



**MINUTES OF THE LONDON RESIDENT PANEL MEETING  
HELD ON 11 APRIL 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
	RT	London Panel Member
<b>IN ATTENDANCE</b>	SH	Resident Engagement Manager
	JR	Executive Director of People, Partnerships and Sustainability
	JT	Head of Business Performance and Improvements
	MM	Head of Resident Engagement and Customer Insight
	PF	Director of Compliance and Planned Works
<b>APOLOGIES</b>	RR	London Panel Member
	GK	London Panel Member
	AS	London Panel Member
<b>NOT PRESENT</b>	FH	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	PG confirmed that at the time of the meeting she has received apologies from RR, AS and GK.	
<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 she hasn't received any declarations of interest.	
<b>3</b>	<b>Matters arising – Action Log</b> <i>For information</i>	<b>SH</b>
3.01	SH discussed the items on the action log that have been requested to be removed and the actions that have further updates since the action log was circulated.	

3.02	SH requested that actions 3.04, 3.05, 4.07, 4.13, 10.02, 11.26, 12.04, 7.19, 7.22 are removed from the action log.	
3.03	SH updated the panel on action 4.10, explaining that the scrutiny panel meeting was held on 28 March 2023. Text messages and emails were sent out, however only one resident attended and the resident mentioned she wasn't interested in the topic more broadly and was only concerned about the issues specific to their home and area. Another resident joined later however they were unable to join the conversation. The resident who joined requested more information on fly tipping in their scheme and SH will connect the resident to their housing officer who will provide more information.	
3.04	SH confirmed she made notes from the meeting as there were some points raised that can be applied to the wider resident base, the main points noted were differentiating between bulk waste and fly tipping. However, it was quite disappointing that only one resident attended as the initial uptake was 24 residents.	
3.05	PG pointed out that the scrutiny was oversubscribed.	
3.06	SH agreed saying that we were planning on holding two sessions, a suggestion given by the London panel, as there were so many interested, however we're not sure what more we can do to ensure residents attend the meetings.	
<b>3.07</b>	<b>SH asked if Panel Members would be interested in attending scrutiny reviews. SH to contact panel members to be involved in future scrutiny.</b>	<b>SH</b>
3.08	BM mentioned that it is important to make it clear to residents signing up to the scrutiny reviews that it is not Network Homes talking about their own issues to ensure residents know they're looking for organisational improvements rather than scrutinising their own homes.	
3.09	PG asked whether there was any update on the vice chair position as it was brought up at the pre-meeting that VL was still put down as vice chair.	
3.10	SH confirmed that there was an update given at January's panel meeting confirming the current vice chairs tenure ended. Documents were circulated with the chairs of both the London and Out of London panel as there were questions surrounding a vice chairs tenure and whether they would eventually be able to apply for the chair role. The Resident Engagement Team have made some edits in the code of conduct and the terms of reference documents to specify that the tenure is up to a maximum of 6 years which allows them to stand as chair if the panel member has enough time on their tenure. The feedback has been shared with the Company Secretary who will review the documents and then request share with the Customer Services Committee for approval outside of the round of meetings.	
3.11	BM asked who sets the length of tenure.	

3.12	SH explained that the National Housing Federation's Code of Governance 2020 set the length of tenure and this is what we adopted as we must sign up to one. They reduced the suggested term from nine years to six.	
3.13	MM added that the Resident Engagement team and the Company Secretary decided to adopt this across our governance structure, therefore tenure for all Boards, Committees and Panels follows the same structure.	
3.14	BM asked why Panel and Board Members tenure is up after 6 years if they're good at their role and add great value.	
3.15	SH explained that it is because it is based on what is classed as 'good governance', ensuring we can refresh the talent pool otherwise we have members who are on boards for extended periods of time.	
3.16	BM expressed that maybe the tenure of Panel Members is something to be looked into and we also currently have members of our panel who don't attend meetings.	
3.17	MM confirmed this is something we are looking into. She also confirmed that in terms of the membership of the London Panel, it is currently full, however, not everyone attends the panel meetings. It is in the terms of reference that if a panel member doesn't attend 3 or more meetings without giving apologies, their position on the panel will be reviewed and they will be asked to step down from the panel.	
3.18	MM also mentioned that we have had residents approach us as they're interested in joining the London panel, however, we have had to turn them away as we are full. Therefore, if we were in a situation where we had less people on the panel, we would be looking to recruit new members.	
3.19	SH confirmed we are going to be a review of all involved residents during April and May to make sure they're still interested in being involved with us.	
3.20	TL asked if a panel member doesn't attend three meetings but gives apologies will they be asked to step down.	
3.21	MM confirmed that it currently states in the Terms of Reference that 3 meetings missed without providing apologies. Panel Members may have legitimate reasons to not attend panel meetings, if that is the case we will have a conversation with the panel member to make sure they still have capacity to be a part of the panel.	
3.22	BM said that this is something we should review before deciding to pay Panel Members as some may attend simply to get the money.	
3.23	MM explained that there are a lot of different aspects to consider when looking to pay Panel Members. Payment won't only be linked to attendance, it will also be linked to performance both in and out of meetings, which will be reviewed during the annual appraisals.	
<b>4</b>	<b>Panel Member re-election</b> <i>For discussion</i>	<b>MM</b>

