

West Kent Housing Association

Scrutiny panel review

How West Kent hears the voice of residents

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26 May 2023

1. Executive summary

The West Kent Scrutiny Panel conducted a comprehensive review over a nine-month period to assess how West Kent effectively hears the voices of its residents. The review involved analysing both qualitative and quantitative data from various areas of the organisation and engaging with staff and residents to gather additional informal feedback.

The panel recognise the solid foundation West Kent has in listening to residents and its recent efforts to enhance this process through the implementation of a broader range of surveys and involvement methods. They also acknowledge that the upcoming introduction of Cx, West Kents' new housing solution will lead to a better level of service and efficiency in some of the areas they've highlighted. However, the review identified several areas where improvements could be made.

The have compiled a set of 20 comprehensive recommendations under four key headings:

- How West Kent can make it easier for residents to be heard.
- How West Kent can improve internal communications and awareness so the resident voice can be more effectively heard and acted upon.
- How West Kent can improve how they let residents know what action they have taken, based on their feedback.
- How West Kent can better define the role of tenancy services officers.

17 of the recommendations have been fully accepted, one partially accepted, one dependent on Cx functionality, and one was not accepted.

The panel found that initial contact with West Kents contact centre is usually positive, but after this point, issues can arise due to a lack of clarity around staff roles and responsibilities. This can lead to delays in response times and left residents feeling frustrated or ignored. They recommended that along with an inclusive and compassionate approach to communication, staff should have guidance and clarification of roles and responsibilities of teams across the organisation.

This lack of clear understanding of roles was reflected in residents and led to the panel's recommendation around providing clear messages to residents on who to contact; when and why. Clear communication on this, that utilises all channels (both digital and non-digital) will enable them to use the right channel and get the best response.

West Kent residents have expressed they don't always feel West Kent listens and responds to their views through recent Tenant Satisfaction Measure surveys and this also emerged in the panels contact with residents during their review. Considering this, and the recent increase in complaints seen across the sector, the panel recommended that West Kent formulate a more effective way to let residents know that they have listened to them, and more importantly, that improvement plans have been made based on their feedback. Resident feedback should encompass complaints, surveys, resident involvement and informal feedback and should be shared across all channels.

Specific recommendations were made concerning the role of tenancy services officers, as again, there was some misunderstanding about their responsibilities both with staff and residents. Residents can believe that they need to get 'past' the contact centre staff in order to talk to their TSO about issues the contact centre staff can fully deal with; and staff may refer issues to tenancy services that aren't their responsibility. The panel also recognised the high level of complex and emotional issues the team are supporting residents with. However, residents feel reassured by having a named contact at West Kent who is available to them and also a visible presence in their neighbourhood.

An overall theme throughout the review was around the need to continue with traditional communication and involvement methods alongside developing a strong self-serve, digital offer. The 'human 'face' of West Kent is really important to residents- it helps them feel heard and provides an opportunity to have wider conversation and discussion that's more than just transactional. In a post-Covid world, many have embraced digital methods of communication, but some residents are unable or unwilling to do this, so more isolated than ever. Written, verbal, and face to face contact needs to be an option for access to both resident involvement and tenancy services as well as via the community development team.

The findings and recommendations of this review have been shared with relevant staff who have provided a response to each recommendation. Some recommendations are already in progress as part of wider plans or Cx implementation so naturally fall into other workstreams, but others will be new initiatives. The most considerable change will be around the face-to-face offer provided by tenancy services and resident involvement and introducing a more comprehensive message around how West Kent listens and acts on resident feedback.

The scrutiny panel and Communities and Housing Committee will receive updates on the implementation of recommendations. In addition, the staff group meeting to oversee Tenant Satisfaction Measure results and other resident feedback, will have oversight recommendations and will track their implementation. Key messages and recommendations from this review will also feed onto the formation of the resident involvement strategy 2024-27.

2. Introduction

West Kent's scrutiny panel was formed in 2020 and currently consists of six residents. The panel meet regularly to understand and analyse performance and satisfaction information and recommend ways in which West Kent can improve services for residents.

Having completed reviews of both West Kent's training and employment service and repairs service, the scrutiny panel wanted to widen the scope of their third review to include more than one area of the business and decided to complete a review on how West Kent hears the voice of residents.

