

Tenant Scrutiny Committee (TSC)

Report on the Text Messaging Service

1. Introduction

The Deeplake texting service was introduced in December 2012 at Arcon. The TSC had been advocates of the development of a texting service and wanted to review and assess how the service has been operating and the benefits this is bringing to tenants and the Association. The TSC considered the following for their review:

- How tenants join and leave the texting system
- How effective the system is for tenants
- How the system achieves value for money

The TSC wanted to achieve the following outcomes from the scrutiny review:

- Ensure that the service is widely used and achieves value for money.

2. Methods used for the scrutiny of the Arcon website

To assess the service the TSC carried out a number of exercises, these included:

- Receiving a briefing from staff on how the service is delivered
- Examining publicity materials for the service
- Testing out the service.

3. Overview of scrutiny findings

The TSC have found the texting service to be a simple, convenient and easy to use service that offers value for money. The TSC have found that further improvements can be made to the service and that it can be utilised more widely throughout the Association.

Detailed below are the findings from the scrutiny and recommendations that the TSC has made.

3.1 How tenants join and leave the texting system

The TSC questioned staff to assess how tenants join and leave the service.

Strengths

Tenants are given the option to join the service at sign up and they can advise their Housing Officer at any time that they wish to join the scheme.

The scheme is promoted to tenants in the Annual Report, Newsletter and via the contact cards issued by Arcon.

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Areas for improvement

When tenants call the Association, Arcon do not routinely check that they have the correct mobile number for the tenant on the system. It is not routine to ask tenants if they are registered for the texting service nor do they ask tenants if they would like to join the texting service. This is a missed opportunity to promote the texting service and check that the Association has the correct contact details for the tenant.

Letters from Arcon to tenants do not promote the importance of updating mobile phone details. Tenants may forget to update their details and therefore not access the texting service.

Tenants cannot register their mobile for the texting service by text or by using the website, this may be a convenient and cost effective way for tenants to register for the service.

The texting service is not widely publicised at point of contact to existing tenants and all tenants may not be aware of the service and the benefits it brings.

The mobile numbers of tenants who transfer to another Arcon property are not always registered with Deeplake. Tenants think that they are registered with the service, however their mobile number is registered at their previous address. This results in tenants not being able to access the service.

Currently only one tenant from a joint tenancy is able to register for the texting service. This means that only one tenant from a joint tenancy can send and receive texts from Arcon.

Recommendations

1. Tenants to be routinely asked if their mobile details are correct and if they are registered for the text messaging service.
2. Promote more widely to tenants the importance of updating contact details with Arcon.
3. Investigate if tenants can register for the texting service via a text and / or online.
4. Ensure staff promote the service in their day to day contact with tenants.
5. Ensure tenants who transfer are registered with the service at their new tenancy.
6. Investigate if joint tenants can each register their mobile numbers for the service.

3.2 How effective the system is for tenants

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The TSC received a detailed briefing from staff on how the texting service has been implemented. The TSC considered the range and number of texts that are received and sent by the Association.

Strengths

Arcon, tenants and applicants have found the texting system to be beneficial and effective. High numbers of texts have been sent and received for waiting list updates, repair confirmations, rent balances and repairs satisfaction.

Areas for Improvement

The texting service is not fully utilised by the repairs service. Few tenants are given repair appointments or appointment reminders by text, which may help tenants to ensure they are home when a repair is due to take place.

The text service is not widely used by the Association to promote scheme meetings and other events. Tenants may not always remember dates and times of meetings and events and text messages can be a helpful reminder.

The texting service is not used to confirm gas servicing appointments or to assess satisfaction with the service. Arcon are missing opportunities to confirm gas appointments and to receive satisfaction information regarding the service.

Recommendations

7. Ensure that the day to day repairs service utilises the system for appointment confirmations and reminders.
8. Staff to consider how the texting service may be used more widely across the Association and how this may contribute to value for money.
9. Consider how the texting service can be used for gas appointments and tenant satisfaction.

3.3 How the system achieves value for money

The TSC is satisfied that Arcon have a process in place to measure how the texting service achieves value for money. Arcon can demonstrate that £28,350 has been saved by using the service over the last 12 months.

The TSC feel that further savings can be made if the service is more widely utilised across the Association. As well as saving money the TSC feel that the texting service improves the way that Arcon communicates with customers.

4. Support for the Scrutiny

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The TSC wishes to express its thanks to those members of staff who have assisted with this scrutiny.

