

# SENATE INVESTIGATION REPORT

OCTOBER 2023

Senate Scrutiny Exercise into  
how RCH deals with reports  
of Anti-Social Behaviour



Methods used in the report

Notes on Group Discussions

Results and Outcomes



# 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report has been written by the Senate to provide feedback from their investigation into how River Clyde Homes deals with reports of anti-social behaviour (ASB).

# 2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Senate met over a number of face to face and hybrid meetings to discuss possible investigation exercises.

2.2 Due to there being fewer Senate members at this time, despite recruitment drives, the Senate agreed it would like to carry out a shorter investigation if possible.

2.3 Having taken advice from TPAS(S), the Senate agreed to open out investigations to all RCH customers to gain assistance, where the investigation, was of interest to them. TPAS(S) informed that this way of carrying out investigations has become common in the UK and Northern Ireland, due to all RSLs finding they have fewer members in their scrutiny groups.

# 3. THE SENATE

3.1 The Customer Senators carrying out this investigation were:

- Irene Howe – Customer member
- Andrew Hurrell – Customer member
- Marion Wilson – Co-opted community member
- Ian McArthur – Co-opted community member

supported by RCH Customers:

Elizabeth Berry, Agnes MacLeod, Geraldine Harron and Mark Anderson.

3.2 The Senate was supported in the investigation by Siobhan O’Kane, Senior Governance & Support Manager, RCH and Anne Ross, Governance Officer, RCH.

# 4. REPORT STRUCTURE

4.1 The report outlines the methods used to investigate the current practices and the Senate’s findings. It makes recommendations based on these findings.



## 5. METHODS USED:

5.1 The exercise was conducted as follows:

- The group considered potential scrutiny topics and sought input from RCH Senior Staff as to areas they thought performance could be improved. The group noted an interest in Anti-Social Behaviour and, whilst performance is generally positive in this area, it was felt that this was an important area for customers and a scrutiny investigation would be beneficial. In order to support the Group in undertaking this investigation, RCH customers were invited to take part via CX Feedback. Initial responses were high, however, attendance was low and those who provided support were as outlined at paragraph 3.2 above. The group viewed the performance of RCH and other RSLs as reported on the Scottish Housing Regulator's (SHR) website.
- The Housing Services Manager attended a meeting and delivered a presentation on the process for dealing with reports of ASB. The Senate heard what RCH is permitted to do and who it works alongside to tackle the issues as they arise.
- The Senate looked at other RSLs websites to see what they published about ASB for their customers.
- Representatives from Police Scotland and Inverclyde Council Community Wardens met with the Senate to discuss joint working practices.

## 6. GROUP DISCUSSIONS

6.1 The Senate is fully aware that all comments and information are treated in the strictest confidence.

6.2 Senate members have signed a Code of Conduct and confidentiality agreement. None of the examples shared with the Senate can be attributed to any individual person, address or area of Inverclyde.



## 7: RESULTS

METHOD	WHAT HAPPENED	COMMENTS
<p>The Senate met to discuss the possibility of carrying on any scrutiny exercise despite having only 4 members.</p>	<p>Advice from TPAS(S) was gained.</p> <p>A telephone/email survey was sent out to customers.</p>	<p>TPAS(S) advised that most RSLs are struggling to get customers involved in scrutiny. Many have advertised an area of service that they would like to investigate. Any customer interested can then feed information into the overall investigation.</p>
<p>Senate to clarify and gain understanding of how an investigation with temporary support might take place.</p>	<p>A TPAS(S) project manager attended a hybrid meeting to give information to the Senate as to how to manage the investigation.</p>	<p>The Senate asked questions about confidentiality and how to manage customers who might only participate because they have their own ongoing ASB complaint.</p> <p>Senate agreed a training session would be beneficial for customers to understand what scrutiny means and what the benefits might be for all customers.</p>
<p>Training session arranged</p>	<p>TPAS (S) project manager attended and only one customer joined.</p>	<p>The training session was cancelled, and a second date offered with no uptake.</p>
<p>A hybrid Senate meeting took place to introduce the Senate to potential supporters and to discuss the proposed topic.</p>	<p>The Senate agreed to do a short investigation into ASB.</p>	<p>The meeting attendees discussed how to gather information about ASB and satisfaction with handling reports.</p> <p>Initially they thought about carrying out a CX Feedback survey.</p> <p>Potential survey questions were put forward and it was decided that the nature of the ASB reports was not required and the figures for individual cases are already captured in reports. It was agreed that the important part of the investigation is the process for dealing with any ASB complaint that is made to RCH. Therefore, a survey was not required.</p> <p>Anecdotally, customers believed nothing was being done by RCH to deal with ASB, that anyone calling in was having to relay the same report to many different staff members and there was no point in making a report.</p> <p>The group agreed to look at the Scottish Housing Regulator's (SHR) website to view other RSLs performance.</p>