4.01	MM shared that RR's first term on the panel has come to an end, the Resident Engagement Team contacted her and she confirmed she would like to remain on the panel for a further 3 years.	
<b>5</b>	<b>February Customer Services Committee 60 second round up</b> <i>For discussion</i>	<b>JR</b>
5.01	JR introduced the item and recapped the main points from February's Customer Services Committee meeting.	
<b>6</b>	<b>March Board 60 second round up</b> <i>For discussion</i>	<b>JR</b>
6.01	JR introduced the item and rounded up the 4 key points.	
6.02	JR explained that the budgeting for year 23/24 has been approved. The budget has an overall margin of 20%, which was the minimum that was considered acceptable in terms of showing our financial strength. The cost of living pay increase for colleagues was also approved, the increase has been set at £2,400 across the business, therefore lower paid colleague will receive a higher increase than higher paid colleagues. In addition, a new building scheme for Northwick Park was approved. This scheme will have 654 homes in Brent of which 323 of these will be affordable rent. Finally, the Board also largely approved the corporate strategy which will be the new five year strategy if the merger goes ahead.	
6.03	TB questioned if the merger is going ahead.	
6.04	JR confirmed the merger isn't guaranteed as the lenders haven't agreed yet and we haven't completed due diligence however we are all expecting it to go ahead.	
<b>7</b>	<b>Damp and Mould</b> <i>For discussion</i>	<b>PF</b>
7.01	PF introduced the item and recapped what has changed due to the new process.	
7.02	TB asked if the four decants in London due to damp and mould are permanent.	
7.03	PF confirmed some are permanent and some are temporary. There are other issues surrounding the damp and mould issue including overcrowding so it wouldn't make sense to decant some residents and then move them back into the property without solving the root cause of the issue.	
7.04	TB asked when do Network Homes offer to decant residents.	
7.05	PF explained that the option to decant is offered to residents after the surveyor has inspected the property. The target turnaround time is 48 hours.	
7.06	TB asked if the letters sent to residents regarding damp and mould are sent to all residents or only those who have reported a case of damp and mould.	
7.07	PF confirmed that letters have been sent to all residents who have reported a case of damp and mould in the last two years.	

7.08	TB asked if those effected by these cases are compensated for any inconvenience, for instance the use of dehumidifiers.	
7.09	PF confirmed the policy is to reimburse the nominal fee for as long as the dehumidifier has been used.	
7.10	TB asked how the compensation is calculated.	
7.11	PF explained it is based on our compensation policy including stress, delay and the time taken.	
7.12	TB asked if this is made aware to the residents.	
7.13	PF explained that it is based on the individual case, we do not offer compensation as standard procedure as not every case warrants it.	
7.14	TB asked what the timeframe on resolving damp and mould cases are.	
7.15	PF confirmed it is dependent on the case, some require long term solutions, but we do communicate this to residents.	
7.16	BM mentioned it is important to note that the overall issues of damp and mould are in line with the way we build houses in the United Kingdom, these issues are exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis as some residents cannot afford to heat their homes to a suitable temperature to prevent damp and mould.	
7.17	PF said that Network Homes recognises this, but it is also important to note that it needs to be recognised that damp and mould issues can't be defined as lifestyle issues across the board, so we are reacting where necessary.	
7.18	BM asked if there is a budget allocated to damp and mould.	
7.19	PF confirmed that in 2022/23 £862,000 was allocated to repairs and an additional £500,000 has been allocated specifically to damp and mould in 2023/24.	
7.20	BM asked why these damp and mould issues are ongoing, why weren't they dealt with properly the first time around.	
7.21	PF explained that one of the areas we were not meeting before was knowing our stock and therefore issues would persist. We are still working on getting this information about our properties.	
7.22	RT asked if there is a damp and mould information leaflet available to residents.	
7.23	PF confirmed there is a leaflet being finalised to send to residents effected by damp and mould cases.	
7.24	RT asked if the panel can review the leaflet before it is sent out to wider residents.	
7.25	PF to send the damp and mould information leaflet to Panel Members to review before being shared with wider residents.	

