

**Towards a Collaborative Enterprise:
The Value of Stakeholders**

**Thesis submitted in accordance with the
requirements of the University of Chester for the
Degree of Doctor of Business Administration**

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my parents.

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I would like to thank my supervisors, Professor Caroline Rowland and Steve Page for their help, support and advice in relation to my DBA and, more specifically, in respect of this research.

I would also thank my Wife and Children for their patience and understanding. When I needed time you allowed it to me, even though you should have been my first priority and I should have put this work to one side. Thank you.

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Declaration of Originality

The material presented for examination is my own work and has not been submitted for an award to this or to any other Higher Education Institution except in minor particulars which are explicitly noted in the body of the thesis. Where research pertaining to the thesis was undertaken collaboratively, the nature and extent of my individual contribution has been made explicit.

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Glossary of Terms

- **Actors.** The participants involved in this research/those from whom data has been gathered.
- **HCA.** Homes and Communities Agency.
- **Homes and Communities Agency.** Regulatory Body for Social Housing Providers in England.
- **Housing Associations.** Social Housing Providers registered with the Homes and Communities Agency.
- **KPI.** Key Performance Indicators.
- **NFP.** Not for profit.
- **Registered Providers.** The official title given to Social Housing Providers/Housing Associations by the regulatory body (the Homes and Communities Agency).
- **RP.** Registered Provider also known as Housing Association and Social Housing Provider.
- **Social Housing Providers.** Not for profit landlords registered with the Homes and Communities Agency.
- **Social Housing.** Not for profit/affordable/below market rented housing for those in housing need as defined by legislation.
- **Stakeholders.** Those individuals or groups, internal or external, who have or believe they have a relationship with the organisation.
- **The Regulator or Regulatory Body.** Homes and Communities Agency.
- **The Researcher.** The author of this work.

Abstract

Social housing, traditionally provided by not-for-profit (NFP) housing associations, has become increasingly competitive as exchequer subsidy has reduced and the market has opened up to the profit-making private sector. These changes have increased the need for housing associations to engage and collaborate with stakeholders. The author's research examines stakeholder engagement and collaboration in One Vision Housing, a NFP housing association. A constructivist epistemology, based on an idealist ontology, using primarily inductive logic, is adopted through a case study methodology. Data is collected through interviews, focus groups, surveys, participant observation, direct observation and physical artefacts. The review of literature highlights the relationship between stakeholder theory, stakeholder management, organisational culture, organisational learning and knowledge management. The author has developed a conceptual model in respect of these relationships.

Conclusions indicate, despite stakeholder initial perceptions in respect of trust, a shared goal is a more salient consideration for collaboration. Further new knowledge challenges elements of existing literature by suggesting that, whilst stakeholder engagement may be an organisational construct, this does not necessarily constrain stakeholder effectiveness. The work has value for professional practice by recognising the critically important role of managers in satisfying stakeholders, and shaping an organisational culture, conducive to genuine stakeholder engagement leading to positive outcomes for the business. The research makes a number of contributions to the field of academic study. It confirms existing research suggesting that collaborative stakeholder engagement can aid organisational decision making, strategy and performance. Additionally, the findings provide new knowledge indicating that the tenant/landlord consumer relationship in housing associations, is fundamentally different to other consumer relationships, affording social housing tenants moral rights in organisational decision-making, notwithstanding any statutory entitlement.

Summary of Portfolio

This research is submitted in partial completion for the degree, Doctor of Business Administration (DBA). The initial two years of the programme are taught modules with set assignments including: A Personal and Professional Review (circa 10,000 words); International Markets and Marketing (circa 4,000 words); Global Business Issues (a critique and presentation of two peer reviewed journal articles); Research Methods for Business Administration (a presentation of a peer reviewed academic article using empirical data); in addition to a 6,000 word research proposal.

There was also a requirement to present to the annual faculty research colloquium and answer questions in relation to the research proposal.

Progress to the research element of the DBA is dependent upon satisfactory completion of the taught elements, to the required standards set by the University of Chester.

Given that this work is part of a professional doctorate, sponsored by the researcher's employer, the assignments primarily relate to scenarios that reflect the author's professional operating environment. The rationale being that the learning outcomes are of value to the employer sponsors. Furthermore, prior to embarking on this study, the researcher cross-referenced both his own research interests and the potential value of various other research topics to his employer. The particular research area was selected in consultation with the researcher's employer, in the context of challenges and priorities that relate to the current operating environment.

