

Orwell Residents Group (ORG) Zoom Meeting

6.30pm 7 March 2022

Meeting Notes

1.0	<p>Present</p> <p><u>ORG Members</u> Mary Ager (MA) Sabrina Duncan (SD) John Burman (JB) Sherill Green (SG) Liz Morris (LM)</p> <p><u>Residents</u> Val George (VG) Beryl Latania (BL)</p> <p><u>Staff</u> Diane Piperno (Tenant Involvement Officer) (DP) Mike Penman (Property and Construction Manager) (MP)</p>	
2.0	<p>Apologies</p> <p>Richard Barber Arthur Clark Sharon Cony (unable to access meeting)</p>	
3.0	<p>Introductions</p> <p>Those present introduced themselves to MP. Mike explained that as the Property and Construction Manager his department has 3 heads of service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Asset Management• Compliance and Planned Works• Responsive Repairs <p>All have departments with administrative and hands on staff, the department also covers estate management.</p>	
4.0	<p>Regulatory standards outline of compliance</p> <p>MP provided a run through of the document to evidence compliance with the Home Standard.</p> <p>1.1a It was confirmed all properties are recorded on a database as a 30-year plan with the life span for each specific replaceable items detailed e.g., kitchens, bathrooms, doors, and windows. When items reach their lifespan replacement phase a tender is put out with a Value for Money (VFM) consideration which is rent proportional. Money for this replacement programme comes from customers rent.</p> <p>There has been dissatisfaction with the kitchen and bathroom contractors and ultimately Orwell would like to take this service in house as with the repairs service.</p> <p>SD commented that she would feel more confident if this service was in house as customers would be more likely to receive a good service.</p>	

The VFM tender is considered through a percentage ratio of Cost 60% Quality 40%. This is the standard ratio used and anything higher than 50%: 50% would incur a cost that could not be sustained.

LM raised concern about the ratio and suggested that due to the quality of some items in properties more emphasis should be put on quality.

Mike explained that it is not all about cost, using the example of expensive wooden kitchen cabinet doors not having a longer life span than MDF.

1.1b

Standards of design and quality for properties are not assessed specifically on quality of products but also to the efficiency of the products in the house. Social housing homes are often built using Homes England grants which can result in them being built to a higher standard than the decent homes guidance. The grant funding provides the opportunity to try out new products, e.g., air source heat pumps, low energy lightbulbs or triple glazing. The standard also relates to the O2 and carbon emissions of the home.

The use of new products needs to be considered carefully to ensure parts for repairs are available as this can be an issue for items such as new types of boilers. Also, the efficiency of a product needs to be considered against the products life cycle. The standard also relates to the metric capacity, for example a kitchen's dimensions need to be in relation to the size of the property.

1.1c Service standards are based on section 6 of the Governments decent homes guidance, Orwell's offer is outlined in their service standards for repairs and planned work. With planned work consideration is made for those who do not wish replacements to take place even though the item is at the ends of the expected lifetime. Often this is due to the product still being in good order.

1.2a

Orwell has an appointment system that offers options for customers. Currently there are concerns re the out of hours service which is a remote service that covers a large number of tenants used by multiple housing associations.

Orwell are looking to make the repairs service more cost effective, for example if a repair is required on one tap, Orwell now replace both taps and check all the taps in the property. This type of practice helps avoid return trips and aggravating the customers

VG raised that the electrical contractors also do this as she was asked if there are any other issues in the property when the contractor had completed the repair.

1.2b

Health and safety is looked at from a compliance point of view and carried out on a monthly basis. Problems with compliance can arise as there is a 12-week tender process and if it is a fire risk it needs to be corrected in 6 weeks. A further problem can arise if someone does not give access to their property. Whilst the customer is in the property Orwell are compliant however as soon as the customer moves out the property it becomes a non-compliant property.

	<p>For hardwiring and gas, Orwell will take tenants to court to gain access but not for gaining access for replacement kitchens and bathrooms</p> <p>2.1.1 Not relevant as no waver requested</p> <p>2.21 Painting and decorating and updating garden areas is also on a 30-year cycle. All areas are budgeted for and VFM is tested through use of Eastern Procurement.</p> <p>The Home standard and Decent Home Definition are currently under review and the government will bring in new criteria following this, which is likely to encourage environmental improvements. Insulating and windows and doors is the first stage and improved heating systems. There will be issues for improving older properties, however Orwell will not sell properties just for economy reasons. There also needs to be consideration for the fact that these are people homes, especially in rural areas where if sold there will be no other social housing available.</p>	
5.0	<p>Question/ Concerns raised following this Overview</p> <p>The 60% Cost 40% Quality rations for tenders, as the quality of doors/windows/ flooring in some properties is questionable, shouldn't there be more emphasis put on quality.</p> <p>New Orwell customers are less likely to complain about the standard of their property due to the "you should be grateful for what you get mentality"</p> <p>Should Orwell more often be replacing rather than mending items, e.g., windows and doors when they are worn out despite not having reached the expected lifetime span. The does not appear to be VFM due to repeated journeys for repairs.</p> <p>In house staff verses contractors, it was raised that in house can sometimes lead to complacency, alternatively others felt it provides a more dedicated service.</p>	
6.0	<p>Next Steps</p> <p>It was agreed to set up a further working group meeting to identify feedback on the compliance of this Standard and to look at some figures around the quality/ satisfaction with homes.</p>	
7.0	<p>Date of Next Meeting: 4 April 2022</p>	