7.26	SH also mentioned that a leaflet regarding damp and mould has been shared previously, this will be a refreshed version of the information with the new advice.	
7.27	TL asked for clarification if Network Homes has contacted all residents who have reported a case of damp and mould in the last two years of if it was only open cases.	
7.28	PF clarified that all residents with cases of damp and mould have been contacted regardless of if the case has been rectified to see if the issue has returned.	
7.29	IA asked that if there is a way of seeing whether the same property has reported multiple cases damp and mould issues.	
7.30	PF explained that the damp and mould team are monitoring the trends and it is still early day therefore we don't have a lot of data, however as a part of the training we have been ensuring the cases regarding damp and mould are raised using key words to help when reporting on damp and mould.	
7.31	TB asked what the process is of checking the work done to ensure what the contractors have said is correct and the issue doesn't persist.	
7.32	PF explained that this is part of our follow-up process which means that the cases that have been completed are not left unresolved.	
<b>8</b>	<b>Network Homes' Performance Report</b> <i>For discussion</i>	<b>JT</b>
8.01	JT took the report as read and opened the discussion to the panel for any questions.	
8.02	TL asked how many currently work in the contact centre.	
8.03	JR estimated that there are roughly 50 however there are also other teams who answer queries as well as the contact centre.	
8.04	SH confirmed that that also include the team leaders who don't necessarily take phone calls but do deal with escalated cases.	
<b>8.05</b>	<b>JT to find out how many people work in the contact centre and breakdown the reason for the dissatisfaction surrounding repairs and the trust score, whether this is due to the contractors or Network Homes.</b>	<b>JT</b>
8.06	TL also asked what area of repairs is bringing the score down, is it the reporting process of the repair or once the repair is done the resident isn't satisfied.	
8.07	PF confirmed that the score given is based on a survey of the whole service, from when the call is taken to the case closed. There are specific questions that ask about the contractor but we would need to do a deeper dive into these surveys to find out where the dissatisfaction lies.	

8.08	SH mentioned that is important to note that at Network Homes we see our contractors as an extension of us, therefore we want the contractors to understand and share our values.	
8.09	MM also mentioned that we will be carrying out training with our operatives in April, the training is about who we are at Network Homes, our values and the trust objective. This training will support the handover between Wates and MCP	
8.10	RT asked what the reason is for Network Homes failing at stage one of complaints.	
8.11	JR explained that there are always going to be a proportion of complaints that get escalated to stage two, however just because those cases that do go to stage two doesn't mean that we give the resident more compensation, the rate of cases that escalate to stage two has gone down in the last few months. There's no policy for us treating the cases any different if they reach stage two.	
8.12	SH also explained that some cases are escalated to stage two for what may be seen as trivial from a process point of view, so sometimes the difficulty isn't just from a process perspective and it's not always something we can. It is within a residents' right to escalate to the housing ombudsman if they don't feel the response was satisfactory.	
8.13	BM asked how complaints are handled.	
8.14	SH confirmed that there are dedicated complaints officers who deal with stage one cases.	
8.15	BM mentioned that it might be good for colleagues who deal with complaints in the initial stages of the complaints should have training regarding the handling of complaints.	
8.16	JR explained that our Mary Gober training focuses on complaints and how they're vital for making processes and policies better.	
8.19	RT asked how much communication is there between the complaints team and the resident.	
8.20	JR explained it is dependent on the case. There will be verbal communication if it is necessary but the decision must be in writing.	
8.21	PF added that in repairs cases the process is to call the resident to get all the facts, especially in cases that are ongoing.	
8.22	JR confirmed that the exact amount of people in the Contact Centre is 50.	
<b>9</b>	<b>Annual procurement plan</b> <i>For discussion</i>	<b>MM</b>
9.01	MM introduced the item and gave a brief overview of the key topics.	
9.02	SH added that the two main topics that may be of interest to panel was the car parking ones, particularly for residents who have existing car parking measures on their schemes as they may be able to offer insight into what works well and what	

