

## Scrutiny 12 Month Review of the Delivery of the ForHousing strategy

**Carried out by:** Sharon Shimmans, Janette Ball, Ian McAffery, Naz Majeed, Helen Wild, Debra Elkins – ForHousing Scrutiny Partners

**Supported by:** Toria Buzza – Head of Community and Tenant Involvement and Jacqui Holmes – Tenant Involvement Partner

**Date of Exercise:** August to September 2024

## 1. Introduction

Scrutiny completed an exercise in December 2023 to provide assurance of the effectiveness of the ForHousing Strategy. A recommendation from this exercise was that Scrutiny should review the year one delivery of the ForHousing Strategy, with a focus on the strategic roadmap.

The focus of the exercise was to provide assurance to the ForHousing Board and Executive Management Team that:

- Actions from the previous review 'The effectiveness of ForHousing Strategy' have been delivered
- Delivery of the strategic roadmap can be demonstrated through clear activities and projects and that there is effective oversight of this
- Performance reporting demonstrates accountability for delivery of the strategy

## 2. Scope of the Exercise

Scrutiny Partners had:

- an overview of the work carried out to date to deliver the strategy and supporting strategies
- a deeper dive into the delivery of three key projects:
  - Knowing our Tenants
  - People Framework
  - Voids Standards Review

## 3. Methodology

Desktop work was carried out which examined the following information:

- ForHousing Strategy
- Homes Strategy
- Customer Strategy
- Resources Strategy
- Year 1 Strategy update presentation
- Customer Strategy Year 1 Closure report
- Homes Strategy Year 1 Closure report
- Resource Strategy Year 1 Closure report
- Customer Committee Quarter 4 Performance reports
- Knowing Our Tenants Highlight report

To assess the successful delivery of the strategies, Scrutiny picked a sample project from each strategic roadmap and carried out focus groups with:

- Knowing our Tenants - Senior ICT Project Manager and Director of Neighbourhoods
- People Framework – Director of People and Head of HR
- Voids Standard Review – Head of Maintenance

## 4. Findings

### Actions from the Previous Review

Of the six recommendations made, five have been completed including this 12 month review. The remaining action is a demonstration of the damp repair dashboard which has been scheduled for 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2024. This had previously been arranged and cancelled by Scrutiny.

### Delivery of Strategic Roadmap

It is clear from the roadmap that customer satisfaction is the main driver for the projects/ programmes that have been prioritised.

Scrutiny were pleased with the progress of delivery of the roadmap with all but one of the milestones for year one either being met or on target.

Scrutiny identified the delivery of the Customer Connect Hub as a highlight of the strategy delivery because of the positive impact on the customer experience. They felt the achievement of the 30 second call answering time showed a huge improvement on historic performance. They also agreed that the proposal to increase the target to 90 seconds to allow for outbound calls will further enhance customer experience and positively impact service delivery.

Scrutiny were concerned that out of the nine strategic measures, only four had reached the target in the first year of delivery. They were particularly concerned about the underperformance on the tenant satisfaction measures

Measure	Target	Year end performance	Scrutiny comment
Tenant Satisfaction	72%	69.8%	Request an update on performance at next meeting and action taken
Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them	72%	69.5%	Request an update on performance at next meeting and action taken
New homes built	64	167	No comment
Tenants satisfied that their home is safe	80%	78.5%	Request an update on performance at next meeting and action taken
Tenants are satisfied that their home is well maintained	74%	73.6%	Request an update on performance at next meeting and action taken
Existing homes meet EPC Band C	91.5%	91.5%	No comment
Best Companies overall score	659.5	706	Impressed at the approach taken in the people framework
% expenditure invested in customer facing services	82%	83%	Agreed this was a positive direction of travel for the organisation
Operating Margin	19.1%	12.8%	Understood the rational for the performance

### Performance Reporting

Scrutiny felt that whilst the dashboard was busy it contained a lot of information with the commentary making it easy to see where things were up to, and actions being taken to address them.

Scrutiny were pleased that a report is now being produced against the Resources Strategy which was a previous recommendation.

Scrutiny enquired about how tenants were involved in target setting and understand that it is the Customer Committee that approve the final targets. They feel that it would further enhance oversight and accountability to involve tenants in the setting of the strategic targets earlier in the process.

## Knowing Our Tenants

Scrutiny can see a huge benefit to the customer experience from this programme and look forward to seeing the impact on service design and delivery and being involved in the next steps.

The key to the success of the programme is the ease of use for staff and the training to enable staff both to upload information and to have the confidence to use the information and tailor the customer experience.

It is good to see that the programme steering group is made up of colleagues from across the business to ensure that all feedback is captured. Whilst it is difficult to identify areas for involvement of the wider tenant base, Scrutiny were pleased that staff who are also tenants have been included in the programme and that Customer Committee are being updated regularly.

It is also a positive for customers that the same questions are being asked at the start of a tenancy to ensure that there is a consistent approach to capturing and updating information.

