wanting to help through donating to charitable fund, providing slow cookers, producing information posters amongst other things.	
11.22	TL expressed that it may also be good to come from a different angle and target people before they get into debt, offering advice and support before people bury their head in the sand with practical support.	
11.23	IA suggested Network Homes' communications team review the communications that are going out as people don't want to admit they're struggling.	
11.24	SH confirmed the Marketing and Communications team are currently reviewing all communications and advising people on what to say.	
11.25	IA asked if it is possible to review documents and communications going out to residents.	
11.26	<b>EC to share communications with the panel for comments before they go to the wider residents.</b>	<b>EC</b>

11.27	IA asked if Network Homes will be doing KPI training for panel members.	
11.28	SH confirmed that training will be delivered to panel members once it has been approved by the comities and board.	
<b>12</b>	<b>Resident engagement update</b>	<b>SH</b>
12.01	SH introduced the item and summarised key points.	
12.02	BM asked for the scrutiny to be split into 2 groups as there are so many signed-up.	
12.03	SH confirmed that she is going to suggest this to the chair of scrutiny.	
<b>12.04</b>	<b>TL requested for more information regarding the My Network Homes online account on the next agenda and asked for us to be consistent in what we're calling it.</b>	<b>RE Team</b>
12.05	IA expressed she feels it is too long of a name.	
12.06	SH shared that it is called this as it is not a portal and we therefore don't want to mislabel it.	
<b>13</b>	<b>Minutes from the meeting of 11 October 2022</b> <i>For information – not to be discussed unless so requested</i>	
<b>14</b>	<b>Building safety</b> <i>For information – not to be discussed unless so requested</i>	
<b>15</b>	<b>Estates policy and procedure update</b> <i>For information – not to be discussed unless so requested</i>	
<b>16</b>	<b>Housing sector hot topics</b> <i>For information – not to be discussed unless so requested</i>	
	Meeting closed at 20:30pm	

**The next meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday 11 April 2023**

Chair: PG

Date: 11/04/2023