



**Minutes of Customer Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2025 via Microsoft Teams**

<b>MEMBERS:</b>	Charlotte Haines (Chair) Ahmed Abdulmalek (AA) Cynthia (Bethel) Alloyda (CA) John Beattie (JBe) Marta Diaz (MD) Helen Wallworth (HW) Victoria Burrows-Boon (VB) Gerald Arhin (GA)
<b>OFFICERS:</b>	Liam Turner, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Gemma Parlby, Executive Director Customers and Landlord Services (EDCLS) Lorraine Giddings, Customer Service and Engagement Manager (CSEM) Christiana O'Brien, Customer Engagement Manager (CEM) Jeanette Green, Director of Property (DP) Campbell McCulloch, Director of Finance (DF) Laura Flint, Complaints Manager (CM) Ed Sidley, Performance and BI Manager (PBIM) Nichola Shepard, Director of Governance, Risk & Assurance (DGRA) Warren Carlon, Director of Communities (DC) Samantha Foster, Customer Communications Manager (CCM) Jamie Cockerham, Governance and Policy Officer (GPO) - Minutes
<b>OBSERVERS:</b>	Martin Warhurst (MW) Philip Johnson (PJ)
<b>APOLOGIES:</b>	Keri Muldoon (KM) Jack Buckley (JBu) Gareth Evans (GE)

The meeting commenced at 18:03

<b>ITEM</b>	
<b>1.</b>	<b>Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest</b>  The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.  Apologies were received from KM, JBu and GE.  There were no declarations of interest.
<b>2.</b>	<b>Introduction of new EDCLS</b>  The CEO introduced the new Executive Director of Customer and Landlord Services, Gemma Parlby, to members.  The Chair and EDCLS noted that they looked forward to working together closely through

