

**Agenda No:**

**Report Title:** Resident Scrutiny Panel – Responsive Gas Services Review

**Board:** Executive Management Team (EMT) | **Action:** For discussion & comment

**Date of Meeting:** Tuesday 10 April 2018

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**Documents in the Board Pad Reading Room:** None

**Executive Summary**

Following their review of Swale Heating Ltd, the resident scrutiny panel has developed nine service improvement recommendations. The recommendations focus on improving information so residents can better understand what to expect when reporting a heating or hot water issue, enabling future self service options and the inclusion of pre-determined performance information in the new gas services contract from July 2019. The recommendations are detailed in full in section 5.1 of the draft Board report and in Appendix One. The latter also details the management response. For ease of reference the recommendations are summarised in section 2.1 of this report.

**Recommendations**

EMT is kindly requested to comment on the draft report and Appendix One.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Resident Scrutiny Panel was established in October 2013 and is designed to fulfil Town & Country Housing Group's (TCHG's) commitment to enable residents to directly influence service provision, as well as exceed the Homes & Communities Agency's regulatory requirements. Since April 2014, the panel has undertaken five service reviews of customer services, responsive repairs, the void standard, the grounds maintenance service and the money support service. In September 2017, the panel commenced their sixth service review of responsive gas services delivered by Swale Heating Ltd.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The nine recommendations resulting from the review are summarised as follows:

1. The development of a service standard and information about gas repairs on the provider website so residents can clearly ascertain:
  - How to report a repair and the likely process that will follow including how they will be communicated with (e.g. texting ahead, etc);
  - Typical/ball park response times for boiler or other gas services breakdowns;
  - How residents will be kept informed if the issue cannot be fixed first time;
  - The process to 'make good' following installation (e.g. where remedial plastering or carpentry may be required);
  - The process for flushing new systems following installation;
  - A named person at TCHG who residents can contact if they do not obtain a reasonable service and/or response from Swale as per the service standard;
  - The complaints process including response times.

In addition, explore if the above can be extended to 'My Home Online' which currently features only telephone numbers and less information than the TCHG website. The service standard should also be part of the new contract and apply to all sub contractors.

2. Revise and publish the engineer's code of conduct (CoC) on the TCHG website to ensure it is fit for purpose (if not for Swale, then for the new provider). The engineer's CoC should also apply to all sub contractors, the new contractor and be considered as part of the tender process.
3. When the new contract is tendered, performance information requirements should be pre-determined and included in the new contract. TCHG staff who monitor performance should also be involved and consulted to minimise future data reporting inconsistencies.
4. Exploration of self service on the TCHG or new contractor website/'My Home Online' so residents can select and amend (with reasonable notice) appointment times to suit their personal needs, including the provision of smaller time slots than existing AM/PM slots e.g. to accommodate the school run. This requirement should be considered as part of the re procurement process.
5. When the opportunity arises, review the relationship with Phoenix Compliance Management given Gravesham Borough Council use an alternative, well regarded provider to deliver a similar service for a lesser cost.

6. Consider developing a networking group with other registered providers/local authorities who use Swale or equivalent providers.
7. The process for gathering satisfaction should be reviewed to ascertain if this can be auto gathered from every resident to enable a more representative picture. For example, by auto text or email following the engineer's visit. In addition, consideration should also be given how to best capture satisfaction from elderly and vulnerable residents who appear (from the survey feedback) to be sometimes more inclined to provide positive feedback even if the service was rated poor.
8. Careful consideration should be given to vulnerable residents and the sensitivities surrounding such issues. Such cases should be referred to TCHG for further investigation and engineers provided with training to eliminate the possibility of ill informed, personal 'diagnosis'.
9. As the panel greatly values the reassurance provided by annual gas checks on appliances owned by TCHG, consider offering the same service for non TCHG owned appliances for a small rechargeable fee.

2.2 Three members of the resident scrutiny panel will present the recommendations to Board on Thursday 3 May 2018.