Practically, pre-thesis work involved internal, informal stakeholder discussions aimed at considering and assessing the viability of the research. This identified that there is general support from engaged service users, employees and the governing body of One Vision Housing, for the work. The discussions identified that the work is timely, given the comparatively recent changes in the regulatory requirements with regard to stakeholder involvement and collaboration in respect of social housing provision.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

This work examines stakeholder engagement and collaboration through a case study of a not for profit (NFP)¹ social housing provider², One Vision Housing, owning (at August 2016) circa 13,000 homes, in the North West of England. One Vision Housing is a registered housing association, also known as a ‘Registered Provider’ on the basis that it is registered with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), the regulatory body for housing associations in England.

Stakeholder engagement and collaboration is said to be a central element of the social housing sector’s operating philosophy (Fitzpatrick & Watts, 2016; Malpass & Victory, 2010; The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England, 2012). One Vision Housing engages with a range of stakeholders, however, other than basic market research, the organisation has not previously carried out any academic research into the value of its engagement. The researcher established this in preliminary discussions with the organisation, prior to commencing this work.

1.1.1 Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration

Levels of stakeholder engagement might be seen as a subset of stakeholder collaboration. Synonyms for collaboration include “participation”, “joining forces”, “cooperating”, “co-producing”, “doing business with”, “colluding” (Roget’s 21st Century Thesaurus). Research indicates that there is often little discrimination between the terms engagement and collaboration (Johnston, 2010). In some instances, stakeholder engagement is seen as a byword for

¹ Not for profit (NFP). A term used to describe an organisation established with a particular purpose other than to make profit (Anheier, 2014; Young, 2013). NFPs are essentially owned by a board of trustees. Revenue surpluses (profits in the private sector) can be made but must be reinvested by the NFP, back into the business for the benefit of the ‘purpose’ for which the organisation is established, rather than paid as a dividend to owners or shareholders, as is the case in the private, for profit sector business (Smith & Jones, 2012).

² Social housing provider. Provider of rented accommodation at below the level determined by market forces where rent levels are established based on a formula set by central government. Also commonly referred to as housing associations, registered providers or provider/s.

public relations, some organisations treating stakeholder engagement as little more than a “tick box” exercise (Morris & Baddache, 2012, p.4). In the context of social housing provision, stakeholder engagement is broadly defined, ranging from basic communication, newsletters and correspondence, through to joint problem-solving, collaborative partnership working and governance structures (Orr & McHugh, 2013; Ryrie, Breanach & Grundy, 2013).

1.1.2 Social Value

The Public Services (Social Value) Act (2012), requires all public bodies in England and Wales, including housing associations, to consider how the “services they provide, commission and procure, might improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the areas in which they operate” (Social Enterprise UK, 2012 p. 2).

Social value is about ensuring that taxpayers’ money is being directed at improving people’s lives and opportunities. It is a “way of thinking about how scarce resources are allocated and used, beyond the cost, and examining what the collective benefit of the service is to the community”. The expectation is that public service providers will engage with stakeholders with regard to achieving social value outcomes (Social Enterprise UK, 2012 p. 2).

1.1.3 Competitive Advantage

According to Porter (1985), an organisation’s competitive advantage assumes, relative to its competitors, achieving a reduced cost of a product or service, which differentiates it from products and services offered by others. Competitive advantage, in the public sector, helps to improve public services and has the potential to reduce waste and inefficiency (Matthews & Shulman, 2005).

Popa, Dorbin, Popescu, and Draghici, (2011) argue that competitive advantage in respect of public service organisations relates to the

organisation establishing important, significant, sustainable differences between itself and others. ‘Importance’, in this context, must be perceived as being the case by stakeholders. ‘Significant’ is defined as something that is accepted by stakeholders as being sufficiently important that they feel compelled to engage with the organisation, and to be considered sustainable, it must be supported and strengthened continuously (Popa et al., 2011). Cong and Pandya (2003) make reference to knowledge management in the public sector as a critical determinant of competitiveness and advantage that differentiates one service provider from another.

In the context of this study, competitive advantage is seen as the measure that positively differentiates the organisation from its competitors. This may relate to achieving strategic advantage (Porter, 1985), superior resources and knowledge (Day & Wensley, 1988), the ability to adapt quickly to change and realise opportunity (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990) and/or achieving superior performance and realising economic and social value (Barney, 2006).

1.2 Background

In understanding the importance and the value of this research, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the current operating environment in which social housing providers, and in particular One Vision Housing, work. Equally, some cognisance of the activities in which providers are involved will help to contextualise the study and in particular the references to social value, competition and competitive advantage in the social housing sector. Maier (2014, p. 17) suggests “there is insufficient understanding about what modern housing associations are, what they do ...”

