Customer Experience Panel Meeting

4 August 2026 7 – 8.30pm

On Teams

		Action Owner
1.0	**Introductions and Apologies**	
1.1	Apologies were noted.	
1.2	**Declarations of Interest.**	
1.2.1	No declarations raised.	
1.3	**Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising.**	
1.3.1	The minutes of the previous meeting were noted. SJP advised that the Panel would continue its work regarding the Competence and Conduct Standard and the development of the associated Code of Conduct Policy.	
1.3.2	SJP reminded members that the Panel had previously selected the Repairs Service as the next area for customer scrutiny and that part of the meeting would focus on agreeing the scope of the forthcoming review.	
2.0	**Code of Conduct Policy Review**	
2.1	**Introduction and Purpose of the Policy**	

2.1.1	SJP introduced the draft Code of Conduct Policy and explained that it forms part of Hightown's preparations for the Competence and Conduct Standard, which must be fully implemented by October 2026.	
2.1.2	The Panel was advised that the policy sets out the standards of integrity, professionalism, behaviour and accountability expected of everyone acting on behalf of Hightown, including employees, Board Members, volunteers, contractors and involved customers.	
2.1.3	SJP explained that customers feedback would directly influence the final version of the policy before approval.	
2.2	**Aims, Objectives and Definitions**	
2.2.1	The Panel reviewed the aims and objectives section and agreed that the purpose of the policy was clearly explained and easy to understand.	
2.2.2	ST commented that the document was concise, easy to read and not overly complicated. She felt the policy effectively communicated expectations without becoming overly detailed or difficult to follow.	
2.2.3	SG asked whether abbreviations used throughout the document would be understood by all audiences, particularly customers and new colleagues with limited housing sector knowledge.	
2.2.4	BR advised that abbreviations such as CIH and NHF may not be immediately understood by readers and suggested that references should be written in full when first used before abbreviations are adopted throughout the remainder of the document.	
2.2.5	ST agreed and explained that organisations frequently use industry jargon and acronyms which may be familiar to employees but can be confusing for customers and external readers.	
2.2.6	ST also suggested that the definitions section could be improved through formatting changes. She recommended that headings such as "Customers" and "Colleagues" should be made more visually distinct through the use of bold text, underlining or other formatting techniques to improve navigation and readability.	

2.2.7	The Panel agreed that minor formatting amendments would improve accessibility and make the document easier to follow.	
2.2.8	SJP JF advised that the final version of the policy should include the Hightown logo to ensure consistency with corporate document standards.	
2.3	**Acting in Customers' Best Interests**	
2.3.1	SG facilitated discussion regarding customer focus and accountability. Members reviewed expectations requiring colleagues to consider both customer needs and organisational responsibilities when making decisions.	
2.3.2	ST advised that the principles reflected comparable professional standards used within her own workplace and considered the expectations to be appropriate and balanced.	
2.3.3	Particular discussion took place regarding the requirement for staff to consider how decisions may impact customer safety and wellbeing.	
2.3.4	ST highlighted this section as one of the strongest aspects of the policy, commenting that it reinforces the importance of understanding the human impact of decisions rather than simply following procedures.	
2.3.5	SG agreed and noted that the section encourages employees to think beyond individual tasks and focus on the outcomes experienced by customers.	
2.3.6	BR welcomed the distinction between senior and executive leadership responsibilities within the policy and considered this to provide greater clarity regarding accountability.	
2.3.7	BR commented that the principles were straightforward and reflected the standards that customers should expect from a professional housing organisation.	
2.3.8	The Panel concluded that the section effectively balances customer focus, accountability and organisational responsibility.	
2.4	**Representing Hightown and Social Media**	

2.4.1	Detailed discussion took place regarding the social media provisions within the policy.	
2.4.2	ST questioned whether the definition of social media extended beyond Facebook, Instagram and TikTok and whether it also included platforms such as WhatsApp, Snapchat and Messenger.	
2.4.3	JF located the definition provided within the Social Media Policy for clarity.	
2.4.4	ST advised that unless examples are provided, staff may apply differing interpretations regarding what is and is not covered by the policy and recommended that the definition in the Social Media Policy be added to this policy for clarity.	
2.4.5	SG agreed and commented that the policy should provide sufficient explanation to prevent ambiguity and ensure that colleagues fully understand their responsibilities.	
2.4.6	BR supported the proposal and agreed that clear definitions would improve understanding and compliance.	
2.4.7	The Panel discussed personal social media use and the potential impact on Hightown's reputation where employees are publicly identifiable as representatives of the organisation.	
2.4.8	ST commented that employees should carefully consider the content they share publicly and whether it could reasonably damage public perceptions of Hightown.	
2.4.9	Discussion took place regarding workplace social events and the importance of exercising judgement when posting content publicly. Members agreed that staff should remain aware of their professional responsibilities when representing the organisation online.	
2.4.10	SG further suggested that references to customers should be broadened to include colleagues, ensuring that information about fellow employees is not shared inappropriately through social media platforms.	
2.4.11	The Panel agreed that clearer definitions and additional wording regarding colleagues would strengthen the policy.	
2.5	**Conflicts of Interest, Gifts and Hospitality**	

