**Customer Steering Group (CSG) Meeting**

**Date:** 8th April 2026
**Location:** hybrid – Dorchester and online
**Chair:** Chris – Customer Engagement Manager
**Attendees:** Alice, Chris, Dan, Helen, Louise, Matt, Mike, Nick, Vicky
**Apologies:** Bex, Dannielle, Danny, Jenni, John, Phil, Rob, Sarah
**Minutes:** Debbie Matthews *(from recording)*

| ITEM | NARRATIVE |
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| 1. | **Welcome and Review of Actions**<br>Chris welcomed all to the meeting – arranged in advance of the meeting on 17th April, as that was likely to concentrate on topics discussed at the joint session with the Board.<br><br>All introduced themselves. |
| 2. | **Check-in:** No issues were raised. |
| 3. | **Progress Update – Strategic Action Plan**<br>Chris had circulated the paperwork in advance of the meeting. Laura was keen this was presented to the CSG before the Board Away Day.<br><br>Chris explained that in March 2025, the CSG had been presented with the Strategic Priorities for 25/26 without having been given an opportunity to be involved in the decisions. The priorities for 26/27 had therefore been brought to January's CSG meeting to ensure the members had a chance to input. Priorities for the CSG had been:<br><br>➢ Customer engagement – as much connectedness and involvement as possible<br>➢ More engagement by Housing Officers as part of the Housing Transformation program, such as informal coffees and drop-in sessions<br>➢ Green agenda – what is the plan for making the organisation fit for the future? It's part of BCHA's 5-year Strategic Plan but customers were keen to see teh long term proposals as they will take time to implement.<br>➢ Communications – internal comms are important<br>➢ A volunteering / training program – how we support customers to understand engagement at CSG level.<br><br>Key feedback from Laura from subsequent discussions at the Exec:<br><br>➢ Reduced priorities so we can meaningfully work on them<br>➢ We've achieved a lot in the first 2 years of the 5-year plan, so rather than rushing into more change it was felt important to focus on getting these right, eg housing transformation program and communications<br>➢ Make space for customer initiatives such as positive change through the transition program<br><br>There being no further comments, Chris moved onto the next agenda item. |
| 4. | **Training Plan for CSG Members** |

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| | Mike advised work was taking place on a new onboarding / training program for customers interested in joining the CSG, to help them to make the step from other routes of participation - 1:1s, house meetings and reference panels (a geographical or group focusing on a specific topic/subject). This would include an introduction to the roles of the CSG, Exec, and Board.<br><br>Chris remarked that the reference panels covered local and personal issues, whereas the CSG looked at the whole organisation. There was also more paperwork to review, and the expectation of bringing scrutiny to the work of BCHA. It was felt an induction package would help customers to be better prepared and make the CSG meetings more meaningful for them. From his experience, Matt agreed it would be helpful for new members to have a more structured introduction to the CSG.<br><br>**Action:**<br>Mike to circulate the template for all to comment on what they felt should be included in the training program |
| 5. | **People Strategy & People Voice Group**<br>Chris reminded everyone of concerns raised at the last meeting about welfare of staff, including long times spent at computer desks and extra hours worked. Chris welcomed Alice, Head of People & Culture, to talk about what was being done to support colleagues.<br><br>Having been in post for 6 months, Alice said she had recently launched the new People Strategy – things being done "to look after our people so we can deliver a better service."<br><br>One step was a new People Voice Group (name to be decided later). This would involve 20 colleagues, not manager-level, who would meet online for an hour each month – la staff version of the CSG.<br><br>Self-nominations had opened the previous week, then each local area would vote if they had more than one nominated rep. The first meeting would take place in May; one agenda item would be feedback from the People Pulse Survey which had been launched earlier that day – what do people say and what are we going to do to make things better? Agreeing with Matt's comment about the importance of a proper induction, Alice said she would be providing support and coaching for those in the group.<br><br>Nick asked if customers would be able to hear the discussions, whilst obviously not taking part. Alice replied she would be discussing with each volunteer whether the meeting should be recorded or summarised, as it was important to ensure everyone felt comfortable speaking. Chris stressed those involved needed an opportunity to talk 'off the record' so sharing the notes could be more appropriate. Alice was keen to shape the group with those involved.<br><br>Dan was fully supportive of the group, saying the CSG had raised before the importance of encouraging staff to talk freely and to give honest feedback. Nick commented it would be good to be updated on how the group was going. Dan suggested the topics raised by the staff could be fed back to the CSG. Nick also wondered if the two groups could meet at points during the year.<br><br>Alice thanked everyone for their helpful comments. She liked the idea of 2-way conversations, so would be happy to be given topics customers felt should be raised at the People Voice Group. She would be glad to attend CSG meetings again and to give |

