

Central Home Owners Panel (CHOP) MEETING

Held Tuesday 7 May 2019, 6pm-8pm
Board Room, Park Street

1. Welcome, introductions, apologies & declaration of interest

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed everybody and introductions were carried out.
- 1.2. Apologies were received.
- 1.3. There were no declarations of interest.

2. Notes from 6 February & matters arising

- 2.1. Minutes were agreed.

3. Overview of upcoming service improvements / consultations, including app

- 3.1. The Director of Customer Operations and Digital Services explained her remit covers Customer Services, Home Ownership Team and Income and that she is here to help transform the services at Hyde.
- 3.2. The Customer First programme is one of four programmes – the others relate to Compliance, Information & Governance, and Ways of Working. The Customer First programme is about designing the service with customers, improving customer experience and getting things right first time. There has been lots of customer research as well as looking at what other organisations are doing. The programme is driven by what customers want, not what Hyde wants.
- 3.3. Q. CHOP asked whether the focus groups included Hyde customers?
A. Yes, we segmented our customer base and spoke to a representative group.
- 3.4. Q. Could we have a report on how many leaseholders etc. were contacted?
A. Yes will provide summary of customer group consulted. Research is also ongoing. Broadly involve 10% of customer base for activities.
- 3.5. Q. What other firms have you looked at?
A. Looked at Institute of Customer Service, housing sector and other sectors, e.g. public sector, utilities - water companies.
- 3.6. Q. The challenge with housing is that you are not really a customer in the sense you don't have a choice about using the service; when you looked at benchmarking, did you consider that?
A. In my view, a customer is someone who receives a service and pays for it. Customers should have choice regardless of whether they have to use that service.
- 3.7. Q. Saving money can sit uncomfortably next to customer service. The first thing that's been delivered is how to recover more money rather than improving the service.

A. If a customer is paying rent and another customer isn't and that means we aren't able to fund a better service, customers are not going to be happy with that. By improving the way we work, we're actually trying to spend less time chasing money and more time on customer service.

3.8. Q. The additional 3 million pound income from leaseholder recovery – where has that figure come from?

A. That's based on our major works programme and the investment we're making over the next 12 months and is strongly linked to keeping homes safe. There is opportunity via consultation for residents to challenge. The Home Ownership Team also challenge before it goes to residents, checking is it reasonable and is it necessary? A summary of the Safer Homes programme will be provided for the next meeting.

3.9. Q. Slide 9 – what do the percentages mean? What were the sample sizes? We can't believe no home owners wanted a single point of contact! Our main issue is being bounced around.

A. We will provide some more information around the research, questionnaire and analysis for this. Please rest assured that we will be prioritising a single point of contact regardless.

3.10. Q. CHOP has been championing for a self-service portal for payments for a long time.

A. Yes, this has been included and came out loud and clear in the research. We're just working on making sure the info we have is correct. Residents want to view balance, make a payment, report and track a repair.

3.11. Q. Will you involve customers in developing the customer experience areas, customer portal and customer service etc.

A. Employees would be involved in developing the internal system rather than customers.

Q. What about customer service standards?

A. Yes, that will be transparent.

Q. CHOP want to see process/guidance to get an idea of how things will be handled.

A. We would be happy to share but not sure if that would help.

Q. Currently, we don't have assurance that staff have the right training and support, we might have ideas about how residents might be able to help them.

A. We would be happy to share training & development plan and also happy to invite members to call centres if they want.

3.12. Q. Customer Service staff do not always understand the customer's frustration.

A. Where Customer Services are not handling things well, there is an opportunity for them to receive coaching, if that doesn't work, they will be performance managed.

4. Update on performance, lessons learnt and complaints examples to review

4.1. Q. The move from a 10 working days complaints response time to 20 days is a big jump...

A. We've never hit the 10 day target and it's more important to most people that they are regularly updated; the 20 day period is more of a back stop than target. A lot of peers have adopted a similar approach. We will know from customer satisfaction data whether this improves the experience. Satisfaction with ease of communication and being kept fully informed have significantly improved in last few months.

