Accent Group Limited

National Customer Group

MINUTES

Date/Time: Tuesday 19th May 2026, 12.00pm to 14.00pm
Venue: Virtual, MS Teams

Chair:	Stacy Hartley (SH), CEC Member, Customer Champion
Customers Present:	Chris Lynn (CLy) Vice Chair of Independent Living Group Edmund England Lyn Nelson (LN) Chair of Independent Living Group Razina Bostan (RB) Richard Wilkinson (RW) CIC Member Helen Hutchinson (HH) CEC Member, Customer Champion, East Customer Group Member
Accent Colleagues	Conan McKinley (CM) Executive Director of Assets and Compliance Dean Anderson, Executive Director of Customer Experience Jo Gallagher (JG) Head of Customer and Community Engagement John Place (JP) Director of Customer Relations Kelly Privitera (KP) Head of Building Safety and Information Mike Squires MS)
Apologies	Stephen Love (SL) Customer Insight Manager Jackie Best (JB) CEC Member, Customer Champion Mark Waite (Customer) Katarzyna Bajdiuk
Minutes:	Callie Lancaster (CL), Customer Engagement Manager

		Action
1.	**AGENDA ITEM 1 – WELCOME AND APPOLIGIES** SH opened the meeting by welcoming members and encouraging open participation, reinforcing that all customer views are valued. Members who could not make the meeting were noted. Housekeeping was outlined, including muting microphones, raising hands, and the meeting being recorded for minute taking.	
2.	**AGENDA ITEM 2 – UPDATE ON ACTIONS** SH provided an update on actions. The following actions are now complete: 1. JP is due to give an update on the deep dive into Colleague complaints in the meeting today – agenda item 5. 2. Rob Bloom has updated the Tenant Satisfaction Measure (TSM) action plan and uploaded to the Accent Website.	

	3. Survey was sent to the members to collect thought on the next scrutiny topic – SH will discuss options in agenda item 9. 4. CL has added meeting dates to all future meeting packs. 5. CL has circulated instructions on how to join TPAS. SH encouraged members to join if they hadn't already. The following action is still in progress: 6. Peter Hall (who presented at the last meeting) has been invited back to the July meeting to provide an update on the Repairs Improvement Plan and how the feedback from the Repairs Discovery Workshop has supported the plan.	
3.	**AGENDA ITEM 3 – CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE UPDATE** SH shared a high-level summary of what was discussed at the last Customer Experience Committee (CEC). SH shared her recent lived experience on having a new kitchen installed. highlighting issues with planned maintenance, including missed appointments, poor-quality installations, and poor communication. This prompted a valuable discussion at executive level and will also be presented to the Board to reinforce learning from a customer perspective. SH was also delighted to share she has been invited to future Board meetings so she can represent customers at the highest level of formal governance. SH then highlighted other projects customers have been involved in including: • Complaints and Compensation Policy Review in March where feedback themes included the need for plain English, a simpler, more transparent process, improved accessibility and greater choice in communication channels. • Customers who attended the Customer Influence Summit back in July and involved customers were invited to a follow-up session in March. Attendance was lower than anticipated however updates on progress and key outcomes have been shared with all customers involved. • A repairs workshop took place in April to develop a deeper understanding of customer experience and identify areas for improvement. Findings from this workshop and complaints analysis will inform and strengthen the Repairs Improvement Plan. • SH explained that Accent have started to investigate the use of AI to support where there's lowers levels of engagement. She explained "digital twins" it's an AI-enabled, data-driven simulation of customer perspectives that mirrors the views, behaviours, and likely responses of real customers. • The customer inclusion and support policy is now live, and colleagues will be supported with training. SH gave an update on the work the Community Development & Inclusion team have carried out. In Q4, Accent supported 279 customers across 3 national projects, and 13 local customer led initiatives. The focus areas were tenancy sustainment, health and wellbeing, employment, and financial and digital inclusion. Customers have expressed a strong desire for greater visibility of these projects and more opportunities to participate in community-led initiatives.	