1.2.1 Defining Social Housing: Diversity and Competition in the Sector.

Cowan and McDermont (2006) argue that the term ‘social housing’ has never properly been defined, firstly because it is complicated and secondly because people instinctively assume they know what it means. According to Malpass (2001) any definition in respect of social housing needs to be capable of accommodating change, which will be dependent upon a number of factors

including economic, political and market forces. Taken for granted definitions do not fully describe the activities and roles that social housing providers play in society (Cowan & McDermont, 2006; Lund, 2011; MacLellan, 2007; Malpass, 2001)

Since 2004, in an attempt by Central Government to increase private investment, private sector (profit making) organisations have been able to ‘bid’ for social housing grant³ and retain ownership and management of socially rented homes (Housing Act 2004). This in turn has increased competition between providers in the sector (Hills, 2007). While housing associations are ‘not for profit’ they can make surpluses and are not permitted to make a loss (Balchin & Rhoden, 2002; Malpass, 2008). In some cases, surpluses amount to tens of millions of pounds (Apps, 2016a; Brown, 2013; Cook, 2013). This has exposed housing associations to a wider range of stakeholder partnerships and networks spanning public and private sector groups, many of whom are central to business strategy and planning, for example, high street banks from which housing associations borrow (Cave 2007; McCann, 2011; Pawson and Wilcox, 2012).

In respect of social housing provision, housing associations have begun to replace local authorities as the main provider of socially rented homes⁴, this has increased the need for collaboration (Cave, 2007; Hills, 2007; Pawson & Mullins, 2010).

The Housing and Regeneration Act (2008) facilitated a revised governance framework for social housing, allowing for a more competitive and commercial approach. Section 68 of the Act defines ‘social housing’ as low cost rental and ownership accommodation. Traditional assumptions are that social housing is provided purely on a rented tenure basis (Cowan and McDermont, 2006). The Housing and Regeneration Act makes reference to

³ A subsidy offered by central government to cover a percentage of the build costs for new social housing. Bidding is a competitive tendering process evaluated by the regulator based on a value for money criterion, crudely based on the lower the grant request, the more likely the ‘bid’ is to be successful.

⁴ Social Rent. Housing rented at below market rent levels for those ‘in need’ as defined by statute (Part 6 of the Housing Act (1996)).

low cost ownership meaning shared ownership⁵ and shared equity⁶ and not simply rented provision. The traditional notion of social housing providers as organisations that operate in an environment where there is little or no competition, is incorrect (Cave, 2007; Hills, 2007; Lennartz, 2014; MacLennan, 2007), important in the context of the references made in this study, to competitive advantage. For a number of years housing associations have operated across a range of housing tenures, competing with other Registered Providers and private sector profit-making organisations, for development land, grant, sales, acquisitions and opportunities for growth, their business plans and structures accommodating both profit and NFP models (Cave, 2007; Cowan & McDermont, 2006; Hills, 2007; Malpass & Victory, 2010). Additional income from commercial activity through their trading subsidiaries has become increasingly important to housing associations, as a replacement for exchequer subsidy (social housing grant), which has reduced over the years, at a time when new entrants have gained access to the market (Cave, 2007; Hills, 2007; Pawson and Mullins, 2010). A number of housing association group structures and mergers have been entirely reliant upon private finance, and have been influenced by the increasing commerciality of the sector (King, 2001; Mullins & Murie, 2006; Tang, Oxley & Mekic, 2016). Stakeholder relationships are often determinants in choice of merger partners (Kottler & Lee, 2007).

Notwithstanding their NFP status, since 2003, housing associations have been permitted by the regulator, to pay their board members (trustees). These changes have furthered the notion of NFP housing associations as “businesses”, again, notwithstanding their traditional social purpose (Chevin, 2013; Friedman, 2007). Indeed, as far back as 1999, Cope highlighted the increasing diversity of housing association activity and their increasing commercial approach to business planning, with accountability to multiple stakeholders including service users, the regulatory body, Central Government, Local Government and a multitude of other public and private sector organisations.

⁵ The tenant owns a percentage share of the property.

⁶ The tenant owns a percentage share of the property.

This, combined with increased competition from both within the social housing sector and organisations outside of the sector, has increased the range and importance of stakeholders that housing associations engage with. The political and economic influences resulting, means that housing associations find themselves caught between the challenge to generate new financial capacity, while remaining true to their social purpose (Elphicke & Mercer, 2014). The growth in knowledge based management rather than capital based management (Halal, 2001), can arguably, help housing associations to tackle the challenge between social purpose, and the need to create new financial capacity and operate in a ‘business-like manner’ (Savitz and Weber, 2014). This assumes stakeholders are regarded as creative partners that add economic and social value by working with organisations to solve problems (Lin & Mele, 2013; Wolch & Dear, 2014). For housing associations this is particularly important, potentially they can redefine their purpose to “serve both capital and society, by integrating stakeholders into a more productive whole, a collaborative enterprise” (Halal 2001, p. 27).

