Berneslai Homes and the Tenant Voice Scrutiny Panel

Website Review

Report April 2021

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1. About the report

During January and February 2021, we have been asking our customers and involved tenants about their experiences and views with the Berneslai Homes website. This report details the results from three consultations that were carried by the Customer Services and Engagement Team and the Tenant Voice Scrutiny Panel.

The Tenant Voice and Scrutiny Panel were formed in 2019, as part of our co regulatory framework. The aim of the Panel is to ensure we have an effective and collective customer voice, that influences service delivery, providing assurance that we are compliant with the Regulator for Social Housing and delivering the outcomes of the Social Housing White Paper.

Why we chose the project
After making changes to the accessibility of the website, we wanted customers to test the impact of the changes. We know from the Star satisfaction survey that 72% of customers are satisfied with our online offer and only 6% actively dissatisfied. As our online offer continues to grow, we wanted to ensure that the website is easy to use and effective.

How we gathered evidence

 Feedback was gathered in the following ways:

- **Scenario testing on our website**

6 members of the Scrutiny Panel took part in this activity and were all given 13 scenarios to complete. The scenarios were mainly around trying to find information on our website about the range of services that we offer and how easy it was to find this. For each scenario that they completed we then asked them to complete a feedback form. Results from this activity are shown from page 8.

- **Website Satisfaction Survey**

The aim of this survey was to gain views, suggestions and improvements from customers about our website. This survey was posted on our Facebook page with a link to our survey. In addition to this, an email was sent to all involved customers (including members from our Tenant Voice Panel, Scrutiny Panel and Service Excellence Assessment Programme). In total we received 14 completed surveys. The results from this survey can be seen on page 21.

- **Open discussion with Scrutiny Panel**

As part of the Co regulatory process, we asked our scrutiny panel to give us their thoughts on our website in terms of ease of access, location of information, layout and content. The panel had already raised concerns that they found some information had, "too many clicks", before it could be located and that using phones and tablets had a negative impact on the customer experience.

The starting point was an initial meeting with the panel to scope out the review.

We agreed on a suite of scenarios of frequently used interactions, to be tested on a series of devices, by members with different levels of experience of using the website.

Once the testing was complete, the Panel met to discuss their experiences and share their initial thoughts.

2: Summary of the recommendations from the Scrutiny Panel

Below details a summary of the findings from the Scrutiny panel and the suggested rectification actions;

Conclusion	Scrutiny Recommendation	BH Response
Finding information about your Home, including finding your Housing Officer is complicated, as the customer may not know which area they fall into. This could inhibit customers from engaging in their communities, as they may not be aware of what is taking place.	The addition of a simple postcode finder on the landing page, that takes the user to a dedicated page all about their area, including what's happening, who their HMO is etc, would help customers engage in their community and cut down on unnecessary phone calls.	Good idea and can be considered when we develop a new website.
Trying to view some aspects of the website, such as Housing Online, on a phone or a device with a smaller screen can be quite difficult and the view distorted.	Consider making Housing Online, accessible for customers that may be using it on a smaller device, such as a phone or tablet.	This needs to be referred to the Performance Team to look into Housing Online as this is a separate website.
Most modern websites have a chat box function that saves the customer time and answers any general questions. The website just feels out of date and could benefit from using this new technology, benefiting both the user and the company.	Introduce a chat box function with a series of frequently asked questions i.e., "What are you looking for today, how to report a repair, how to make a complaint etc. This would bring the website up to date and may encourage more customers to use the website.	This can be looked at when looking at a new website, but it needs to be staffed, which will be a full time job 24/7, so this needs to be taken into consideration.
The website is not user friendly if you are trying to use it for the first time and it is quite complicated to navigate.	Simplify the site, so that it is accessible for first time users, encouraging them to use it for simple tasks. Ensure that Housing Officers	Agreed the website is too wordy with too much information and needs to be more transactional which

