

Minutes of Resident Consortium Meeting
Thursday 1st July
6-8pm

Attendees

Stuart Parker	Independent Chairperson
Cassie Watts	Resident Engagement Assistant
Gemma Holden	Resident Engagement Officer
David Mitchell	Resident Engagement Officer
Mike Counsell	Building Safety and Fire Manager
Adam Hardwick	Assistant Director (Buildings)
Phil Bentley	Head of Neighbourhood Services
Sally Scattergood	Assistant Director (Housing)
Mark Fitch	Head of Decants (Portsmouth Homes)
Danny Ardrey	Head of Sheltered Housing and Support Services
Nicola Clannachan	Head of Housing Community Services
Lauren Rackham	Head of Community Safety

Maureen Butler	Resident
Dawn Foster	Resident
Andy Gisby	Resident
Richard Ward	Resident
Frank Derham	Resident
Cher Dawson	Resident
Maria Cole	Resident
Christine Judge	Resident
Ann Scott	Resident
Valarie Gratton	Resident
Karen Braddock	Resident
Mary Brook	Resident
Mary Bailey	Resident
Elliot Heasman	Resident
Gordon Croucher	Resident
Kim Scaddan	Resident
Malcolm Horn	Resident
Debbie McMillan	Resident
Lorraine Philpott	Resident
Steve Langton	Resident
Andrew Huntley	Resident

1. Fire Safety - Mike Counsell & Danny Ardrey

Full presentation available at request via email housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Introduction

Mike Counsell, Fire & Building Safety Manager, and Danny Ardrey, Head of Sheltered Housing and Support Services, provided an overview of Portsmouth Homes' approach to fire safety, mitigation measures, resident support, and emergency evacuation planning.

Building Safety and Fire Risk Assessments

The Building Safety Team is responsible for carrying out Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs), managing resulting actions, producing Building Safety Cases, and working with other departments to ensure fire safety risks are effectively managed. FRAs identify hazards, assess risks, and recommend improvements such as fire door repairs, fire stopping works, maintenance, and housekeeping measures.

Outstanding Actions and Mitigation

Over 5,500 FRA actions have been completed in the last two years, although around 1,700 remain overdue due to the scale of the works required. These actions are included within funded remediation programmes due to be completed by 2030. In the meantime, Portsmouth Homes uses mitigation measures, including inspections, interim repairs, compliance checks, and additional safety controls, to manage risks.

Compliance and Safety Checks

Regular compliance activity includes gas and electrical safety inspections, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, emergency lighting, sprinklers, fire alarms, risers, automatic opening vents, and fire door maintenance. Ongoing surveys, block inspections, bin store checks, and repairs help identify and address risks before they escalate.

Communal Areas and High-Rise Buildings

A zero-tolerance approach applies to personal belongings in communal areas within general needs blocks to keep escape routes clear. Additional measures are in place for high-rise buildings, including Building Safety Cases, resident engagement programmes, Premises Information Boxes for the Fire Service, and enhanced equipment checks.

Future Fire Safety Works

Portsmouth Homes has remediation programmes covering 22 high-rise blocks, 17 mid-rise blocks, and 802 low-rise blocks. Planned works include fire door installations, compartmentation improvements, fire stopping, external wall remediation, and emergency lighting upgrades where required.

Partnership Working and Governance

The organisation works closely with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service through quarterly meetings, building audits, and training exercises. Fire safety performance is monitored through a structured governance process involving safety panels, strategic groups, governance boards, and regulatory reporting.

Resident Communication and Support

Residents receive fire safety information through safety packs, noticeboards, newsletters, the website, and resident engagement events. Support is available through Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessments (PCFRAs), which identify individual risks and any additional measures required to keep residents safe.

PEEPs and Individual Risk Management

Where residents may have difficulty evacuating independently, a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) can be developed. These plans are tailored to individual needs and may include

additional equipment, environmental adaptations, or referrals to support services, with information shared with the Fire Service where consent is given.