1.3 The Case Study: One Vision Housing

This case study relates to One Vision Housing, a social housing provider based in Sefton, Merseyside. The organisation was established as a housing association resulting from the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) of 11,500 homes from Sefton Council in October 2006. LSVT involves the local authority transferring the ownership of the stock to either an existing or a new housing association, with the agreement of tenants (Ginsberg, 2005; Watt, 2009).

One Vision Housing employs circa 250 people and has a turnover around £65 million per year. Since its establishment in 2006, One Vision Housing has grown to over 13,000 homes, and formed a larger group structure ‘The Sovini Group’, of which it [One Vision Housing] is the largest partner.

Circa 550 people are employed within the Sovini Group (including the 250 from One Vision Housing). The Group comprises NFP (social housing providers) and profit making (commercially trading business).

One Vision Housing is governed through a board of non-executive directors and has been established as a Cooperative and Community Benefit Society with charitable objects. There are circa 1,700 housing associations registered in the UK, owning circa 2.7 million homes, varying in size and purpose (Beckett, 2014). One Vision Housing is by far the largest housing association in the Borough of Sefton and is amongst the largest 100 housing associations in England. It has, therefore, a reasonably high profile in the sector. While there is opportunity for further research in respect of the wider Sovini Group, it should be understood that the focus of this case study is One Vision Housing, albeit data is collected from the wider Sovini Group as the parent company, where appropriate and applicable. The reference to the Sovini Group is ~~merely~~ largely provided for completeness and context in respect of the structure within which One Vision Housing operates.

The decision to focus this research on One Vision Housing, rather than the Sovini Group as a whole, is primarily because, as a large housing association, unlike other subsidiaries in the group, One Vision Housing is a NFP organisation accountable to the social housing regulator, the Homes and Communities Agency. Other subsidiaries in the group (except for one smaller housing association) serve to support One Vision Housing, and are not directly part of the regulated social housing sector. Moreover, One Vision Housing is one of only three housing associations nationally, operating within a group structure, whose parent company (Sovini Limited) is not a registered social landlord. This has stimulated interest from other landlords and the regulator, arguably making One Vision Housing an important case study, with the potential to provide “insights that other generalisations will not allow” (Siggelkow, 2007, p. 20).

An investigation into the value of stakeholder engagement in respect of One Vision Housing, as one of the largest housing associations in England will have potential significance for and be of interest to the sector as a whole, “creating managerially relevant knowledge” (Ramachandran, 1998; Gibbert, Ruigrok & Wicki, 2008, p. 1465)

1.4 Purpose of the Research

The work investigates stakeholder engagement and collaboration in One Vision Housing. The aim being:

To explore and understand the extent to which the organisation derives value from its stakeholders.

This is important because there is a specific regulatory expectation that housing associations will operate collaboratively with stakeholders, to achieve mutually desirable outcomes and added value for service users (The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England, 2012). Stakeholder theory suggests that an organisation's strategic and operational decision making will be influenced by its relationships with stakeholders (Freeman, 1984; Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997). These relationships can be a source of competitive advantage (Friedman & Miles, 2006; Kerzner, 2014; Mainardes, Alves, & Raposo, 2011). There are, of course, conflicting views that argue to the contrary, suggesting that stakeholder theory acts contrary to business priorities, is too simplistic, costly in terms of time and resources and offers little value other than affording management the opportunity to control stakeholders, who may otherwise be problematic (Blattberg, 2004; Kaler, 2003; Mansell, 2013; Stief, 2009).

The objectives of this research are:

- i) to consider if knowledge from stakeholders is translated into learning;
- ii) to review stakeholder perceptions of the organisation;
- iii) to assess the relevance of the stakeholder/manager relationship;
- iv) to examine the relationship between stakeholders and organisational achievement;

- v) to consider the relevance of organisational culture in respect of collaborative stakeholder relations.