The decision to look at this area was taken based on communication being a recurring theme in the 2021 STAR survey results and complaint trends and was also an area of concern when the panel completed their review of the repairs service.

In a wider, national context, the panel are aware that upcoming changes in housing legislation, including the introduction of Tenant Satisfaction Measures, are designed to ensure that the voice of the resident is central to the decisions and actions of housing providers. Therefore, the panel wanted to better understand how West Kent currently hears the resident voice. In addition, they wanted to understand how residents felt about communicating with West Kent in a post-Covid world, where communication channels, options, and preferences may have changed for both West Kent and residents.

Five panel members contributed to this review:

- Linda Lee
- Carolina De Andrade
- Fen Stanley

- Jason Purtell
- Cathy Morgan

The sixth member of the panel, Hans May, was recruited towards the end of the review and so didn't contribute directly.

3. Review aims

When scoping the review, the panel agreed on the overall questions they wanted to answer:

- How is resident feedback (informal and formal) fed back into the business so changes can be made?
- How do we collect information from residents?
- How can we 'find out what we don't know' and make sure all voices are heard?

The panel wanted to understand the pathway of communication that happens when a resident contacts West Kent, from both the point of view of the resident and staff – and the systems and processes involved. They were particularly interested in survey/feedback methods used by West Kent and the inclusivity of these.

4. Methodology

This review was conducted over a period of eight months. Data from a variety of sources, both qualitative and quantitative, was collected and analysed to inform the review and recommendations.

4.1 Staff presentations and information

Staff across the business worked with the panel, presenting the work of their teams, key achievements, and challenges. They were welcoming of the panel's interest, provided all the data and information required and were open to answering questions.

The panel had presentations from:

- The customer experience team – this covered the different ways residents can contact West Kent, the 'customer journey' and included a demonstration of West Kents current CRM.
- The customer resolution team – this covered all aspects of complaints, including the themes and how West Kent learns from complaints
- The resident involvement team – this covered the current opportunities residents have to scrutinise and challenge West Kent and get involved in reviewing and improving services.
- The tenancy services team- this covered the role and responsibilities of tenancy services officers and the type and frequency of contact they have with residents.
- The communities team – the head of communities outlined the new communities structure and the approach to community development.
- The business improvement and analytics team – this covered the different types of surveys West Kent send out and how we respond to results.

In addition, the resident involvement manager completed a 'mapping exercise' on behalf of the panel, meeting with operational management members across the business to better understand how teams hear from residents, and how they respond. The panel also met with a scheme manager to understand how residents are heard in schemes.

3.2 Data and information

The panel also received:

- A breakdown of how residents contact West Kent by channel in 2022.
- The customer service performance figures for 2022.
- A breakdown of non-responders to the West Kent census.
- A breakdown of responders to rant and rave surveys.
- A summary of all complaints received in 2022 and the themes of these.
- Initial results of Tenant Satisfaction Measures surveys.
- The summary report from the digital survey West Kent completed to better understand the digital lives of residents.
- Organisational charts

The panel receive information quarterly on West Kent's performance and satisfaction results, so this also informed this review.

3.3 Desktop research

The panel completed research on West Kent's website, checking its ease of use and functionality.

3.4 Resident survey and focus groups

The panel sent a survey (digital and paper) to all residents who have consented to resident involvement opportunities. A link to a survey was sent to 565 residents via email and 217 residents via the post. 134 responses were received (29 paper, 105 digital) giving an overall response rate of 23.7% which is consistent with the response rate we receive on rant and rave (our method for conducting transactional surveys).

Residents who took part in the survey were invited to attend a follow up focus group, facilitated by panel members, with support from the resident involvement team, and they had the option of doing this online or in-person. A phone call option was given to those who couldn't attend either. Eleven residents (8%) participated, five residents attended an online focus group, four came to an in-person one and two residents gave further feedback by phone.

In summary, the survey and focus groups asked:

- How residents felt when they contacted West Kent
- If they felt listened to
- What barriers they faced when contacting West Kent
- If they felt able to voice their opinions on West Kents services
- How West Kent could listen more effectively

4 Review findings and recommendations

The panel drew together all the information they received throughout the course of the review and spent a whole day discussing their findings and recommendations. Overall, they grouped together their findings and recommendations into four key areas:

- How West Kent can make it easier for residents to be heard.
- How West Kent can improve internal communications and awareness so the resident voice can be more effectively heard and acted upon.
- How West Kent can improve how they let residents know what action they have taken, based on their feedback.
- How West Kent can better define the role of tenancy services officers.

