

Spotlight Zoom Meeting Minutes – 17 June 2025 6-8pm

1	Welcome, Apologies and Matters Arising
	<p><u>In attendance:</u></p> <p><u>Spotlight members:</u> Kirsten De Keyser (KDK) – Chair Derek Sheppard (DS) – Joint co-chair Christian Leonard (CL) - Joint co-chair Nickie Fonda (NF) Shane Addicoat (SA) Brian Wrigglesworth (BW)</p> <p><u>Guest Attendee:</u> Amanda Williams – Together Resident Panel</p> <p><u>Origin & Gilmartins Staff:</u> CW – Resident and Community Engagement Manager (Origin) FA – Resident Engagement Officer (Origin) LT - Service Charge Integration Project Manager (Origin) SB – Assistant Director (GM)</p> <p><u>Apologies:</u></p> <p>Zahraa Kadri (ZK) – Spotlight Lia Voutourides (LV) – Spotlight Kiki Onyesoh (KO) – Spotlight</p>
2	Ombudsman maladministration case review
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CW explained that she would take questions from Spotlight about the maladministration case review and refer them back to Pam. - DS mentioned that the main issue is around communication. - DS asked why, after an operative attend an emergency repair and completes some of the work, why the repair is not deemed as urgent and has to be rebooked as a standard repair? - Why is Origin paying a third-party company for CCTV images and not Origin staff? Relying on a third party delays the process as, it takes 2 -3 days to download the images and then another 7 days to produce it. - CW explained that with CCTVs it could be difficult to get hold of the information required and there are issues with GDPR which causes problems in accessing CCTV and there is a number of things that makes this difficult to manage. Origin pays a third party because we do not have capacity within our staffing structure to manage it. - CW highlighted that on the action plan been sent back to the Housing Ombudsman, it says Origin would collate information on CCTV and how it works at scheme level and save this in an easily accessible shared folder for staff. - SB explained that emergency repairs are raised as an out of hours repairs and they attend within 2hrs, If there are follow on works that emergency has to be closed otherwise the repairs team would be out of target on their KPIs, that's why a new job is raised. - SA said he thinks there is something missing in the process, if someone has an emergency repair, the expectation is for it to be resolved at the initial point of contact, the process is broken and it's not working. - NF asked who had oversight of the case? (Is it Origin and Gilmartins?) to ensure that the issues raised were successfully dealt with and leads to a positive outcome for the resident.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LT explained that when there is an Ombudsman maladministration, it would sit at the executive director level to ensure that lessons are learned, and actions are carried out. In this case it's PB as it's an operations issue but if it was for a different area of the business it would sit with the director that manages that area. - CL mentioned that the case had come from the Ombudsman who has instructed Origin to share with Spotlight the action plan proposed to address the failings. - CL said that what isn't made clear in the action plan is that record keeping relies upon the manager initially responding to a complaint, or disrepair, needs to take responsibility for following it through to a satisfactory conclusion. - CL asked how many maladministration cases Origin has found against it by the Ombudsman in the last year. CW to check this and update Spotlight. - KDK advised that all the maladministration cases are on the Housing Ombudsman website. - CL mentioned that the minutes from the National Customer Group (NCG) states that PFP (P had 80 maladministration cases brought against them last year and paid out £1million in compensation and this year they are down to 60. It is important to have the continuity of these discussions with PFP.
3	Service Charge queries and questions6
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SA advised that it took the service charge team 3 months to get back to him about his query which they reduced drastically but haven't reduced his monthly direct debit. - DS mentioned that he quoted that the response time was 10 days the team quoted that it was 30days from the date of their email. He pays a service charge in his rent each week which is not set out so every time his rent goes up by 5%, his service charge also goes up by the same percentage. - SA asked if there was a legislation that Housing Providers leverage in making decisions relating to service charges? - DS's lawn is meant to be cut 8 times in 12-month period but has only been cut once in 18 months, he's asked for a refund for the months that has been missed but hasn't received it. - LT explained that one of the things that was discussed was an update on the scrutiny panel recommendations and had this on an excel spreadsheet which she would send out after this meeting. - The conversations were around definitions and what was available on the website ensuring that matched, it was also around the booklet and confirmed that there would be an Origin booklet before the integration. - BW explained that him and Amanda had a pre-meet based on the agenda items that he sent to Spotlight, where Amanda identified a few items from the scrutiny group that hadn't been implemented. This is concerning as the scrutiny took place over two years ago and they were told the recommendations had been implemented which hasn't been. DS get SC included in his rent and doesn't get told what is being charged for each of the services he is supposed to receive. - They also queried why they seem to be charged for services that they are not receiving such as pest control, bulk waste, gardening service or grounds maintenance where they get charged for it. - LT explained that residents are charged for pest control in advance even if they don't use it, they might require the service later because this is an unpredictable service. - This is part of Origin's policy, it's a flat fee that is charged to residents, LT advised that as we get into the integration with PFP this policy would be reviewed. - KDK asked if there are any residents involved when the service charge rates are set? - LT explained that when there is rent plus service charges, her team would go out to all the teams to ask what specific services they would be providing to the scheme and the cost of those services. LT's team is producing the service charges and there is an internal validation process that they go through, it's checked at every stage and benchmarked against other similar size schemes and what the current costs are.

