

# Homeowner Virtual Panel

23 July 2024, 18:00pm to 19:30pm

## Minutes and Action Log

In attendance:	Apologies
Catherine Jarrett (CJ) Director of Sales & Marketing, Delphine Guillemoteau (DG) Customer Involvement Officer, Kerry Castello (KC) Leasehold Services Officer, Mark Bateman (MB) Programme Manager Landscaping, Nora Ragze (NR) Head of Planned Works, Thomas Dennis (TD) Insight and Data Analyst	Helen Lloyd (HL) Head of Insight, Viv Price (VP) Existing Homes Sales Manager, Jasmine Dudgon (JD) User Experience Lead

## Minutes

1	<p><b>Welcome, apologies and introductions</b></p> <p>CJ welcomed everyone to the meeting. Eight customers attended the meeting: leaseholders being in larger numbers. HL, VP and JD sent their apologies. JD was going to outline the 'sales portal' strategy but this will now be dealt with outside of this meeting. This is a topic we can possibly bring to our October meeting. We are currently at the design, build and testing stage.</p> <p>At our April meeting a query about leaseholder's ground rent payment was raised. KC explained that the query had been raised with the Finance Director. It was confirmed that ground rent isn't being collected across the board from leaseholders since the migration onto a new database management system called D365. Finance confirmed that they are aware of this and were hoping to fix to start issuing ground rent notices again. For Right to Buy leases the ground rent is £10.00 per annum. KC said she will get an update from finance in readiness for our next meeting in October to see when the charge will resume.</p>
2	<p><b>Scope of meeting</b></p> <p>The scope of today's meeting emerged from the feedback homeowners gave us at our April meeting around our landscaping services and communal cleaning services.</p>
3	<p><b>Landscaping and communal cleaning</b></p> <p>Colleague MB and NR joined the meeting to talk about landscaping services and communal cleaning. MB is the Programme Manager for Landscaping and he outlined the extensive amount of work he has been involved in to create a new service standard for landscaping (see slide 2 of MB's presentation). He inherited a difficult situation where we were not meeting the required service standard. After some work MB submitted in February 2024 a proposal to the Executive Team asking for an increase in resources to hire more landscaper colleagues and new equipment. The Executive approved MB's</p>

proposal and more funding has now been allocated which will make all the difference (see slide1 of MB's presentation).

The new standard will achieve the following:

- Correctly resourced teams able to complete the minimum service standard and frequencies expected by our customers (2-weekly visits) by July 2025)
- Capacity for growth in line with new development opportunities. Lichfield and the West of England will benefit most from increase in workforce numbers.
- Manageable workloads for the landscapers will increase site quality and boost team morale.
- Leadership capacity to enable greater engagement with colleagues and customers.

MB said that by April 2025 he would expect to see changes in the service delivery and standards across the board. The new funding will take time to be embedded as recruitment and adequate training takes place: it is not a quick fix but one that homeowners can be reassured is currently taking place and is taken seriously by Bromford's Executive team. It was agreed that MB would come back to this meeting, in April 2025, to tell us about the progress he expects his team to have made.

MB was asked if the new positions are recruited on a seasonal basis: MB said this wasn't the case as we need to keep building momentum and we can make good of all the months in the year to get the service where it need to be.

Customer Tony said that he wants to be informed when the landscaping team will be at his building block so that he can ensure the parking area is free of cars for litter picking to take place. He has asked for this to happen but it hasn't materialise. DG explained that a customer had requested something similar in Gloucestershire but prior contact with the customer wasn't made. MB apologised that this hadn't happened and said this level of customised service is where he wants his team to be but they currently aren't there yet because of other challenges. However, this is his aspiration/vision: a more collaborative experience where customers can get involved if they want to and for landscapers to be visible on the ground and approachable.

NR explained that Section 20 letters were sent out in relation to the cleaning of communal areas. This is because we need to re-tender the cleaning contract (this does not include the West of England area where an in-house team is already operational). The Section 20 letters explain what you rights are and as a customer you have thirty days to respond. Customer Delia said that the cleaning contractor 'Arrow' is amazing where she lives especially the new cleaner Tom'.

