

## AGM 2023 QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

**Q.** Could we be sent a breakdown of service charges paid especially those living with communal gardens? I have asked repeatedly but to no avail.

**A.** A breakdown of service charges was included in the new occupation contracts sent in June this year. The service charge detail is included in Annex D of the occupation contract and a further copy of this information has been emailed to you. Please contact our Service Charge Manager Jo Harris at [jo.harris@newportcityhomes.com](mailto:jo.harris@newportcityhomes.com) for any further queries on your service charges.

**Q.** Will “Involved Residents” involvement ever be restored (pre COVID), as various groups were running prior to that?

**A.** We have a broad range of opportunities for customers to engage with us, to scrutinise, improve and shape the services that they receive. Our focus has moved away from static groups, which had limited attendance from customers, towards engagement with a clear purpose, at a location or in a way that is convenient to customers. This includes membership of our NCH Connected digital engagement group, attendance at community estate walkabouts, coffee mornings at our 55+ schemes, engagement events held in the community, task and finish groups to focus on specific service areas, and more. Our Customer Scrutiny Partnership plays a key role in scrutinising our engagement offer to ensure that we are capturing a broad range of customer feedback. Please contact our Customer Engagement Manager Jodi Bowman at [Jodi.Bowman@newportcityhomes.com](mailto:Jodi.Bowman@newportcityhomes.com) if you are interested in joining our Scrutiny Partnership or want to discuss other ways in which you can get more involved.

**Q.** Can I ask for the reasoning behind the decision not to allow voting opportunities on the day of our Annual General Meeting? Our bold local "Chartists" favoured a secret ballot for all, as do I. A secret ballot means people can vote freely and not possibly on the expectations of others.

**A.** Thank you for your question, the decision to request voting in advance of the AGM allows us to ensure sufficient quorum to allow the AGM to take place and not have to be rescheduled to another date and time due to a lack of share member attendance and the inability to enact any voting. This is something that can be considered when planning future general meetings.

**Q.** What benefits do you receive by taking direction and following guidance from a government that has consistently failed in its management of issues such as the housing crisis, law and order, health and wellbeing at both physical and mental levels, repeatedly launching cynical attacks against the vulnerable and at risk sections of society, endorses the wholesale use of bullying, threatening behaviour, veiled and actual, harassment and intimidating action (see DWP practices etc)?

**A.** We are an independent social business, focused on providing social housing to around 20,000 people in Newport. As a registered society under the Cooperative and Community Benefit Society Act 2014, we are in receipt of grants and are regulated

by the Welsh Government. We also comply with the legislation relevant to social housing providers in Wales. We also have a working relationship with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), which is a UK department responsible for welfare, pensions, and child maintenance policy – and are compliant with UK wide legislation. While we remain fully alert to the advice and policies of both the UK and Welsh Government, as an independent entity, we make our own decisions. Our focus is on the interests of our customers and the safe and effective running of Newport City Homes.

**Q.** You repeatedly remind us that we are customers so we can take that to mean and naturally assume that we have rights as such, for example, the right to complain, be heard and be listened to properly. To live in a safe pollutant free environment, free from drug fumes and the risks of passive smoking (see the case of Sir Roy Castle) and finally the right to choose where we live and what we live in cross tenure. So why are these rights and others being eroded and denied to so many of us?

**A.** Please contact your Neighbourhood Manager Lisa Ash at [Lisa.Ash@newportcityhomes.com](mailto:Lisa.Ash@newportcityhomes.com). Lisa can listen to your concerns and give appropriate advice on any action we can take if you feel your rights are not being upheld. We value customer feedback on our services, and you have the right to complain if you are not happy with the standard of service you have received. Please contact our Customer Experience Business Partner Emma Williams at [Emma.Williams@newportcityhomes](mailto:Emma.Williams@newportcityhomes) if you would like to make a complaint.

**Q.** Despite repeated complaints to Sara Birch, our allocated car park (17-24 Monmouth Drive) is over populated by cars belonging to those who live in Green Tower across the road. It has caused inconvenience, arguments, fights amongst NCH tenants. Could you please sort this out?

**A.** As a social landlord we do not have any powers to enforce car parking arrangements on our land. As such we are unable to get involved with disputes over local parking arrangements or enforce road users from restraining to park in the Monmouth Drive car park. Please contact Megan Parsons, your Neighbourhood Manager, at [Megan.Parsons@newportcityhomes.com](mailto:Megan.Parsons@newportcityhomes.com), if you have been threatened or physical violence has occurred, as this behaviour would be in breach of the conditions of tenancy, and appropriate action would be taken.