	The inclusion team supported 58 customers one-to-one. Areas included welfare benefits, income maximisation, debt reduction and digital inclusion. This resulted in over £300,000 pounds this year in financial gains for customers. The Lightning Reach platform, which is a platform that helps customers find and apply for financial support, has seen 200 Accent customers access it, 23 applications submitted, and four successful awards so far, with an average award of 856 pounds. The highest awards were linked to food and essential items. SH confirmed the Big Conversation is going to be held mid-September and it's been shaped using customer and colleague feedback. The main aim of the event will be to identify what matters most to customers in their communities, will produce a 12-month action plan that reflects their needs and will shape future community activity. Feedback from a joint meeting with Ian Williams was discussed. SH invited customers who attended the joint meeting to provide feedback. While the presentation was informative, RW challenged whether the customer experience reflects Accent's position as their largest client. He highlighted inconsistency as a key issue, with some operatives providing excellent service and others delivering poor experiences. HH agreed with this concern, reinforcing that while the presentation was positive, it did not fully align with lived customer experience.	
4.	**AGENDA ITEM 4 – PERFORMANCE UPDATE** SL presented the year-end performance position explaining we've got 10 key performance indicators (KPIs) in red, three with an amber status so weren't quite where we wanted them to be and 11 that was either on target or above. He noted some KPIs including number of antisocial behaviour cases (ASB), are being reviewed. DA explained that future ASB reporting will focus less on volume and more on response quality and timeliness. RB also raised concerns about staff wellbeing when dealing with increasing ASB, prompting confirmation from DA that specialist roles and training are being introduced to better support colleagues. SL explained the impact the winter period has on the repairs service which could be seen on the graph. RW challenged the organisation to better anticipate winter pressures, noting this is predictable and should be planned for proactively. He also commended the clarity of the reporting format. RB questioned whether increasing repairs demand is linked to underlying property condition, suggesting a need for more proactive investment rather than repeat fixes. This was acknowledged by CM with confirmation we're currently looking at our repairs data and triangulating with our planned investment programmes. <u>CM confirmed he would share the findings once task is complete.</u> RW suggested prioritising improvements by focusing on areas within organisational control and securing quick wins where possible. SL explained how we've got 12 KPIs which finished the year worse off than the previous year but in contrast, there's also some KPIs which are performing very well including EPC A target, which is above the sector average, improvement in the satisfaction on the repairs service and satisfaction with	**CM**

	complaint handling. He also explained although some KPIs are 'red' such as stage 2 complaint handling timescales, we have seen a significant improvement since last year.	
5.	**AGENDA ITEM 5 – DEEP DIVE INTO ACCENT COLLEAGUE COMPLAINT** JP presented findings from a detailed review of complaints about colleagues. The key finding was that issues are primarily caused by inconsistent or incorrect advice, not poor attitude. Key themes discussed included: • Confusion for shared owners and leaseholders about responsibilities • Failure to deliver promised actions. • Regional challenges, particularly in the South, linked to staff turnover. • Differences between houses and flats in repair responsibilities • Communication gaps and lack of joined-up working. RW raised concerns about potential inequalities, noting that some customer groups (including younger customers and specific ethnic groups) appear more likely to receive incorrect advice. He questioned whether this could present a serious risk and requires urgent attention. RB supported this with lived examples, highlighting subtle cultural misunderstandings and potential unconscious bias affecting service delivery. She stressed the need for greater cultural awareness and understanding. CLy raised significant concerns about language barriers, sharing observations from Bradford where housing staff struggled to communicate effectively with customers who did not speak English fluently. He noted that this creates misunderstanding, frustration, and contributes to ASB. He suggested better use of interpreters, digital tools, and multilingual support. RB added that even where customers have basic English, complex processes such as rent calculations require clearer explanations. She highlighted gaps in translation support and ESOL opportunities. Rob Bloom, Director of Housing, was allocated an action to look at support for Housing Partners in terms of language barriers. RW also raised concerns about silo working between teams, particularly housing and assets, leading to poor communication. He shared examples where housing partners were unaware of planned works, leaving customers uninformed. JP confirmed a wide-ranging action plan, including: • Improved complaint categorisation • Development of a shared knowledge base • Equality impact assessments • Stronger focus on vulnerabilities • Better alignment with contractors • Regional reviews and targeted interventions SH asked for regular updates on progress against actions. It was agreed any major updates would be shared in the monthly chair meeting and lessons learnt would be shared in future NCG meetings.	 **RB** **JP**