	can be improved. The other topic is pest control because we always have a pest control contract in place and residents may be able to influence the accessibility of the provider.	
9.03	PG asked whether the parking review will apply to schemes in the Wembley area.	
9.04	SH explained that we are not in control of the parking measures in Wembley.	
9.05	IA asked what the involvement is for residents.	
9.06	SH mentioned that feedback from residents was that the experience can be quite long and intense, therefore we will be breaking down what the procurement process looks like and confirming what areas residents can get involved in.	
9.07	SH also mentioned that during the last Big Winter Check In survey the question was posed to residents to see if they'd like to get involved in the procurement process. Over 150 people replied saying they wanted to get involved. One of the first things we did was ask the residents what they think of when we talk of contract so we can create a bank of questions for residents to ensure they can influence on the procurement process. We will be working with the Head of Procurement to discuss the questions.	
9.08	TB asked whether the procurement information will be shared with panel members.	
<b>9.09</b>	<b>EC to share the procurement consultation sign-up options with panel members.</b>	<b>EC</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Panel Business</b> <i>For discussion</i>	<b>ALL</b>
10.01	BM gave an overview of the cost-of-living conference she attended in February.	
<b>10.02</b>	<b>PG confirmed she will be sharing with the panel a few dates to complete the annual appraisals.</b>	<b>PG</b>
10.03	IA asked what the annual appraisals are.	
10.04	MM explained that as a part of the terms of reference we do want every panel member to go through an annual appraisal, Panel Members will be able to give feedback on how the panel working including anything you think would be good to stop, start and continue. The appraisal process is also an opportunity to discuss directly with the chair including feedback on the Resident Engagement team and how we are performing, any development opportunities such as training and anything Network Homes can do to support Panel Members.	
10.05	SH mentioned that we have done appraisals in the past however they were framed differently, this time round Panel Members also have the opportunity to discuss how they feel they're performing as a panel member and what support we can provide you.	



10.06	PG ran through what was discussed at the pre-meeting.	
10.07	PG asked if there are any plans on a follow up meeting after the initial meeting held the day of the announcement of the intended merger.	
10.08	MM explained that during the initial meeting with residents it was mentioned that we will be putting together a draft consultation plan regarding how we will be contacting wider residents. We have also been talking to colleagues at Sovereign to ensure our approaches are aligned. We are then looking to arrange with Sovereigns involved residents to discuss these plans together to see if they're correct. We will run a consultation during the summer and towards the end of the summer to meet with Panel Members and Sovereigns involved residents to feedback on how the consultation has gone.	
10.09	PG explained that Panel Members were wondering how much of a voice will residents have in the merger process.	
10.10	JR mentioned that some Panel Members may have gone through the stock exchange process before however the merger process is different, we don't want to over promise by saying residents will have the opportunity to veto the decision, they will have the opportunity to provide feedback to be properly considered by our board.	
10.11	SH explained that we will be asking involved residents how we can best consult with our wider residents, after our meeting with our counterparts at Sovereign we will be coming up with our initial ideas to ensure our approaches are aligned throughout the consultation process.	
10.12	PG asked how the merger will work logistically, for instance are the panels going to merge.	
10.13	JR explained that Sovereign and Network Homes only overlap slightly, and this is a real advantage as we can create a more supportive core to the organisation whilst not disrupting the service. We will then take a measured approach to integration performed by an intergradation team. In terms of resident engagement, nothing will change immediately from 1 October, we will both have sperate committees who oversee our customer services operations.	
10.14	MM added that from a resident engagement perspective we don't want the residents voice to be lost, therefore we will be taking our time to see how to best manage the change.	
10.15	PG asked how the residents at Sovereign feel about the merger.	
10.16	SH said their involved residents were initially excited about the merger but since the announcement we haven't heard much else. Our communications team have been keeping an eye on social media and in the press to see what residents have been saying but there hasn't been that much discussion on the topic.	