**Q.** Why did Newport City Homes not discuss and offer a continuation of scheme managers from April 2018 with the customers in Woodside and Nightingale schemes, in particular contributing to the costs involved. Since that date matters have become worse such as noise intrusion at all hours and continue to do so, with scheme managers having the authority to deal with such, life would be more acceptable.

**A.** The Sheltered Housing Review conducted in 2018 in response to the withdrawal of Supporting People funding was led by robust customer engagement across all of our 55+ schemes. A dedicated Customer Steering group was established with a representative

from each 55+ scheme, numerous engagement events held to capture feedback on what mattered most to customers, and customers were asked to vote on the options available to address the funding shortfall. Independent advocates were also appointed to lead the engagement with customers to ensure the customer voice informed the options appraisal and decisions taken. We are currently reviewing our Older Persons Housing offer, and engagement events are being held at all of our 55+ schemes. The event at Woodside/Nightingale is taking place on 28 September, we would welcome your feedback as part of the consultation process to inform the new Older Persons Housing offer.

**Q.** Communal areas are now being cleaned by Newport City Homes' own employees, so why are we still paying extra for this service, as contractors are no longer doing it. Also, the standard has lapsed, it seems that Newport City Homes has become complacent in their attitude to their tenants requirements. Set your staff back in office's to answer queries.

**A.** Prior to the introduction of the communal cleaning service to blocks of NCH owned flats, it was the responsibility of individual customers to clean the communal areas. The cost of providing the communal cleaning service is recovered through the service charge, but there was no separate charge in place before this cleaning service was established. We welcome feedback on our services, please contact our Estates Surveyor Ann Willis at [Ann.Willis@newportcityhomes.com](mailto:Ann.Willis@newportcityhomes.com) if you have any concerns on the quality of service provided.

You can get in touch with us in a range of different ways, over the phone, on-line or in person at one of our offices. Please contact [enquiries@newportcityhomes.com](mailto:enquiries@newportcityhomes.com) if you would like to arrange an appointment at one of our offices to discuss any concerns.

**Q.** I have heard that Maesglas may be having new kitchens and bathrooms, my question is will disabled people be able to have a wet room instead?

**A.** If any of our customers require an adapted bathroom to allow them to live independently then we can help. Please contact us at [enquiries@newportcityhomes.com](mailto:enquiries@newportcityhomes.com), and we will happily talk you through the process of assessing your needs and then undertaking any works required.

**Q1.** When is NCH going to accept that living in a high rise block is completely different from living in any other residential properties that they own and that there should be rules and guidelines in place to reflect this, eg the keeping of large dogs in small flats. Would the RSPCA support this? Dogs being allowed in the communal lounge? A Housing Manager recently verbally told me that dogs are not allowed in our lounge but there is no written rule supporting this - why? Dogs being allowed to roam freely in our communal garden knocking over ornaments and plant pots and damaging plants, why is there no written rule stating that dogs must be kept on a lead at all times when in communal areas?

**A1.** All pet owners must make sure that any pets in the home, or pets of any visitors to the home, are kept responsibly and do not cause any nuisance to neighbours. All pet owners are required to sign an Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC), that sets out expectations on responsible pet ownership for the specific pet in question. If you have any concerns relating to pets causing a nuisance at Greenwood, please provide further information by contacting [restricted.contact@newportcityhomes.com](mailto:restricted.contact@newportcityhomes.com), and where necessary the terms of any existing ABC can be reviewed and updated.

**Q2.** When is NCH going to issue new tenants with an information pack:

- How to operate the electric radiator
- How to operate the windows
- How and where to dispose of rubbish
- Fire safety information and more

**Q3.** And when are NCH staff going to treat residents as human beings not made of bricks and mortar like the properties that they own?

**A2&3.** Our customer service standards set out the standards of service our customers should expect to receive when they access our services. These standards were developed with customers, and form a core element of the customer services training that we deliver to all colleagues. The Customer Services Standards are published on our website, but we can provide you with a copy upon request. If you feel the services you receive do not meet these standards, please provide further detail by emailing [restricted.contact@newportcityhomes.com](mailto:restricted.contact@newportcityhomes.com) and this will be investigated further.