4.1 How West Kent can make it easier for residents to be heard

This first area focuses on how easy residents find it to communicate with West Kent and considered:

- Customer service
- Involvement opportunities
- Ease of contact and communication
- Residents' awareness of roles and responsibilities.

The panel recognised the strong performance of the contact centre in rant and rave feedback and acknowledged initial contact is usually positive and supportive. The results from the resident survey, created by the panel, were mixed in terms of how residents felt when they contacted West Kent. Comments included issues around phone systems not always working effectively, residents not receiving call backs from the relevant teams after raising initial queries, and some residents feeling rushed during calls. The panel noted that the contact centre receives very high levels of calls, with the KPI for calls answered in target not being met consistently. They also noted that email contact from staff to customer services exceeded emails from residents and questioned the efficiency of this process.

Feedback from residents in the survey and focus group suggested that residents felt frustrated with not being able to get 'past' customer services to speak to other staff members – very often their tenancy services officer (TSO). Or they felt frustrated with not hearing back after they reported an initial issue or raised a query. When discussing this in more detail during focus groups, it became clear that residents were attempting to contact their TSO for issues that were outside the realm of control for their TSO. There was a misconception that TSOs were able to make decisions and provide information that the customer service team were not. Residents at the focus groups also felt they wanted to know the name and face of their tenancy services officer as they perceived them to be their personal contact at West Kent.

These findings led the panel to make recommendations around improved training for resident facing staff. They noted that all staff are undertaking Making the Difference training but felt there should be more of an emphasis on empathy, understanding and communication with residents with vulnerabilities and disabilities. This felt more important considering the call centre have a KPI around call handling time, when some residents may need extra time to communicate.

They also recommended that there should be improved information shared with residents at sign-up, along with regular reminders, of who to contact at West Kent and when, and also the role and remit of TSOs.

The results of the digital survey indicate that the majority of West Kent residents have access to the internet. Therefore, there should be a strong digital offer that West Kent staff can direct residents to, so they can access most efficient service. But the digital channels need to be fully functioning, fit for purpose and residents need to understand them and the efficiencies they bring.

The panel noted that face-face customer service options had been stopped some time ago at both the Sevenoaks and Swanley offices, with a move to an appointment only system. It seemed that information about the closure of customer services at the Swanley office had not been effectively shared with residents. As several panel members live in Swanley and are involved in the local community, they feel a lack of a West Kent presence in Swanley has had a negative impact on residents, particularly considering the withdrawal of other services in the area (such as closure of banks, limited post office and pharmacy facilities and a reduction in bus services). West Kent no longer having a regular face-to-face offer has added to a feeling of isolation for this community.

The previous West Kent desks in the public area of the Swanley Link are now empty with residents needing to make an appointment to see a staff member, which gives a message that staff aren't readily available if needed. Although the panel are aware that reinstating customer services in Swanley may not be the only answer to this lack of contact opportunity for Swanley residents, they felt strongly that a regular, face-to-face drop-in service in Swanley should be a priority for West Kent. This should be considered particularly important as there are such a large number of West Kent homes in Swanley.

The panel's focus on ease of contact also included a recommendation around website improvements, so that key information could be found more easily, and that it provides clear information about the tenant portal, its benefits and how to sign up. The contact us page would also benefit from an overhaul, so that there is clear information on who to contact, when and why and a wider explanation of the range of issues customer services can assist with (to deter the feeling some residents have of wanting to get 'past' them). There should also be advice on when and why a tenancy services officer may be the right person to deal with certain, specific issues.

There also needs to be a clear message about how to contact West Kent via non-digital methods- phone, letter or face to face. This should be shared in Neighbourhood News and communal areas when possible.

Speaking with residents throughout the course of the review, and more generally, the panel felt there was a general lack of understanding of who West Kent are – i.e., not the council or local authority and not a profit-making housing provider. Although there is an 'about us' area of the website it has a more corporate voice and doesn't clearly set out who we are to residents.

During the review, the panel had a concern around residents with disabilities or vulnerabilities and felt it was important to ensure contact for these groups is as easy as possible. There needs to be clear information on how residents can nominate advocates to speak to West Kent on their behalf- there is no guidance currently available on the website. There should also be key documents such as tenancy agreements available in multiple, accessible formats, including dementia friendly and 'easy-read' versions.