Q&A

KB - What does HHSRS stand for?

MC - HHSRS stands for Housing Health and Safety Rating System.

LP - I live in a Block of 3, I see smoke coming from a middle-floor flat window on Sunday. The smoke was visible for around five minutes before stopping, and no fire alarms were heard. Why would the alarms not have sounded?

DA - Smoke alarms inside individual flats usually only sound within that flat and are not connected to alarms throughout the building. It is also possible that the smoke was from smoking or another minor source that did not trigger an alarm.

MH - I am concerned about motorised scooters and e-bikes after seeing reports of batteries catching fire. If one caught fire in a tower block, could it cause a serious problem?

PB - Yes, e-bikes and mobility scooters can pose a fire risk if their batteries fail. Portsmouth Homes manages this risk through fire safety measures, inspections, and controls on the storage and charging of mobility scooters within its buildings.

MC - We recently had sprinkler system fitted, are they being rolled out to all high rises?

DA - Sprinkler systems are installed where they are recommended as part of Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) actions. Each block is assessed individually, so not all high-rise buildings will require sprinklers, but they will be installed where the assessment identifies a need.

MC - I have seen TV demonstrations showing lithium batteries catching fire and being difficult to extinguish with water or foam. What should residents do if this happens?

DA - Lithium battery fires can be very dangerous and spread quickly. Residents should leave the area immediately, call 999, and follow the building's fire safety procedures. Safe charging, storage, and maintenance of devices are important in reducing the risk.

MC - I would like to know whether fire drills are carried out for residents, as fire service drills take place in some buildings.

MC - Fire drills are carried out by the Fire Service to help them familiarise themselves with buildings and emergency procedures. Residents are instead provided with fire safety information and guidance on what to do in an emergency.

MBR - I have noticed a number of nitrous oxide (NOS) canisters of various sizes in the car park area and I am concerned that, if one was involved in a fire or exploded, it could pose a risk to residents and the building.

MC - Nitrous oxide canisters can present a safety risk if damaged, exposed to heat, or involved in a fire. Residents who find discarded canisters should report them so they can be removed safely as part of maintaining a safe environment around the building.

EH - Our fire doors in my block and internally in flats, are from 1959 are they going to be updated?

AH - Fire doors are assessed as part of Fire Risk Assessments and door surveys. Where doors do not meet the required standard, replacement or upgrade works are included within the fire

remediation programmes. Each block is assessed individually, and any necessary upgrades will be carried out as part of these planned works.

RW - What about garages, being used for storage and people hording in them?

DA - Garages can present a fire risk if unsuitable items are stored in them. Portsmouth Homes monitors fire safety risks through inspections and Fire Risk Assessments, and any concerns about inappropriate storage should be reported so they can be investigated.

AH - I live in a low-rise block, who should I report concerns to when items such as boxes and other belongings are being left in communal corridors and fire escape routes.

PB - Residents should report any items left in communal areas or fire escape routes to Portsmouth Homes. A zero-tolerance approach applies to most communal areas, and keeping escape routes clear is an important fire safety requirement.

MBA - The fire safety posters shown during the presentation are useful, but how do residents such as myself, living in smaller blocks or flats without communal noticeboard areas receive this information.

DA - Portsmouth Homes shares fire safety information in a variety of ways, including safety packs, newsletters, the website, resident engagement events, and other communications. Residents who do not have access to communal noticeboards should still receive important fire safety information through these alternative channels.

FD - How do firefighters reach the upper floors of tower blocks and can fire engines reach the tallest buildings with their ladders?

DA - Firefighters do not rely on ladders to reach the upper floors of high-rise buildings. Tower blocks are fitted with dry or wet risers, which allow firefighters to connect hoses within the building and quickly get water to higher floors using protected stairwells and firefighting access points.