1.5 Theoretical Gap and Perceived Contribution to Knowledge and Practice

There is substantial information available in respect of public sector housing in Britain (Cave; 2007; Hills, 2007; Lund, 2011; Mullins and Murie, 2006). Housing associations are required, as part of the regulatory process, to engage with a range of stakeholders (The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England, 2012). However, there appears to be limited academic research into the value of stakeholder engagement and collaboration in the social housing sector, and if the knowledge gained is contributing to success and/or competitive advantage (Lennartz; 2014; Malpass and Victory, 2010; Mullins and Murie, 2006; Mullins, Czischke & VanBortel, 2012). This is perhaps surprising, given the commercialisation of the sector (Murie, 2012; Pollit & Bouckaert, 2011; Tang et al., 2016) and the increasing value and acceptance of stakeholder salience in the commercial business sector, given that comparisons can be drawn between NFP housing associations and private sector, commercial business (O'Higgins & Morgan, 2006; Seymour, 2012).

Stakeholder theory proposes that organisations have regard for the needs and wants of stakeholders, particularly those that can influence the sustainability of the business, for example; shareholders, employees and customers (Johannson, 2008). Riege and Lindsay (2006), argue that public policy impacts the population generally, and those operating in or on behalf of the public sector are constantly under pressure from society to engage with stakeholders. Some researchers have posited that engagement and collaboration with stakeholders, are fundamental to changing public service providers into proactive, knowledge based, learning organisations (Kim, Pan & Pan, 2007; Osbourne, 2013), arguing that knowledge from stakeholders, should be considered as a source of advantage that distinguishes organisations from the competition, and a mechanism for generating

improved performance and customer satisfaction (Hislop, 2013; Riege & Lindsay, 2006).

This research explores stakeholder engagement and collaboration through a single case study (Ramachandran, 1998; Siggelkow, 2007) of a housing association (One Vision Housing), in an attempt to understand, in the context of the objectives, if the organisation derives value from its stakeholders. In doing so, the work seeks to address gaps in knowledge and practice that exist in One Vision Housing, and potentially the sector generally. Consequently the work adds to the body of knowledge and identifies implications for practice, through this transfer of knowledge.

1.6 Overview of Adopted Approach

This research is a qualitative case study utilising a phenomenological research philosophy (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe, 2001), on the basis that the research is aiming to explore lived experience (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007). The work is based on an idealist ontology taking an inductive logic, justified on the basis that the research is subjective and attempts to understand reality as the actors involved perceive it (Perry, 2001). The work is an empirical study, seeking to develop theory through observation where general conclusions are induced from particular influences, which is the opposite of deductive research (Hussey & Hussey, 1997) and lends itself more readily to qualitative research.

The researcher takes a constructivist epistemology. Again, this is suitable, because the researcher is attempting to understand views and opinion based on experience (Blaikie, 2007).

The data collection methods are based on Yin (2004; 2012; 2014) to gain a richer insight into the respondents' perception (David & Sutton, 2004; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). The sample has been drawn from a range of sources, utilising the stakeholder mapping exercise completed by One Vision Housing in 2013. The justification for the sample is set out in detail in chapter five.

1.6.1 Case Study Methodology.

Case study research is helpful for understanding complex issues where there exists some current knowledge (Yin, 2014). Case study research is less about the actual methods used but more importantly that the focus of the study is actually a 'case' (Yin, 2014). This is further supported by Eisenhardt, (1989); Siggelkow (2007) and Stake (1998) who argue that case study research should be convincing and is identified by interest in individual cases, not by the methods of enquiry used. Additionally, several authors including Gibbert et al., (2008); Johansson, (2003) suggest that a case study should capture the complexity of a single case.

As referenced earlier, stakeholder research examples have tended to focus on private sector rather than public service examples. Equally, One Vision Housing's group structure is somewhat unusual compared to the majority of others in the sector (see 1.3) and there has been no previous academic research that examines stakeholder engagement in the organisation. As a 'case' therefore, One Vision Housing is a suitable study (Ragin & Becker, 1992; Siggelkow 2007).

1.7 **Outline of this Research**

The research has potential importance for the social housing sector, not least of all because of the expectations of the Social Housing Regulator, but also because stakeholders have become increasingly consumer aware, socially responsible and expectant (Hasler and Davis, 2010; Haywood, 2010; Manochin, Brignall, Low & Howell, 2011). As Government grant has reduced, social housing providers have been forced to think more creatively about how they generate new financial capacity, for investment to maintain levels of service and growth (Manzi, 2011). Equally, local authorities generally, have become more reliant upon housing associations, for the provision of social rented accommodation, as their role [local authorities] has changed from one of provider to facilitator and enabler (Duncan and Thomas, 2012; Pawson and Fancy, 2003). This reliance is not just in respect of

housing provision, but a wide range of community based services (Manzi, 2011). The resulting dilemma for social housing providers is how to balance the need to create additional financial capacity for investment, against their traditional 'social' values. Stakeholder theory is seen by some as a means of balancing these apparent competing demands (Freeman, 2010; Johansson 2007; Mainardes et al., 2011).

