



Longhurst Group Customer Forum

Annual Review

2022-2023

Introduction

As Chair of the Longhurst Group Customer Forum (LGCF), I am pleased to present this report to the wider customer base, but also to the officers and the Group Board. This report defines what we do as a voluntary forum to ensure that Longhurst Group delivers to the customer base what is both expected and required of the Consumer Standards.

The LGCF is not a body that just ticks boxes. We act on a wide variety of information and data that encompasses the whole business of Longhurst Group. Areas of concern are determined by the members of the LGCF and are escalated either to the Group Board or to officers of the various departments within the business. We are there to challenge performance that falls below par and ask what steps they will take, or are taking, to rectify the situation. The Forum is here to make a difference and provide a benefit to all customers in accordance with the following standards:

- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard.
- Tenancy Standard.
- The Decent Homes Standard.
- Neighbourhood and Community Standard.

The Customer Forum members (see appendix B) are now fully aware of the Social Housing White Paper (November 2020), which is in line with Government legislation. Once the regulation becomes law and the revised Consumer Act is published, we will ensure that all members are fully updated with this.

I thank my fellow Forum members for helping to compile a wide ranging and hopefully informative report for 2022.

John Cole - Chair

Our achievements as a Forum

The committee decided to increase the number of meetings, but reduce the meeting length; this keeps members more engaged and focused. This new format was put forward by the new Chair and Vice Chair and agreed by all members.

The Forum requested a move away from long presentations and more towards balanced discussions. Preparation meetings take place to give members an opportunity to talk about the key points.

The Forum receives regular updates, for example repairs, voids standard, call handling and complaints handling. Opportunity is given to escalate areas of concern to the Board.

The topics covered in meetings were as follows:

February 2022	Q3 Performance dashboard Customer satisfaction Clean and Green Inspectors - Update Scrutiny Team documents Domestic Abuse policy
May 2022	Q4 Performance dashboard Mystery Shopping report Under 25s' survey Customer satisfaction Update on Procurement process
August 2022	Q1 Performance dashboard Leasehold communications survey Consultation report - Communal services in sheltered schemes Progress report - 'The Hub' New Scrutiny Review matrix Q1 Customer Experience - Update
November 2022	Q2 Performance dashboard Customer Engagement policy Customer Perception survey - Update Customer Experience - Satisfaction and customer complaints

	Customer Scrutiny Review - Together with Tenants DBS Checks Training topics – Discussion
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Policy reports are presented to the Customer Forum members to provide assurance that customers have been consulted with prior to the policy developments and that their recommendations have been considered.

Policies approved during 2022:

- Domestic Abuse

In addition to policies, the Customer Forum was updated regarding the implementation and outcomes of:

- 'The Hub' - a web based interactive platform launched May 2022.
- A pilot for the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey (TSM) carried out between November and March 2023. This became regulatory from April 2023.

New contractors - A move to three new repairs contractors took place in July 2022 followed by a new heating contractor in November 2022. Change was welcomed by the Forum and repairs performance continues to be regularly monitored.

Customer scrutiny – The Scrutiny Team completed a review of the 'Together with Tenants' standards and reported the results to the Customer Forum who will monitor the recommendations through to completion.

The Customer Forum has introduced a new matrix to decide on the topics they will select for scrutiny and is using this framework to ensure it prioritises a fair selection of scrutiny topics for review.