Providing more traditional opportunities for contact was a recurring theme with several survey responses indicating residents felt refreshed to be sent a paper survey. Attendees at the face-to-

face focus group expressed a genuine appreciation for the traditional contact methods. Although this only came from a small number of residents, there was an appetite for more in-person opportunities to engage with tenancy services staff, but also to voice their views on services and service improvements. The panel were pleased to find that that generally, residents in staffed schemes are given many opportunities to share their views on where they live through residents' meetings. However, older, potentially less digitally able, residents living in schemes with no staff, or in general needs homes, don't have the same access to this, which again reinforces the need to improve face to face contact opportunities.

The panel noted that the desire for face-to-face contact may come from a variety of underlying reasons- a lack of knowledge around digital contact methods and their efficiency; a definite choice not to engage digitally; or loneliness and isolation. But overall, they felt there was a need for residents to see the 'human face' of their landlord on a regular basis – to know where to go to talk to someone. The Swanley community pilot in St Marys has been met with an overwhelmingly positive response from residents, demonstrating the value of an increased face to face presence from West Kent staff.

In addition, the face-to-face resident involvement workshops which happened two or three times a year prior to Covid lockdowns haven't been reinstated, with involvement opportunities being related to specific service areas or projects. This means there are fewer opportunities for open conversations where residents have the chance to set some of the agenda.

These findings led to a recommendation around face-to-face opportunities to engage that were joint initiatives between community development, resident involvement, and tenancy services, that take place in a variety of locations. This would mean that individual issues could be looked at and responded to as well as themes of concerns being escalated when needed. Such events would also provide opportunities for non-digital residents to share views and engage. A later recommendation around drawing resident feedback together would provide a mechanism for themes and issues from face-to-face events to be triangulated with other feedback methods and larger data sets and to contribute to prioritising and planning action.

4.2 How West Kent can improve internal communications and awareness so the resident voice can be more effectively heard and acted upon.

This area focuses on West Kents internal structure and communication and how the residents voice is listened to and acted upon. The panel found, in their conversations with staff across the organisation, that there can be a lack of understanding around roles and responsibilities of different teams. This can lead to confusion; time being wasted and residents waiting longer for responses as their questions and queries are passed from department to department. The panel found that tenancy services in particular were getting frequent internal contact asking them to deal with issues that are outside their remit. The panel's recommendation was to ensure a comprehensive training or communication plan around roles and responsibilities of teams, so all staff know who to contact when a resident has a concern or issue.

A mapping exercise gave the panel insight into the different ways resident feedback was gathered by West Kent and they acknowledged the positive steps towards ensuring inclusivity in this area by, for example, carrying out all TSM surveys by phone rather than relying on digital methods. However, they also noted there wasn't always a joined-up approach to resident feedback, with different teams responding to this in different ways. They recommended a central point where feedback can be analysed and responded to but noted the importance of informal feedback being a part of this, and not just relying on data gathered by surveys etc. The importance of bringing in

what resident facing staff are hearing 'on the ground' needs to be brought into this. With 30% of residents not replying to the census with up-to-date contact details, this 'ear-to-the-ground' work becomes even more important as surveys may not be reaching all residents – and in addition some may just never reply. Therefore staff who are in homes and communities need to be reporting back what they're seeing and hearing.

With complaints being a key method of hearing residents, the panel welcomed the work being done around identifying themes and learning from complaints. However, 'quick fixes' don't receive the same level of attention or analysis. Quick fixes are usually carried out by the customer services team on behalf of other teams. There isn't an automatic notification or report of quick fixes carried out for teams, so individuals, managers and heads of service don't have a clear oversight of this. This means that themes of 'low-level' issues may not be spotted. Better analysis and understanding of quick fixes could prevent escalation to the formal complaint process but moreover would provide opportunities for service improvement.

4.3 How West Kent can improve how they let residents know what action they have taken, based on their feedback.

Desktop research led to the panel reviewing the page on the website that details how West Kent is performing. Information here is very limited and the panel felt that far more needed to be provided and it should be inter-linked with the resident involvement 'you said, we did;' area.