This may discourage customers from using it.	signpost new customers to the website, highlighting the fact that it is transactional and could be used for certain tasks.	will be the key ask when we get a new website. The HMO teams will then be able to let new customers know maybe have a postcard with a QR code taking them to this section.
The App on the phone is clunky and outdated, it has the old logo on it and has a confusing layout. It is not a "true application", it's a webpage. The option to open the App in Berneslai Homes or Chrome may be confusing for some customers and may put them off using it.	Consider updating the App, with the correct logos, ensuring it is user friendly. Consider the use of a true App rather than a webpage, this would make it easier for the user and may encourage more transactions to be completed via the App. Include customers in the development/changes to the App, as customer feedback and experience is a valuable tool when developing or changing	The App we currently have will be reviewed
The landing page could be improved to highlight information that is frequently searched for, this would cut down on time and may push customers into using the website for more transactions.	Put the prominent and the most used content on the landing page, ensuring it is displayed clearly. For example the Complaints Form and Housing Application Form. .	It's a good idea, but we have to be careful not to put too much information on the landing page. We needed to do more analytics to redesign the homepage
In general, the website is sometimes difficult to navigate. It contains a lot of information in places that you would not expect to find it and there appears to be little logic to where information can	Rearrange sections so it is obvious where you can find information. This may include a need to update and refresh the landing page.	This is something we can look at when we redesign the website, and will be asking customers for their thoughts on it.

be located. Using a website should be a simple process with a 1 click response.		
The landing page features a range of sections but could benefit from them being made clearer on issues that customers use the website for. For example, reporting repairs, or updating their information. A one click button such as "Report a Change", may encourage customers to use the website for this function, cutting down on pressure on the Contact Centre.	Review the landing page key function buttons, ensuring they are reflective of the traffic on the website.	This needs to be looked at when we get a new website as the whole site needs restructuring and content cutting to make it more transactional. It's a good idea, which we will explore.
The website should be accessible for all customers of all abilities, using all devices. This is not currently the case, as first-time users can find the site complicated to navigate.	Develop any changes with a range of tenants of differing abilities, from first time users to customers that use the website a lot.	We use site improve every week to make sure the site is accessible, but more work needs to be done and work with customers from all abilities when developing the new website.
Customers may simply give in when they cannot find what they are looking for, increasing calls to the Contact Centre, for issues that could be dealt with online. The website does not offer any assistance if customers are having issues using it.	Add a one stop shop for vulnerable customers, if they can't find the information they need and put it on the landing page, or a phone number they can contact if they need help with the website	This will be considered for the new website and all content will be reviewed. The website is constantly updated but this relies on teams letting comms know of the updates.
There is too much content and some could be removed, making it	Examine the content and remove any unnecessary pages or outdated links	We do review the content of the website but do take on Board

difficult to navigate. Some content is also outdated.		that its something we need to get better at.
As prospective tenants now need an account in order to look for properties, this may put some people off, or they may make choices that are really not feasible, leading to an extended stay on the waiting list. For example, if you are not aware that 3-bedroom bungalows in Penistone are not available and you list them as a choice, this would impede your chances of rehousing.	Open up the page that allows future tenants to look for properties, without the need to have a number or to set up an account	We will refer this to the Performance Team to look into Housing Online as this is a separate website.

3: Findings from website scenario testing

Scenario 1 topic: Complaints

Scenario: "You would like to make a complaint about Berneslai Homes and you would like to fill out a complaint form online. Please look through our website to see if you can find the online complaints form."

Number of customers testing this scenario: Four assessors

What devices were used when testing this scenario?

- 2 assessors used a tablet
- 1 used an Ipad
- 1 used a laptop

Did you find it easy to search what you were looking for? 100% said yes

Where did you expect to find this information?

- Two customers said in the 'apply for it' section
- One customer thought in the 'contact us' section
- One customer expected it to be on the front page

What areas could we improve on?

- I think that is easy enough to find in the area it is in.
- May be have contact us in coloured part
- Not needed
- Place a link on the front page, I would also prefer different pages to fill the form EG, not all the form on one-page, complete sections of the form.

Tenant Scrutiny findings/suggestions:

- Easy to find
- Would have expected to find this on the landing page
- A link could be added to the homepage for this, as not all forms are located in one place, it would also make for a more transparent process of welcoming and learning from complaints

Scenario 2 topic: Details of HMO

Scenario: "Try and find details of your housing management officer for the area you live in"

Number of customers testing this scenario: 4 assessors

What devices were used when testing this scenario?

- 1 assessor used a phone
- 1 assessor used a tablet
- 1 assessor used a laptop
- 1 assessor used an Ipad

Did you find it easy to search what you were looking for? 50% of assessors said yes, they found it easy to search for this scenario and 50% said no, it was difficult to search for this scenario.

Where did you expect to find this information?

- 2 assessors expected to find this scenario in the 'your home' section
- 2 assessors expected to find it in the 'contact us' page

What areas could we improve on?