This work comprises a review of existing relevant literature, in respect of Stakeholder Theory and Management together with their respective relationship with Organisational Culture, Organisational Learning and Knowledge Management, from which a conceptual model is proposed. This sets the broader context for the research.

The researcher uses a range of methods to collect data including interviews, focus groups, survey, participant observation, direct observation and physical artefacts (Yin, 2014). The analysis of data provides support for existing research, which argues that collaboration with stakeholders can result in social and economic benefits, providing an invaluable source of knowledge, that can, if used appropriately, add value and be a source of competitive advantage (Freeman, 2010; Johansson, 2008; Mitchell et al., 1997). The work also provides new knowledge in respect of the consumer relationship that social housing tenants have with their landlord, and how this differs significantly, emotionally and practically to other consumer relationships that they may have. The research finds differences in respect of existing stakeholder literature, which makes reference to the nature of the organisational 'construct' for stakeholder engagement, and the expectations of stakeholders in having their needs and wants met through the engagement process (Jonker & Nijhoff, 2006; Letza, Sun & Kirkbride, 2004; Lozano, 2005; Susiene & Vanagas, 2005). The work confirms the importance of managers in the stakeholder relationship together with the significance of stakeholders in respect of organisational achievement. The research may therefore, have benefit for professional practice. The research concludes with a reflection on the study and the experience and development of the researcher during the period of the work. Reference to the limitations of the study are outlined, together with the opportunities for further research.

1.8 Summary

This chapter has set out the rationale and context for this research, establishing the background to the study, together with the justification, purpose, theoretical gap, potential contribution to knowledge and professional practice. The chapter provides an overview of the approach taken in respect of the methods and methodology, in addition to an outline of the overall research project.

CHAPTER TWO. Stakeholder Theory and Management

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the relevant literature in relation to Stakeholder Theory and Stakeholder Management which underpins the academic perspective of this study and contextualises the research, providing a review of the theoretical perspectives. Consideration is given to the similarities and differences between stakeholders in the NFP social housing sector and the private (commercial) sector, respectively.

2.2 Stakeholder Theory

There is substantial academic and professional literature in respect of the existence of organisational stakeholders, and research generally substantiates this (Mainardes, Alves & Raposo, 2011). Stakeholder theory challenges the traditional business concept which is viewed from a shareholder perspective (Moser & Martin, 2012). Stakeholder theory has tended to focus on the for-profit (private) sector rather than the NFP sector where shareholders have a different relationship with the business (Moulton & Eckerd, 2012). In general, the prevailing business law is that share/stockholders are the legal possessors of the company (Carroll and Buchholtz, 2012), and owed a binding fiduciary duty by the organisation, aimed at increasing value for them personally (Wynn-Williams, 2012). This is very different to the NFP sector where the aim of the endeavour is to benefit 'the cause or mission' or add value for the 'recipients' of the cause, for example, to address disadvantage or tackle exclusion (Aiken & Bode, 2009). Unlike the private sector, shareholders in NFPs do not receive a financial dividend and tend to be recipients or service providers acting as trustees (Gaver & Im, 2013).

The traditional business model, focusing primarily on value for shareholders, proposes that the business translates the inputs from investors, employees and suppliers to outputs or sales which are purchased by the customer (Saleem, Kumar & Shahid, 2016). This then returns a financial benefit to the

organisation (Carroll & Shabana, 2010; Kamaruddin & Abeysekera, 2013; Wilson and Post, 2013). However, this model of business simply focuses on the priorities of those from these groups (investors, employees, suppliers and customers). Stakeholder theory argues for a more comprehensive engagement philosophy which includes a wider range of stakeholders, indeed anyone with an interest or who may be affected by the activities of the organisation (Freeman, 1994, 2010; Freeman et al., 2010). For example, the ‘community’ as individuals or a collective, local government, central government, funders and regulators (Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar & DeColle, 2010; Jensen, 2010; Mason & Simmons, 2013). This is particularly relevant to housing associations whose activities tend to be socially or community focused and sometimes community driven (Card & Mudd, 2006). Community based activity often involves multi agency cooperation and/or collaborations (Manzi, 2010). In this environment, agendas may not always be coterminous, bringing about particular challenges (Browhill & Carpenter, 2009). This is different to the experience in the private sector where commonality of cause, ultimately linked to profit, can lead more readily, to a willingness to collaborate (Savitz & Weber, 2014; Tadelis, 2012).

