Housing Operations Committee

Report title:	SCHape Panel Report		
Meeting date:	4 November 2024		
Report from:	Becci Youlden – Head of Customer Experience		
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Decision type:	~~Assurance~~	Approval	Information

1. Report overview/purpose

1.1 This report provides an overview of the Complaints Service SCHape Panel Review and sets out the recommendations made by the Panel.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

(i) **Discuss** the report and recommendations
(ii) **Agree** the next steps.

3. Consultation and engagement

3.1 This was a tenant led activity.

4. Financial implications

4.1 Potential financial implication of some of the recommendations. These will be looked at in more detail as part of the action planning.

5. Legal implications

5.1 None.

6. Risk implications

6.1 None.

7. Equalities implications

7.1 None

SCHAPE
Residents Panel
Solihull Community Housing
Achieving Performance Excellence

Complaints Service

1. Introduction

As a Panel we have developed a process whereby we choose a subject for review based on performance and feedback from residents. We focus on an area where there may be poorer performance or gaps in services and where the Panel could add value in terms of making recommendations for improvement.

Following a review of data from recent surveys, the Panel requested that they review the complaints service as the levels of satisfaction were low.

The review has been supported by the Engagement Team and various other officers, and the Panel would like to thank those involved.

2. Overview of review process

Working session 1: Overview of service

The Panel received a presentation that included details of how SCH deals with complaints as well as information about the new Complaint Handling Code, the new Annual Report and self-assessment as well as the Service Improvement Plan.

Working session 2: Review self-assessment & SIP

The Panel looked in depth at the self-assessment and Service Improvement Plan, challenging some of the commentary and making suggestions for changes and improvements. They commented that these documents were very thorough, and they fully supported the content.

Working session 3: Review of past complaints

The Panel scrutinised past complaints at both stage 1 and 2, looking at the original complaint and the response given. Members were given the opportunity to review the initial complaint in advance of the meeting, allowing them time to see what response they would have given and if this matched the officer's response. This gave invaluable insight to the Panel.

Working Session 4: Development of recommendations

Using information gathered during the review, the Panel developed a set of recommendations.

3. Summary of findings

This review has recognised the hard work undertaken by the complaints team, particularly given the recent changes to both the team structure and the introduction of the Complaint Handling Code.

The Panel has identified a number of recommendations that could enhance the service.

Members of the Panel would like to place on record their appreciation of the work that has been undertaken as part of the complaints team pilot. They noted that the responses from the pilot were more detailed, providing a thorough response, looking at the history and were more user friendly. They felt that having a dedicated member of staff was going well as they have time to commit and can deal with more complex complaints. The pilot has been able to demonstrate that the team are impartial.

During conversations with staff and residents, we noted that:

- all staff need to manage residents' expectations
- residents don't want to tell their story repeatedly
- ensure that IT systems are being updated
- make sure that the right trades people are being sent.

4. Recommendations

Recommendation	Benefits to SCH and customers
Learning from complaints	
1. Data and case studies should be a regular feature in the tenants' newsletter – good and bad	Tenants will be more informed with the relevant information
2. Be transparent and keep residents informed – communication is key	Tenants will be aware of what is happening at all stages
3. Ensure contractors are aware of our complaints policy and are managed appropriately	Tenants should receive a seamless service regardless of who is providing it
4. Establish a team of Complaints Reviewers who will review response letters from a customer's point of view	To make sure that the content of the letter is clear, and the language used is easy to understand for our customers
5. Develop Complaints Advocates who can work with us to offer support to tenants by providing information about the complaints process, helping to write letters etc.	Tenants will be supported throughout the process
Complaints annual report	
6. SCHape Panel to be involved in the annual report and the self-assessment from the outset in future	SCHape Panel will ensure that the views of our tenants are taken into account

7. Promote the Annual Report in the tenants' newsletter giving a summary of the report, QR code to take people to it and an offer to send more information if required	Tenants will be more informed with the relevant information
8. Promote the Annual Report in high rise blocks - a poster with a QR code so tenants can access it easily	Tenants will be able to easily access the Annual Report
Complaints pilot project	
9. Make the current arrangement permanent in view of the pilot's success	A more impartial service for our tenants and stability for the team
10. Financial investment in the team is needed to provide more staff	Having only one member of staff doesn't allow for cover during annual leave and sickness

5. Next steps

a. The Panel would ask SCH officers to consider the recommendations and work with the SCHape Panel to develop an action plan of those recommendations that can be reasonably implemented. Timescales and responsible officers should be agreed, and the implementation of the agreed recommendations will be monitored by the Panel.

b. A debrief session will take place to assess what has gone well with the process and methods of the review and what could be improved for the next review. The Terms of Reference will be updated and the process we use be updated.