Minutes

CUSTOMER FOCUS COMMITTEE

Monday 10 August 2026
MS Teams

Members Present

Nasrin Fazal (Chair)
Marie Gilluley
Paula King

SHG Officers in Attendance

Anne-Marie Heil, Director of Customer Services (Lead Officer) **(AMH)**
Rachel Cossey, Governance Manager **(RC)**
Natalie Connolly, Complaints Manager **(NC)** *(items 8 & 9)*
Mike Coppock, Programme Delivery Manager **(MC)** *(item 7)*
Lucy Darbyshire, Senior Customer and Colleague Communications Partner **(LD)** *(item 5)*
Christian Hartley, Assistant Director – Customer Excellence **(CH)**
Shenade Hegarty, Safer Neighbourhood Operational Manager **(SH)** *(item 6)*
Anila Khalid, Assistant Director – Neighbourhoods **(AK)** *(item 10)*
Bob McGechan, Chair of ASPIRE Panel **(BM)** *(item 3)*
Cheryl McCabe, Head of Customer Voice **(CM)** *(item 3)*
Rebecca Parry, Governance Officer **(RP)**
Ian Pitteway, Assistant Director – Assets and Development **(IP)** *(item 7)*
Liz Smith, Head of Safer Neighbourhoods **(LS)** *(item 6)*
Jackelyn Taylor, Governance Officer **(JT)**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies received for Carol Jack; there were no declarations of interest.

2. PREVIOUS MINUTES AND ACTION MONITOR

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as an accurate record. Progress with the Action Monitor was noted.

3. ASPIRE PANEL ANNUAL REPORT (ASSURANCE)

BM and CM introduced the ASPIRE Panel Annual Report. The report highlighted the Panel's contribution to shaping the Customer Experience Strategy, influencing communications and accessibility, and challenging areas including repairs, complaints and building safety. CM advised that a customer-friendly visual version of the annual report was being developed to improve accessibility and understanding, with Committee feedback to be incorporated before publication.

The Committee discussed the Panel's achievements, the impact of customer engagement and the importance of strengthening links with other customer groups.

The Committee sought assurance on how Panel members' skills and aspirations would be identified and developed. CM advised that support was being provided through an independent mentor, training needs assessments and further work to understand the skills members could contribute.

The Committee recognised the Panel's sector profile, including engagement with the TPAS accreditation process and feedback from wider sector bodies. It was agreed that further work would be undertaken to support Panel member skills development.

RESOLVED: The Customer Focus Committee reviewed and commented on the content of the report.

4. REVIEW COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE (CONSULTATION)

RC presented the annual review of the Committee's Terms of Reference. It was explained that, following an external review of the Scheme of Delegation, the Terms of Reference for each Board and Committee had also been reviewed by DTP.

The only significant amendment to the Terms of Reference clarified that the Committee and Chair were appointed by the Board and set out the Committee's role in the annual review of effectiveness.

The Committee discussed the Chair appointment process and sought clarification that the practical approach would remain unchanged, with the Committee identifying a preferred candidate before Board approval.

RC confirmed that the Board would retain ultimate approval, but the process would continue to involve Committee input.

Action: RC to share the finalised Terms of Reference with the Committee at the November Customer Focus Committee meeting.

RESOLVED: The Customer Focus Committee reviewed and commented on the proposed changes to the Terms of Reference.

5. ANNUAL REPORT TO CUSTOMERS (DECISION)

LD presented the Annual Report to Customers for approval. The report had been informed by consultation through in-person workshops, online surveys and engagement with the ASPIRE Panel. Customer feedback had shaped the final version, including clearer information on rent increases, tenant satisfaction measures and accessibility.

LD advised that the report would be published as an interactive online book to support environmental objectives and reduce printing costs. Accessibility features included translation, read-aloud functionality and hard copies or alternative formats for customers who are not digitally engaged.

The Committee welcomed the level of customer consultation and the accessible presentation of the report. Assurance was provided that the report supported regulatory expectations on transparency and accountability.

RESOLVED: The Customer Focus Committee approved the Annual Report to Customers.

6. SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS STRATEGY 2025-28 UPDATE (ASSURANCE)

LS provided an update on the first year of the Safer Neighbourhoods Strategy. The update covered anti-social behaviour trends, partnership working, enforcement activity, community engagement and planned developments.

LS reported that ASB case numbers had plateaued following an increase during the pandemic. Current challenges included complex cases linked to mental health and substance misuse, limited housing options for relocations and the importance of support for victims of domestic abuse. The strategy's priorities included improving access to services, strengthening partnership working, effective enforcement, prevention and early intervention, and addressing environmental ASB.