2.5.1	The Panel reviewed the sections relating to conflicts of interest, gifts, hospitality and bribery.	
2.5.2	ST queried how gifts and offers are recorded and whether declined gifts are also registered.	
2.5.3	SJP confirmed that Hightown maintains a gifts and hospitality register and that both accepted and declined offers are recorded where appropriate.	
2.5.4	ST explained that similar arrangements operate within her workplace and welcomed the existence of a formal recording process.	
2.5.5	The Panel was satisfied that appropriate controls are in place and that the policy reflects existing legal and regulatory requirements.	
2.6	**Accountability, Transparency and Customer Information**	
2.6.1	SG introduced discussion regarding accountability to customers, transparency and publication of performance information.	
2.6.2	The Panel reviewed references to the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH), Tenant Satisfaction Measures and STAIRS requirements.	
2.6.3	Members agreed that abbreviations such as RSH and STAIRS should be written in full when first referenced.	
2.6.4	BR observed that Hightown already publishes a significant amount of information and appears transparent in its reporting and communication arrangements.	
2.6.5	ST agreed and highlighted regular publication of complaints information, satisfaction results, performance data and customer engagement outcomes.	
2.6.6	SJP advised that extensive work is underway to ensure compliance with the Social Tenant Access to Information Requirements (STAIRS), including publication of policies, performance information, governance information and other key documents.	
2.6.7	ST and BR suggested including a link to the Performance Hub on the intranet to make performance information more accessible and to support transparency.	

2.6.8	The Panel concluded that Hightown demonstrates a strong commitment to transparency and customer accountability.	
2.7	**Confidentiality, Data and Artificial Intelligence**	
2.7.1	The Panel reviewed sections relating to data protection, confidentiality and the use of Artificial Intelligence.	
2.7.2	ST welcomed the inclusion of guidance relating to AI and highlighted the increasing use of AI tools across workplaces.	
2.7.3	ST stressed the importance of verifying AI-generated outputs before use, noting that inaccuracies can occur if content is not properly reviewed.	
2.7.4	SJP confirmed that Hightown only permits the use of approved AI platforms and that controls are in place to protect customer data and information security.	
2.7.5	BR commented that several specialist policies already govern these subjects and agreed that the Code of Conduct should signpost rather than duplicate those requirements.	
2.7.6	The Panel agreed that the section was clear and appropriately supported by associated policies.	
2.8	**Speaking Up, Professional Judgement and Safeguarding**	
2.8.1	Discussion took place regarding speaking up, whistleblowing and organisational culture.	
2.8.2	ST positively welcomed wording encouraging colleagues to be "upstanders rather than bystanders" and felt this promotes a culture of openness and accountability.	
2.8.3	ST suggested including wording confirming that all concerns raised through speaking up or whistleblowing processes will be taken seriously and reviewed appropriately.	
2.8.4	SG recommended strengthening the policy further by referencing protection from repercussions for individuals who raise concerns in good faith.	

2.8.5	BR agreed that confidence in the reporting process is essential if individuals are to feel comfortable speaking up.	
2.8.6	The Panel also discussed the concept of professional judgement.	
2.8.7	ST commented that policies cannot anticipate every possible situation and therefore employees must be trusted to make decisions based on individual circumstances where appropriate.	
2.8.8	BR agreed that flexibility is important provided decisions remain aligned with organisational values and can be justified appropriately.	
2.8.9	SJP highlighted that colleagues are frequently required to apply professional judgement whilst balancing policy requirements, customer circumstances and regulatory responsibilities.	
2.8.10	The Panel concluded that the policy appropriately recognises the need for professional judgement whilst maintaining accountability.	
2.8.11	BR and SG suggested that, for consistency with the remainder of the document, the safeguarding and customer safety sections should include links or signposts to the relevant policies and procedures referenced throughout the Code.	
2.9	**Outcome of Policy Review**	
2.9.1	The Panel welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Code of Conduct Policy.	
2.9.2	ST and BR provided a number of practical recommendations relating to accessibility, clarity, transparency and customer understanding.	
2.9.3	The Panel was supportive of the draft policy and considered it comprehensive, customer-focused and aligned with the Competence and Conduct Standard.	
3.0	**Repairs Service Review**	
3.1	**Scoping Discussion**	
3.1.1	SJP reminded members that the Panel had previously selected Repairs as the next area for scrutiny following review of the KPI report.	