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Appendix 1 - Recommendations

| Area | Recommendation | Management response Agree / Partial / Disagree | Proposed actions | Timescale | Responsibility |
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| How tenants join and leave the texting system | 1. Tenants to be routinely asked if their mobile details are correct and if they are registered for the text messaging service. | Agree. | At point of contact staff can ask if tenants are registered for Deeplake & check mobile number is up to date. Most effective when taking a repair request. | March 2106 | SMT. |
| | 2. Promote more widely to tenants the importance of updating contact details with Arcon. | Agree. | At point of contact staff can check whether the mobile number is the current one held on the system. Phone manager software to be linked to Omniledger for frontline officers as will recognise numbers already on system Promote through the newsletter and the website. | March 2016. April 2016. | SMT. |
| | 3. Investigate if tenants can register for the texting service via text and / or online. | Partial/Disagree | By default, all Tenants are registered for the Deeplake texting service automatically. Twice a day, Pyramid creates a database that is automatically imported into Deeplake CMGR. This database contains records for all Tenants accounts where either a mobile phone number or email address exists and this is the basis for the | To be reviewed.. | SMT. |

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| | | | <p>CMGR Participant file. As soon as new phone number is updated within Pyramid, they are included within the next scheduled import.</p> <p>Tenants that have opted out of the service are still included within the import and exist as Participant inside Deeplake, however communication is immediately dropped with these tenants. To date, Arcon only have 9 current tenants that are 'Opted Out' of the service.</p> <p>We are aware that Tenants will change their mobile telephone number and may forget to update Arcon with the new details. In the event that an unknown number should be used to contact the text system, we have standard messages in place that specify that the number is not registered and the user should contact Arcon on 0161 214 4120 to update their details. However, certain workflows like the 'Reporting of a Repair' will accept communication for unregistered numbers.</p> <p>If Arcon wish to pursue the need for Tenants to register their new phone number either online or via a text, then OmniLedger can investigate that possibility. However, using this type of service to register a new number provokes some thought on how secure a validation of this number might be. For example, how can Arcon be sure that the new number</p> | | |
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| | | | belongs to either the primary or joint tenant and not another household member? | | |
| | 4. Ensure staff promote the service in their day to day contact with tenants. | Agree. | Encourage all staff to promote Deeplake texting when dealing with enquiries that could be completed via Deeplake. e.g. request a rent balance, request a repair. | March 2016. | SMT |
| | 5. Ensure tenants who transfer are registered with the service at their new tenancy. | Agree. | Housing officers to ensure that the mobile phone number is deleted from the old property, and registered with the new property. | Implemented December 2015. | DL/JOC |
| | 6. Investigate if joint tenants can each register their mobile numbers for the service. | Agree-already available | <p>All joint tenants are currently registered to use the texting service by default. The database produced by Pyramid and imported into Deeplake's CMGR system contains both Contact 1 (Primary Tenant) and Contact 2 (Joint Tenant). Arcon currently have 245 Contact 2 records included within the Deeplake system. However, only 82 of these records include mobile phone numbers.</p> <p>At present, a lot of the existing automated workflows from Pyramid will attempt to send communication to both Contact 1 and Contact 2 should numbers exist,</p> | January 2106. | AS. |

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| | | | <p>including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Stop Arrears – Arrears Letter 1 • One Stop Arrears – Arrears Letter 2 • Maintenance Request Inspection Confirmation. • Maintenance Request Appointment Reminder • Repair Order Confirmation • Repair Order Reminder <p>The Repair Order QS survey is the only workflow that only sends to the Primary Tenant (Contact 1). This is by design as responses and answers would otherwise be confused and messy when imported results back into Pyramid.</p> | | |
| How effective the system is for tenants | 7. Ensure that the day to day repairs service utilises the system for appointment confirmations and reminders. | Agree. | Message sent to all contractors to remind them to send appointments to Arcon so that a reminder text message can be sent out to the tenant. Monitor the up take and review in 3 months. | March 2016 | JB/DEH |
| | 8. Staff to consider how the texting service may be used more widely across the Association and | Agree. | <p>Raise at Team meetings, investigate ways to utilise the Deeplake texting system further using the existing work streams or identify new work streams.</p> <p>Discuss with Omnilegder at meeting on 5/2/16</p> | March 2016. | SMT |

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| | how this may contribute to value for money. | | | | |
| | 9. Consider how the texting service can be used for gas appointments and tenant satisfaction. | Agree. | Put gas annual gas service information onto omniledger by December 2015. Discuss with omniledger at meeting on 5/2/16 how the appointment system can be implemented. This will be an on going piece of work. | March 2016. | JB/DEH |