The Committee welcomed the number of customers engaged during ASB Awareness week and sought assurance on how this had been achieved. SH explained that the Safer Neighbourhoods and Customer Engagement Teams had worked collaboratively to promote the events across relevant neighbourhoods, and that the format had been well received.

The Committee sought assurance on partnership working with Greater Manchester Police and how targeted operations had been received by residents.

SH confirmed that SHG liaised with Greater Manchester Police and shared intelligence as required. Weekly meetings were held where appropriate to support information sharing, monitor actions and ensure additional tenancy and community support was in place. The Committee was advised that feedback from residents had been positive.

LS outlined planned developments, including improved satisfaction survey response rates, development of an ASB reporting app, exploration of peer support for complainants and preparation for forthcoming legal tools.

Action: LS and CH to explore integration of the ASB reporting app with the existing customer portal to avoid duplication and improve customer experience.

RESOLVED: The Customer Focus Committee noted the update and received assurance on progress with the Safer Neighbourhoods Strategy.

7. **SAFETY AND QUALITY STANDARD UPDATE (ASSURANCE)**

IP presented an update on the Safety and Quality Standard focussing on the role of the Home Improvement Agency. The update outlined how the Consumer Standards require SHL to demonstrate clear knowledge, control and delivery across its services, with the Safety and Quality Standard placing particular emphasis on knowing homes, maintaining decency, ensuring safety, delivering repairs and supporting adaptations. It was noted that adaptations are central to ensuring homes remain suitable for customers' changing needs and should be viewed as an opportunity to improve customer outcomes rather than solely as a compliance requirement.

The Committee was advised that SHG's Home Improvement Agency manages and delivers major and minor adaptations for Council-owned HRA properties and privately owned homes in Stockport. Works are commissioned in response to care plans from Adult and Children's Social Services and include Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG), adaptations to SHG-managed homes, Home Repair Assistance Grants and Sanctuary scheme grants. The service is supported by a multidisciplinary team and DASH, SHG's in-house Architectural Team.

MC highlighted significant demand and cost pressures. Demand for adaptations has more than doubled over the past five years. Between 1 April 2025 and 30 April 2026, the HIA completed 216 SHG adaptations and 270 Disabled Facilities Grant adaptations.

In 2025/26, there were 441 minor adaptation requests and 405 completed jobs, with adaptation spend reaching approximately £3.8m for DFG works and £1.02m for adaptations to SHG-managed properties.

The update also identified that existing case management arrangements had not provided reliable performance information across the full adaptations process. Work is taking place with the Data Team to develop a performance tracker.

Future challenges included increasing demand, rising case complexity, increased labour, material and contractor costs and the need to review funding arrangements to reflect demand, statutory duties and delivery costs. Opportunities were identified to strengthen governance and accountability with SMBC, use improved data to track performance and evidence outcomes, and implement the new Major Adaptations Policy to support consistency, proportionality and transparency.

The Committee queried what had led to the increase in cost and demand. MC explained that this reflected increased contractor costs across the sector, an ageing population and a higher number of customers with vulnerabilities or conditions requiring adaptations support.

RESOLVED: The Customer Focus Committee noted the update and received assurance on the Safety and Quality Standard.

8. **CUSTOMER FEEDBACK REPORT QUARTER 1 2026/27 (ASSURANCE)**

NC presented the Quarter 1 Customer Feedback Report. Complaint volumes had increased year-on-year at both stage one and stage two, with higher escalation rates and more complex cases involving multiple service areas. Outcomes showed more complaints being upheld or partly upheld, reflecting increased complexity and customer expectations.

The report highlighted that repairs and assets remained the main sources of complaints, particularly in relation to damp, mould and communal issues. Repairs also received the highest number of compliments, demonstrating both positive and negative customer feedback in this service area.

The Committee discussed Housing Ombudsman activity and complaint handling performance. NC advised that Ombudsman cases had increased, but maladministration rates had reduced, with learning focused on communication and complaint handling. Complaint handling compliance remained strong, with 100% compliance at both stages.

The Committee queried whether the increased complexity of complaints had impacted resources. NC clarified that internal processes had changed, with service areas responsible for drafting complaint responses. The Customer Feedback Team continued to support and quality check responses, which had helped to make best use of resources despite increased volume and complexity.

CH added that the Customer Feedback Team contacted complainants by telephone to ensure SHG understood the core issues within complex complaints and could support the most appropriate resolution.

The Committee queried how SHG had used AI within the feedback service. NC advised that AI had been used to review data and identify trends, and that the team would access further training to support appropriate use of AI when drafting complaint responses.

The Chair noted the continued strong complaint compliance and the inclusion of a deeper analysis around MP and Councillor Enquiries.