TSM results indicate that residents don't always feel their views are listened to and acted upon and the resident survey and focus groups reiterated this- residents made it clear they felt they got little feedback from West Kent in terms of how their views had been taken on board. This could be on a 1-1 basis if they had shared a view or opinion with a staff member during a transactional interaction (e.g., talking through a repair issue) or via a wider feedback method such as a survey. More generally residents complete surveys etc and may participate in resident involvement activities but felt they didn't get a bigger picture message informing them of what West Kent is hearing from residents and what they're doing about it.

The recommendation around bringing resident feedback together centrally should inform priorities and actions and this information should be provided to residents through multiple channels- not just the website but also through Neighbourhood News and social media. The panel also felt there could be an opportunity for a larger scale resident event where West Kent staff can clearly set out plans and priorities and how these correspond to resident feedback.

4.4 How West Kent can better define the role of tenancy services officers

Throughout the course of the review, the panel found that a number of issues emerged around the role of tenancy services officers and a lack of understanding about their roles. Therefore, they made some additional recommendations in specific area. An initial recommendation was around the job title. The former tenancy support officer role (now tenancy sustainment officer role) is also abbreviated to TSO so the name can cause confusion and more generally isn't meaningful to residents, who on the whole, still refer to their TSO as a housing officer. The panel have made a recommendation to revert to 'housing officer' as the job title and note that the staff members in this role are likely to welcome this change,

The panel had feedback from residents that they didn't know who their tenancy services officer was and found them hard to contact. They would call but not always hear back and some were confused about who to contact due to patch changes. As above, it sometimes transpired that a resident was contacting a TSO about an issue they wouldn't be able to help with anyway which indicated a lack of understanding around their role and purpose. The panel heard about the types of high need individuals and families the TSO team support and the complexity of many of the situations they deal with. They could see that this was a team carrying a lot of emotional stress and that was very stretched. Additional requests from other staff members adds to this pressure when requests are not within the remit of the team. Hence the above recommendation around a clarification of roles. Added to this, residents are leaning on the support of TSOs when local support services cannot help them or no longer exist.

In terms of residents' perception of TSOs, again, the panel realised some clarification was needed in this area. Residents felt strongly that they should know who their tenancy services officer is; how they can contact them; and when they can see them.

They felt they needed to be more visible in the community, taking part in events with resident involvement and community development and being ready and willing to talk informally with residents about their neighbourhood. The panel agreed that TSOs also need to be advising residents of the most appropriate way to contact West Kent with individual issues (e.g., through customer services) to ensure residents get the most efficient response and avoid extra burdens for the team.

Summary and next steps

The key messages in this report are about ensuring that an inclusive range of contact and engagement methods are available for residents to be heard. Both in terms of reporting issues, raising concerns, for giving general feedback and getting involved.

While the panel recognise the efficiencies digital contact methods can bring both residents and staff, they stress the importance of maintaining a visible and accessible presence in all the communities where West Kent has homes. Non-digital residents, whether by circumstance or choice, may be in the minority, but shouldn't be left out or left behind. Whatever the contact method, staff should be fully present, attentive, empathetic, and understanding in all interactions.

It feels important to residents to have a named contact at West Kent – a person who is available and visible in their Neighbourhood, so the role of the tenancy services officer is key.

West Kent should continue to better understand the feedback from residents and remain vigilant about residents they consistently don't hear from, identifying any commonalities in these groups and creating targeted communication and engagement opportunities when needed.

The panel highlighted that communication is two-way. West Kent needs to provide up to date, comprehensive and accessible information about services and residents need to understand who to contact, how, why, and when.

Drawing the different strands of resident feedback together and analysing ap them effectively, will enable West Kent to really understand what residents are telling them. Once they set priorities and

start to plan for improvement, residents need to be involved in co-creating service improvements. Opportunities for involvement in this need to be diverse and inclusive.

Appendix one contains a table of all recommendations related to the review and responses from relevant teams across the business. Some recommendations are already part of internal plans, and this have been noted in the table so that priority in terms of planning, can be given to the recommendations requiring new action.

Overall, the recommendations and thinking behind them has been very much welcomed and there is an aim to work closely and constructively with the panel to achieve them. Initial responses will be followed up by the resident involvement team to create clear action plans and time frames. The coming months at West Kent will have a focus on the launch of Cx, the new housing management system, which the panel is fully aware of. This may result in some actions beginning after the go live date in October, but there are also opportunities to tie in recommendations with work already in plan as part of the wider Cx implementation. In addition, much of this review will be used to inform the new resident involvement strategy.