Stakeholder theory has progressed from a strategic notion, to a mechanism adopted by the public and private sectors for understanding the customer (Williams & Lewis, 2008) in a more consumer aware and knowledgeable operating environment (Jongbloed, Enders & Salerno, 2008). Some theorists argue that Stakeholder engagement and collaboration is a means of generating knowledge and organisational learning (Basu, 2011; Johansson, 2008), essential to the organisation’s strategic development and sustainability (Garvare & Johansson, 2010). This view is not universally supported, contrary research holds that not all stakeholders are capable of consenting or contracting with the organisation in a manner that ensures their interests are protected, for example, low paid employees (Aas & Ladkin, 2005). Equally, pressure on stakeholders or differing levels of power can result in coercion or stakeholders not contributing honestly, so that they ‘fit it’ (Van Buren & Greenwood, 2011). Mitchell et al., (1997) accept that not all stakeholders have the same level of influence, power or legitimacy in respect of their claims over the organisation, arguing that an appreciation, by managers, of

these differences, is fundamental to successful stakeholder management. However, this can mean that hard to reach or less vocal stakeholders are excluded. Structuring relations to allow all stakeholders to participate equally, is not necessarily straightforward (Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005) and achieving both inclusivity and equity in respect of stakeholder claims is difficult, if achievable at all, (Adams & Hess 2001; Stuart, Cooper & Owen, 2007).

Stakeholder theory holds that an organisation's strategic and operational decision making will be influenced by its relationship with stakeholders (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2012). The manner in which it views stakeholders, will be reflected in its decision making processes, its operational planning mechanisms and structures (Mitchell et al., 1997). An understanding of how stakeholders view and associate with the organisation, their relationship with management, and the perception of managers towards stakeholders, is critical to business success (Friedman & Miles, 2006). At its heart, business should have regard for who their stakeholders are and what they expect from the organisation, taking this into account when they develop their strategic plans (Freeman et al., 2010).

Critics argue that this perspective is counterproductive and opposed to corporate governance, denying the fiduciary responsibility owed to shareholders, as owners of the business, shifting the focus from the interests of shareholders to stakeholders (Saleem et al., 2016). It also assumes all stakeholders are equal and can contribute freely, articulately and unfettered (Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005). This is often not the experience, and therefore, the theory, as a management tool, is flawed (Greenwood, 2006; Jensen 2010). Not all stakeholders are capable of representing themselves, some need to be represented by others, for example; those who are sick, infirm or vulnerable in some way may need to be represented. In the absence of this they are excluded (Smith, 2008). NFPs and in this particular case, housing associations are involved in tackling social deprivation. Stakeholders are sometimes marginalised and do not necessarily have the means to engage (access to Information Technology or transport for example). Physical and educational disparities, gender and cultural differences can lead to

marginalisation (Ross, Orenstein & Botchwey, 2014). NFPs may be more likely to take a holistic approach to allow stakeholder learning and capacity building (Baur, Abma & Widdershoven, 2010; Chalmers & Balan-Vnuk, 2013), whereas the private sector often seeks a more immediate response, which is not necessarily reflective of considered stakeholder opinion. This can lead to ambiguity and confused and/or conflicting stakeholder management and organisational decision making by managers (Kaner, Lind, Toldi, Fisk & Berger, 2014). There are however, those who argue that whilst it may be necessary to engage with certain stakeholders, those able to exert particular influence or control over the organisation, it is not necessary to engage with them all (Hart & Sharma, 2004). To try to do so would be resource intensive and add little value (Gao & Zhang, 2006). Others suggest that the term 'stakeholder' and the explanation of what is meant by it, can be ambiguous and vary considerably. In some cases it can be generalised to the extent that those using the term, do so as a kind of 'catch all' phrase, without specific meaning, definition or clarity, in respect of who is being referred to (Friedman & Miles, 2006). This is not just the case in commerce, but in academia there are numerous definitions and not always agreement, on who or what is meant by the term 'stakeholder' and 'stakeholder groups' (Wynn-Williams, 2012).

One of the most commonly accepted definitions according to Mainardes et al., (2011) is that offered by Freeman (1984) who makes reference to individuals and/or groups that have the ability, to influence or be influenced by the organisation's business activities. This wide ranging definition proposes that stakeholders can be individuals or groups that are structured or unstructured. They may be internal or external to the organisation and its supply chain. Additionally, they will hold different degrees of power, and their claims on the organisation, may or may not be legitimate. Their desire to influence may be urgent or otherwise (Greenwood & Anderson, 2009; Van Buren & Greenwood, 2011).

