

**Scrutiny Meeting
Monday 20 March 2023**

Present: Mike, John, Paul, Helen, Phil, Anna, Tina
Rachel Edwards, Ruth Cutler, Joanna Selby, Hazel Clarke

Guests: Andrew Stevenson – SME Housing Operations
Amanda Jordan – Localities Operations Manager

1. Welcome

All were welcomed to the meeting and introductions made.

2. Apologies

Eileen, Janet, Alison

3. Mutual Exchange Project Update & Next Steps (Andrew Stevenson & Amanda Jordan)

Swap Tracker has been implemented at the end of February. To date 206 applications have been received since the launch with 204 of those being completed online and 2 paper application forms. Paper applications are also entered in to Swap Tracker for monitoring purposes, but customers will still receive letters etc through the post, this option will always be available.

This is a much faster process and produces better performance management information. Customers can see the stages and updates at all times to suit them and receive communications through the online system.

Andrew asked if the Scrutiny Panel would consider a review of the information about mutual exchanges held on the website. The content, look and navigation to find the information needs reviewing. Also looking at other organisations websites for good practice and conducting a survey with customers who have used it. Rachel and Andrew will be finalising the details of what needs to be done but the knowledge gained by the Scrutiny Panel in the recent review will be very useful.

Mike queried a response received from the recent report from the Service Managers regarding the 42 day deadline, it was said that they had analysed the data from 2022 but couldn't find any applications that had missed the deadline.

Ruth advised that the KeyFax script used by the Hub had a key missing question of 'have you received consent?'. This is what is required within 42 days not for the whole mutual exchange to have been completed. As this wasn't being asked it was being recorded incorrectly as an avoidable contact, all applications had received consent or refusal within 42 days. The Scrutiny Panel had asked for this question to be included in the KeyFax script as part of their recommendation.

Paul asked if it was cheaper for the applications to be managed online, Andrew advised it was difficult to quantify at this time, but it is more efficient for the business and the customer and will reduce the number of non-value calls and emails which will free up time for other queries to be dealt with, it also reduces printing and postage costs and is a far better customer journey as any required documents or communications are being uploaded and dealt with through their Swap Tracker account.

Any incoming customers from another landlord can use Swap Tracker, as can their landlord for their part of the process. It also has a dashboard so all information is held in one place.

A demonstration will be arranged for the Scrutiny Panel – action Amanda and Andrew

Mike asked if the system could identify properties that couldn't be exchanged if there was a temporary hold on relets due to major works. Amanda advised this would be picked up in the initial checks from information held on Open Housing and information from Neighbourhood Officer check.

The timeframe for the review of the website is 3 months. Rachel will email all Scrutiny Panel members with details to gauge interest and arrange a meeting to look at the project plan and next steps.

4. Discussion about new projects

The Grounds Maintenance project is still running, and it is expected that input will be needed again in the next month from the members on that project.

The mini Mutual Exchange website review as discussed by Andrew.

The ideas that were suggested at the last meeting have been discussed with the relevant service areas and they had all been identified as areas that Platform are aware merit review and internal projects and reviews are in progress or have been carried out.

Platform are working with a consultant called Baytree to review the Contact Centre call times.

The whole Service Charge model is being looked into in preparation for next years' service charges

The Compensation Policy and procedure have just been reviewed and new software has been installed to streamline this, but it could be an option in the future once this has had time to settle in. These projects can all be kept on the list for future reviews which will be really useful to scrutinise how the new services are performing.

It has been advised by Gem Murphy that a review of staff sickness would be difficult to carry out as HR work within prescribed and legal frameworks, there is a strong employee wellbeing package available, and it would be difficult for Scrutiny to make recommendations which would benefit customers.

Mike and Rachel had discussed whether it would be possible for departments to notify Rachel when they were carrying out reviews so that Scrutiny weren't make suggestions for areas already under internal review. Due to the size of Platform and the number of teams this wouldn't be feasible.

Discussions with the Customer Experience Team have shown there are high levels of complaints regarding leaks (escaping water) and call backs.

If a leak is containable the repair is logged as a normal job which can take longer to complete than the customer is expecting and could cause other issues such as damp.

Call backs are offered by the Contact Centre if they are unable to transfer a customer to a particular team at the time of the call. These call backs are not always completed leading to frustration for the customer and investigation is needed into why these are not happening.

John confirmed that he sees these trends in his role as a Complaint Reviewer. He also advised that communication breakdown with outside contractors is an issue and would like this included.

It was agreed by those at the meeting that the call back investigation would be the project to consider along with the review of the information on the website for mutual exchanges.

It will be investigated if communication breakdown with outside contractors could fall within the call back review.

More detail will be obtained on both projects and emailed to all Scrutiny Panel members along with the timescales for the Grounds Maintenance project so members can decide which reviews they would be interested in and for those on the Grounds Maintenance project if there is capacity for them to be involved in another review.

All to let Mike know their preference.

5. AOB

Phil requested a presentation from HR for staff wellbeing and support.

Following discussion about more detailed information being provided on staff sickness it was agreed this could be looked in to after the presentation if it was felt further information was needed.

Phil outlined a recent situation he had encountered with work issued to external contractors. It was discovered that the timescale for completion of works is generally 12 months or over and it would appear the contractor will wait until they have sufficient jobs in an area before they attend to them. Customer perception is that jobs take a long time to complete and on checking with the contractor Phil understands that no internal checks by Platform are carried out to see when works will be done and requests can sometimes be lost in the system and until a customer chases progress and the contractor checks back with Platform this isn't discovered.

Phil would like to know if this is normal practice and if it is why do Platform give such large timeframes to external contractors with no checks in place to find out progress unless a customer chases it up.

Rachel will make enquiries on what the standard timescales are for external contractors and the reasons for this.