	the Committee over the next few months.
<b>3.</b>	<b>Minutes of the Customer Committee Meeting held on 2nd September 2025</b>
	<b>The Committee approved the minutes from the last meeting held on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2025.</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Matters Arising and Action Tracker</b>
	<b>The Committee noted the changes to the Action Tracker.</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Chair's Update</b>  The Chair noted that a Board Strategy Event was held on the 24 <sup>th</sup> and 25 <sup>th</sup> October. Discussions centred around financial stress testing, Salix Homes' resilience amidst future challenges, the capacity to develop, corporate priorities, EDI commitments and the customer insight project.  The Chair noted that, overall, there was lots of positive discussions around Salix Homes' position, and colleagues continue adopt a proactive approach of constant learning to ensure that future challenges can be met by the organisation.  <b>The Committee noted the Chair's update.</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>CEM Update</b>  The CEM provided members with an update on customer engagement activities and progress relating to the scrutiny action tracker, including on 3 actions carried forward into December 2025. The CEM also provided an update on the activities of other customer oversight groups.  In particular, the CEM noted that there are current and anticipated vacancies across Salix Homes' customer oversight groups. She requested expressions of interest from members in the available Chair positions- noting the importance of these groups in ensuring that there is a direct link between them, the Customer Committee through to Board, so as to continue to provide effective oversight of specific service areas.  The following was noted during discussions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JBe expressed an interest in Chairing the Apartment Living Forum (ALF) - noting that he is also happy to join the Complaints Oversight Group (COG) if this works better around other members' availability.</li> <li>• HW noted that she would be happy to participate in the ALF.</li> <li>• MD noted that her availability in the medium term would be limited due to her upcoming maternity leave from her main employment.</li> <li>• In response to a query raised by GA relating to the constitution of the groups, the CEM noted that she would arrange follow-up discussions with any interested members to further explain the background of each of the groups and the opportunities for involvement.</li> <li>• The Chair noted that she would also be happy to assist any other members with chairing skills should this be required.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>The Committee noted the Customer Engagement Manager's Update.</b></p> <p><b>Actions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>CEM to follow-up with interested members on the current vacancies in Salix Homes' customer oversight groups.</b></li> </ul>
<b>7.</b>	<p><b>Scrutiny Report &amp; Recommendations</b></p> <p>The CEM presented a summary of the final report and recommendations of the Customer Communications – Property Investment scrutiny piece. The report was supported by a number of appendices which outlined the methodology, findings and recommendations set out by the customer scrutiny group. Overall, the scrutiny panel found that Salix Homes is committed to providing good quality, accessible communications to customers, although this could be strengthened by more collaborative working across teams and making better use of available tools so communications were more tailored and proactively address issues. It was noted that the recommendations were designed to improve the customer experience during investment works which would increase customer satisfaction, reduce the likelihood of complaints and positively contribute to the key outcomes within the Corporate Plan.</p> <p>The following was noted during discussions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chair queried whether all the recommendations listed were considered achievable by Salix Homes colleagues. In response, the CEM confirmed that the recommendations had been discussed with officers for feasibility prior to being finalised and all recommendations were considered appropriate and actionable.</li> <li>• The CEO commented that the scrutiny piece was timely for Salix in the context of recent investment works where communications with customers could have been improved. He further noted that details of the report could also be shared with members of the Assets &amp; Sustainability Committee to support strategic-level decision making around customer communication.</li> <li>• The DGRA noted that recommendation 3, for the publication of an annual calendar of proposed investment works, ties directly into the implementation of STAIR regulations.</li> <li>• The CSEM noted that further information relating to complaints would be added to the scrutiny report prior to publication on the Salix Homes website, but that this would not have a material impact on the contents of the report or recommendations.</li> <li>• In relation to recommendation 5, for the use of a communication app/tool for customer communications, MD queried whether a specific tool had been identified. The CEM confirmed that a tool had not been identified as yet and that this would be explored further by colleagues as a result of the recommendation.</li> <li>• CA questioned whether the recommendations were set out in order of priority. The CEM commented that this was not the case but, if approved, additional context such as timescales and responsible colleagues would be added to each recommendation within the scrutiny action tracker. CA suggested that it may be worth prioritising recommendations in future to ensure that the required resources are available for key priorities.</li> </ul> <p><b>The Committee noted the outcome of the Customer Communications Investment scrutiny piece and resolved to approve the recommendations set out in the report.</b></p>
<b>8.</b>	<p><b>Awaab's Law Customer Comms Review</b></p> <p><i>The DP joined the meeting at 18:20.</i></p>

The DP provided members with an overview of external communications by Salix Homes in relation to the implementation of Awaab's Law. The following key points were highlighted:

- Salix Homes is in a positive position in relation to Awaab's Law compliance due to the preparatory work that has taken place.
- The DP has worked closely with the Comms team to develop appropriate communications with customers around the impact of Awaab's Law. Salix Homes' approach is to be open and transparent with customers, and this needs to be balanced with specific wording and information for customers as set out within the legislation.
- Colleagues have also sought legal advice and worked closely with partners across Greater Manchester on customer communications in relation to the law.

The CCM noted the proposed graphics, website and newsletters appended to the report. She confirmed that 'Option 1' would be circulated to customers first to spread awareness around Awaab's Law, which would then be followed by 'Option 2' on an ongoing basis.

The following was noted during discussions:

- JBe commented that the proposed inclusion of information around the different types of hazards covered by the law would be beneficial for customers. The DP noted that comms would also focus on ensuring that customers use the correct avenues to report issues, so that Salix Homes remains compliant with the relevant timescales. Customers will be directed to the customer portal rather than reporting directly to colleagues, which will assist in avoiding potential issues such as when individual colleagues are on leave.
- CA queried whether the proposed information was already on the Salix Homes website. The CCM confirmed that a news story on Salix Homes had been published on the website, but the follow-up detail will go live following approval by members.
- CA suggested the inclusion of a further introductory paragraph on the Law within the proposed webpage information, to provide additional context for customers.
- GA queried whether information could be targeted specifically to customers who may not access the website or Salix Homes' social media pages. In response, the DP noted that harder-to-reach customers would be focused on for engagement, and the prioritisation of communications would also be supported by things like tenancy audit and Switchee data.
- The DP further noted that the Comms team are also looking to develop a customer pack in an accessible format for customers within further phases of the communications campaign. She commented that this would also highlight the importance of points such as customers providing access for tenancy audits and other building safety works.
- HW suggested that information posters be placed in communal areas of high-rise buildings to ensure maximum possible reach for the comms campaign. The CCM confirmed that this action was planned. JBe noted that they could be placed in the lift of buildings where there is a captive audience to read the information.
- AA commented that he liked the proposed graphics, in particular the slight changes in colour to denote different information. He suggested that the image for the poster may be too large in relation to the text and may detract from the overall message. The CCM noted this feedback.
- AA queried Salix Homes' position in relation to issues reported to shared mailboxes by customers. The DP confirmed that shared mailboxes and any Salix Homes work phone would be supported by automated messages which would confirm the correct routes to report issues. Emergency service provision for out-of-

	<p>hours times will also be maintained.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AA further queried Salix Homes' position in cases where customers with hazards within their homes refuse alternative accommodation. The DP confirmed that colleagues will make sure an emergency is safe before leaving the site. The repairs system will then flag these issues first in the next working day, which specific colleagues will be assigned to address as a priority.</li> <li>• The Chair praised Salix Homes' proactive approach to the implementation of Awaab's Law and the involvement of the Customer Committee throughout the process. The DP thanked members for their feedback. She noted that she would bring a further update on data in relation to Awaab's Law timescales to the Committee in the new year.</li> </ul> <p><b>The Committee resolved to approve the External Communications in relation to Awaab's Law.</b></p> <p><b>Actions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DP/CCM to provide a further update on Salix Homes' position in relation to Awaab's Law, including on customer communications.</li> </ul>
9.	<p><b>Rent and Service Charge Increase Letters</b></p> <p><i>The DF joined the meeting at 18:46.</i></p> <p>The DF and CCM provided an overview of Salix Homes' updated rent and service charge increase letters for 2026. The following key points were highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Finance and Comms teams work closely on the update of the letters each year, which are then shared with SLT, Customer Committee and Board for comment prior to being finalised.</li> <li>• There are no significant changes to the format of the letters in comparison to the previous year, but feedback from new members in particular is welcomed.</li> <li>• It was noted that the letters may be adapted to include further detail if the anticipated detail around rent convergence is published by the government in the Autumn Budget.</li> </ul> <p>The following was noted during discussions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JBe noted that customers would never be happy to receive the increase letters but commented that Salix's approach has always felt reasonable. In particular, it is good for customers to see that Salix's rents are comparatively low in relation to other providers across Salford. The DF thanked JBe for this feedback and noted that the Finance team conducts regular benchmarking comparisons of rent levels.</li> <li>• The Chair queried what the additional detail on rent convergence would be included within the letters. The DF provided members with additional detail on the proposed re-introduction of rent convergence and the intention to ensure that similar rents are charged for similar social housing properties. He noted that the information communicated to customers on this would depend on the detail provided by the government in the Autumn Budget.</li> <li>• VB and JBe raised queries in relation to rent convergence for private landlords and new-build social properties. The DF commented that rent convergence only applies to social landlords and is also based on outdated valuations from 1999 which has led to increasingly complex rent calculations in relation to social housing properties.</li> <li>• MD queried whether the letters would be sent via email to customers. The DF confirmed that he was discussing this approach with the Customer Engagement and Comms teams as it is important to communicate with customers via their</li> </ul>