6.	**BREAK** Before moving on to agenda item 7, EE noted that Accent colleagues often use abbreviations and asked that, where possible, <u>terms are said in full to reduce confusion and support clearer understanding for everyone.</u>	**ALL**
7.	**AGENDA ITEM 7 – AWAABS LAW UPDATE** MS provided an overview of how damp and mould cases are managed under Awaab's Law. Cases are triaged based on severity and vulnerability, with strict response times. Data showed a relatively small percentage of cases are high severity. However, SH challenged this, stating that any severe case represents a failure that should be prevented. MS explained that most cases result from leaks or ventilation issues and acknowledged that some cases develop over time without being identified early. He accepted that prevention needs to improve. RW welcomed the shift away from blaming customers, noting previous approaches often focused on lifestyle factors rather than landlord responsibility. LN asked how severity is assessed, and MS explained the structured triage process, including questioning and use of video or photos where needed.	
8.	**AGENDA ITEM 8 – ACCESS POLICY UPDATE** KP presented the revised access policy, which takes a more balanced and customer-focused approach. Forced entry is now only used in exceptional circumstances, with greater consideration of customer vulnerability. KP explained the detailed process, including multiple access attempts, involvement of housing teams, and risk assessments. RW supported this, noting the importance of balancing safety with respect for customers' homes. CLy questioned how often access is refused, and KP shared data showing increased missed access cases during the transition to the new approach. SH raised concerns about inconsistency in appointment notice periods. KP clarified expectations and noted the challenges of balancing customer flexibility with compliance requirements. DA outlined a new proactive approach to contacting customers who have not engaged for 12 months, including calls, texts, and visits to better understand circumstances.	
9.	**AGENDA ITEM 9 – AGREE SCRUTINY TOPIC** The group agreed to focus the next scrutiny on planned maintenance. Multiple members strongly supported this. SH highlighted concerns around why customers refuse appointments or report dissatisfaction despite receiving upgrades. RW supported this, noting this has been a long-standing issue within governance discussions at the Capital Investment Committee (CIC).	

	EE shared a detailed negative experience of poor workmanship, delays, and safety concerns during previous works. He emphasised this is a widespread issue affecting many residents. LN noted that Independent Living groups are also exploring related topics, particularly stock condition, and there is opportunity to align work. CL outlined the agreed next steps, which include meeting with the external consultant, O'Halloran's, to gather advice on the scope of the scrutiny based on initial discussions with group members. She confirmed that the scrutiny exercise will be customer-led, with opportunities for members to get involved. This will include customers who have received training in how to effectively scrutinise services, as well as those with lived experience, ensuring a well-rounded and informed approach.	
10.	**AGENDA ITEM 9 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS** **Feedback on the paper update - Sustainability** RW raised concerns about the organisation's office location and its impact on sustainability and value for money. He questioned the reliance on taxis due to poor transport links and suggested reviewing office locations in line with sustainability goals. <u>This action has been allocated Chris Lewis, Facilities Contract Manger, to investigate further.</u> **Housing partner 'churn'** Significant concerns were raised about high turnover of housing partners. RW and LN both shared experiences of frequent changes, impacting relationships and service consistency. CLy provided further insight following visits to different regions. He described differences in workload, complexity, and cultural challenges, particularly in areas with higher deprivation and diversity. He suggested housing partners may not be adequately supported, equipped, or resourced for these challenges. He also highlighted the impact of remote working and isolation, the importance of community engagement skills, the need for better support, training, and tools. SH reinforced that housing partners are critical to customer experience and should be consistently effective. CLy also suggested involving customers in recruitment processes to ensure the right people are appointed. DA committed to reviewing this issue, including analysing internal vs external turnover and exploring solutions and <u>provide a paper update for the next meeting.</u> The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions, noting the meeting was highly productive and rich in customer insight. The next meeting will take place on 21 July 2026.	**CLe** **DA**
11.	**DATE OF NEXT MEETING** Date: Tuesday 21 July 2026 at 12.00pm Venue: Virtual, MS Teams	