3.1.2	The Panel reviewed the repairs-related performance indicators and discussed potential areas for further investigation.	
3.1.3	ST stated that she would like future scrutiny to focus on areas where performance targets are not currently being met and to understand what actions are being taken to improve results.	
3.1.4	ST specifically highlighted access-related issues and questioned why some customers request repairs but are subsequently unavailable when appointments are arranged.	
3.1.5	ST suggested that understanding the root causes behind missed appointments would assist the organisation in identifying improvements and removing barriers.	
3.1.6	SJP explained that access is currently a significant issue across the housing sector and impacts repairs, gas servicing, electrical inspections and other compliance activities.	
3.1.7	SJP advised that Hightown has already introduced evening appointments and other measures to improve customer access.	
3.1.8	BR queried repairs performance data and sought clarification regarding KPI performance indicators that remained below target despite quarter-on-quarter improvements.	
3.1.9	SJP explained how improvement arrows and target status are reported within KPI reporting.	
3.1.10	SG advised that access issues are currently a significant area of scrutiny across the housing sector due to their impact on compliance, customer service and value for money.	
3.1.11	SG explained that missed appointments generate financial costs, wasted travelling time, operational inefficiency and wider compliance risks.	
3.1.12	The Panel agreed that access and missed appointments should form the primary focus of the forthcoming review.	
3.2	**Access, Customer Engagement and Reasonable Adjustments**	

3.2.1	Detailed discussion took place regarding the causes of missed appointments and barriers preventing customer access.	
3.2.2	SJP advised that issues may arise due to work commitments, childcare responsibilities, language barriers, communication difficulties, literacy concerns, vulnerabilities, neurodiversity or other personal circumstances.	
3.2.3	BR questioned whether sufficient work is undertaken to understand the reasons behind failed appointments and whether underlying causes are fully explored.	
3.2.4	SJP outlined Hightown's escalation process, which includes contact attempts, tenancy management involvement, door knocking, reasonable adjustments and legal processes where access is required for health and safety purposes.	
3.2.5	ST welcomed Hightown's approach to gathering customer information and asked whether vulnerabilities, neurodiversity and mental health needs are recorded to support reasonable adjustments.	
3.2.6	SJP confirmed that Hightown's customer data collection project is designed to improve understanding of individual customer circumstances and support needs.	
3.2.7	Members discussed the importance of flexibility around appointments and ensuring services are tailored to individual circumstances wherever possible.	
3.2.8	ST highlighted the value of understanding customer circumstances before assuming that missed appointments are solely the result of customer behaviour.	
3.3	**Customer Communication and Behavioural Insights**	
3.3.1	The Panel explored ways of encouraging improved appointment attendance.	
3.3.2	BR suggested that customers could be informed about the financial impact of missed appointments in a similar way to communications used by GP surgeries and hospitals.	

3.3.3	ST supported the proposal and suggested that highlighting the financial consequences may encourage greater customer engagement.	
3.3.4	SG expanded on the concept and suggested linking the costs of failed appointments to improvements that could otherwise be funded for customers and communities.	
3.3.5	ST commented that customers may respond positively if they understand how missed appointments affect investment in services, facilities or community improvements.	
3.3.6	Discussion took place regarding behavioural insight approaches, nudge theory and communication techniques that may encourage greater customer participation.	
3.3.7	ST suggested that appointment communications could include reminders explaining why attendance is important and outlining the wider impact of missed appointments.	
3.3.8	Members also discussed incentives and recognised concerns that incentives could potentially be perceived as rewarding poor behaviour.	
3.3.9	The Panel agreed that behavioural insight approaches could form part of future discussions during the review	
3.4	**Next Steps for the Service Review**	
3.4.1	SG suggested that the Panel would benefit from reviewing existing access-related research and case studies before the next meeting.	
3.4.2	SJP confirmed that Hightown has previously completed a detailed access review and that supporting information could be shared with members.	
3.4.3	SJP also offered to share sector-wide case studies and research regarding customer access arrangements.	
3.4.4	ST recommended retaining flexibility within the review rather than restricting discussion to a narrow area of focus.	
3.4.5	BR agreed that the topic is sufficiently broad to warrant an open discussion format.	**ER**

	Action: Circulate Hightown's access review, supporting performance information and relevant sector case studies in advance of the next meeting. **Action**: Invite the Head of Asset Management or relevant representative to attend the next meeting to support the access review discussion.	**ER**
4.0 **4.1** 4.1.1 4.1.2 4.1.3	**Any Other Business** **Customers Development Opportunities** SG informed members about the forthcoming TPAS Scrutiny Conference taking place in October 2026. Members were encouraged to consider attending as part of their ongoing development and scrutiny training. SJP confirmed that attendance could be supported through the customers involvement budget and that information would be circulated to the wider Panel.	
5.0 5.1 5.2 5.3	**Close of Meeting** SJP thanked everyone for their attendance, contributions and constructive challenge throughout the meeting. Thanks were given to ST and BR for their detailed scrutiny of the Code of Conduct Policy and their contributions towards shaping the scope of the forthcoming Repairs Service Review. Meeting closed at approximately 8.20pm. **Date of next meeting:** 1 September 2026 7pm to 8.30pm on Teams	