**Q1.** In the new contract the service charge is for £7.02 Annex D - employers pension, employers NI, this is not a "service" for customers and may need to be challenged in a tribunal test!

**A1.** We are entitled to recover our costs from the service charge where there is a requirement for dedicated on-site staff to deliver services, for example site supervisors at our 55+ schemes. There are no dedicated on-site staff provided at your address, and as such you are not contributing anything under your service charge towards on-site office and employee costs, with a £0.00 figure input in your service charge statement under this heading. You have a right to contact the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal if you believe that the service charges you are responsible for are not reasonable or are not lawfully applied.

**Q2.** NCH have ignored emails from shelter why?

**A2.** We are unaware of any emails from Shelter that have not been responded to. Please provide further detail on this by ringing (01633) 381111 or emailing [enquiries@newportcityhomes.com](mailto:enquiries@newportcityhomes.com) and we will investigate further.

**Q3.** Since last AGM and my one question on non-repairs, I was promised contact one year ago and have not been?

**A3.** Our repairs record for your home show that we have made numerous contacts with you to undertake works, most recently in January 2023. There is a job showing as outstanding from November 2022, but the works were cancelled as you were waiting for advice from David at Shelter. Our records show you have made no further contact in relation to this repair.

**Q4.** Covid is over and the working from home does not work as staff do not answer the phone. Only in the office works.

**A4.** You can get in touch with us in a range of different ways, over the phone, on-line or in person at one of our offices with a pre-arranged appointment. Please ring (01633) 381111 or email [enquiries@newportcityhomes.com](mailto:enquiries@newportcityhomes.com) if you would like to arrange an appointment at one of our offices to discuss any concerns.

**Q5.** What is the need of a Diversity Officer on over £43k a year as Diversity can cause Division, I hope to start seeing Mens Day every year via the officer.

**A5.** Newport is a very diverse City and it is important that Newport City Homes reflects the communities we serve and to make sure there is equality of access to our services. Focusing on EDI helps the association to have a better understanding of the communities we serve and to make better and informed decisions to meet our customer's needs. We are committed to building an inclusive culture to ensure that none of our customers are disadvantaged for being themselves, our EDI commitment supports us in constantly reviewing the way we work to bring our services and teams closer to our customers and communities.

Our EDI commitment is for all of our customers, communities and colleagues. Recent initiatives include the establishment of a Men's Shed in Malpas. The shed is a place to pursue practical interests at leisure, to practice skills and enjoy making and mending, it's also about creating a support network which can help people connect with the community and improve the health and wellbeing of their members by giving them a safe place to make friends, share meaningful activities, talk, and access health information and resources.

**Q6.** NCH on surveys always post "we had good feedback" so will you start to post the survey samples for Transparency?

**A6.** We value the feedback we receive from customers on our services, and we seek to collect this in a number of different ways through our customer engagement activity. To help us identify areas for improvement, we conduct a range of satisfaction surveys. The results of our satisfaction surveys, alongside other customer feedback including complaints, are published within our Customer and Communities at the Heart newsletter, which is emailed to all customers with a registered email address twice yearly. We also provide printed copies of the newsletter upon request. Our satisfaction survey results are also available in other public documents, including the annual report and financial statements and on Welsh Government's website. As a share member you will have

received a copy of the annual report along with the notification of the AGM, and the report will also be published on our website once approved at the AGM.

**Q1.** Increased energy costs have hit the elderly hardest, so why not make use of any large suitable roofs for solar panel systems such as the south facing sheltered housing complex at Woodside/Nightingale Court and Aneurin Bevan Court, Duffryn. This would enhance NCH's green credentials and provide electric vehicle charging points.

**A1.** NCH are in the process of developing a decarbonisation route map. We will be creating a plan for every one of our homes to ensure that we undertake the correct works to improve the energy efficiency of those buildings, this will include an assessment of the roofs to larger properties including those suggested. We are also working with NCC on the provision of electric vehicle charging points.

**Q2.** Why is there no post box at Nexus House?

**A2.** NCH shares a reception area with the Passport Office, neither organisations have post boxes for security and also to avoid hand delivered correspondence being placed in the wrong post boxes. All NCH post is delivered by Royal Mail in the usual way, however, hand delivered correspondence is accepted at Nexus House and can be left with the security guard in reception or alternatively you can knock the NCH door and a colleague will accept your correspondence and ensure it is passed to the correct person.