



**Minutes of Customer Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 5th May 2026
via Microsoft Teams**

MEMBERS:	Charlotte Haines (Chair) Ahmed Abdulmalek (AA) Keri Muldoon (KM) Marta Diaz (MD) Jack Buckley (JBu) John Beattie (JBe) Victoria Burrows-Boon (VB) Gerald Arhin (GA)
OFFICERS:	Gemma Parlby, Executive Director Customers and Landlord Services (EDCLS) Lorraine Giddings, Director of Customer Experience (DCE) Christiana O'Brien, Customer Engagement Manager (CEM) Nichola Shepard, Director of Governance, Risk & Assurance (DGRA) Warren Carlon, Director of Communities (DC) Jamie Cockerham, Governance and Policy Officer (GPO) - Minutes
ATTENDEES:	None
APOLOGIES:	Helen Wallworth (HW) Gareth Evans (GE)

The meeting commenced at 18:02.

ITEM	
1.	Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest
	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from HW and GE. There were no declarations of interest.
2.	Minutes of the Customer Committee Meeting held on 3rd March 2026
	The Committee approved the minutes from the last meeting held on Tuesday 3rd March 2026.
3.	Matters Arising and Action Tracker
	The Chair noted that 2 outstanding actions have had their completion dates extended to July 2026. However, she noted that these had been discussed in-depth at the Committee Strategy Day in April and that work is progressing on these actions. The Committee noted the changes to the Action Tracker.
4.	Chair's Update

	It was noted that a Board Teatime session had been held in April relating to ongoing work around the new Competence & Conduct requirements, which members of the Customer Committee had previously been briefed on during the January 2026 Committee meeting. The Committee noted the Chair's update.
5.	CEM Update
	The CEM provided members with an update on customer engagement activities, including progress relating to the scrutiny action tracker. The following was noted during discussions: • Discussion was held around membership of the Committee. It was noted that 3 founding members, including the Chair, are due to step down in September 2026 at the end of their terms and that recruitment is underway to ensure a smooth transition to a new Chair. • The CEM confirmed that JBe and HW have begun external Chairing training in relation to this transition and to the chairing of Committee Sub-Groups. The Committee noted the Customer Engagement Manager's Update.
6.	Customer Scrutiny Scope Approval
	The CEM presented members with the detailed scope for the planned scrutiny review of Tenancy Management, following previous member discussion at the Committee Strategy Day in April 2026. The Chair thanked the CEM for incorporating members' views into the proposed scope and for providing clarity, both on what was included and excluded from the scope. JBe echoed this view and commented that the scope captured the elements which members had discussed at the April Strategy Day. Members agreed to approve the proposed scope. The CEM noted that this would be finalised subject to approval from the DC. The Committee approved the Tenancy Management scrutiny scope.
7.	Annual Self-Assessment vs. the Consumer Standards
	The DGRA presented Salix Homes' annual self-assessment vs. the Consumer Standards, to confirm the organisations' ongoing compliance with the standards. She noted the following points: • The annual self-assessment forms part of the 'co-regulatory' approach adopted by the RSH. Members have oversight of the Consumer Standards element of this as this is part of the Committee Terms of Reference. Any feedback on this by members will be incorporated prior to final sign-off by the Board. • It is an important document – allowing the organisation to identify, record and monitor any areas of non-compliance. Members were reminded that the organisation is required to record any areas of non-compliance in Salix Homes' annual financial statements. • The self-assessment document includes links to reports, leaflets or published information on e.g. the website which provide evidence to support the compliance grading. • Overall, no areas of non-compliance with the Consumer Standards have been

identified for 2025/26.

- The report also refers to anticipated changes for 2026/27 (e.g. STAIRs and the Competence & Conduct requirements), to ensure that we are being proactive in measuring compliance and strengthening our approach in these areas.
- It was confirmed that all actions identified to strengthen compliance in the 2024/25 self-assessment have now been implemented.

The following was noted during discussions:

- MD raised a question in relation to responsibility for the maintenance of roads. The EDCLS noted that road maintenance is generally undertaken by the local authority (SCC) unless the road is unadopted and, therefore, Salix has limited responsibility for this in general. The Chair noted that it would be useful for members of the Committee to receive an update on this - including confirmation of responsibility for the roads in which Salix properties are located. The EDCLS noted this and requested that MD contact her with any concerns for specific roads to be reviewed.
- GA queried whether the self-assessment is reviewed by the Board. The DGRA confirmed that this is the case and that any comments made by Customer Committee would be reflected in the final version to be presented to Board. She noted that this is done annually, following the end of the financial year and ahead of the annual financial statements being produced.
- GA raised a further query in relation to the process for developing KPIs. The DGRA noted that this is also an annual process and that KPIs for 2026/27 have been applied from April 2026, following approval of the Performance Framework by Customer Committee and Board. She noted that KPI reporting contributes to the overall picture of compliance, as reflected in the self-assessment document.
- JBe noted reference to the possible rejection of allocations by Salix Homes and queried the rate at which this occurs. In response, the EDCLS noted that while this occurs infrequently, it could be that Salix rejects an allocation if it deems that there are serious risks associated with it. She further noted that the government is undertaking consultation with the NHF and member organisations around the process for allocations and whether first-time tenants should be prioritised in future. JBe noted that queries around allocations would also be assessed through the upcoming Tenancy Management scrutiny piece.
- KM noted that the self-assessment is a long and complex document and encouraged newer committee members to ask any questions for clarification on this if needed. The Chair and EDCLS echoed this view. VB commented that the document is well-written and very informative of Salix's overall work.
- The Chair thanked officers for the in-depth approach to the self-assessment and noted that it provides a high level of re-assurance around compliance.
- The DGRA thanked members for their comments and noted that the self-assessment can be a useful source document and provides a useful overview of what Salix Homes do across our teams. She further noted that, as this is an annual review, over time, newer members will notice similarities in the document as fundamental work areas and reporting will remain in place.

The Committee resolved to recommend approval to the Board of the annual self-assessment against the Consumer Standards.

Actions:

- **EDCLS to provide an update in relation to road maintenance for Salix properties.**

	The DGRA presented members with an update of Salix Homes' operational performance in Q4 2025/26. She highlighted the following key points: • Overall, performance remains strong. Areas of underperformance continue to be monitored, with actions implemented to address this. It was noted that there is a lag between actions being taken and changes to TSM indicators. • Satisfaction with repairs and ASB handling remain outliers against overall performance and are below target. However, overall performance has improved year-on-year. The following was noted during discussions: • In relation to complaints performance, the DCE noted that the volume of stage 2 complaints received has risen in line with the overall increase in complaints across the sector. Some analysis has been undertaken to understand the reasons for this - including consideration of whether Housing Ombudsman compensation determinations are driving customer complaints. However, it can be difficult to ascertain this due to the lag in HO determinations, with some recent determinations for Salix dating back as far as 2024. • The DCE noted that complaints performance may be impacted by TSM surveys' inclusion of complaints questions - even when a customer has not been through the formal complaints process. She noted that further learning and actions are always put in place in response to, and often in advance of, HO determinations. • AA agreed with the DCEs assessment and noted that, in his day job, he has seen many cases in which customers will escalate complaints to stage 2 - no matter the circumstances, to ensure the full process has been exhausted. He noted that customers do not need to provide a reason for escalation of complaints and may not engage with the process following escalation. He suggested that Salix should mirror HO guidance on complaint redress to increase the likelihood of favourable HO determinations in future. • AA queried whether Salix's 80% complaint handling timescales targets are challenging enough given that performance is exceeding this. The DCE commented that targets have increased to 100% in line with HO guidance. • AA queried whether changes to the HO team have impacted Salix's working relationship with them. The DCE noted that having multiple points of contact at the HO for complaints can be challenging particularly where more than one assessor is reviewing the same case, but triaging of evidence requests is shared across the Salix team, who the DCE supports to understand their capacity and resource needs. • KM queried whether complaints volumes are influenced by legal organisations which may prospectively encourage customers to follow redress routes. The DCE noted that this has not specifically been noted at Salix. AA commented that this may have a greater impact on the receipt of disrepair cases rather than complaints. The Committee noted the Operational Performance Q4 2025/26 Update.
9.	Annual Safeguarding Update
	<i>The DC joined the meeting at 18:55.</i> The DC provided members with a summary of safeguarding activity from across the organisation during 2025/26 - summarising safeguarding referrals, highlighting key trends and outlining processes and partnership work in place to protect vulnerable customers. He noted that there had been 144 safeguarding cases raised across the year, 10 of which related to children and the remaining related to adults with care and support needs.