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| | feedback from the People group. |
| 6. | **Brand / Identity Project**<br>Vicky, Communications Manager, was welcomed to the meeting.<br><br>Vicky said the team was looking for customers to join a new Communications Subgroup, which would work together on projects such as the identity project (leading to a new brand for BCHA), *Tenant Talk* and the new website (to match the new branding).<br><br>This group would probably meet regularly once a quarter but would need to be flexible, eg *Tenant Talk* was likely to involve 3 meetings over the 6 weeks leading to publishing the magazine.<br><br>It would be possible to dial into some meetings, although the 8-week creative part of the identity project would have to be face-to-face.<br><br>Customers would be able to contribute to this subgroup their passion, ideas, scrutiny, any skills such as writing or photography, etc. They would decide what they wanted to get from the group, which could include making a difference, confidence building, sharing their skills or learning new skills.<br><br>*Identity Project:*<br>Vicky advised a project manager was leading this, and it would be discussed at the Board Away Day on 17th April.<br><br>The process would involve wide consultation through engagement groups with customers, staff and stakeholders, similar to those in which members of the CSG had been involved when the 5-year Strategic Plan had been created.<br><br>Vicky shared on screen the draft questions for the engagement session with customers and welcomed feedback or different questions. The aim of these was to establish BCHA's identity: what is your experience of BCHA, how does it make you feel, and what do you like/appreciate about BCHA? Chris added the point was to say what BCHA means to us and what we think the values are, which would be the starting point for those considering a new name and branding.<br><br>Nick asked how long the process would be. Vicky replied it would take about a year and was scheduled for implementation in the first months of 2027. Nick felt it would be interesting to hear people's opinions at supported house meetings.<br><br>**Actions:**<br>Chris to:<br>1. Add the questions to the CSG and reference panel agendas for feedback<br>2. Ask customers if they wanted to be part of the Communications Subgroup |
| 7. | **Updates from CSG Members**<br><br>*Homewards / Groundswell Participatory Evaluation*<br>Nick reported he had been part of a group of 5 who worked with Groundswell to do an evaluation of the Homewards Programme. This had involved 2.5 days of training in Manchester, following by 5-and-a-half months or work with 3 members of Groundswell.<br><br>In November, the report was presented to the Royal Foundation, with breakout sessions to discuss the issues raised. |

The full report had then been given to all those involved in the Royal Foundation, who had started to act on it.

Nick advised the report was on co-production in the first 2 years of the programme. The group had interviewed 23 people, including volunteers, senior members of staff and coalition partners. The final “Peer Evaluation Report” was now publicly available (post meeting it became apparent that the report has yet to be made public chris will distribute when it is made available).

Overall, Nick concluded the process was the definition of co-production in his view. He had shared the report with Chris and Laura, as he felt it would be useful as the basis for training as well as designing co-production at BCHA. Chris agreed it was really good report, pulling no punches and offering genuine insights from those experiencing the services and those working in the environment, drawing together many different perspectives.

*Co-labs Radio Programme*

Dan told everyone about a monthly group called “Common Grounds”, made up of those involved in homelessness and substance misuse services in Exeter – either experiencing or delivering the services. Dan explained several organisations worked at the Co-lab, which had a drug and alcohol department, a doctor’s surgery, people from Exeter City Council and Devon County Council – a good way of working together under one roof.