VG - Our back door fire exit leading to the rear garden previously had a break-glass security mechanism, which has since been removed. The door is now being used as a regular entrance and exit, and is often left open, allowing people to enter the building without a fob. Can a security mechanism be reinstated to ensure the door remains closed?

MC - I would need to have a look at this.

GC - I was previously told that garages would be inspected annually by a Fire Safety Officer, but they have not seen any inspections take place. Can confirmation be provided when inspections have been completed, for example through a certificate or notice?

PB - It is worth noting that this information relates to some time ago, and there have been significant changes to fire safety processes since then.

SS - Garage and storage cage inspections now receive much greater attention, and inspection arrangements have been strengthened as part of our current fire safety approach.

AG - Regarding fire risks out-of-city Portsmouth Homes areas that are managed by Havant Borough Council, where grassed areas are not maintained regularly. During dry weather, the long grass becomes very dry and could increase the risk of fire.

PB - We are not aware of any previous grass fires in these areas. Grounds maintenance is managed by Havant Borough Council, and we will continue to monitor and raise any fire safety concerns where appropriate.

2. Neighbourhood Update - Phil Bentley

Neighbourhood walkabouts have been completed in Paulsgrove, Somerstown and the Housing Depot areas. Overall, resident feedback was positive, with many residents taking the opportunity to engage with staff and discuss their local neighbourhoods.

A number of minor issues were identified during the walkabouts. These were promptly reported to the relevant teams and have since been resolved. Residents appreciated the opportunity to raise concerns directly and welcomed the visible presence of staff within their communities.

There was also positive engagement regarding community activities, with several residents expressing a keen interest in attending the next Housing Depot event planned for later in the summer. This reflects continued enthusiasm for opportunities to connect with services, access support and engage with their local housing teams.

Further updates on the remaining outstanding neighbourhood areas will be provided at the next meeting. Overall, the completed walkabouts have been well received and continue to provide a valuable opportunity to gather resident feedback, identify local issues and strengthen community engagement.

3. Performance/Regulator improvement plan update - Nicola Clannachan

Full presentation available at request via email housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Purpose of the Improvement Plan

Portsmouth Homes received a C3 Consumer Standard judgement in January 2025 following a self-referral to the Regulator of Social Housing. The judgement highlighted gaps in stock condition information, electrical safety assurance, fire safety actions, and repairs service standards. The improvement plan was introduced to strengthen safety, improve data quality, and provide clearer services for residents.

Improvement Journey

The improvement programme has progressed from identifying weaknesses in 2024, through regulatory intervention in 2025, to embedding stronger processes and assurance during 2026. Major improvements have been made to safety monitoring, investment planning, and resident communication, although some workstreams remain ongoing.

Stock Condition

Significant progress has been made in understanding the condition of homes. At the time of judgement, fewer than 40% of homes had been surveyed within five years and around 10% had no survey record. By May 2026, 67.8% of homes had been surveyed within two years, 77.8% within five years, and homes with no survey record reduced to 0.2%. The programme is expected to reach approximately 85% coverage by September 2026.

Electrical and Core Safety

Electrical safety compliance has improved substantially, with EICR compliance reaching 96.9% by June 2026. Other key safety measures show strong performance, including 100% compliance for communal gas safety, fire risk assessments in high-risk buildings, and smoke alarms/detectors. Gas safety checks within homes were reported at 96.5%.

Fire Safety

Over 5,000 fire risk assessment actions have been completed during the last two years. While 1,712 overdue fire safety actions remain, including 66 high-risk actions, many are now included within funded remediation programmes with mitigations in place. Investment in building and fire safety has increased from £110m to approximately £180m, supporting improvements through to 2030.

Repairs and Service Standards

The repairs service has become more structured and transparent. The overdue routine repairs backlog reduced from 1,873 cases in April 2025 to 324 in May 2026. Current performance is strong, with emergency repairs completed on time at 99.3%, urgent repairs at 96.2%, and routine repairs at 97%. New repairs and damp and mould policies have also been introduced.

