



**Minutes of the Customer Committee Meeting held on  
Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2026 at Diamond House**

<b>MEMBERS:</b>	<p><b>Diamond House</b> Charlotte Haines (Chair) Ahmed Abdulmalek (AA) Gareth Evans (GE) Jack Buckley (JBU) Keri Muldoon (KM) Helen Wallworth (HW) Victoria Burrows-Boon (VB)</p> <p><b>Virtual</b> Marta Diaz (MD) Gerald Arhin (GA)</p>
<b>OFFICERS:</b>	<p>Gemma Parlby, Executive Director Customers and Landlord Services (EDCLS) Eric Tamanis, Executive Director of Finance &amp; Growth (EDFG) Sarah Henderson, Executive Director of Business Services and Improvement (EDBSI) Lorraine Giddings, Director of Customer Experience (DCE) Christiana O'Brien, Customer Engagement Manager (CEM) Nichola Shepard, Director of Governance, Risk &amp; Assurance (DGRA) Ed Sidley, Performance and Business Intelligence Manager (PBIM) Rebecca Airey, Governance and Policy Officer (GPO) - Minutes</p>
<b>OBSERVERS:</b>	
<b>APOLOGIES:</b>	<p>John Beattie (JBe) Cynthia (Bethel) Alloyda (CA)</p>
<p>The meeting commenced at 18:07</p>	
<b>ITEM</b>	
<b>1.</b>	<b>Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest</b>
	<p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>Apologies were received from JBe and CA.</p> <p>There were no Declarations of Interest.</p>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2025</b>
	<b>The Committee approved the minutes from the last meeting held on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2025.</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Matters Arising and Action Tracker</b>
	<b>The Committee noted the changes to the Action Tracker.</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Chair's Update</b>

	<p>The Chair noted that the Board had not convened since the last Committee meeting and therefore had no updates to report.</p> <p>The Committee welcomed back the GPO and introduced Gemma Parlby as the new Executive Director of Customer and Landlord Services (EDCLS). The EDCLS provided members with an overview of her professional background and informed the Committee that she would be responsible for the customer and landlord services at Salix Homes, such as overseeing housing services, customer engagement, repairs and maintenance. She added that three Directors would report to her: Lorraine Giddings (Director of Customer Experience), Warren Carlon (Director of Communities) and Jen Green (Director of Property).</p> <p>The Chair noted that a Chairs Group meeting had taken place and that she found it particularly useful for Chair support, adding that this would be especially beneficial for the new Chair of the Customer Committee.</p> <p><b>The Committee noted the Chair's Update.</b></p>
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>CEM Update</b></p>
	<p>The CEM provided members with an update on customer engagement activities, including progress relating to the scrutiny action tracker and an update on the activities of the subgroups.</p> <p>The Committee noted the effectiveness of including an insert into rent letters as a recruitment method for subgroups.</p> <p>AA emphasised the need for the proposed online customer engagement tool to compliment, not duplicate, what is already available via MySalix and the Salix Homes website.</p> <p>In response to AA's query regarding the scalability of the online customer engagement platform, the CEM confirmed that it is scalable and noted that several organisations have expressed interest in exploring collaborative opportunities to expand the platform. It was further noted that there is potential to grow the platform and develop it in a range of directions.</p> <p>AA queried what safeguards Salix Homes will put in place to ensure the 'silent voices' are not excluded. The CEM informed the Committee that this will form part of a larger piece of work focused on identifying the 'silent voices' who are not currently engaging with the organisation, and that the customer engagement platform would not be the only tool used to reach these customers. It was noted that this is an important area of focus, and that Salix Homes is increasingly improving its reach to these customers. The Chair was pleased with the clarification of how Salix Homes propose to use the online tool following feedback from the Strategy Day.</p> <p>The EDCLS informed members that the Director of Communities and DCE are looking to refresh the Customer Engagement Strategy to include Communities and highlighted the redevelopment of Neighbourhood Action Plans, to reinforce that all customers can identify their Neighbourhood Officer. It was also noted that Salix Homes had undertaken a significant amount of work in relation to customer data and insights, and the EDCLS emphasised the need for the organisation to manage resources efficiently to maximise impact.</p> <p>The EDCLS agreed to bring the draft Customer and Community Engagement Strategy to the Committee for feedback.</p>