- One Customer stated that they had to go through a lot of pages and links to get to where they wanted to be
- Another customer said it was too complicated to find as the website lacked logic. They said that all the information was there but it required a lot of clicks to get to where they wanted to be. Links need to be more direct
- Another comment suggest that 'It needs to have its own area; people are going to need to know who their housing officer is and it not clearly pointed out'

Tenant Scrutiny findings/suggestions:

- Not easy to find
- Lots of clicks before the information was located
- Should have its own area, as it's not clear where to find it
- Expect to find it on the "Contact us" page
- A postcode checker would be a good idea, as some tenants may not be aware of which area they fall into
- Is the information up to date and amended when a change takes place?
- Very challenging to locate

Scenario 3 topic: Tenants support service

Scenario: "You are struggling to pay your finances and benefits, and you have heard about the Tenants Support Services who can help and support you. Please look through our website to see if you can find more about this service and how to get in touch with them."

Number of customers assessing this scenario: 4 assessors

What devices were used when testing this scenario?

- 2 assessors used a tablet
- 1 assessor used a laptop
- 1 assessor used an Ipad

Did you find it easy to search what you were looking for? 3 out of 4 assessors found it easy to find this scenario. 1 assessor found it difficult.

Where did you expect to find this information?

- One assessor expected to find this in the 'apply for it' section
- One assessor thought this information would be in the 'supporting you' section
- One assessor found it where they expected to find it
- One assessor said they thought it would be in the 'rent, advice & support' page

What areas could we improve on?

- One customer explained that we needed to provide more information under the apply for it area so it is clearer that there is support out there
- One customer said they found it very easy to find the information - nothing to improve on
- One assessor suggested we need to improve on our specificity - for example clearly defining who helps with what or this service provides you with X,Y,Z

Tenant Scrutiny findings/suggestions:

- One member could not find any information and got redirected to the BMBC website, this was very misleading and could delay the process
- It should be located under apply for it
- The information, once found, was quite sparse and it needed more detail
- Was found easily under the supporting you section
- Needs to detail the key values of the section and types of help that are offered

Scenario 4 topic: Joining the housing register

Scenario: "You want to join the housing register and complete an application form. Please look through our website to see if you can find the form to do this?"

(We did not ask customers to complete the form, just to locate it)

Number of customers testing this scenario: 4 assessors

What devices were used when testing this scenario?

- 1 assessor used a phone
- 1 assessor used a tablet
- 1 assessor used a laptop
- 1 assessor used an Ipad

Did you find it easy to search what you were looking for? 100% of assessors recorded that that it was easy to search for this scenario

Where did you expect to find this information?

- One assessor expected to find this within the 'find a home area'
- Another assessor said 'Apply for it section where I expected it and it was. The rehousing part'
- One assessor thought it would be in the housing section

What areas could we improve on?

- One customer said 'It is really easy to find that information out. I don't think you need to do anything'
- Another suggested we could improve the wording on the website to improve clarity
- Feedback also reiterated the fact that we need to have a more direct link to things- this will reduce the time spent searching, but also the amount of clicks it takes to get the end result

Tenant Scrutiny findings/suggestions:

- Easy to find
- Could be put in a more prominent page
- Could be added to the landing page, as it must be a frequently used form

Scenario 5 topic: Viewing your rent balance

Scenario: "You want to view your rent balance. Please look through our website to find out how you can do this?"

(We did not ask customers to check their rent balance, just to locate the page)

Number of customers testing this scenario: 4 assessors

What devices were used when testing this scenario?

- 2 assessors used a tablet
- 1 assessor used a laptop
- 1 assessor used an Ipad

Did you find it easy to search what you were looking for? All four assessors found this easy to search for

Where did you expect to find this information?

- Two customers expected to find this scenario in 'your rent' section
- One assessor expected this information to be in the 'accounts' section
- One customer said this information was where they expected it to be

What areas could we improve on?

- One customer didn't think we needed to improve on anything
- One customer said 'Easy to miss check your rent text if you scroll to the bolder options below that stand out more'
- Another customer said, 'Instead of the page forwarding, when clicking the link to access the account, make it so a new page opens, as currently it redirects you away from the website.'

Tenant Scrutiny findings/suggestions:

- Found where it was expected to be found
- This takes you to a sub domain, but getting back is a little difficult, as the link at the top is small and it's not obvious it's a link
- Easy to find
- It opens a new page and it could be confusing

Scenario 6 topic: Applying for medical priority

Scenario: "You are on the housing register and you want to apply for medical priority, can you find the online form that you need to complete?"

