

Scrutiny Panel

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



The customer
scrutiny Panel

Learning from the past, steering the future.

It's been a successful year

The Scrutiny Panel has had another successful year, conducting two high-quality reviews about issues that matter to our customers, making recommendations that benefit people from across the country.

In addition to the hard work of the team, we were pleased to recruit several new members, taking our total to 11, including chairperson Gareth Morgan.



Anti-social behaviour review

In 2021, the panel conducted a successful review of anti-social behaviour (ASB) and noise nuisance, leading to the creation of Stonewater's ASB guide and other important improvements. Building on this, in 2023/24 we wanted to take a wider view of Stonewater's ASB service to make further improvements.

We made 15 recommendations, of which eight are complete, and seven are in progress – due to be delivered in June.

We identified four priority recommendations to help improve the overall experience for customers when reporting ASB to Stonewater. Below is an update on the progress against them.

- 1. Review and update current ASB Policy:** this was completed, and we were pleased that customers were able to offer feedback on the policy before it was published
- 2. Consider offering customers a way to triage ASB on the website:** Stonewater has taken on this recommendation and is looking at best practice and how other housing associations do this.

The Resolution team is currently working with the Communications Team to decide how best to implement this tool

- 3. Continue to utilise and develop clear, consistent and bespoke action plans with all reporters of ASB detailing what was discussed and agreed:** while this was already part of Stonewater's approach, the Performance and Delivery Manager for Resolution has been reviewing this closely with the team to make sure it's being done consistently
- 4. Review and update all customer communication channels, including Customer Service Centre scripts, social media and website to make sure all the information is up to date and consistent:** this priority is complete but ongoing as Stonewater has a commitment to review all key guides regularly, making sure they're up to date and correct.

The Resolution team and Customer Communications Team will be reviewing the ASB guide in June.

We've been kept updated on this review by Olu, Customer Experience Director, and Alex, Performance and Delivery Manager for Resolution, and will work with them to review anything created as a result of our recommendations.

Rents and Service Charge Communications review

We understand that the last few years have been incredibly difficult for everyone, and it's more important than ever that customers understand what they're paying for when it comes to rent and service charges.

We recognise the importance of strengthening communications to bring about a better understanding of service charges for customers, and we made 33 recommendations in this review. We're pleased to note that 27 are complete, with the remaining six to be finished in the future.

We had three priorities for this review.

1. Refresh communications that inform and reassure customers: any increase can be worrying, it's important that customers have as much information as possible on both rents and service charges, but also how Stonewater can support customers if they're worried.

We're pleased that the customer website, guides and video were all updated. A new guide was also created for customers who only pay estate charges to Stonewater

2. Improve letters and statements: we were pleased to see the inclusion of our suggestions in the rents and service charge letters that went out this year.

This included making use of QR codes to link to the online guides and the use of coloured envelopes in the mailing.

3. Consider how all customers can access information: we were particularly interested in improving this for customers who are not online.

The Customer Communications team created PDF versions of online guides, as well as printable FAQs, all of which were sent to retirement living and supported schemes to make sure these customers could access information offline.

Recommendations for this review go into 2025 and we'll continue to work with Holly Edwards, Assistant Customer Experience Director, and her team to ensure that they're delivered.

Structured Development and Learning

It's really important that, as a panel, we keep learning.

Different members of the panel have done this by:

- Meeting for our annual learning and development day
- Taking the opportunity to attend conferences and events such as TPAS's annual scrutiny event
- Introduction to Scrutiny training for newer members
- Taking part in We Are Digital training
- Working with Stonewater's specialist team to gain employability skills



Scrutiny Panel Recruitment

We were pleased to welcome an incredible six new members to the panel in 2023. Since joining, Viv, Clayton, Louisa, Susan, David and Pat have all made their mark by offering their unique perspectives and skills. We have recently completed recruitment for a few new members and look forward to introducing you to them soon.

We were also sad to say goodbye to some long-standing members of the panel who had either reached the end of their time with scrutiny or have chosen to join other Stonewater groups instead.

Lee Anne McCaw was a valued member of the panel. Although she had reached the end of her tenure as a Scrutiny Panel member, we hope to continue working with her through other engagement opportunities at Stonewater.

We're really grateful for everything **John Allen** offered and achieved as both chair and vice chair. John is now focusing on his roles as Ageing Well Board member and founding member of the Customer Complaints Learning Panel (CCLP).

Steve Bladen has continued to support Stonewater through the CCLP and continues to advocate for customers on a national level by being a member of the Housing Ombudsman Resident Panel and a member of the tenant-led Stop Social Housing Stigma campaign.



What does 2024/25 hold for the Panel:

We're currently wrapping up our damp and mould reasonable adjustments scrutiny review. We know this is an important subject for our customers, and we look forward to sharing our findings with you when the review is completed.

Our first review for 24/25 will be a "mini review" of an area where Stonewater is performing well, and we'll publish our findings on the Scrutiny page of the website in autumn 2024.

We're grateful that Dan Buckley has stepped up as vice chair and has been supporting to lead the panel.

Moving forward, we'll be informed by the Tenant Satisfaction Measures, seeing where Stonewater customers are happy and not so happy, and looking at where we can make a real impact.

We'll be taking part in more events, such as Customer Involvement Week 2024, to increase our outreach and meet more colleagues and customers.

I'm really focused on getting some young voices into the panel. I had a really successful visit to one of Stonewater's foyers recently and we're excited to see how we can represent the views of younger Stonewater customers whilst giving them new skills that will stand them in good stead for their futures.

Finally, as always, we're looking forward to another productive year working with our Stonewater colleagues.

Gareth Morgan
Chair of the Scrutiny Panel.