

ORWELL RESIDENTS GROUP MEETING MINUTES

Monday 26th January 2026 6pm - 8pm
Crane Hill Lodge

			Action by
1.0	Attendees	Mary Ager (MA) John Burman (JB) Val George (VG) – on Teams Jackie Millar (JM) Maggi Miller (MM) Jamie Hopkins (JH) Rob Longfoot (RL) Michelle Lunt (ML) Sarah Parramint (SP)	
	Apologies	Claire Townley (CT)	
2.0	PayPoint scrutiny action plan	<p>ML and JH presented the action plan which had been developed during and after implementation of PayPoint. The actions have been completed apart from two which are in progress:</p> <p>1) One action related to the Orwell App needing to be “fit for purpose”.</p> <p>JH explained that the App is currently being reviewed and updated. Historically, 2 of the biggest hurdles for customers are (a) the need to create and use passwords and (b) customers knowing their ID number. The new App will overcome the need to set and remember passwords. This will be replaced with a link which can be accessed via the customers mobile number or email. A link will be sent to the customer and if they click on the link, it will automatically take them to the App.</p> <p>2) The second outstanding action is a follow up survey with the same group of customers to understand how they’ve found the transition. The questions have been agreed, and the survey is planned for March.</p> <p>Further discussion took place about the implementation of PayPoint.</p> <p>The letters were reviewed by ORG prior to dispatch and their feedback incorporated as much as possible given the complexity of the information. The letters were outsourced to a third party so that</p>	

		they could be personalised to include customers' 3 nearest PayPoint locations.	
		<p>MA felt the resulting letter was better spaced and clearer for customers.</p> <p>Some customers didn't receive their letters in advance of PayPoint going live despite the letters being dispatched two weeks in advance. We are now aware that mail is not always delivered in a timely fashion and we will consider alternative providers in the future. We will also consider pre-advertising via email, text etc. A new Communication Group has been set up to look at how we communicate with customers and will pick up large-scale communication as part of its remit.</p> <p>DD is Orwell's preferred method of payment as it is more efficient and cost effective. DD forms were sent to all customers when PayPoint was introduced. JM raised concerns about older people being left behind by the introduction of online payment. JH confirmed that the goal is to provide customers with a choice of payment that suits them and PayPoint delivers greater options than our previous system.</p> <p>The group discussed the reasons why some customers are suspicious of DD. This included the charges that were previously levied by banks when funds were not available to cover payment. Having worked in the banking sector previously, ML confirmed these charges were removed years ago. From March, customers will be able to choose a DD payment date to suit themselves. It was agreed that "myth busting" will need to accompany this change in order to reassure customers and maximise take up.</p> <p>JH reported that all channels of payment are being used and together with housing officers, he is monitoring customers for rent arrears.</p>	
3.0	Damp and mould scrutiny action plan	<p>ML reminded ORG that the scrutiny started with a review of the Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy and Procedure on the 20th October.</p> <p>At the ORG meeting on 17th November, members considered the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Assistant Director of Property Services gave a presentation on the requirements of Awaab's Law which came into effect on 27th October 2025. • ORG considered the content of the process map associated with Awaab's Law and agreed that it met the requirements of the law and there were no gaps. • ORG were given 2 tasks to review the existing customer information on damp and mould: 	

		<p>Task 1 – “Find something you wanted to know”</p> <p>Task 2 – “Review the damp & mould pages”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The findings from the Damp and Mould Scrutiny carried out by the Independent East Residents Voice Panel (IEVRP) was shared. <p>ML presented the findings and recommendations from the scrutiny and asked members to note their comments on the printed copies provided. These will be collated and shared with the Assistant Director of Property Services and Head of Communications.</p>	<p>SP</p>										
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Key Priorities 2026</p>	<p>RL explained that he has been in post for just over 2 months and one of his key priorities is collecting information about Orwell’s compliance against the Regulator of Social Housing’s Consumer Standards.</p> <p>An inspection is likely to take place in 12-18 months’ time and now is the last chance to make meaningful improvements. Orwell is aiming for a C1 rating, and he believes we are in a strong position to achieve this with some key changes.</p> <p>Whilst inspection is a key driver for change, the primary objective is always to improve services to customers. Orwell has a lot of different tenure types and therefore not all of its customers are tenants.</p> <p>He has identified the following areas requiring improvement:</p> <p>1) ORG refresh and strengthen</p> <p>He asked ORG members to say whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:</p> <table><tr><th>Statement</th><th>Outcome</th></tr><tr><td>Our voice is open and confident</td><td>Agreed.</td></tr><tr><td>We are involved early enough to influence</td><td>Agreed but recognition that there are occasions when policies are presented once drafted.</td></tr><tr><td>We have the information we need</td><td>Agreed</td></tr><tr><td>The ORG is genuinely tenant led</td><td>Agreed that they have the choice over scrutinies but recognise that officers lead. Some members said that they wouldn’t want to lead and it was agreed that different voices are needed. MM said she might be interested in this role. ML confirmed that training can be offered.</td></tr></table>	Statement	Outcome	Our voice is open and confident	Agreed.	We are involved early enough to influence	Agreed but recognition that there are occasions when policies are presented once drafted.	We have the information we need	Agreed	The ORG is genuinely tenant led	Agreed that they have the choice over scrutinies but recognise that officers lead. Some members said that they wouldn’t want to lead and it was agreed that different voices are needed. MM said she might be interested in this role. ML confirmed that training can be offered.	
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		Support strengthens independence	Agreed and said that involvement wouldn't be possible without the support they receive.				
		Our input leads to visible impact	Agreed				
		Our voice reaches decision-makers	Agreed. Members felt the Board hears their voice. Greater presence on CIC for customers				
		We reflect a range of tenant experiences	Agreed but also recognised that it is difficult to get people involved.				
		2) Equitable outcomes					
		Engagement is limited with the structures we currently have in place. We need to offer accessible locations or times for different tenures/customers.					
		We should be collecting data and using it to deliver services that match individuals' needs.					
		The biggest impact comes from designing services for people who struggle the most.					
		3) Start with customer insight and engagement					
		We need to use our available data to encourage earlier customer involvement with projects/services.					
		4) SMARTer not harder					
		It isn't always clear what our actions are, and we can't do everything at once, so we need to be more specific.					
		5) Wider representative engagement					
		This will follow on from the ORG refresh. We already have an engagement platform, My Orwell Voice (MOV), and this will form parts of our plans to widen our network of engagement.					
		ML reminded members that they have previously reviewed the Consumer Standards. These are available on MOV should they wish to review the requirements.					
		5.0	2026 Scrutinies		ML explained that the following projects are planned requiring customer involvement. These may be suitable as scrutinies and she asked members to consider any other suggestions they may have:		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Telephone project – will be a long scrutiny• Repairs customer journey – links with the telephone project• ASB - an internal audit will be taking place shortly and there may be follow up actions/outcomes.	
6.0	Any other business	<p>7th March was confirmed for the next CHAT</p> <p>VG raised the issue of void properties as a tenant on her estate has come to her to say 4 properties have been vacant since last summer. RL explained the work that is currently being done to reduce the backlog of void properties and agreed to follow up.</p>	RL
7.0	Date of next meeting	23 rd February 2026 (18:00 at Crane Hill Lodge)	