RESOLVED: The Customer Focus Committee reviewed and commented on the content of the report.

9. SELF ASSESSMENT AGAINST HOUSING OMBUDSMAN CODE OF COMPLAINTS HANDLING CODE 2025/26 (ASSURANCE)

NC presented the self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code 2025/26. The item provided assurance on compliance with the Code and the arrangements in place to support continued learning and improvement in complaint handling.

The Committee considered the self-assessment alongside the customer feedback update.

RESOLVED: The Customer Focus Committee reviewed and commented on the self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code 2025/26.

10. UPDATE ON BRINNINGTON TOWER BLOCK DEEP DIVES (ASSURANCE)

AK presented the findings from the Brinnington Tower Blocks deep dive. The work had followed a data-led approach using a community health dashboard to identify areas requiring further analysis. Brinnington Towers was selected as the first area of focus based on indicators including arrears, turnover and Damp Mould and Condensation (DMC) reports. Brinnington Towers comprised of seven blocks and 474 households, with a young, diverse and digitally engaged community.

AK advised that demand for properties was high and turnover in this property type was low and had reduced significantly. Challenges included higher arrears, low self-referral rates for financial support, fly-tipping and dissatisfaction with communal repairs. ASB reports were broadly in line with other tower blocks, with noise and pet nuisance among recurring issues.

The Committee noted that services were broadly stable and comparable with other tower blocks, but that the customer voice had identified clear areas for improvement.

Proposed actions focused on prevention, communication and partnership working, including early intervention on arrears, DMC, ASB and tenancy support; clearer customer communication on rehousing, repairs and lift outages; and targeted work on repeat issues such as fly-tipping, lift vandalism and repeat repairs.

The Committee welcomed the detail and insight from the deep dive and discussed the importance of targeted action planning.

AK advised that action plans were being developed to address early intervention, ASB management, lift issues, fly-tipping and repeat damp and mould cases. The approach would be replicated in other areas, with further analysis to be brought to the Committee in future.

Action: AK to include Deep Dive summaries on future Customer Focus Committee agendas as they are completed.
Action: AK to share the completed action plan from the Brinnington Towers Deep Dive following Area Committee feedback.

RESOLVED: The Customer Focus Committee received assurance from the update.

11. SAFEGUARDING ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26 (ASSURANCE)

AMH presented the Safeguarding Annual Report 2025/26. The report outlined increased safeguarding cases and activity forms, with mental health, domestic abuse and self-neglect identified as the main concerns. Most cases related to adults, and referrals had been made to relevant services where appropriate.

AMH advised that the Keeping Customers Safe training pathway had been launched, with 88% compliance achieved and an ambition to reach 95% compliance across the organisation. Safeguarding champions continued to provide training and support, including sharing learning from serious case reviews and policy updates. It was highlighted that using Safeguarding Champions to deliver safeguarding training had improved the approach previously provided through external providers.

The Committee discussed participation in serious case reviews, coroners' inquests and multi-agency safeguarding groups. SHG had maintained DAHA accreditation and continued to contribute to strategic and operational safeguarding activity.

RESOLVED: The Customer Focus Committee received assurance from the report.

12. CUSTOMER FOCUS COMMITTEE UPDATE REPORT (ASSURANCE)

AMH presented the Customer Focus Committee Update Report. The update included customer engagement activity, the launch of the customer census, Live Well initiatives and ongoing repairs and adaptations information.

The Chair noted the reference to the use of AI within the report and how it can be used in a positive way.

The Committee discussed customer engagement formats and low attendance at some resident forums. AMH advised that formats would be reviewed, with further consideration of less formal drop-in sessions and wider community development activity.

The Committee noted that the themes within the report aligned with the presenters in attendance and welcomed evidence that common themes were being identified across the organisation.

RESOLVED: The Customer Focus Committee noted and commented on the report.

13. FORWARD PLAN

RC shared the proposed forward plan with the Committee and advised that it reflected the current expected programme of business. RC noted that the final version of the Terms of Reference would return to the Committee in November.

14. REVIEW OF THE MEETING

The Chair conducted a review of the meeting and thanked Paula King for her contributions to the Committee over the last three years. It was noted that this was Paula's final Customer Focus Committee meeting, as her tenure as Board Member would end in September.

The Committee noted that the quality of presentations and papers was excellent and supported meaningful discussion. The use of presentations was encouraged where appropriate, as the Committee welcomed the format and considered that it supported effective discussion.

Author: Rebecca Parry	Date: 11/08/2026
Lead Officer: Anne-Marie Heil	Date: 13/08/2026
Chair: Nasrin Fazal	Date: 17/08/2026

*Matters arising are communicated and tracked via a separate **Action Monitor**.*