	<p>preferred routes. He noted that this would be checked against relevant legislation to confirm that posted letters are not required. The CCM noted that the Comms team are exploring a potential new system which could send information automatically via customers' preferred formats although noted that this would not be ready in time for the letters to be sent in 2026.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AA thanked officers for taking on board feedback on the letters from previous years. He further suggested that the support information for concerned customers could be moved higher up in the letter to ensure it is not missed.</li> <li>• In relation to AA's comment, the Chair commented that, while the details within the letter around rent comparisons and services provided by Salix were valid, it may feel like over-justification of the rent increase to customers.</li> <li>• GA raised a query in relation to the provision of FAQ information with the letter. In response, the DF confirmed that FAQs are listed on the Salix Homes website and circulated along with the letters to customers. This also contains legally-required standard script around things like disagreement with rent or service charge increases.</li> <li>• The DF thanked members for their feedback and noted that further comments are welcomed prior to the letters being shared with Board in January.</li> </ul> <p><b>The Committee resolved to approve the updated Rent and Service Charge Increase Letters.</b></p>
10.	<p><b>Customer Committee Annual Appraisal Overview</b></p> <p>The DGRA provided members with an overview of the outputs from the appraisal programme for committee members in 2025. The following key points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This was the first time for this report to be shared with Customer Committee members, with a summary of the feedback from appraisals having been shared with the Remuneration &amp; Governance Committee.</li> <li>• The report provides members with a summary of the anonymised feedback and themes arising from the appraisal.</li> <li>• Members were reminded that as they were remunerated, the Customer Committee members are subject to an annual appraisal</li> <li>• The methodology of the appraisal process was outlined – this reflected the methodology for Board members.</li> <li>• Actions identified as a result of the appraisals process will inform a wider Governance Action Plan along with Board appraisals feedback and the outcomes of the recent External Governance Review. This will be shared with Board for approval in January 2026.</li> </ul> <p>The Chair noted that the number of agenda items during meetings had been raised as a potential issue through the appraisals process. The DGRA noted this as an important point and commented that colleagues would explore the possibility of reducing the overall number of agenda items to ensure that in-depth and effective discussion can be held by members.</p> <p><b>The Committee noted the Annual Appraisal Overview.</b></p>
11.	<p><b>Complaints 6-Month Update</b></p> <p><i>The CM joined the meeting at 19:10.</i></p> <p>The CM provided members with an overview of complaints received by Salix Homes between 1 April and 30 September 2025. The following key points were highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data shows a consistent increase in the volume of complaints received by Salix</li> </ul>

Homes across the last few years.

- From April to September, 4 complaints were refused. 3 of these related to previous complaints and so were directed to the Housing Ombudsman. The remaining refusal related to an ongoing legal disrepair claim.
- Overall, Salix Homes adopts an open approach to complaints and ensures all complaints are investigated fully as they cannot be de-escalated.
- The proportion of complaints which proceed to Stage 2 has also increased. Some of this relates to customers who repeatedly submit complaints across numerous services areas. The Complaints Team are focusing on this to identify themes and trends in repeat complaints.
- Repairs remain the main source of complaints although the themes within complaints have changed over time. For instance, time taken to complete a repair has reduced and dropped out of the top 3 complaints themes for the first time in Q2.
- Other areas focused on within the previous 6 months have included complaints relating to staff attitude, and on sub-contractor performance and service. To address this, works have been ongoing around language and the delivery of information to customers.

The Chair noted the interrelation of Salix Homes complaint service with Salix Homes' performance in other service areas. She commented that the work of customer scrutiny for example, could help support improvements in customer communication and, therefore, reduce the likelihood of complaints being submitted by customers.

The CM noted that performance by the Complaints Team has been positive over the last 6 months, and colleagues have strictly stuck to complaint response timescales which has led to improved performance figures.

The CM commented that next steps for the Complaints Team include continuing to work with managers to analyse the impact and effectiveness of previous actions, as well as to continue identifying patterns in complaints received. She noted that October 2025 was likely to be the month with the highest number of Stage 1 complaints received by Salix Homes on record.

