



**Customer Opinion Panel Minutes**  
**Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2017 – Council Chambers**

**Gosport Borough Council**

James Hill – Housing Services Manager  
Julie Smith – Head of Operational Services  
Elaine Bastable – PCC Housing Options  
Steve Groves – PCC Asset Management

Denise Hudson – Resident Involvement Officer  
Sam Downing - Resident Involvement Officer

**Guests:**

Mr W Pullen	Mrs M Cook	Mrs E Saunders	Miss S Bellerby
Mr P Batty	Cllr Mrs L Batty	Mrs V Twyman	Ms J Perry
Mr K Burns	Mrs M Harmer	Mr B Hudson	Mrs L Hay
Miss R Walker	Mr T Gale	Mr B Sherman	Mrs S Greenwood
Mrs V Carter	Mr B Wakefield		

**Apologies:**

Mrs L Smith	Miss J Anders	Mrs I Symons	Mrs D Corbett
Mrs S Spelzini	Mrs P Grant	Miss J Rowe	Mr J Wild
Mr L Bedford	Mrs A Hill	Mr J Mardle	Mrs R Hill
Mr T Withers	Miss J Reed		

1.	<p><b>Welcome and Introduction</b></p> <p>Sam Downing opened the meeting and introduced Portsmouth’s Shared Managers: James Hill (Housing Services Manager), Julie Smith (Head of Operational Services), Elaine Bastable (Housing Options Manager) and Steve Groves (Asset Manager).</p>
2.	<p><b>Housing Review</b></p> <p>James gave an overview on the Housing Services Review and explained the next steps. He referred to the November 2016 COP and summarised the original proposals for the housing service. He confirmed that the formal consultation period staff and stakeholders ended in January and there was a wide range of feedback. All the timescales for the review have been met and James is keen to move through the next phase at pace. With the end of the consultation we can now move from ‘talking about change’ to actually implementing the change.</p> <p>James stated that following the end of consultation, meetings had taken place with staff to formally respond to the feedback and an End of Consultation document has been issued. James highlighted the following key</p>

messages that he had given to staff

- Tenants can expect to see improved customer service.
- Staff will be supported through the next phase.
- No personal judgement has been made regarding staff.
- The housing service will benefit from better tools such as information technology and training.
- The new structure needs to be flexible and can change in order to reflect customer demand.
- It is hoped that this is the last time that the housing service will have to go through such a major structure review.
- The new structure will go live over the next few months and whilst every attempt will be made to minimise disruption to customer services there may be some temporary disruption. The change will need to be managed carefully.
- James had encouraged the staff to read back through the proposal document because the initial change was focussed on the structure (roles and responsibilities) but the change programme was broader and is about placing customers at the heart of services. The teams were encouraged to hold the new management team to account for the wider programme.
- James would be happy to come back to a COP to hear how it is all going.

### **Elaine Bastable – Housing Options**

Elaine outlined the Housing Options section of the housing proposals and explained the what this team is responsible for:

- Housing waiting list
- Choice Based Lettings (CBL)
- Homelessness
- Support needs
- Temporary accommodation

Elaine explained that the roles will become more generic and the section will be reduced from four teams to two teams.

The following changes have been made as a result of the feedback from the consultation:

- Housing Advisors will now be a grade 6 rather than a grade 5/6.
- The Homeless support contract with Two Saints will be brought to an end in March. Two Saints will continue to provide support to customers in the community and hostel staff will continue to support those customers living in Gosport Borough Councils hostels/family centre.
- Accommodation Lettings Manager will be grade 8 rather than grade 9. However this will be reviewed at a later date.
- The Housing Options service will be available 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday.
- Customers will have a named point of contact throughout the

application process.

### **Steve Groves – Property Services**

Steve discussed the proposals for the Property Services section and highlighted the following:

- Property Services will amalgamate from three teams to one team.
- The focus will be on surveyors being able to carry out all types of surveying functions without relying on external support. Surveyors will receive support and training to enable them to be able to do this.
- Non property areas such as development work will be handled by PCC.
- Energy Services come under the remit of PCC.
- GBC will benefit from funding from PCC to install solar panels onto the Town Hall building and our sheltered schemes. After 7-8 years associated costs will be covered.
- GBC will have the use of a Structural Surveyor based at PCC as there is not enough demand for one to be based in Gosport.
- Good stock information is required to identify problems with GBC properties and focus on planned maintenance programmes. The PCC database will be used to record all this information.

