



**GGHT Panel of  
Excellence and Scrutiny  
Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup>  
November  
Room 6, The Gateway**

## Minutes

<b>Attendance:</b>	Lynda Johnson, Graham Hanson, Fiona Roberts, Jean Bullock, Dot Thacker, Alan Rankin, Debbie Ergen, Charlie Martin, Jenny Thompson, Rebecca Hallam, Cathy Macleod (CMc), Peter Mercer (part), Angela Perry (part), Ian Bowden (part).
<b>Apologies:</b>	Ayo Akinrele

		Action
1.	<p><b>Apologies/Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>Apologies as above.</p> <p>No declarations of interests.</p>	
2.	<p><b>Appointment of Deputy Chair</b></p> <p>Graham Hanson was elected deputy of the Panel of Excellence and Scrutiny.</p>	
3.	<p><b>Minutes from Meeting held on 09 October 2013</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ JT provided 'before' and 'after' pictures of two void properties which were shown to the Panel. These will be circulated to the Panel via email. JT is awaiting 'after' photographs for a further four properties.</li> <li>❖ JT confirmed that GGHT does have a handyman policy. Mark Burrows is going to develop this to widen its remit. The Panel would like to be involved in the development of the policy. CM agreed.</li> <li>❖ The Panel asked for information on contractor complaint. JT explained that this information is being taken to the complaints sub-committee on 20.11.2013.</li> <li>❖ RH provided an update on the cost of the Vanguard review for the void process. The Panel expressed concern about the cost of the review and suggested that a scrutiny review would represent better value for money. CM explained that the cost of void properties are a big concern for GGHT and there is a danger of the panel duplicating</li> </ul>	<b>JT</b>

	the Vanguard review. The Panel agreed to revisit the void standard after the Vanguard review.	
4.	<p><b>Minutes from Meeting with Chairs held on 21.10.213</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ CM provided the Panel with an overview of the meeting. Roy Smith is happy with the progress of the Panel.</li> <li>❖ When the new head office is complete the Panel will be able to access the meeting rooms.</li> <li>❖ The Chairs agreed that it would be useful for the Panel to revisit voids after the review.</li> </ul>	
5.	<p><b>Feedback from Training</b></p> <p><b>PIP Training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Welfare reform champion found the training useful. JT to email the slides to other Panel members. <i>Update: Emailed 21/11/2013</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Welfare Reform Training at Trafford Hall</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Welfare reform champions explained that the event was useful as a way to benchmark GGHT's welfare reform initiatives against other housing associations.</li> <li>❖ GGHT are doing more than other providers to combat the impact of welfare reform on tenants.</li> <li>❖ Welfare reform champions are to conduct independent investigations into Personal Independence Payments and Universal Credit.</li> </ul> <p><b>Gas Servicing Update from the Gas Servicing Champion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Gas servicing champion met with Mark Moore, the Energy Solutions Manager.</li> <li>❖ The gas servicing team has taken a pro-active approach to accessing properties due for their annual gas service. As a result access for the past month was 100%.</li> <li>❖ The number of properties that GGHT are unable to access varies each week. The aim is to access above 98% of properties visited.</li> <li>❖ The Panel asked for assurance that engineers allowed enough time for customers to answer the door. AP explained that engineers are paid only when they access a property and that their vehicles are tracked; as a result the number of instances where they do not attend properties is low. Mark Moore is considering a change to the contract which would require engineers to photograph the front door of each property they visit.</li> <li>❖ Letters that are sent to tenants to arrange an appointment with a gas engineer are going to be reworded to help improve access.</li> <li>❖ An option to email contractors to arrange an appointment with a gas engineer is also being introduced to improve accessibility.</li> </ul>	<p><b>JT</b></p> <p><b>LJ/DT</b></p>
6.	<p><b>Update on Repairs Review</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ AP thanked the Panel for their work on the Repairs Review. PM also extended his thanks to the Panel.</li> <li>❖ AP explained that she had met with the Chair to work on balancing</li> </ul>	

the wording of the report.