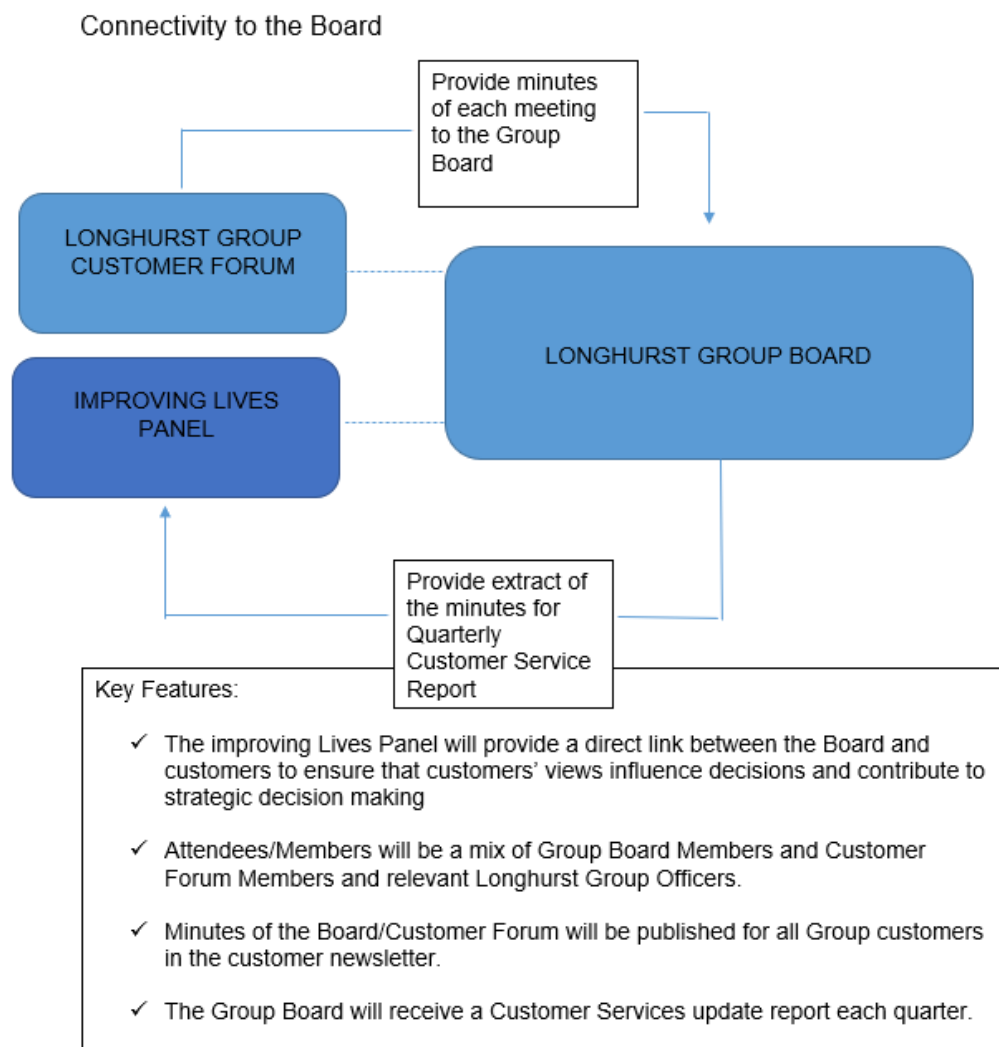
IT integration - LCGF is updated regularly on the status of a new IT integration aimed to improve the effectiveness when dealing with customer enquiries.

Intensive Recovery Plan - The number of repairs within the sector has been challenging under the increasing pressures on resources. The sector has seen a spike in complaints and Longhurst Group have been responding to this through an Intensive Recovery Plan. The Forum has had transparency over the ongoing plans and is kept informed with the expected timeframes to getting back to business as usual, in

accordance with our customer charter. The Forum continues to monitor this situation and to hold Longhurst Group to account.

Improving Lives Panel – The Improving Lives Panel was set up at the end of 2022 and works in partnership with members of the Group Board and Customer Forum to ensure the voice of the customer is represented.

As part of a co-regulatory approach, the panel works to strengthen the link between the Board and the Customer Forum to ensure that customers’ views influence and contribute to strategic decision making.



Continuous improvement

Training topics covered:

- Compliance seminar.
- Environmental sustainability overview.
- Q&A Buildings insurance.
- Complaints self-assessment and next steps.