4.2. Q. Will there be a KPI around more regular communication?

A. There will be activities that need to be logged in our case management system and we will be able to report on these. The requirements of the approach will be reflected in the process and systems steps.

4.3. Q. Will time be wasted on updates that could be spent resolving?

A. We will be asking customers for their preferences on frequency of communication but these will be based around milestones.

4.4. Q. The target for complaints to reduce?

A. This is in context of improving services and will be driven by better services not better complaints handling.

4.5. Q. We'd like to see the feedback loop out to the business and understand how this works.

A. We categorise by service area and facet of complaint. There is a monthly lessons learnt meeting which includes Voice of the Customer (VOC) feedback & Housing Ombudsman determinations. The big things are agreed at this meeting and the rest goes to the contract management meetings.

4.6. Q. Quality assurance of complaints – how does it happen?

A. We will provide info on this.

4.7. Q. What is the programme to make sure the complaint is processed correctly?

A. We measure this via satisfaction of whether complaints have been fully addressed. This is an area we can improve on. Part of the complaints acceptance process should be a discussion with the complainant to clarify points they have made. An important part of the first response is that you are very clear about what you are responding to. We are trying to do a really good job of the first stage so a review is less heavy duty.

4.8. Detailed Feedback was received on the four case studies provided.

4.9. There is a possibility Hyde will be working with an external company around letter writing and if so, would like to get CHOP's feedback on principles, tone of voice via The OAK (Hyde's resident engagement website). We want greater consistency and better tone of voice, structure, simplicity of language.

Q. Who writes the complaints letters?

A. Mostly the Complaints Team but sometimes drafted by managers especially if they are reviewing a complaint.

4.10. CHOP members will also be invited to next evening Voice of the Customer session in London.

4.11. Q. Is the Complaints Team now up to strength? Interviews happening this week. One of the Resolutions Officers will be focusing on service charges and making sure complaints are handled as complaints when they should be, not enquiries.

5. Update on Hydewide Residents Eye (HRE) Service Charge Recommendations & Update from Service Charge Team

5.1. A summary report was shared of HRE inspection of service charges and the agreed recommendations.

5.1.1. Q. Are timescales realistic? A. When negotiations take place this is discussed.

5.1.2. Report is good and well set out.

5.1.3. Is the full audit paid for by Hyde or by residents?

A. This is an internal audit by Mazars of Hyde's internal processes and will not be directly charged to residents.

5.1.4. CHOP would like to find out about results of impact assessment

5.1.5. CHOP would like to see Comms plan around service charges

5.1.6. Invoice packs – CHOP would like information about this to be included on statement of accounts and also ensure it is on website.

5.1.7. CHOP would like update on service charge recommendations at December 2019 meeting.

5.2. Service Charge Update

5.2.1. Would be useful to have comparison data from last year

5.2.2. 65% relating to services incorrectly coded at point of invoice payment – if these were quality assured would avoid this. It was explained weekly meetings have been held since December 2018 with the Property Managers involved to check any issues.

5.2.3. Q. What is being done in terms of evidence of service charges?

A. Mazars action plus info & gov programme. Home owners in Camden have a self-service portal – very basic. Can see by invoice.

6. Forward Planner

6.1. Agreed to focus only on Service Charges and Property Managers at September meeting.

6.2. Service charge comms consultation to take place via OAK beforehand.

6.3. Representative from HRE to be invited to talk about service charges.

6.4. Property Managers (PMs)– would like to have job role plus guest speaker and PM to share about what their role is like on a day to day basis and whether role is working

7. Election of Vice Chair

7.1. Send an email to the rest of members to give them an opportunity to vote.

8. AOB

8.1. Observer thoughts – interesting

8.2. Good that members challenge

Meeting closed at 8pm.