Common Grounds was a forum for everyone to discuss the services and problem-solve issues in Exeter. Dan felt it would be beneficial for a representative from BCHA to join the group.

Dan said Common Grounds had just secured funding for a radio slot on Phonic FM Those involved would receive training on the equipment, how to do a radio show and on podcasting. Dan commented the podcasting training would be helpful, as 3 of them had started but it was easy to go off track, which then involved a lot of editing.

Dan also informed everyone that Common Grounds had been approached by the University to do some research on four topics: homelessness, substance misuse, accessibility with local services, and stigma around being homeless and using substances within the community. Dan gave the example of a wheelchair user perhaps being able to check on the Stagecoach app if the one suitable space on a bus was already taken, in which case they could make alternative travel arrangements.

Those involved would take part in four workshops with the University, leading to a presentation to local decision-makers including MPs and the NHS to help them to understand the impact of their decisions in these areas.

Once the workshops started, Dan would send the information to Chris or Mike to circulate. Dan stressed the importance of the work and encouraged BCHA to get involved.

Alice was impressed with what Common Grounds was doing. Dan explained the process had been organic, starting with like-minded people coming together and persisting to the point where others were now interested in hearing what they had to say. Nick observed his motto was patience, as it took time for others to take such groups seriously, realise they were in it for the long term, and then it would start to make a difference. Dan

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| | agreed, commenting discussions had led to an anxiety group for men in Exeter, and now also a 'mixed solutions' group for men and women. |
| 8. | **Transition Working Group**<br>Chris reported there had been a pause in this project – supporting those moving from supported housing to general needs - whilst the Housing Transformation programme took root.<br><br>Chris also advised there were 11 new Tenancy Sustainment officers in Plymouth, whose role would cover some support for those moving between services. Chris would be meeting the two managers of that service to discuss how it was working and how it fitted with the working group's transition plan, as well as how to replicate the model of using IHM from the Local Authority to help with sustainment work in Bournemouth and Exeter.<br><br>Based on that conversation, Chris said the Lottery bid might be tweaked. A questionnaire was being put together to get information and case studies from customers about their experiences of moving between services. From his work with Groundswell above, Nick stressed it was important to get the questions right to get the right feedback from those who had been through the process, especially to identify problems they had experienced when moving. |
| 9. | **Urban Bike Project**<br>Chris advised this was now running on Wednesday afternoons at Dorset Lodge. Matt was hoping to attend the next session. |
| 10. | **Preparation for Joint Board / CSG Meeting on 17th April**<br><br>**Rent and Service Charge Setting**<br>The Customer Steering Group discussed concerns about customer understanding of how rent and service charges are set, including clarity, transparency, accuracy, and the timing of customer engagement. Members felt earlier involvement and clearer communication would help reduce confusion and complaints.<br><br>It was agreed that these issues should be escalated, and that a proposal be submitted to the Board to establish a Customer Scrutiny Project on Rent and Service Charge Setting to review the process from a customer perspective and make recommendations for improvement.<br><br>On the agenda for the CSG meeting that day were also:<br>➢ Strategic Improvement plan.<br><br>Additionally there were two subject the CSG may be interested in<br>➢ New Eviction Policy<br>➢ New Lettings Policy.<br><br>Dan asked about the new policies for referrals to Gabriel House, so Chris said he would make sure discussion on the new Lettings Policy covered supported housing schemes.<br><br>**Action:**<br>Next agenda (post 17th April )to include supported housing lettings policy, Evictions. |
| 11. | **Any Other Business:** |