RN explained that it is often the case that when an in-house team delivers a contract it is to a better standard than that of a contractor. This is often the case because you can be more in control of the service and recover better value for money.

Delia said that this wasn't the case of the in-house landscaping team where she lives: they attend every 8 to 9 weeks as opposed to every two weeks which is what the standard is meant to be yet we are still paying for this. MB apologised and said that with an in-house team you should be getting the same customer service than with a contractor (if not better).

	<p>Delia explained that when an area is kept looking untidy and unkept this attracts fly tipping which has been the case where she lives where the unused garages are attracting unwanted rubbish. This needs addressing. MB asked for Delia's address so he can look into this.</p> <p>Customer Elaine said she believed her service charges do not reflect the services she receives living in a maisonette (especially around window cleaning). DG will investigate on Elaine's behalf.</p>
<p><b>3.1</b></p>	<p><b>Customer feedback</b></p> <p>TD shared feedback received from homeowners in the first quarter of this financial year which saw a decline in the customer advocacy score for home ownership properties, with 72.5% of customers agreeing they would recommend us to a friend. This is a drop from last year's score of 91.1%, and 88.4% for the same period last year. The feedback, gathered from 51 customers, contributed to an overall customer advocacy score of 88.8%, surpassing our target of 88%.</p> <p>The comment analysis reveals mixed sentiments among customers. Many expressed satisfaction with the overall service, particularly praising the attitude of colleagues. Customers described them as kind, friendly, and polite, noting that they listen, take action, and go above and beyond. However, negative sentiments point to areas needing improvement. Customers highlighted communication issues, such as long wait times for responses and not being informed of appointment changes. Some reported difficulties in reaching our offices, with wait times of 30 minutes or more. Additional issues included unresolved problems and stalled complaint outcomes, which contributed to lower satisfaction scores for the complaints service.</p> <p>CJ reminded everyone that the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) do not include leaseholders as this is not required by the Regulator. However, based on your feedback we have ensured that the Thrive Index includes all homeowners so that the voice of leaseholders is heard and captured too.</p> <p>Customer Tony noted that 16% of customers who had been asked for feedback said that they did not know who their coach is. That is problematic. CJ said that she agreed and that they are working on improving this (shared owner feedback saying: I have very little to do with Bromford). Tony added that an opportunity might be missed when neighbourhood coaches hold block inspections about 4 times a year. They could door knock and introduce themselves and ask for some information to ensure, for example, that the emails we hold are up to date. This would include homeowners. DG said that more of this will happen if Bromford decide to embrace a place based working approach. Community conversations will include all tenures living in a defined place.</p> <p>CJ said that her team is currently working on defining the service standard offer and that this could be discussed at our meeting in October.</p>
<p><b>4</b></p>	<p><b>Policy reviews</b></p> <p>CJ explained that she is looking for feedback on two policies affecting shared owners. She wants the policies to achieve the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Set clear expectations for customers,</li> <li>2. Provide clarity and transparency and</li> </ol>

	<p>3. Enable customers to hold us to account.</p> <p>Based on the feedback received CJ's team will update the policies. Any feedback is valuable so if you are a leaseholder and upon reading the policies you have some feedback please do contribute too. The survey links will be sent by email after this meeting. The two policies we are seeking feedback on are: 'First come first served' policy and 'Surplus Income' policy.</p>
<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>Next steps and A.O.B.</b></p> <p>We look forward to seeing you at our next meeting. Please send any individual queries to the following email: <a href="mailto:homeownership.panel@bromford.co.uk">homeownership.panel@bromford.co.uk</a></p> <p>Customer Tony asked if conversations with Paul Coates (Chief Customer Officer) had progressed with regards improving the offer provided to homeowner's especially with regards to easier access to Bromford colleagues and expert knowledge. CJ said that exploring what could be done differently is relevant but no definite solution has been defined. Tony said he will keep asking so that we don't lose momentum on this.</p>
<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>Date and time of next meeting:</b></p> <p>Tuesday, 29 October 2024: Zoom, 6pm start.</p>