The following identifies the changes to the original proposal document:

- All staff in Property Services has been job matched.
- An Apprentice Surveyor rather than an Assistant Surveyor will be appointed. There is funding that can be assessed to train and support the apprentice who will be based at GBC during their apprenticeship. There will be opportunities for the sharing of experiences for the apprentice in order to develop their skills.

Steve explained the Surveyor's role will become more generic and the service will look at the most effective way for customers to be able to contact the team. Consideration will be given to providing a surveyor drop in service. A comment was made that it was felt there are problems with communication with the surveyors.

There was a general discussion about apprentices and reassurance was given that the apprentice would be supported and will be shadowed. Positive comments were given about the apprentices at Kier.

### **Julie Smith – Housing Operational Services**

Julie discussed the proposals for the Operational Services section and reminded the group that the proposals aimed to bring together the current fragmented service. She confirmed the following changes:

- The current Housing Officer and Income Recovery Officer roles would be amalgamated to become a more customer focussed generic role with each officer dealing with smaller patches.
- The Neighbourhood Services Manager role will be responsible for

cleaning and estate services ensuring the estates are clean, safe and tidy. This role will work closely with Streetscene and customers should see a more improved service.

- There will be two Neighbourhood Services Officers (Estate Wardens) and we will recruit an apprentice Neighbourhood Service Officer.

There was a further general discussion about the cost to GBC to employ apprentices. James explained the apprenticeship levy and stated that every organisation has to pay for this. He confirmed the pay grade is different and the levy pays for training with a planned programme to develop the role and there will not be an increased cost to tenants. Apprentices are usually aged between 18-25 years. As well as receiving training, the apprentices work shadow officers with experience.

- A Business Support Team will be created; they will be a dedicated team that will serve all areas of the housing department.
- Following the consultation an additional Business Support Officer will be created.
- Job profiles for the Neighbourhood Involvement Officer and Policy Officer have been made following the consultation.
- The Neighbourhood Housing Officers will now be a grade 6 rather than a grade 5/6.

Julie stated that she is keen to create a stable environment and ensure tenants receive a consistent level of service.

### **Summary**

James summarised the outcome of the housing review and explained that there were just a few minor changes from the original proposals.

He stated that Housing's Senior Management Team is made up of Elaine Bastable, Julie Smith and Steve Groves who are shared PCC managers. James confirmed that 98% of the housing department are GBC staff and would remain based in Gosport. He reassured tenants that this is a shared management arrangement and **not** a takeover.

James explained The Senior Management Team will need to make decisions in the best interest of Gosport's residents and have signed contracts to confirm this. He stated Julie Smith will become Head of Housing and will be based in Gosport full time.

Below are some questions raised:

**Q. Will the housing list be amalgamated with PCC?**

A. No, this is because we are two separate authorities.

**Q. What is the housing stock at PCC?**

A. There are approximately 15,000 tenants and 1900 leaseholders.

James explained that the benefit of shared management means that both authorities can share training, job vacancies etc. He added that customers

	<p>may not see a massive change to the service from day one but improvements from a customer's point of view will follow. Our commitment will be to let our customers know who their point of contact will be by using publications, correspondence etc.</p> <p>James informed the COP that 68% of staff have been advised today that they are job matched. The selection process for recruiting officers into new roles will be carried out during the next couple of weeks.</p> <p>This is a big change for the housing service.</p> <p><b>Q. Can we give our opinion on how things are going in a couple of months?</b></p> <p>A. Yes, we can do this at the next COP.</p> <p><b>Q. Will you be looking at staff hours?</b></p> <p>A. Yes, working hours will be looked at on an individual basis.</p> <p>James stressed that the COP will continue but there would be opportunities to review how customers are engaged and involved in the service.</p> <p>There were no further questions.</p>
3.	<p><b>Breakout Session – How would you like to see customer engagement develop at GBC?</b></p> <p>The Senior Management Team sat with individual tables and asked the questions below to find out how they would like to see customer engagement develop.</p> <p>The following questions were asked:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Following the information given by James, do you have any concerns?</li> <li>2. What do you like about the proposals?</li> <li>3. Was there anything you wanted to know that wasn't covered in the presentation?</li> <li>4. How do you feel about the current level of involvement?</li> <li>5. Do you have any suggestions on how we encourage residents to become more involved?</li> <li>6. How can we encourage new residents to be involved?</li> <li>7. What neighbourhood involvement opportunities would you like us to consider?</li> </ol> <p>Please see attached document for the responses from individual tables.</p>
3.	<p><b>Date of next COP</b></p> <p>TBC</p>