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| | The **action tracker** was updated (see below).<br><br>Regarding **ASB**, Louise reported a meeting took place the day before, and a plan was put together on how to promote to customers the route to deal with ASB. Vicky said it tied in with the Housing Officer restructure and communicating the new roles to ensure clarity. This was a big project which was likely to take several months. ASB would be one element of this, with a focus on Louise's specialist role in ASB awareness week in June.<br><br>For customers, the message would be: is this ASB I'm experiencing? If so, whom do I contact to get help now? The Housing Officer would be the main contact for customers, with Louise's specialist role to support BCHA's approach.<br><br>Helen added the meeting had covered topics raised through the CSG, which the housing transformation programme was addressing. Helen's background was as a Property Manager, before joining BCHA in January as an Area Housing Manager. Sarah, the Head of Housing, had asked Helen to look at how BCHA worked with customers on quality of services on estates, how this was monitored and how joint monitoring could be introduced, how that linked with the CSG project on services charges, and ASB.<br><br>Helen said her review would include how the team worked with customers to develop these processes. The early stages involved introducing the Housing Officers and the various roles. Vicky was developing a plan which would be brought back to the CSG for comment.<br><br>Helen explained the service charge scrutiny project fitted into this. What are the services in your property? What do you expect them to be? What would you like them to be? How do we monitor that those services are being delivered? How do we do that together?<br><br>This approach would take time to introduce. Chris commented customers had been involved in the rationale and development of the housing transformation programme, so this was one way of seeing if it was achieving what was hoped.<br><br>Helen said this would mean starting with getting people more involved in issues where they lived, which could lead to more interest in wider customer engagement groups. She welcomed ideas and comments from members of the CSG.<br><br>**Action:**<br>Communications plan to be brought back to the CSG for comment. |

**Update Action Tracker from previous meeting (ongoing and from this meeting)**

| No. | Action | Owner | Update / Status | Update Due / Origin |
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| 1 | Update customers with details of the Urban Bike Project plans | Chris | Has now re-stared | Complete |
| 2 | Ensure complaints and whistleblowing process | Mike | Pending | 08.04.26 Mike – had conversations with the |

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| | is known. Plymouth Exeter and Across BCP | | | Senior Practitioner in Plymouth, not BCP yet |
| 3 | Review and improve communications around whistleblowing process | Dannielle | Pending | Next CSG |
| 4 | Share TSM updates via Tenant Talk | Chris / Dannielle / Lauren | Complete | Included in last Tenant Talk |
| 5 | Develop CSG induction / training approach with current members | Chris / Mike / Laura | 08.04.26 discussed at meeting | Mike to distribute notes of meeting and proposal for the larger CSG and asked for feedback for next meeting June 17th |
| 6 | Relay request to Tenancy Officers to identify potential panel members | Sarah | Ongoing | 08.04.26 raised at panel meeting the previous week |
| 7 | Include:<br>• ASB Roles and responsibilities<br>• BCHA's legal responsibilities and abilities<br>• Who else has responsibilities<br>• What can you expect from us?<br>• What do we need from you?<br>• What to do if you are not comfortable or feel unsafe doing what is necessary to report ASB? | Dannielle / Louise | Pending | Pending see meeting minutes |
| 8 | Explore engagement options for general needs customers | Sarah | Pending | Next CSG June 17th |

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| 9 | Customer involvement in development of annual strategic action plan 26/27 | Laura | **ONGOING.** Agreed with CEO & Exec Team; timeline to be produced before Q3 25/26 | CSG April 17th 2026 |
| 10 | Repairs task & finish group to review building maintenance issues<br>Last meeting not attended by repairs | Lauren | **ONGOING**<br>next Repairs Task & Finish Group | Quarterly |
| 11 | Customer Quarterly reports to future CSG paperwork | Chris | | Quartey report fall out of sync with CSG but will be distributed as produced to CSG |
| 12 | Review Transition Strategy and agree next steps | — | ONGOING<br>Task and finish group action plan | CSG April 17th, 2026 |
| 13 | Phil to attend or report to next CSG with d update on the restructure of the Board committees and possible CSG attendance at the customer related one? | Phil | April CSG (same day as Board meeting ) | CSG/Board April 17th 2026 |
| 14 | Alice to fee back on progress of staff “people Voice group” | Alice | Ongoing | CSG June 17th |