	<p><b>The Committee resolved to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Note the progress regarding the Scrutiny Action Tracker.</b></li> <li>• <b>Note the updates of the sub-groups.</b></li> <li>• <b>Note the proposed use of the online engagement tool.</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Actions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Customer Committee to review the revised Customer and Community Engagement Strategy.</b></li> </ul>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Internal Audit (IA) Plan 2026/27</b>
	<p><i>The DGRA entered the meeting at 18:25.</i></p> <p>The DGRA provided members with an overview of the internal audit process at Salix Homes and emphasised that an effective Internal Audit (IA) Plan is an important part of internal controls assurance. Members were informed that the Internal Audit Plan is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure the areas identified for review are appropriate and relevant. The DGRA asked the Committee to suggest areas for potential inclusion into the Plan for the forthcoming year (2026/27).</p> <p>The Committee considered the proposed areas for review and agreed that, given the recent development of Salix Homes’ ICT function and its effective management of cyber security, this area could be postponed until 2027/28.</p> <p>The DGRA reassured members that Salix Homes’ ICT functions had undergone two IAs over the past two years, and that the Audit and Risk Committee maintain oversight of ICT action plans and the implementation of IA recommendations.</p> <p>AA queried whether consideration should be given to STAIRs (Social Tenant Access to Information Requirements), to provide assurance that the organisation fully understands, and is compliant with, the new legislative requirements.</p> <p>The DGRA noted that the legislation comes into force from October 2026, with Registered Providers (RPs) being required to proactively publish information from April 2027. As such, there would be a limited amount of data available to audit should STAIRs be included in the 2026/27 Internal Audit Plan.</p> <p>In response to a query from GE about how many Freedom of Information (FOI) requests Salix Homes receive, the DGRA informed members that the team currently receives fewer than one request per month, although the introduction of the new legislation may result in a higher volume of requests.</p> <p>The DGRA provided members with an overview of STAIRs and emphasised that RPs will only be required to accept FOI requests from customers or their representative, and that the request must relate to their property or the housing management services.</p> <p>In response to AA’s query about whether STAIRs would apply to potential customers, such as those applying through choice-based letting, the DGRA noted that currently the legislation only applies to Salix Homes’ existing customers.</p> <p>In response to KM’s query about whether the Committee had previously discussed responsive repairs, the CEM noted that members agreed at the Strategy Day not to carry out a customer-led scrutiny project on this topic in 2025/26, preferring instead to consider</p>

it alongside the 2026/27 Internal Audit Plan. The Committee then reflected on how responsive repairs might feature in the future IA plan.

HW asked for clarification on the distinction between disrepair and responsive repairs. The DGRA explained that disrepair refers to failures in maintaining a safe and habitable property, whereas responsive repairs are conducted as part of routine maintenance or in response to a tenant's request. Prior to Awaab's Law, damp, mould and condensation was classed as a responsive repair.

The Chair requested further information on the scope of the proposed review of Salix Homes' HR function. The DGRA noted that HR had been identified as a potential area for review given it has not been audited for a number of years and emphasised ongoing changes in this area including the introduction of the Competence and Conduct Standard. It was noted that the EDBSI would examine this in greater detail at item 7. The Committee agreed to discuss the matter with the EDBSI before deciding whether to prioritise HR as part of the 2026/27 Internal Audit Plan.