(We did not ask customers to complete the form, just to locate it)

Number of customers testing this scenario: 3 assessors

What devices were used when testing this scenario?

- One assessor used a phone
- One assessor used a tablet
- One assessor used a laptop

Did you find it easy to search what you were looking for? 100% of assessors said yes

Where did you expect to find this information?

- One assessor thought it would be in the 'apply for it' section
- Similarly, another assessor thought it would be in the 'apply for it section' but also stated 'just wasn't sure where to go then but found it on both most popular and rehousing'
- One assessor found it where they expected

What areas could we improve on?

- One customer felt we had nothing to improve on - it was really easy to find
- Two assessors had no comments

Tenant Scrutiny findings/suggestions:

- Easy to find
- Not so easy on an Ipad or smaller device
- 1 member got redirected to BMBC

Scenario 7 topic: Becoming a mystery shopping or joining the scrutiny panel

Scenario: "You want to become involved as either a mystery shopper or join our scrutiny panel. Please look through our website to see if you can find out how to apply."

Number of customers testing this scenario: 4 assessors

What devices were used when testing this scenario?

- 2 assessors used a tablet
- 1 assessor used a laptop
- 1 assessor used an Ipad

Did you find it easy to search what you were looking for? All four assessors said yes

Where did you expect to find this information?

- One customer thought it would be found in the 'apply for it' section
- Two assessors thought it would be in the 'get involved' section
- One assessor would have thought this scenario would have been on the front/home page

What areas could we improve on?

- One customer didn't think we needed to improve on anything
- Two assessors didn't provide any feedback
- One assessor said they had to click too many links to get to where they wanted to be

Tenant Scrutiny findings/suggestions:

- Found under the Get Involved section
- Easy to find, but had to look carefully
- Reading the descriptions listed under the icons helped
- Would like it on a more prominent page
- Too many clicks to get to the section on Mystery Shopping

Scenario 8 topic: Reporting Anti-Social Behaviour

Scenario: "Search our website to see how you can report Anti-social behaviour. Please look through our website to find out how you can do this?"

Number of customers testing this scenario: 3 assessors

What devices were used when testing this scenario?

- One assessor used a phone
- One assessor used a tablet
- One assessor used an Ipad

Did you find it easy to search what you were looking for? 2 out of 3 assessors said yes it was easy to find, 1 out of 3 did not find it easy to find.

Where did you expect to find this information?

- 2 assessors thought they would find this information in the 'tell us about it' section
- 1 assessor expected to find this information in the 'your home' section

What areas could we improve on?

- Easier to find on the app rather than the website

Tenant Scrutiny findings;

- Couldn't find it on the Website, but found it easily on the App
- Make it more visual – put to a, "report an issue" this makes it clearer

Scenario 9 topic: Ending your tenancy

Scenario: "You would like to end your tenancy; can you find out how to do this online?"

Number of customers testing this scenario: 5 assessors

What devices were used when testing this scenario?

- 2 assessors used a tablet
- 2 assessors used a laptop
- 1 assessor used an Ipad

Did you find it easy to search what you were looking for? 4 out of 5 customers said yes it was easy to find, 1 customer said no it was not easy to find

Where did you expect to find this information?

- 4 customers expected to find this in the 'your home' section. Of these 4 customers, 1 customer also thought it may be found in the 'your tenancy' section
- 1 customer said 'I expected to find this in the "tell us about it section" I found it under the "your home" section'

What areas could we improve on?

- None
- Nothing, easy to find
- Maybe a report it button

Tenant Scrutiny findings/suggestions:

- Easy to find under your home
- Confusion over where to find it as 1 member thought it may be under Tell us about it

Scenario 10 topic: Changing address and mobile number

Scenario: "You are on the housing register and would like to change your address and mobile number. Please look through our website to find out how you can do this?"

Number of customers testing this scenario: 3 assessors

What devices were used when testing this scenario?

- 2 assessors used a tablet

- 1 used a laptop

Did you find it easy to search what you were looking for? All three assessors found this easy to search for

Where did you expect to find this information?

- One assessor said 'tell us about section'
- One said 'they weren't sure where to look, then looked at tell us about section'
- One assessor said 'they originally clicked the 'your home' section, then found it under the 'tell us about it' section

What areas could we improve on?