	The following was noted during discussions: • The Chair noted the high proportion of cases relating to mental health, within the context of limited support resources in the local area. She queried how Salix Homes colleagues cope with limited or delayed external support in these cases. The DC noted that Social Services support with specific mental health safeguarding referrals as a priority. However, he noted that mental health issues have generally become more prevalent in daily customer interactions for Salix colleagues. He noted that Salix Homes has a small internal Customer Support team to whom referrals can be made and that intensive tenancy support funding options are currently being assessed to provide further resource. • AA noted that housing providers' roles have expanded over the years to take an increased and more proactive role in customer welfare. He queried whether any analysis of cases in relation to property size has been assessed by Salix Homes, for instance whether more cases come from single-bedroom properties where people may struggle with loneliness. The DC noted that this is an interesting point for further analysis and that, while a high number of cases come from high-rise blocks, it may be worthwhile to review whether single-bedroom properties of all types are correlated to a higher number of cases. • AA further queried how Salix Homes can try to support customers who may be dealing with loneliness and mental health issues. The EDCLS noted that Salix can work to prevent issues early, such as ASB, tenancy disputes and rent arrears which can negatively impact customer wellbeing. She further noted that colleagues can signpost customers to support services and to partner organisations such as Manbassadors, which offer specific support. • KM noted a recent case in which she had supported a vulnerable customer to complete a complex series of forms relating to a water bill debt, which the customer otherwise could not have done themselves. The DC commented that Salix seeks to support customers in these cases whenever they become aware of them, both with signposting to external support and through internal support such as the Customer Support Fund. • MD queried the interim support that Salix can offer while customers wait for potentially long mental health support waiting lists. In response, the EDCLS noted that Salix's Customer Support team can provide some personal support and that the organisation is currently working with SCC to confirm a funding set-up for further intensive housing management. Furthermore, she noted Salix can signpost customers to support services and otherwise seek to support customers by building community connections and focusing on preventive measures. • JBe highlighted the need for consistent and reliable communication with customers who require support. The DC agreed with this view and noted that preventive work is key to avoid further resource requirements at the point of crisis. The Committee noted the Annual Safeguarding Update. Actions: • DC to consider safeguarding cases in relation to property type, in particular around single-bedroom properties.
10.	Customer Support Fund Annual Review
	The DC provided a summary of support provided to customers in 2025/26 through the Customer Support Fund (CSF), including details of the support provided, trends in applications and spend and impacts of the CSF on tenancy sustainment and customer wellbeing. He noted that 203 customers had received support through the CSF in 2025/26, with a total spend of £48,021 from a total budget of £50k.

The following was noted during discussions:

- The Chair queried how 'sufficient income' is judged in relation to CSF applications which are rejected. The DC noted that colleagues follow stringent funding guidelines to assess whether a CSF application is appropriate. He noted that unsuccessful applicants may also be directed to alternative funding sources that have not been exhausted prior to an application.
- GA raised queries in relation to underspend against budget, advertisement of the CSF and the breakdown of applicants in comparison to overall customer demographics. In response, the DC noted that usage of the CSF is balanced across the customer base and that underspend is likely due to the need to balance funding across the entire year and not due to a lack of need. He further noted that the CSF is not proactively advertised by Salix to avoid being overwhelmed with applications and to assist in balancing the budget spend across the whole financial year, to cover all peak times such as Christmas.
- In relation to advertisement to customers of the CSF, the DC commented that customers who may benefit from the fund are currently identified via close one-to-one working with the Housing and Income Management teams rather than through prospective applications. GA noted that this may mean some customers are unaware of the fund. In response, the EDCLS commented that advertisement of wider customer support could be used to facilitate engagement from customers who are struggling, without leading to excessive CSF applications.
- MD queried whether Salix Homes plans to increase the CSF budget. The DC noted that the approved budget remains at £50k for 2026/27. The DGRA noted that this is reviewed by the Board on an ongoing basis and may increase again in the future if cost of living pressures continue to increase for customers.
- VB queried whether, in cases where CSF is used for property/garden clearance, actions such as the supply of gardening tools are taken to avoid repeated issues or CSF applications in future. The DC noted while this is sometimes done, actions are taken on a case-by-case basis. He noted that clearance may sometimes be required where customers can no longer manage a large property, in which cases downsizing to a smaller property may be a more appropriate long-term solution. The DC also noted that the Customer Support team also work closely with social services for customers who are hoarding. Costs are often shared between Salix and SCC in these situations.
- KM queried whether unsuccessful CSF applicants are signposted to other potential support. The DC confirmed that this is the case, and that signposting often occurs prior to an application, with CSF then used as a last resort once other funding options have been exhausted.
- KM noted that Vodafone and other phone service providers offer free sim cards to benefits recipients who fit their criteria, which could be advertised to customers as another route for financial support. The CEM noted this and commented that Salix also has agreement in place with three service providers to offer this to digitally excluded customers too.

The Committee noted the Customer Support Fund Annual Review.

11. Any Other Business

The DC confirmed that – in relation to Item 6 – he was happy to approve the Tenancy Management Scrutiny scope following member approval.

The DCE noted Salix Homes' involvement in the Salford Everywhere art project to commemorate 100 years of Salford's city status. KM also encouraged members to

	nominate any members of the local community, particularly volunteers, for the ongoing 'Salford Heroes' nomination process in advance of the event on 8 August.
12.	Meeting Reflection
	The Chair requested any feedback from members regarding the meeting. The Chair reflected on the positive development on setting the Tenancy Management Scrutiny Scope and receiving reassurance around compliance with the Consumer Standards. She further thanked members for their interesting and educational discussion around complaints performance, safeguarding and the Customer Support Fund, noting that it is good to know that help and support is there for those who need it.
	Date of Next Meeting
	Tuesday 7 th July 2026 (Virtual)
The meeting closed at 19:34.	