- ❖ AP noted that the repairs service is a complex area for the business and that the Panel's review had identified some good areas of improvement. AP felt that the organisation and the Panel were on the same page with regards to improvements needed to the service.
- ❖ CM noted that it is essential to ensure that reports are balanced and are reinforced with statistics. AP agreed and suggested this is an area of improvement for the Panel.
- ❖ The Review highlights instances of spelling and grammatical errors in complaints letters which need to be addressed, and also recommended a consistent approach to response letter to complaints. AP agreed but noted it is important to have a consistent, but not uniform, approach to complaint letters.
- ❖ The Panel has suggested that a cost/benefit analysis needs to be done of the appointment slots.
- ❖ AP noted the suggested improvements to the IT systems but explained that this will be a long term goal and GGHT does not want to set a target which is not achievable.
- ❖ The Review will be presented to the Board at the next Board meeting on 25.11.2013. CM suggested that the Chair and Deputy Chair attend. Chair and Deputy Chair to inform CM by email. *Update: Chair and another Panel member to attend the meeting to present the report.*

Senior Customer Service Adviser (CSA), Cathy MacLeod, was introduced to the Panel to answer some queries which had been put to Donna Wilkinson.

- ❖ CMc explained that text message reminders are sent to tenants the day before their appointment.
- ❖ GGD are working with IT to develop a system to send text messages to landlines and emails. This is dependent on the new telephony system.
- ❖ The number of customer satisfaction surveys collected has decreased as a result of the focus on welfare reform.
- ❖ Customer satisfaction surveys are no longer done on handheld devices to enable customers to be honest in their feedback.
- ❖ CMc confirmed that where customers are not able to access the internet CSA's will conduct the survey via an outbound call.
- ❖ CMc confirmed that CSA training and monitoring is ongoing to ensure continuous improvement in the GGD service.
- ❖ CMc explained that the complaint's process is being reviewed and that in future CSA's may have the authority to resolve complaints over the telephone.

Ian Bowden, Technical Officer with the Property Services team was introduced to the Panel.

- ❖ IB explained the use of iforms to the Panel. Iforms were introduced six months ago and are used for void inspections. The iforms have reduced the number of mistakes and inaccuracies and have also improved efficiency and productivity of the team as it is easier to circulate the results of a void inspection. AP agreed with this assessment.
- ❖ IB demonstrated how an iform is completed by an operative.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Currently five inspectors have access to iforms via ipads; two are used for void inspections whilst the other three are used for responsive repairs inspections. Two neighbourhood officers also have ipads which are used for estate inspections, tenancy audits and environmental requests. This number may be increased in the future.</li> <li>❖ The Panel felt that the introduction of iforms was a positive step forward for the organisation.</li> </ul>	
7.	<p><b>Forward Planning</b></p> <p>CM provided an overview of the link between the Panel and other areas of the business in particular the audit and risk committee. CM explained the role of the audit and risk committee.</p> <p>CM explained the strategic risk register to the Panel. It is important for the Panel to be aware of the risks to the business when they are conducting a review. Currently welfare reform is the biggest risk to GGHT.</p> <p>There are four areas that the Panel considered for their next review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Voids</li> <li>❖ Ground Maintenance</li> <li>❖ Contractor complaints</li> <li>❖ No access for repairs and gas servicing</li> </ul> <p><b>Voids</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The Panel expressed an interest in conducting their own review of voids parallel to the Vanguard review to see if they reached the same conclusions.</li> <li>❖ CM felt that this would lead to a duplication of results.</li> <li>❖ PM confirmed that a review of voids may not make best use of the Panel's time at present. GGHT is in the process of reviewing its approach to void properties in light of demand issues created by the welfare reforms.</li> <li>❖ It would be most effective for the Panel to review voids in 2014.</li> </ul> <p><b>Ground Maintenance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The existing partnership agreement with Warrington Borough Council has been extended until September 2014. PM explained that the tender for the new contract may be delayed whilst GGHT gathers some more accurate information about the amount of land owned by the Trust.</li> <li>❖ PM suggested that the Panel review the existing contract and make recommendations for what to include in the next contract and that this is an area where the Panel can add value to the business.</li> </ul> <p><b>Contractor Complaints</b></p> <p>This is an area that the scrutiny panel sub-committee are currently reviewing. As a result the Panel decided that it was best for the sub-committee to focus on this area.</p> <p><b>No Access</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The number of "no access" appointments can be as high as 10% and</li> </ul>	

