**Service Charge Group Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** 10 October 2025
**Location:** Online (Microsoft Teams)
**Chair:** Tracy Jones
**Duration:** 1 hour 38 minutes
**Purpose:** To review service charge communications, resident engagement tools, contractor transparency, core support charge enforcement, extra care service review, and preparations for budget meetings.

**Attendees from Housing21**

* Tracy Jones (Chair)
* Richard Lawton
* Richard Wheeldon
* Amber Crick

**Resident Attendees**

* Tom L
* Michael R
* Allen A
* David D
* Ian D
* Dennis B
* Steve M

**1. Meeting Schedule and Previous Minutes**

* No meeting held in September; last meeting was in late August.
* Tracy clarified the cancellation and confirmed no missing minutes.

**2. Vlog Updates**

* Latest vlog published on Housing 21’s YouTube channel.
* October vlog (due by **30 October**) will explain the purpose and format of service charge discussion meetings.
* The idea is that the Vlog will be shown by managers before meetings to help residents understand what to expect.
* Promotion of the Housing 21 YouTube channel is planned.

**3. Service Charge and Rent Brochure**

* Circulated for feedback; minor terminology updates agreed.
* Terms like “sinking funds,” “usage charge,” and “24/7 support” were clarified.
* Final version approved for distribution.

**4. Resident Survey Planning**

* Jordan (Research Team) proposed 17 questions; group reduced to 13 for clarity and relevance.
* Key questions retained:
	+ Meeting organisational standards and communication.
	+ Accessibility of information
	+ Value for money
	+ Feedback and voice
	+ Detailed breakdowns of charges
* Survey questions to be sent to Jordan next week for external setup.

**5. Contractor Transparency and Service Specifications**

* David D raised concerns about lack of access to service agreements and contractor specs.
* Residents often choose contractors based on cost without understanding service scope.
* Group agreed:
	+ Core service agreements should be publicly available (e.g., notice boards).
	+ Managers must present clear quotes and service details before contracts are agreed.
	+ Residents should be involved in reviewing specifications.
* Tracy proposed developing a standardised process for managers to follow. (Tracy, Richard W, Richard L to work on and have prepared by 30th October ready for SC discussion meetings to commence)

**6. Core Support Charge Enforcement and Care Provision**

* Ian and Allen raised concerns about inconsistent service delivery by third-party care providers.
* Double billing is a concern where core support is paid for but no separate person doing the role, meaning paid care workers picking up in between calls (paid for care and having to pick up core support) needs reviewing for integrated care and 3rd party)
* Examples included lack of emergency response (due to capacity) and unclear responsibilities.
* Steve M reported that 20% of residents at Willow Gardens are refusing to pay the mandatory core support charge.
* Tracy confirmed the charge is mandatory and will investigate further with Sophia.
* Richard Lawton explained the separation of core support charge due to housing benefit eligible and Non-eligible charges.
* Housing 21 are conducting a wider service charge review which will include reviewing the integration of eligible/non-eligible charges over the next 6–9 months.
* Need to link core charges into Service Level Agreements with 3 party providers and care contract with LA’s.

**7. Extra Care Service Review**

* Jamie (absent due to bereavement) has supported HR and Heads in leading the Extra Care Service review for the last 12-18 months which has looked at all management roles across EC including HM, AHM, ACM and also lifestyles, capacity, expectations and resource has been a key point in the review along with benchmarking salaries.
* Role profiles being updated; consultation underway with managers.
* Proposed changes include:
	+ New job titles
	+ Clearer responsibilities
	+ Stronger partnership working with care providers and local authorities
	+ Improved capacity on schemes
* We anticipate there may be a small increase in service charges mainly occurring in integrated schemes due to staffing levels and the review of what is charged back through the SC.
* Lucy to include explanation in briefing note for managers to provide transparency for residents.

**8. Meeting Logistics and Accessibility**

* Allen raised concerns about poor visibility and sound at a recent in-person meeting. (Environmental Seminar) Tracy will feedback to the organisers.

**9. Service Charge Budget Meeting Planning**

* Toolkits and paperwork to be finalised by **30 October**.
* Meetings to run from **early November to mid-December**.
* It was discussed all managers should inform residents 14 days prior to the service charge discussion meeting of the date and time and send all information to each resident at least 7 days prior.
* Vlog to support meeting - understanding service charge discussion meetings will be completed by **30 October**.

**10. Any Other Business**

* Group expressed appreciation for the meeting’s structure and progress.
* Tom L praised the subcommittee’s effectiveness and thanked Tracy, Richard Lawton, and Richard Wheeldon.
* Ian to raise core charge principles at the Extra Care Committee.
* Tracy confirmed she will attend and support that discussion.
* Light-hearted end to the meeting with festive suggestions for December.

**11. Actions and Decisions**

| **Action** | **Owner(s)** | **Deadline** | **Notes** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Finalise and publish October vlog | Tracy Jones | 30 October | Vlog to explain service charge meetings and be shown before sessions |
| Promote Housing 21 YouTube channel | Tracy Jones & Comms Team | November | Include vlog links in meeting invites and newsletters |
| Finalise service charge brochure | Tracy Jones & Lucy Nixon | Immediate | Include updated terminology and distribute to managers |
| Finalise and send survey questions | Jordan (Research Team) | Next week | Survey reduced to 13 questions; Jordan to liaise with external provider |
| Investigate non-payment of core support charge | Tracy Jones & Steve M | October | Follow-up discussion and resolution planning |
| Raise core charge principles at Extra Care Committee | Ian D | Next meeting | Amber Crick to add to the agenda. |
| Finalise service charge meeting toolkits | Tracy Jones & Team | By 30 October | Ensure materials are ready for November meetings |
| Full communications review | Ian D & Katrina Wilcox | Immediate | Ian to invite Tracy to meeting |

**Closing Remarks**

* Group praised the meeting’s structure and progress.
* Tom Long and Ian Devereux highlighted the subcommittee’s effectiveness.
* Tracy committed to supporting the Extra Care Committee discussion.
* Light-hearted end with festive suggestions for December meetings.

Next meeting will be held on 21 November at 2pm.