A progress report on recommendation implementation will be provided to the panel and communities and housing committee in six months (January 2024).

Scrutiny report

Appendix one: Scrutiny panel voice of the resident review recommendations and management responses

| Recommendations | | |
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| Making it easier for tenants to be heard | | |
| Customer service | | |
| 1. Extend customer service training so there is more emphasis on patience and empathy and so it includes interacting with residents with disabilities, vulnerabilities and non-digital residents. | Accepted | This is covered in West Kent’s Making The Difference Training but will be reinforced through strengthening messages around empathy, understanding and patience A digital nudge campaign planned for 2024 will include training on diversity of people’s needs and abilities and having an empathetic and understanding approach In plan |
| 2. Contact centre to review ‘scripts’ to include a clear ending, involving full clarification the advisor has correctly understood the issues and dealt with it, by repeating back/clarifying and saying “Have I understood what you needed today?” | Accepted | Conversation endings will be reviewed and linked with the Making the Difference 'wrap up' to ensure residents who call the customer service centre feel their call has been resolved well. |
| 3. Ensure the phone systems are fully fit for purpose- that the call back system works and that calls don’t drop off. | Accepted | An upgrade in August 2023 should resolve ongoing phone connectivity issues. |

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| <p>4. Re-introduce a public staff presence at Swanley Link- a walk in service should be offered – reception and/or tenancy services</p> | <p>Not accepted</p> | <p>Prior to the Covid lockdowns, we were aware that our customer services staff at the Swanley office were having limited face to face contact with residents. We realised that the time and expertise of these staff members would be better used in our contact centre where they could work to reduce waiting times and help more residents.</p> <p>Before we had time to announce the decision to move the customer services team away from the desks in the Swanley Link, we had to close them down anyway due to Covid restrictions. We accept that we didn't communicate to the Swanley community that this closure would be permanent, and this also meant we weren't able to let residents know the other options they had to see staff face-to-face. <i>We're sorry this happened and do understand the value of seeing staff face-to-face. We're reviewing our face-to-face contact options and will let residents know when they're able to see key staff in person.</i></p> |
| <p>5. Review the welcome information for new tenants so that its clear who they contact, how why and when as well as RI opportunities.</p> | <p>Accepted</p> | <p>Current information is being reviewed to ensure its up-to-date and clear.</p> |
| <p>Involvement and contact opportunities</p> | | |

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| <p>6. Introduce regular in person events/meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunities for West Kent to share what they are doing, get feedback and demonstrate how they've listened to resident feedback and include scrutiny panel in this Regular meetings throughout the year, in various locations, where residents can come and share their views on what matters to them- target some of these meeting specifically for non-digital and scheme residents (tie-in with Housing Officer in-person events below) -Opportunities for residents to see their Tenancy Services Officer in-person | <p>Accepted</p> | <p>We recognise that we should provide a variety of ways for residents to engage with us. In-person opportunities to get involved will be and incorporated into the 2024-27 resident involvement strategy plan</p> <p>The resident involvement team will work with the community development team and tenancy services team to establish a programme of events where residents can engage with staff and share their views.</p> <p>The resident involvement team will establish better links with scheme managers to ensure relevant feedback is passed on and to promote wider resident involvement opportunities for residents in schemes.</p> <p>There will be improved promotion of how and when residents can contact or see their Tenancy Services Officer.</p> |
| <p>7. Ensure a clear message is shared with residents when they have contributed to improving a service and consider going back to them to check if improvements have been made.</p> | <p>Accepted</p> | <p>We will improve the performance pages on the website so residents know how their feedback through surveys and elsewhere, have made a difference.</p> |
| <p>8. Review resident involvement Facebook page as its frequently used for complaints</p> | <p>Accepted</p> | <p>The resident involvement team will review, and consult with residents currently in the discussion group to see if we can change the group, or re-consider its function, ensuring the updated social media guidance is adhered to.</p> |
| <p>9. Consider targeted consultations for the vulnerable, disabled, non-digital and for those West Kent don't hear from.</p> | <p>Accepted</p> | <p>This will be included in the 2024-27 resident involvement strategy</p> |