Members confirmed they wish to continue the subscription to 'Inside Housing' magazine to keep up-to-date with housing debates, current affairs and legislation.

Our aspirations for 2023

Repairs service –

For Longhurst Group to provide and deliver a repairs service that meets the expected customer standard.

Sustainability -

Longhurst Group is following the decarbonisation road map. The Forum is interested to see plans that lay out a clear vision of the milestones and pathways to achieve the decarbonisation targets. The Group has managed to secure Social Housing Decarbonisation Funding (SHDF) for this.

The Customer Forum envisages that Longhurst Group will take steps to construct the whole three pillars of the ESG framework and it looks forward to future updates.

Not only is this a regulatory requirement, but it's used for measuring the sustainability and ethical impact of the Group's operations and can demonstrate that Longhurst Group is transparent and accountable, providing evidence of its commitment to reducing risk and complying with future environmental legislation.

Jennifer (Vice Chair)

Communication – The Forum is looking for teams to take ownership and responsibility as well as showing evidence of clear communication throughout the customer experience.

Customer Engagement –

We're looking for more customers to get involved and help improve services provided by Longhurst Group. Some of these improvements include:

- Customer involvement recruitment drive to raise awareness of what we do and what involvement opportunities are available resulted in the development – 'The Hub'.
- The Customer Forum welcomes feedback from other engagement groups to keep them up- to-date with ongoing developments and outcomes.

Face to face meeting -

To work towards an annual, in person, get together.

Membership of the Customer Forum

The Forum is looking for four new members to ensure it meets its ideal 12-member capacity:

- We would like to recruit from a diverse range of groups and are looking at ways this might be possible, including the use of Housing Officers so we are representing Longhurst Group customers.
- We have enabled current members to access meetings and information by providing used laptops. We could extend this where possible to ensure customers can get involved regardless of income levels.

Appendix A

Longhurst Group Customer Forum - Terms of Reference

Purpose The Longhurst Group Customer Forum will support the Longhurst Group Board by providing customer based assurance that the consumer standards of the 'Regulatory Regime for Social Housing in England' are being met; that value for money is being achieved in service delivery to all Longhurst Group customers; and is in line with Longhurst Group's vision of 'improving lives'.

Responsibilities The Longhurst Group Customer Forum will develop and maintain a strong, meaningful and influential relationship with the Longhurst Group Board to ensure that they and the Longhurst Group Board work together effectively.

The Longhurst Group Customer Forum will ensure that agreed service delivery standards to all customers is being achieved and that Longhurst Group meets the expectations and outcomes of the

- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard
- Tenancy Standard
- Home Standard
- Neighbourhood and Community Standard

It will do this by:

- Being involved in the decisions about how services are delivered, including the approval of service standards
- Ensuring that the customer involvement structure delivers on the consultation and review of landlord services
- Monitoring Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) from Longhurst Group's Performance Management Framework along with other information identified through customer feedback and insight.
- Identifying areas of customer assurance and escalating areas of customer non-assurance with the consumer standards to the Longhurst Group Board
- In conjunction with staff agree a programme of service improvement reviews that are linked to business objectives and customers' priorities
- 'Call to scrutiny' service areas they have concerns about which are not subject to an agreed review process.
- Monitor the implementation and outcomes of service reviews and scrutiny reviews
- Produce an annual review, to be reported to the Longhurst Group Board and to all Longhurst Group customers and staff, detailing the impact of its activities.

Operating protocols

Longhurst Group Customer Forum will produce formal minutes of each meeting, including items for escalation, which will be reviewed at Longhurst Group Board.