	<p>is a source of frustration for operatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The Panel suggested focussing on communication between operatives and tenants where customers cancel appointments.</li> <li>❖ PM explained that as a result of the welfare reforms more people will be encouraged into employment or volunteering and will not be available for appointments between 9am to 5pm. As a result there may be an increase in appointments outside normal working hours.</li> </ul>	
<p>8.</p>	<p><b>Scrutiny Panel Development Session</b></p> <p>RH gave the Panel a timetable of training for the next six months. RH will continue to update the Panel on future training events.</p> <p>The Panel were conscious of value for money (VFM) and said they are happy to attend the training which will have the least cost. CM explained that VFM does not necessarily mean the cheapest training and the Panel should consider the benefit that they will get out of the training.</p> <p>RH explained that Andrew Shaw, Chair of Halton Housing Trust, will attend a future scrutiny meeting to observe the Panel and offer advice and guidance.</p> <p>The Panel was given a summary of the costs and expenses for the Panel for the financial year to date. Panel asked for a breakdown of all training and all costs. RH to provide this for the Panel at the December meeting. CM and PM agreed that the Scrutiny Panel can have a budget and this will be based on the costs of previous years.</p> <p>CM conducted a SWOT analysis with the Panel. The Panel identified the following strengths and weaknesses:</p> <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Strong working relationships between all Panel members</li> <li>❖ Business minded</li> <li>❖ Thorough approach to the Panel’s work</li> <li>❖ Strong working relationship with GGHT officers</li> <li>❖ Diverse rang of knowledge on the Panel</li> <li>❖ Good leadership via the Chair</li> </ul> <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Attendance at meetings</li> <li>❖ No consistent base where meetings can be held</li> <li>❖ Succession planning and recruitment</li> <li>❖ Access to the right and relevant information</li> <li>❖ Access to training</li> <li>❖ Ensuring all actions are followed up</li> <li>❖ Understanding performance data</li> </ul> <p>The Panel identified the following opportunities and threats to the Panel:</p> <p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Define a budget</li> </ul>	<p><b>RH</b></p> <p><b>RH</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Network with other Panels</li> <li>❖ Mentoring opportunities- Andrew Shaw at Halton Housing Trust</li> <li>❖ Learning from best practice</li> <li>❖ Dedicated meeting rooms at Bank Park House</li> <li>❖ Going digital</li> <li>❖ Use of social media – Facebook/Twitter</li> <li>❖ Utilise the scrutiny champions</li> <li>❖ Utilise the resident associations</li> <li>❖ Independent research</li> <li>❖ Responsible for personal development</li> </ul> <p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Recruiting new members</li> <li>❖ Low profile amongst tenants</li> <li>❖ Lack of engagement</li> <li>❖ Availability of members/time of meetings</li> <li>❖ Agenda to full</li> </ul> <p>The Panel also discussed a code of conduct and decided on the following guidelines to be observed during meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Members to speak through the Chair</li> <li>❖ Members to show they are listening to one another</li> <li>❖ Mobile phones should be on silent during the meeting</li> <li>❖ No personal issues to be raised however using a personal experience to highlight a widespread problem is acceptable</li> <li>❖ All members to try their best to attend each meeting</li> </ul>	
9.	<p><b>A.O.B and Agenda for December Meeting</b></p> <p>The Panel asked when James Doran would be able to attend a meeting to give an update on the anti-fungal paint used in the bathrooms. CM to contact James Duran to arrange.</p>	<b>CM</b>
10.	<p><b>Meeting Costs</b></p> <p>Postage: £6.24</p> <p>Out of Pocket Expenses: £34.70</p> <p>Room Hire: £51.66</p> <p>Catering Expenses: £25</p> <p><b>Total: £117.60</b></p>	
	<p><b>Date of next meeting: Monday 16<sup>th</sup> December, Orford Jubilee Hub</b></p>	