Resident Engagement and Consumer Standards

Resident involvement has been strengthened through the Resident Consortium, consultations, focus groups, and performance workshops. Improvements have also been made to tenancy support, community engagement, complaints handling, and transparency. Consultation activity included 531 responses on pets, 238 on repairs, and 768 on neighbourhood improvements. Resident feedback is now being used more directly to shape services and decision-making.

Next Steps

The next phase will focus on completing the stock survey programme, maintaining safety compliance, progressing Project 2030 fire safety works, embedding clearer service standards, and increasing resident influence. Portsmouth Homes continues to meet with the Regulator every two months, with feedback to date reported as positive regarding progress against the improvement plans.

4. Minutes and actions from last meeting

All minutes noted as correct.

Actions:

MC - In sept 2025, I asked about the area in Ladywood, there was multiple bags of rubbish for 2 weeks, PB said he would follow this up, I was informed it was material for a new pathway. I then brought it up again January 2026, as nothing had been done, and PB said it will be started in March. It is now June and no works has been started. It has been there nearly a year now. Nicola Stone completed a joint visit with David Lavendar to Maria on 13 March regarding fire remediation queries. Information was provided and outstanding questions addressed. The Ladywood gate and stones were discussed; it was explained that no garden works will begin until resident consultation takes place, following block works this year. Maria was satisfied with this update.

RW - At the last meeting I brought up about a sign being put up, by our bin sheds and this has not been done.

Sign was put up on the same day after the meeting (4th June)

VG - We have a magnolia tree in our communal garden, and children have been swinging on it. Could the council consider trimming the lower branches to prevent this, or possibly installing a fence around the base to protect it?

We have looked into the concern raised about the tree and can confirm it was not planted by us and is not part of our managed planting. Maintenance like trimming could be considered longer term if it becomes necessary or poses a clear issue (for example, safety or obstruction). At the moment, as it's not urgent, so we wouldn't be looking to intervene

5. AOB

CW - For the Play and Youth Update in October 2027, we would like to know which topics residents would be most interested in hearing about. Possible options include attendance data from our new digital system, which provides more accurate information on the number of children accessing our playgrounds and youth clubs; updates on the new Stamshaw Youth Club; a general update on the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme; and any other relevant developments that arise between now and October. Please let us know if you prefer any of these topics.

CW - For the Policies Review, we have extended the 9 July session to run from 11:00am–1:30pm and have also arranged an additional meeting on 20 July from 11:00am–2:00pm to allow more time for discussion and ensure residents have sufficient opportunity to share their views.

We have additional policies needing to come to the policy focus group and we would welcome your feedback

Would you prefer:

- Additional standalone focus group sessions for Policies
- Extending existing focus groups (regardless of topic) by an extra hour to allow more discussion time?

Please let us know your preference, as this will help us plan future resident engagement activities in a way that works best for everyone.

Room vote - Majority to have additional stand-alone sessions.

MBR - Leaflets are sometimes left on communal stairways after being delivered, which can create a trip hazard and contribute to clutter in escape routes.

PB - This needs to be reported.

MBU - I am concerned that some doorbell cameras overlook communal areas, and there does not appear to be any council policy or guidance governing their use.

CW - Will take to Sara. TBA

MC - If a focus group is held on a policies, will this be for new policies, existing policies, or both?

PB - The focus groups will primarily review existing policies that are currently being updated. We have been advised to consult residents before a policy is finalised, allowing feedback to be considered as part of the review process.

AH - I am aware of several out-of-hours ASB cases that appear to have made little or no progress, and I have not been able to understand the reasons why.

LR - I will follow this up. TBA

SS - Are members satisfied with the new venue and its location? Meetings have moved to The View to support a hybrid format, while all daytime meetings will remain at Somerstown Hub. There is also the possibility of introducing hybrid facilities at the Hub in the future.

All attendees voted - Yes

6. Date next meeting - Thursday 3rd September 11-1pm