10.17	MM added that more will come out as we work through the consultation.	
10.18	TL mentioned that meeting with the residents from Sovereign will be a great opportunity.	
10.19	TB expressed that this merger seems to be further along than other mergers in the past.	
10.20	JR explained of the mergers that get to public announcement roughly 50% don't go through, we think the chances of this merger are more likely however it is dependent on the lenders and due diligence.	
10.21	PG asked how many housing associations have Sovereign merged with.	
10.22	JR estimated that Sovereign have gone through 9 mergers.	
10.23	MM mentioned that their business plan is to grow through merger, therefore they're seeking the opportunities.	
10.24	IA asked if there is going to be something in place to protect the money currently being spent on Network Homes' homes so that it isn't being distributed elsewhere.	
10.25	JR explained that Sovereign are a more financially strong organisation than Network Homes is, therefore, it is more likely that their money will be distributed to the areas we're working in but overall, it will be a single organisation so there won't be ringfenced resources.	
10.26	BM asked how we protect ourselves as the smaller organisation, especially a few years down the line.	
10.27	JR explained that there is no way of binding ourselves forever, therefore what will happen down the line is that the people making those decisions will make them in the best interest of their residents, the Board will be broadly balanced and therefore decisions will be made with both in mind.	
10.28	PG asked if better job opportunities and redundancies have been made available to Network Homes staff.	
10.29	JR confirmed there will be no changes to staff as a direct result of the merger until 2025.	
10.30	PG asked what are the benefits and disadvantages for residents.	
10.31	JR explained his top 5 benefits are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not disrupting services but a better core to the organisation in terms of technology, data and processes</li> <li>• Being able to invest more in our existing homes</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the increase in the charitable foundation will mean we are able to invest more in our communities</li> <li>being able to build new homes, a 20% increase over 10 years</li> <li>the foundation of the organisation being stronger and more resilient</li> </ul>	
10.32	<b>TL expressed that it would be good to hear from Sovereign what the benefits of merging with Networks Homes is to them as an organisation.</b>	JR
10.33	<b>SH mentioned that the same question was asked by Network Homes' colleagues therefore the information is out there, we can collate it and share it with the Panel.</b>	RE Team
10.34	SH also mentioned that although Sovereign are a much larger organisation, from a staff perspective it doesn't feel like they are going to swallow us, they have made it clear that we are going to work together.	
10.35	RT noted that Sovereign have a large number of staff, roughly 2100 and asked if that is proportionate to Network Homes.	
10.36	SH expressed that it is important to note that Sovereign also have an inhouse repairs team, therefore if we factored in our contractors the numbers are comparable.	
11	<b>Any Other Business</b> <i>For discussion</i>	
11.01	MM explained that we can see the analytics on OnBoard of how many Panel Members have opened and read the papers ahead of the meeting therefore she encouraged Panel Members to read the papers to ensure we have the best discussions during the meetings. MM also expressed that we're happy to help with any queries or concerns about OnBoard.	
11.02	IA asked if the documents are updated after she has read them will the analytics change.	
11.03	<b>SH explained that OnBoard reports on unique views, how many times the book has been opened as well as the individual reports, so we can monitor this and see the difference. SH will ask for more detail on how the analytics work if the papers have been updated or refreshed.</b>	SH
11.04	CJ asked if the Resident Engagement team can send an email once papers have been updated.	
11.05	SH confirmed we only send emails to notify Panel Members of changes to papers if there is a significant change but will continue to do so.	
12	<b>Minutes from the meeting of 17 January 2023</b> <i>For information – not to be discussed unless so requested</i>	
13	<b>Building safety</b> <i>For information – not to be discussed unless so requested</i>	

<b>14</b>	<b>Housing sector hot topics</b> <i>For information – not to be discussed unless so requested</i>
<b>15</b>	<b>Business Transformation</b> <i>For information – not to be discussed unless so requested</i>
<b>16</b>	<b>Charitable Fund update</b> <i>For information – not to be discussed unless so requested</i>
<b>17</b>	<b>Continuous Improvement Panel Update</b> <i>For information – not to be discussed unless so requested</i>
<b>18</b>	<b>Resident engagement update</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 18 July 2023**

Chair: PG

Date: 25/04/2023