#### **The Committee noted the Complaints Update.**

**12.**

#### **Performance 6-Month Update**

*The PBIM joined the meeting at 19:30.*

The PBIM provided members with a 6-month progress update on Salix Homes' performance, including details of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) and other key performance indicators. The following key points were highlighted:

- Overall, performance remains strong across most service areas, with 65% of indicators meeting or exceeding performance expectations. The majority of TSMs are within target, and all but 2 exceed scores from the Greater Manchester Housing Providers (GMHP) group.
- It was noted that the next Performance update to Committee would include further benchmarking data from across the sector.
- TSM data shows fluctuations across the year, such as in relation to complaints performance. It was noted that TSM data can be impacted by issues outside of Salix Homes' remit. For instance, negative complaints and ASB-related responses may be given by respondents even where they have not submitted a recent complaint or ASB report. It was confirmed that Salix Homes now follows-up with

	<p>these customers to confirm the correct processes relating to submitting complaints and ASB.</p> <p>In response to a query, the PBIM confirmed that repairs performance has been impacted by the increasingly challenging targets set by Salix Homes although he also noted that repairs performance overall is significantly stronger than at the same point in the previous year.</p> <p>AA requested that information relating to Salix Homes' tolerances for performance in relation to each TSM be added to future performance reporting. The PBIM noted this for inclusion in future and commented that this was already planned for future reporting to Board.</p> <p><b>The Committee noted the Performance Update.</b></p> <p><b>Actions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>PBIM to include further detail on Salix Homes' tolerances in relation to performance within future reports.</b></li> </ul>
13.	<p><b>Neighbourhood Action Plans 6-Month Update</b></p> <p><i>The DC joined the meeting at 19:45.</i></p> <p>The DC provided members with an update on progress in relation to the delivery of Salix Homes' Neighbourhood Actions Plans (NAPs). The following key points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The main neighbourhood priorities identified by customers have remained consistent, and continue to centre around litter-picking, ASB reduction, clearing untidy gardens and communal areas, reducing the impact of rodents and nuisance pets, amongst other areas.</li> <li>• The approach to NAPs has become business-as-usual amongst Salix colleagues. New approaches are now being explored to 'freshen-up' the approach to neighbourhood improvement. This has included discussions around a potential new online engagement tool, expanding the use of Customer Insight data and re-launching programmes such as the 'Love Your Neighbourhood' scheme.</li> <li>• Members are welcomed to provide input to and co-design the revised approach to neighbourhood management on an ongoing basis.</li> </ul> <p>The following was noted during discussions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CA thanked Salix colleagues for taking previous feedback from members on-board and noted that it was positive to see that the impact of the NAPs is starting to be seen.</li> <li>• In relation to the potential online customer engagement tool, the Chair noted that members had previously requested further detail on the specific functions of this prior to final approval, which is yet to be presented to Committee.</li> <li>• The Chair further queried if Salix is still holding quarterly Working in Neighbourhoods (WIN) days for colleagues as part of wider community engagement. In response, the DC noted that WIN days had continued to be held, although Salix is currently exploring alternative options such as wider volunteering opportunities for colleagues to avoid some of the logistical problems experienced with WIN days. He commented that this could be linked in with the proposed reintroduction of some community projects. It was noted that dates for future community engagement events, involving colleagues from across the organisation, could be shared with members to allow their involvement.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>The Committee noted the Neighbourhood Action Plans Update.</b></p> <p><b>Actions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DC to share details of upcoming neighbourhood events to be shared with members.</li> <li>• CSEM/CEM to share further details on a potential online engagement tool with members, including on the proposed purpose and functionality of its use.</li> </ul>
<b>14.</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>
	JBe and HW noted their preference for presentations to be shared on-screen during remote meetings, where possible, to assist in following on with discussions. In addition, the Chair noted that members can contact report authors at any time with questions or points of clarification outside of regular committee meetings.
	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>
Tuesday 13 <sup>th</sup> January 2026 (Diamond House)	
The meeting closed at 19:55	