In addition, Longhurst Group Customer Forum will follow a

documented protocol which will include

- A scheme of understanding with the Longhurst Group Board
- Communication and reporting protocol with the Longhurst Group Board
- Code of Conduct and Confidentiality statement

Membership

- The Longhurst Group Customer Forum will consist of a maximum of 12 eligible members.
- Individual members will be appointed for a period of three years.
- Members can voluntarily resign at any time during their tenure.
- If a Longhurst Group Customer Forum member ceases to be Longhurst Group customer they must resign from the Longhurst Group Customer Forum.
- Members will serve no more than two consecutive terms of three years.
- Members can be asked to step down without notice if they are seen to be in breach of the Code of Conduct

Quorum

At least five or more members must be present at a meeting for it to be quorate

Meetings

The Longhurst Group Customer Forum will meet at least 6 times per year to mirror the Longhurst Group Board's meeting cycle. There is a requirement for members to be fully prepared for all meetings.

Attendance

Longhurst Group will monitor attendance at the Longhurst Group Customer Forum through the meeting minutes.

Failure of a Longhurst Group Customer Forum member to attend three consecutive meetings, without providing a reasonable reason, will be investigated by the Longhurst Group Customer Forum Chair in conjunction with Longhurst Group staff. Failure to attend might result in the member being asked to step down from their role.

Chair and Deputy Chair	<p>The appointment of the Chair will be made following application and interview.</p> <p>The appointment of the Deputy Chair will be made following application and interview.</p> <p>Both appointments can be for up to a period of three years with succession planning identified after two years of tenure.</p>
Support and Servicing	<p>The Longhurst Group Customer Forum will be supported by the Executive Director of Housing Services.</p> <p>The Longhurst Group Customer Forum will also be supported by the appropriate level of staff and other resources to ensure it can operate effectively.</p>
Applications and Appointments	<p>All Longhurst Group tenants, leaseholders and shared owners are eligible to apply for vacancies (Subject to eligibility as detailed in the person specification).</p> <p>Applicants will be interviewed for vacancies.</p>
Review of effectiveness	<p>The Longhurst Group Customer Forum will, on an annual basis, review its effectiveness by reviewing the key achievements and impact of its work and reporting these to the Longhurst Group Board and Longhurst Group customers.</p>
Training and Development	<p>Longhurst Group Customer Forum members will be required to attend training to ensure their skills and knowledge enables them to effectively carry out their role.</p> <p>New appointees will be required to complete induction training.</p>
Annual Appraisal	<p>Longhurst Group Customer Forum members will be required to participate in an annual appraisal.</p>
Equality and Diversity	<p>Longhurst Group Customer Forum encourage fair and equal treatment for all, regardless of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, gender, physical or mental disability, appearance, political affiliation, sexuality, age or class.</p> <p>Longhurst Group Customer Forum will identify obstacles that may prevent customers from contributing to its work, and find the means to remove those obstacles.</p>

Longhurst Group Customer Forum will annually review membership with the aim of creating a body that is representative of the diverse communities in which Longhurst Group operates.

Longhurst Group Customer Forum members will abide by Longhurst Group’s policies on equality and diversity and attend equality and diversity training as part of their induction training; followed by annual update training.

Confidentiality Members of the Longhurst Group Customer Forum will have access to information, which will be of a sensitive or confidential nature. Any information shared as part of the Forum’s meetings that is of a confidential nature must not be disclosed to anyone outside of the meeting.

Longhurst Group Customer Forum members will be required to sign the Code of Conduct and confidentiality statements as part of their appointment.

Review of Terms of Reference Longhurst Group and the Longhurst Group Customer Forum will review these Terms of Reference after one year of operation to ensure they are fit for purpose; and annually thereafter.

Appendix B

The Customer Forum membership 2022

Member	Region	Tenure
Jennifer Anderson	South	Tenant
Natalie Bunyan	South	Tenant
John Cole	East	Freeholder
Mervyn Cowdell	South	Shared Owner
Marie Linford	East	Tenant
Robin Oliver	East	Tenant
Arit Otu	West	Tenant
Angela Ryan	West	Tenant
Sinead Safford	South	Tenant
Fiona Murphy	South	Tenant
Gina Lawless	South	Tenant
Jane Bills	West	Tenant