Scrutiny welcomed the staff event on the 2nd of October for all staff about Customer Care and Customer Experience and welcome the proposed scenario based training and mandatory training for staff. This will ensure that the data collection will be worthwhile if everybody is expected to and supported to use the information.

Sharing the information around adjustments to service delivery with Contractors and other agencies will also have a positive impact on the customer experience.

Scrutiny were advised that Contractors are aware of how to report safeguarding issues but felt it would be beneficial if Contractors were able to report changes to people's circumstances to ForHousing to allow systems to be updated, e.g. disabilities, as they are often the first person to be told.

Whilst Scrutiny accepts there may be issues should there be a data breach of storing keyholder and keysafe information on the system, it would be worth exploring this further as other agencies have this information stored and it would possibly help with gaining access with a tenant's permission in their absence or in cases of concern for welfare.

## People Framework

The framework has made good use of data to prioritise projects and where to focus e.g. the front line pay review for instance.

Scrutiny were pleased to note there is a detailed plan with identified leads for each project. They also thought that the approach of involving members of the HR team and assigning tasks based on skills and areas that staff enjoyed was positive.

Scrutiny noted the importance of staff forums such as those below to allow issues to be fed back to the wider staff team to co-produce solutions, forums include:

- Staff forum
- Race inclusion forum
- Access to work
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion group
- Staff tenant forum

Completing the Best Companies survey and using this to 'drill down' to see who is less satisfied and put actions in place to improve will help staff morale which will have an impact on customer satisfaction. They felt the way in which this was being coordinated within departments was positive.

Scrutiny were particularly pleased to note the introduction of a colleague tenant group which will provide feedback from both a tenant and staff perspective

Scrutiny welcomed the re-introduction of GIFT and the support this can give to local communities.

## Voids Standard Review

Scrutiny felt that this review clearly prioritised tenant satisfaction and the use of satisfaction/ complaints/ feedback data gave it a good focus. The number of tenants who gave feedback was particularly high and Scrutiny were pleased to note that these were tenants who had recently moved into their property.

Scrutiny were satisfied that the contactor has capacity to deliver the new standard and that other options had been put in place should this become an issue.

The void period is clearly being used to assess potential future issues and rectify them at the void stage which will offer a better customer experience over the long term of the tenancy.

Scrutiny were pleased to note that this will be monitored by a customer group going forward (The Repairs SEG).

## **5. Summary of Findings**

Scrutiny were pleased with the progress of the action plan from the previous scrutiny exercise on the Effectiveness of the ForHousing Strategy.

It is clear from the roadmap and the three focus groups that customer satisfaction is the main driver for the delivery of the strategy.

Scrutiny were impressed with the amount of activity delivered within the first year of the Strategy.

Scrutiny were particularly impressed with the Hub response rate of 27 seconds and agreed that the proposal to increase the target to 90 seconds to allow for outbound calls will further enhance the customer experience.

Scrutiny were concerned that the strategic measures relating to customer satisfaction had not met their target.

The performance reporting is thorough, and the commentary clearly shows where things are up to and any action being taken. Scrutiny were pleased that a report is now being produced against the Resources Strategy which was a previous recommendation and that the reports are taken to the People & Culture Committee for accountability.

The rationale for prioritising the knowing our tenants, people framework and voids view projects was clear as was the link to both customer satisfaction and the Strategy delivery.

Tenant involvement, where this was appropriate, was evident and the feedback from both tenants and staff contributed to the outcome of the projects.

They particularly welcomed the re-introduction of GIFT and the support this can give to local communities and can see a role for Community Voice in working with the GIFT committee to identify and support projects.

The void standard review has been long awaited and it was good to note that tenant feedback has led to the improvement in the standard.

## Recommendations and Actions

Recommendation	Proposed Action	Responsibility	Timeframe
Improve oversight and accountability by ensuring that a group of involved tenants are involved in the target setting process, beyond approval of the final targets.			
When Knowing Our Tenants project is complete, Scrutiny would like an information summary of how much information has been collected and any planned improvements relating to customer service			
Ensure there is a mechanism for customer involvement in any policy changes as a result of the Knowing Our Tenants project			
Explore the possibility of			

Contractors and other third parties to report changes to people's circumstances to ForHousing to allow systems to be updated, i.e. new disabilities			
Further explore the feasibility of storing information in relation to key safe numbers and key holders to enable access when tenants are not present for emergency repairs and in times of concern for welfare			
GIFT committee to work closely with Community Voice to produce a process for supporting projects funded by community voice and for identifying GIFT opportunities within the Community Voice			
Achievements of 'GIFT' to be communicated wider through such things as Life in Salford, the tenant newsletter and rent statements			
Consider Re-introducing the Customer Inspection role in void inspections once the new void standard has been embedded			
Scrutiny to request information for the quarter 3 information meeting relating to the impact of the new void standard on such things as cost of repairs in first 3 months, rent loss due to number of voids refusals, property becoming void again within 3 months and complaints compensation levels			
Scrutiny to request information in their quarter 3 information meeting relating			

to overall satisfaction and satisfaction that tenants feel they are listened to			
Scrutiny to carry out a further review at the end of year 2			