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| <p>Ease of contact and communication</p> | | |
| <p>10. Website: make the following updates and also share through NN and social media:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Update 'contact us' information on website so it's clear who to contact, why and when (also produce a leaflet for communal areas) -Provide a clear message on who West Kent are - that they are a non-profit organisation, and separate from councils -General refresh so it's easier to find key information – work with residents on this -Create a video guide to tenants portal | <p>Accepted</p> | <p>We agree the website can be improved. We are introducing a new housing management system in October 2023 and after this, we will improve and update our contact us information.</p> <p>We will create an improved website, that's easier to use and navigate. Residents will be involved in shaping website improvements. Our tenant portal, my West Kent, will be updated in October 2023.</p> <p>Clear information on the portal will be shared and residents will be involved in testing the portal to get messages about it right.</p> |
| <p>11. Review accessibility of key documents including policies, tenancy agreements and letters to ensure they are available in alternative formats including 'easy-to-read' and dementia friendly versions.</p> | <p>Accepted</p> | <p>We will work to identify key documents and how we can produce more accessible formats, working with external partners if needed.</p> |

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| <p>12. Ensure there is a clear, easy and well publicised process for tenants that wish to nominate an advocate to speak to West Kent on their behalf.</p> <p>-This process needs to include an acknowledgement from West Kent that an advocate has been recorded on the system and should be sent in the same format as the notification was received (e.g. if a letter is sent by a tenant/advocate, a letter should be sent back)</p> | <p>Accepted</p> | <p>We agree we can provide better information on this and this recommendation will be actioned.</p> |
| <p>West Kent hearing the residents voice – internal communications and awareness</p> | | |
| <p>13. There needs to be improved internal communication and understanding in terms of roles and responsibilities of customer services, tenancy services and repairs.</p> | <p>Accepted</p> | <p>This will be reviewed and improved as part of the introduction of the new housing management system, which aims to create smoother, clearer processes.</p> |
| <p>14. All resident feedback needs to be brought together centrally to be discussed, prioritised and responded to so that there is continuity.</p> | <p>Accepted</p> | <p>A group of staff members from across the business will meet to track resident feedback in all forms. This group will identify themes; prioritise issues; and plan and track action.</p> |

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| <p>15. There needs to be a mechanism for informal feedback (received in communities, in homes and at face to face events) to be recorded and fed up through the organisation – such as a standing item at team meetings that is fed upwards through management.</p> | <p>Accepted</p> | <p>We will create a mechanism for informal resident feedback to be passed up via team meetings and management meetings.</p> |
| <p>16. Learning from complaints should be expanded to exploring and addressing themes in 'quick fixes'</p> | <p>Accepted</p> | <p>We accept this recommendation and will explore the options we will have to better report on quick fixes through the new housing management system.</p> |
| <p>West Kent communicating their response to resident feedback</p> | | |
| <p>17. West Kent needs to provide clear information on what West Kent is doing – what the priorities are and why, and how this is linked to resident feedback. This should include resident survey results and be provided through all channels- NN, website, social media, face to face RI events as above (twice yearly larger events)</p> | <p>Accepted</p> | <p>We will communicate this through improved performance pages on our website and in Neighbourhood News.</p> |
| <p>Tenancy services recommendations</p> | | |

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| <p>18. Job title should be changed to Housing Officer for clarity (often confusion with tenant sustainment – also TSOs) and ease of understanding</p> | <p>Accepted</p> | <p>We agree Neighbourhood Housing Officer would be a more appropriate title – we would welcome this change and will implement it as soon as possible.</p> |
| <p>19. All residents should be informed of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TSO/Housing Officers name contact details days and times of working week and their availability for contact – including face-to-face opportunities for contact - The full role and responsibility of their TSO/Housing Officer <p>This should be provided through multiple channels, website, letters NN etc</p> | <p>Accepted</p> | <p>A name change would provide the opportunity to 'relaunch' the tenancy services team and provide more information on their roles, responsibilities and how residents can contact them.</p> |
| <p>20. TSOs/Housing Officers need to be more visible and accessible to tenants, not just supporting those with more complex issues</p> | <p>Partially accepted</p> | <p>We agree that residents need to better understand the roles and responsibilities of TSOs/Housing officers. Residents may not need to contact their TSO/Housing Officer if there are no relevant issues so we will tie this in with the relaunch of the team and will also offer clear information on how TSOs/Housing Officers can be contacted, including face-to-face opportunities as detailed in recommendation 6 above.</p> |