**The Committee resolved to prioritise the following areas for potential review during 2026/27:**

- **Building Safety**
- **Disrepair (including damp, mould and condensation)**
- **Landlord Health and Safety (Electrical Safety)**

*The DGRA left the meeting at 18:45.*

## **7. Competence and Conduct Standard**

*The EDBSI entered the meeting at 18:46.*

The EDBSI provided an overview of the Competence and Conduct Standard, due to run from October 2026 to October 2029, noting it aims to professionalise the sector and improve culture through requirements on competency, conduct and qualifications. Key highlights included:

- Salix Homes will develop its own Code of Conduct modelled off the National Housing Federation's (NHF) which the organisation has adopted.
- Salix Homes will review job descriptions to ensure colleagues have the correct skills, knowledge and behaviour to perform the role effectively.
- A policy will be developed that outlines how Salix Homes will approach learning and development, appraisal of colleagues and how to manage poor performance.
- Customers will have meaningful opportunities to influence and scrutinise the Code of Conduct and Learning and Development Policy.
- Salix Homes will ensure colleagues are registered, working towards or have completed the relevant qualifications – this will include Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs).
- Senior Housing Managers will require a Level 4 qualification, equivalent to the first year of a bachelor's degree.
- Senior Housing Executives will require a Level 5 qualification, equivalent to the second year of a bachelor's degree.

In response to a query from the Chair regarding funding for the additional learning and development requirements, the EDBSI advised that there are no grants available to support the requirements of the Competence and Conduct Standard, but provisions have been made within the budget.

The EDBSI noted that there is no standardised framework for regulating the new standard, but the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) will likely focus on the impact the changes to competency, conduct and qualification requirements have had on the customer experience and organisational management.

AA expressed concern regarding succession planning, querying whether larger organisations might recruit colleagues who have obtained their qualifications through Salix Homes. AA also highlighted the risk of having a limited pool of potential candidates to recruit from, as those remaining may not be trained to the required standard.

The EDBSI reassured members that the new Standard is applicable to all Housing Associations, meaning that by October 2029 all housing staff across the country should hold the relevant qualification. The EDBSI noted the potential risk during the transition period when recruiting new staff, as those who already hold the qualifications may be favoured in the recruitment process.

Responding to AA's query about how Salix Homes will manage colleagues approaching retirement who require a qualification, acknowledging that providing training may be perceived as a less efficient use of resource, the EDBSI noted that such colleagues may choose to step down into roles that do not require qualifications or may opt for early retirement. The EDBSI emphasised the importance of identifying training that is suitable for colleagues at all stages of their careers.

The EDCLS reiterated the discussion regarding the inclusion of HR in the 2026/27 Internal Audit Plan. Following the conversation with the EDBSI, the Committee agreed to include HR in the 2026/27 Internal Audit Plan (see item 6).

The Chair raised concerns regarding the effect on customer experience should housing officers be required to take time out from their operational responsibilities to undertake learning and development.

**The Committee resolved to:**

- **Note the Competency and Conduct standard update.**
- **Prioritise HR for potential review during the 2026/27 Internal Audit.**

*The EDBSI left the meeting at 19:11.*

**8. Rent Convergence Update**

*The EDFG entered the meeting at 19:11.*

The EDFG provided members with an overview of rent convergence, and highlighted that:

- Formula rent is a standard rent level calculated using factors such as property value, local earnings and property size, designed to ensure fairness and consistency in rent levels across similar properties.
- Convergence means enabling properties that are currently below formula rent to increase above the usual inflation-linked cap (CPI + 1%) until they align with formula rent.
- This is done to reduce historical disparities where tenants in similar homes pay different rents.
- 94% of Salix Homes' rents are currently below this formula, and most properties would reach the standard rent level in the first year.
- It was expected that a timeline for implementation would be outlined in the Autumn Statement, but RPs are still waiting for government steer.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As such, Salix Homes will request Board on 27 January 2026 to approve a rent increase of the standard CPI + 1% unless further guidance is issued.</li> </ul> <p>In response to a query from KM about CPI, the EDFG informed members that the CPI figure is taken from the previous September for implementation in the following April. For the year 2026/27 this will equate to 4.8% (3.8% CPI + 1%).</p> <p>The EDFG reassured the Committee that all profits generated from rent increases are reinvested in the properties.</p> <p>The EDCLS noted that, while Universal Credit will cover the increase for many customers, those paying partial or full rent would be most affected. Members were advised that the Customer Support Fund could be increased to reflect these needs.</p> <p>The Committee discussed rent convergence and noted that, while members recognised the potential financial impact on customers, they also acknowledged and understood the business need for rent convergence.</p> <p><b>The Committee noted the Rent Convergence Update.</b></p> <p><i>The EDFG left the meeting at 19:26.</i></p>
9.	<p><b>Springboard Update</b></p>
	<p>The CEM updated members on community activities supported through the Springboard Fund Q1-Q3 2025/26.</p> <p>The Committee thanked the CEM for presenting and noted that it is a very positive report. In response to a query from the Chair about including photos to accompany the report, the EDCLS and DCE reassured members the photos will be used elsewhere, such as in an annual report.</p> <p><b>The Committee noted the Springboard Update.</b></p>
10.	<p><b>Annual TSM Benchmarking Report</b></p>
	<p><i>The PBIM entered the meeting at 19:38.</i></p> <p>The PBIM presented the annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) benchmarking report to the Committee, and noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benchmarking performance is beneficial because it allows an organisation to compare its outcomes against peers, identify areas for improvement and drive efficiency and effectiveness.</li> <li>Overall, Salix Homes is performing above average across all areas of TSM benchmarking.</li> <li>Salix Homes performs above the national average in 11 out of 12 tenant perception measures – with time taken to complete the most recent repair scoring slightly below national average.</li> <li>There are 7 tenant perception measures where Salix Homes places within the top 50 nationally.</li> <li>Of the 14 operational measures for 2024/25, Salix Homes performs above the national average in 12 of them – with the exceptions being the number of ASB cases raised and hate-related incidents.</li> <li>Salix Homes is 100% compliant across all areas of building safety.</li> </ul> <p>AA praised Salix Homes on customer satisfaction regarding the handling of ASB cases,</p>

noting that the organisation ranks 15<sup>th</sup> nationally. JBU acknowledged this achievement but highlighted that a third of customers remained dissatisfied and stressed the need to avoid complacency.

The PBIM informed the Committee that Salix Homes has its own internal targets aimed at improving customer satisfaction, but that benchmarking against other organisations is useful for understanding the organisation's performance in this area.

The PBIM advised that Salix Homes' significant number of high-rise properties, with extensive communal areas, has resulted in multiple reports relating to the same ASB issues. It was further noted that some estates have experienced complex ASB challenges, necessitating multi-agency working to address these matters.

It was also highlighted that prior to the introduction of triage in the new REACT system, out-of-hours reports were not assessed at initial contact, leading to duplication and some misclassification of complaints. The PBIM highlighted the value of reviewing post-implementation data, noting that ASB cases had already reduced by approximately half in the first month.

The Chair proposed the inclusion of an additional column setting out Salix Homes' internal targets, commenting that although peer comparison is valuable, assessing performance against internal targets would be of greater benefit to the Committee. The PBIM noted that current internal targets are ambitious and are under discussion by the SLT to determine how best to frame them considering Salix Homes' national performance. JBU suggested that, instead of fixed targets, the organisation could consider targets expressed as a percentage above the national average.

**The Committee noted the Annual TSM Benchmarking Report.**

**Actions:**

- **PBIM to consider framing internal targets as a percentage above the national average.**

*The PBIM left the meeting at 19:52.*

**11. Meeting Schedule & Forward Plan**

*The DGRA entered the meeting at 19:53.*

The DGRA presented the proposed Board and Committee meeting schedule and forward plan covering 2026 to December 2027. It was noted that the schedule had been reviewed by the Remuneration and Governance Committee in advance of consideration by the Customer Committee. The DGRA highlighted that the schedule reflected members' feedback from appraisals regarding meeting cancellations and confirmed that, subject to approval, Salix Homes would adhere to the agreed dates.

Following a request for clarification on the term 'SLT,' the Chair emphasised the need for officers to communicate in plain English, both verbally and within written reports.

**The Committee noted the meeting schedule for 2026/27.**

**12. Any Other Business**

No other business was discussed.

**13. Meeting Reflection**

	The EDCLS noted that members demonstrated an effective balance between business requirements and customer needs in their consideration of the Competency and Conduct Standard and rent convergence, and that they provided appropriate challenge to officers.
	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>
	Tuesday 3rd March 2026 (Virtual)
The meeting closed at 20:06	