- One assessor said it was clearly set out and we did not need to improve anything
- One suggested we could introduce a type of 'report a change' button

Tenant Scrutiny findings/suggestions:

- Found it under tell us about it and it is clearly set out
- Not sure where to look at first
- Clicked on Your Home section
- Add a "Report a change" button
- One member had an issue trying to change a phone number

Scenario 11 topic: Searching for available properties

Scenario: "You would like to search for available properties. Please look through our website to find out how you can view the properties?"

Number of customers testing this scenario: 4 assessors

What devices were used when testing this scenario?

- 1 used a phone
- 1 used a tablet
- 1 used an Ipad
- 1 used a laptop

Did you find it easy to search what you were looking for? 100% of our assessors said yes it was easy to search for

Where did you expect to find this information?

- All 4 customers expected to find it in the 'find a home' section

What areas could we improve on?

- One comment suggested we 'Allow the properties to be viewed without having to create an account.'
- 2 assessors made no comment
- 1 suggested it was clear enough

Tenant Scrutiny findings/suggestions:

- Clearly set out under, "Find a Home"
- It would be easier if it could be accessed without having to set up an account, as this may put people off.

Scenario 12 topic: Alterations to property

Scenario: "You would like to make some alterations to your property and would like to ask for our permission. Please look through our website to find out how you can ask for permission?"

Number of customers testing this scenario: 4 assessors

What devices were used when testing this scenario?

- 2 assessors used a tablet
- 1 used an Ipad
- 1 used a laptop

Did you find it easy to search what you were looking for? 3 out of 4 said yes it was easy to find

Where did you expect to find this information?

- 2 thought it would be found in the 'apply for it' section
- 1 thought it would be in the 'repair your home' section
- 1 initially looked in the "your Home" section but found it in the Repair your home" section

What areas could we improve on?

- One customer said we had no improvements to make
- One suggested having 'Have doing own repairs as option to click on to'
- Another assessor reiterated that there needs to be much less clicks

Tenant Scrutiny findings/suggestions:

- Location was confusing - Looked under Repair your Home
- Looked under Apply for it

- Did have to do a little digging for this one, but found it under Repair your home
- Needs less clicks to find the information
- Could this be added in more than one location

Scenario 13 topic: Home contents insurance

Scenario: "You are interested in some information about our home contents insurance. Please look through our website to find out more information about this?"

Number of customers testing this scenario: 5 assessors

What devices were used when testing this scenario?

- 2 assessors used a laptop
- 2 used a tablet
- 1 used an Ipad

Did you find it easy to search what you were looking for? 2 out of 5 said yes, 3 out of 5 said no

Where did you expect to find this information?

- Two assessors thought it would be in the 'apply for it' section
- One said, 'I went to completely the wrong section, I initially went to the leaseholder section.'
- One assessor said 'once I looked thoroughly, I found it where I expected to find it'
- One thought it would be in the 'your home' section

What areas could we improve on?

- One customer said 'None it is clear once you search the website'
- One suggested we add it to the Berneslai Homes App
- Two assessors made no comments
- One customer suggested it needed to be more prominent as it took some effort to find

Tenant Scrutiny findings/suggestions:

- Thought this would be on the landing page
- Is it on the App, it should be?
- Confusion as to its location, people may give up and it's such an important thing
- Needs to be on a more prominent place

4. Feedback from overall website feedback

During February 2021, we carried out a survey to ask customers their views, suggestions and improvements about our website. This survey was posted on our Facebook page with a link to our survey. In addition to this, an email was sent to all involved customers (including members from our Tenant Voice Panel, Scrutiny Panel and Service Excellence Assessment Programme). In total we received 14 completed surveys.

Q. What did our customers state were the top 5 things that were important to them on the website?
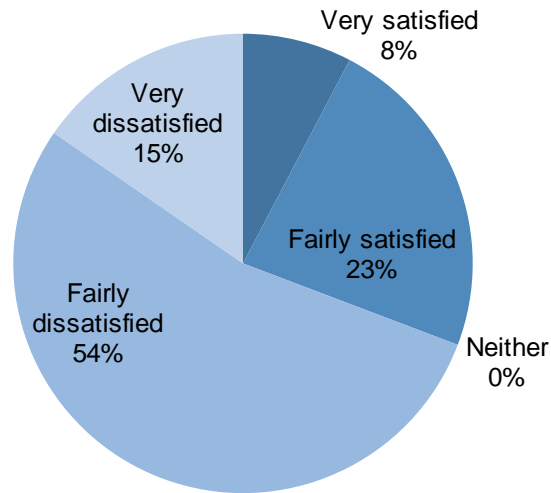
Customers were asked to tell us the top 5 things that were important to them on the website. The below table shows the comments grouped together and placed into thematic groups. These have also been placed in rank order with the top theme receiving the most comments made. Not everyone gave 5 answers each.