METHOD	WHAT HAPPENED	COMMENTS
<p><b>The Housing Services Manager attended a hybrid meeting.</b></p>	<p>A presentation was delivered to the Senate and one additional supporting customer who attended.</p>	<p>The Senate asked if people who had been served with an eviction notice for ASB, could be rehoused with RCH through the homeless centre.</p> <p>Each case is discussed on an individual basis, and a joint decision is made in agreement with the HSCP homeless team.</p> <p>The group was informed that the eviction notice given is 28 days. This does mean a tenant could terminate their tenancy in that period to avoid eviction.</p> <p>The Housing Services Manager also informed that the more complaints made about an issue highlights the problem to the police and so helps build a case for them to keep a closer watch in a particular area or building.</p>
<p><b>Meeting with representatives from Police Scotland and Inverclyde Council Community Wardens.</b></p>	<p>The Senate and one supporting customer attended a meeting to discuss working partnerships and the processes involved.</p>	<p>The Senate was advised that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police Scotland meets with RCH and other RSLs locally on a very regular basis.</li> <li>• All information is recorded onto a Police intelligence system regardless of who has reported it.</li> <li>• Anonymous reports are recorded and followed up in exactly the same way.</li> <li>• It can take 6 months to get an eviction hearing and if there are no further reports of ASB in that time, then an eviction case will not be granted.</li> <li>• ‘Cuckooing’ is a new type of ASB that is happening in Inverclyde and was explained as to what this is.</li> <li>• RCH pays for additional warden patrols in specific areas and these are carried out as and when requested.</li> <li>• The Wardens are used as expert witnesses in court cases which means that customers reporting ASB issues are not identified.</li> <li>• Police Scotland informed the Senate that the working partnership with RCH is very effective.</li> <li>• Communications are clear and speedy in both directions which enables action to be taken quickly and records kept up to date.</li> </ul>

METHOD	WHAT HAPPENED	COMMENTS
<p><b>Senate meeting to discuss additional data and sample cases provided by Area Housing Manager with a view to seeking assurance that cases were being managed and dealt with by the same individuals.</b></p>	<p>A presentation was made available of 5 redacted ASB reported cases.</p>	<p>Although the Senate was unable to view cases even with the redactions, it was explained that in all cases the Housing Officer (HO) for the area will be the main contact for all tasks.</p> <p>This means that customers will not have to explain the issue to different people when they call. If the HO is on annual leave or sick, then the HO covering their duties will be the only other member of staff that the customer needs to speak to.</p> <p>The Senate was informed that all five cases were lengthy in that the reports which are recorded on RCHs' housing system have hundreds of lines of input and updates. This demonstrates that every call or interaction with other partners, the customer or perpetrator was recorded.</p> <p>This also showed that the number of staff hours was significant even for less involved or shorter cases.</p> <p>Therefore, showing that although customers may anecdotally say nothing happens when ASB is reported there is evidence to show the opposite.</p> <p>The Senate fully understands that due to confidentiality there are many actions that are being recorded but cannot be shared with the customer who initially made the report, and this is why customers may feel no action is being taken.</p>
<p><b>Follow up meeting</b></p>	<p>The Senate met to discuss the information they had and what possible recommendations they might consider.</p>	<p>A discussion highlighted that the processes in place were working, and this can be seen in the performance figures with evictions also taking place.</p> <p>However, the group felt that customers are still reluctant to make a report due to assumed potential repercussions and the idea that ASB issues are never resolved.</p> <p>The group suggested this was due to four things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a perceived lack of feedback to customers who make a report;</li> <li>• customers being unaware of the processes and timescales;</li> <li>• customers not realising they can make anonymous reports to RCH; and</li> <li>• a perceived lack of available information explaining how easy and safe it is to report issues and why more reporting is beneficial to all.</li> </ul>

METHOD	WHAT HAPPENED	COMMENTS
Final report agreed by Senate and senate supporters.	The Senate met on 7th Feb 2024	To enable a report with their investigation findings and recommendations to be presented at the next Board meeting.

## 8. INVESTIGATION SUPPORTING NOTES

8.1 The number of people taking part varied throughout the exercise due to work commitments and holidays. Having only 4 Customer senators and a small number of supporting customers being involved from time to time, even having hybrid meetings and varying the meeting times did not increase attendance overall.

8.2 The group noted that the information currently on the RCH website was more informative than some other RSLs, and on comparing the performance on the SHR website, RCH performed well.

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

	RECOMMENDATION	REASON FOR MAKING THIS RECOMMENDATION
1.	A timetable for updates to the customer is advised at the point of reporting. Contact should be made with the customer reporting the issue, even when there is no information to share.	To ensure customers are aware and understand that actions are being taken in relation to their cases, the Senate consider that making contact to assure them things are happening in the background, will help to mitigate the feeling that nothing is being done and customers will be reminded that their case is still ongoing. The timescales for contact and feedback requests must be adhered to.
2.	Information about all the ways in which customers can anonymously report ASB issues, to be reviewed and updated if required.	To make it clear how reporting can be done and to include explicit information around continued anonymity for customers throughout the whole process. This will hopefully encourage more reporting to RCH which will increase the number of reports being shared with Police Scotland. This will help inform them on the areas to focus their resources. To continue to work closely with and encourage partner organisations to report ASB incidences on behalf of their constituents, community residents or service users.

## 10. REVIEW

10.1 The Senate will meet to discuss the Board's acceptance or rejection of any of the recommendations.

10.2 An action plan for any recommendations approved by the Board, will be generated by the responsible Director and presented to the Senate.

10.3 Team Leads will be invited to the Senate meeting to report progress on their specific actions.

10.4 The Senate will have the option to attend any subsequent meetings of the Board or the Social Landlord Operations Committee, during which an update of the action plan is being presented by the relevant Team Lead.

# SENATE INVESTIGATION REPORT

OCTOBER 2023

This document can be made available by request in different languages and in other formats such as in larger print, audio and Braille.

Please get in touch for more information:

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