- This is signed off by LT and the senior development colleagues before it is sent out to either the sales team or the lettings team to advertise. KDK responded by asking how is it that all the checks you have described there are such errors in the SCs that go out to residents?
- LT advised that the annual rent increase is dictated by the government and the non-regulated rent such as the shared ownership rent, market rent, we will follow what's in the lease, this then goes to board for approval.
- It's a similar process with service charges, the team would go out to the business area providing a service and ask what the charges would be for the next year, this process can take up to 2 months because the business area would away and work out what would be happening in the next year. It is a manual process using excel spreadsheet, there is no bespoke software that is doing these calculations.
- CL asked if LT could put something in writing about how service charges are calculated as there is clearly something wrong with the process. As the minutes can only capture part of what is said in these meetings and only a small number of residents read the minutes on the website, it is critical to have something in writing that residents can refer to that explains how SCs are calculated.
- BW and AW went through this process two years ago with Carl Mercer and yet none of the agreed changes has been carried forward to this year. Residents are still being charged for services they do not receive.
- SA asked if there is a legalisation that the service charge team works within and is there a system in place for residents to put in a complaint and on what housing providers can use.
- LT explained that what Origin can charge is in the agreement between Origin and the resident which is either in the lease, rent or tenancy agreement. The National Housing Federation provides good guidance, best practice and service charge books and anyone who's working in service charges has a copy of this. **LT to double to see if she can share copies of the service charge handbook with Spotlight.**
- LT explained that the way Origin operates, whoever is providing a service, will receive an invoice and confirm if a service has been delivered, at the end of the year when the service charge team needs to reconcile accounts with leaseholders, they will check what has been spent before they charge residents.
- If residents are paying for a service and not receiving it, this needs to be flagged to Origin so that it can be addressed.
- The service charge team would not change service charges unless a business area tells them to do this.
- BW advised that his 2025 estimate for pest control compared to last year's actual is increased by 565% for a service that he hasn't received for years.
- LT advised that the best control service has been outsourced to improve the quality of the service when required, that is while the estimate is gone up.
- AW advised that with the scrutiny group they were more interested in the presentation of the information and not really allowed to look at the accuracy of it and a lot of the ongoing issues is around the accuracy of it.
- DS said that the minutes catch and mention all the main points and issues discussed.
- DS advised that he moved into his property in January 2019 when it was a brand new built property and had just been handed over to Origin from Bellway Estates, when he signed his tenancy agreement he was told he would be paying a certain amount of rent and service charge and there was a breakdown of the services they should expect to receive from a property management company which include window cleaning every 3 months, grass cut between March and October once a month, the plan area at the front and back of the building should be addressed between March and October, communal areas and stairs cleaned one a week.
- The grass & plant area has been done once within the last 18 months; internal cleaning has been done 4 times within the last 18 months and windows cleaned twice within the last 18 months. When he signed his tenancy agreement he incorporated his rent with the

	<p>service charge, he's been trying to resolve this matter for two years to get a refund for services he's not received but not getting anywhere.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LT clarified that there are some tenures such as affordable rent and intermediate rent, where rent is included in service charges which is what DS has, when calculated the rent drives the increase not the service charges. In those circumstances we do not calculate the service charges differently because Origin's rent governs what would be charged not what service charges is. - DS explained that every time he pays a rent increase, he also pays an increase on his service charge. - LT would look at DS case individually separately. -
4	KPI Review – Performance, satisfaction and KPI data
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - KDK thought the KPI data was poor and wondered how accurate the KPI are and why does it matter as we are getting closer to the integration with PfP. - CW advised that it doesn't have to be an agenda item if Spotlight no longer wants to discuss them at the bi-monthly meetings, the resident and community engagement team can just share them with the committee.
5	AOB
	<p><u>ASB</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Camden Neighbourhood policing team and the Neighbourhood team managers to be invited to the next meeting in August. – FA to send questions from KDK to the team in advance of the meeting <p><u>New date for Spotlight meeting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Spotlight would be changing the meeting days from a Tuesday to another day as majority of Spotlight members are no longer able to commitment to Tuesdays. - KDK explained that it's proving difficult to find a weekday that all members can do and asked if there could be some flexibility on the day the bi-monthly meeting is held. - CW advised that as long as we can agree on a date at the end of each bi-monthly meeting, this wouldn't affect the team organising the logistics for the meetings. - The August meeting was agreed to be moved from 19th August to Wednesday 20th August. – FA to update invite this and send new zoom link out to members.