Theme	Answers provided by customers
Navigation, easy to use and reliability	- Easy to navigate - Easy to use - Reliability - Clear links - Clear instructions - Clarity - Ease to manoeuvre around the site - Plain English - Ease of use - Ensure the weekly vacancy list works more often
Rents	- Paying rent - Rent account - Paying and viewing rent - Rents - Pay rent - Payment option - Looking to pay my rent

Searching and applying for a property	- CBL - Check vacancies - Property list - Accessing vacancy list - Lettings
Contacting us	- Contact details for various services - Contact numbers for diff departments - Contact details of officers - Contact details - Find contact telephone numbers
Repairs	- Repairs - Housing repairs - Repairs - Order repairs
Joining the Housing register	- Housing application - Info on banding - Looking for a transfer
Other (single thematic answers)	- Forms - Policies - Accessibility to services - More online transactions - Complain - What's happening

Overall, how would you rate Berneslai Homes website? (excluding myhousing online)

Overall 31% (4) were satisfied with the Berneslai Homes website. The remaining 9 (69%) respondents were dissatisfied.

A pie chart showing:
- Very satisfied 8%
- Fairly satisfied 23%
- Neither 0%
- Fairly dissatisfied 54%
- Very dissatisfied 15%

Q. Please tell us what you think works well?

The following 9 comments were received to this question:

- Lots of info on website
- The website is full of information but is difficult and confusing to navigate around
- Not a lot. Always seems to be down for maintenance especially at weekends when you advertise houses
- Rent section to see balance and make a payment
- Easy to navigate, appears to have everything needed on there
- Repair hotline until I believe you get timed out and have to start again.
- Nothing. It's so complicated
- Nothing
- Nothing

Q. Please tell us what doesn't work so well?

The following 11 comments were received to this question:

- Cbl system complicated and not easy to understand and navigate.
- Customers are confused. They can't navigate to where they want to go.
- Vacancy list and applying for vacancies. Rarely working properly. Have had to report issues about it not working very well. Always seems to be having maintenance when it is not available

- Never working. Cannot access vacancies and apply to join the waiting list
- Most things are very hard to find and there its confusing
- I do not use the website. The phone line should be better handled especially for older people. Reporting repairs at times can be a pain. I prefer to speak to people face to face you can see there expression and the can see yours.
- Nothing I think it's great
- Never working. Vacant properties difficult to negotiate. Letting staff do their best with poor website
- Vacancies rarely works
  Always being maintained especially at weekends
  Confusing
- It is a waste of council money. Very poor as if a 2 year had done it

Q. Do you have any suggestions or improvements that you would like to see on our website?

The following comments were received:

- Clearer. More reliable
- Clear bold links. Easier to navigate for customers. Some of our customers are not 'tech savvy', they are unable to find what they are looking for.
- All staff contact details- Telephone numbers and email addresses. Photos of all vacancies advertised each Friday.
- Yes, make it more customer friendly. It's not very good.
- Yes stop making it so confusing and make it easier to find information......its seems to be set up for a computer expert not a average user who can just about use a computer
- Make it easier for people to handle we are not all bill gates's
- No
- Improve reliability and make it clearer, easier to negotiate
- No. Just having it working would be good
- Just close it

5. Additional comments from tenant scrutiny

The Scrutiny Panel met to discuss the findings and share individual experiences when testing the website. It is to be noted that not every member chose to complete the survey but chose to discuss their findings at the Scrutiny meeting.

Conclusion

The Panel had mixed experiences when testing the scenarios, and on the whole tended to offer constructive challenge, as they are involved customers and have used the website for numerous activities on a regular basis.

The general consensus is that the website is functional, but as it becomes more transactional based, it may benefit from updating and small improvements.

One of the main additions suggested would be the addition of a, "Chat box function", as is popular on many websites. It may also encourage customers to use the website, rather than pick up the phone, as it is a quicker way to get a response to a general question.

In addition to this a simple, "Frequently asked Questions", section may also be beneficial, saving customers time and effort if they have a general enquiry.

You can find a detailed summary of recommendations in section 2 of the report.