Those with opposing views argue that influence, is not necessarily based on power, legitimacy and/or urgency, but on other factors, in particular the nature of the organisation and the activities in which it is engaged (Felps &

Jones, 2010). This will influence the nature and dynamics of organisation/stakeholder relationships (Clarkson, 1995; Engster, 2011). Mainardes et al., (2011), in their paper *Stakeholder Theory; Issues to resolve*, propose that stakeholder theory encompasses various relationship concepts involving the organisation, its stakeholders and their interdependency (Freeman & Reed, 1983; Wicks, Gilbert, & Freeman, 1994), the power held either by the organisation or its stakeholders (Brenner, 1995; Carroll, 1993) and the legal and contractual relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders by which either may hold the other to account (Hill & Jones, 1998).

The general concept of stakeholder theory relates to the relationships that an organisation forges with its stakeholder networks, all of which will bring some influence to bear on the organisation and its decision making (Jones & Wicks, 1999; Savage, Nix, Whitehead, & Blair, 2004). For housing associations, operating in communities where there are multiple stakeholders, involved at different levels, sometimes with different agendas, the focus on these relationships and their influence on how an organisation conducts its operations, is important (Collier, 2008). This is particularly true in respect of management decision-making (Mullins, Czischke, & Van Bortel, 2012). Taking the case of stakeholder engagement in community activity, for example, there may be layers of agencies, statutory bodies, public sector organisations, other interested parties and individuals, operating at different levels, integrating, interacting, cooperating or conflicting (Manzi, 2010; Thaler & Levin-Keitel, 2016). In these circumstances, strategic planning will have regard for these multiple stakeholders and account for them in how operational plans are implemented. Stakeholder relationships in this regard will be reflective of organisational culture and can be significant determinants of strategic planning and approach (Jones & Yumuna, 2009). Relationship development may be determined based on stakeholder perception, influenced by a range of factors, including political allegiance, religious belief, cultural and ethnic background (Goodstein & Wicks, 2007). Accordingly organisations must have regard for this if they are to succeed (Bourne, 2016).

Mitchell et al., (1997); Freeman et al., (2010) concur, suggesting that progressive organisations will seek to firstly identify, and secondly to understand and balance the interests of its various stakeholders, having regard for their different levels of salience and power and interpreting their needs and interests. Counter arguments propose that this is a narrow perspective and underestimates the complexity of relationships where stakeholders may have competing expectations and demands, all with a particular self-interest (Branzei, 2011; Tse, 2011). Others suggest that stakeholders do not necessarily fit nicely into groups, nor can their sometimes competing agendas be accommodated through simple categorisation, (Covell, 2005). Political, ethnic and religious allegiances for example can make categorisation difficult and produce variations in how stakeholders are perceived by managers and by each other (Weiss, 2009).

Accountability is challenging according to Hull et al., (2011), there can be considerable difficulty in balancing self-interest, common good and organisational ambition in stakeholder relationships (Diochon & Anderson, 2009; Thaler & Levin-Keitel, 2016). Well intentioned stakeholder position can often lead to a vicious circle where multiple stakeholders are engaged and hold strong or moral views and opinions, self-interest sometimes prevailing over common good and acting contrary to the organisation's ambitions (Gibbon & Angier, 2011; Hull, 2011). Research in the health sector for example indicates that fundamental is an understanding of stakeholder expectations if value is to be derived and stakeholder cooperation achieved (Etchegary et al., 2013; Hoffman, Montgomery, Aubrey & Tunis, 2010). Stakeholder willingness to participate is based on their interests and expectations linked to their particular 'stake' (Alexander, 2009). Their motivation may be financial, managerial, personal, aspirational or altruistic (Eskerod & Lund Jepsen, 2013).

2.2.1 The relationship between Stakeholder Theory and Shareholder Theory

Freeman (2010) originally raised the notion that stakeholder theory is replacing shareholder theory. This is important in the context of this study, given the nature of the stakeholder/shareholder relationship in housing

associations and NFPs generally. As referred to earlier, shareholders in NFPs may be recipients of the service or in a legal sense, the trustees, not entitled to a financial dividend, unlike shareholders in commercial business enterprise (Stone, Crosby & Bryson, 2010). The proposition is that stakeholder engagement has organisational value which can lead to competitive advantage through a better understanding of customer expectations (Ackerman & Eden, 2011). This has the potential to increase surpluses⁷ and other value added benefits, including market share (Cheung, Chung, Tan & Wang, 2013; Dong & Chiara, 2010; Edgeman & Hensler, 2005; Radder, 1998). Proponents argue that stakeholders will only be of value to shareholders, if their [stakeholder] demands and expectations are met, (Garvare & Johansson, 2010). However, as highlighted earlier, a range of factors affect relationships and the ability and willingness of stakeholders to engage and/or cooperate. Power relations will impact, some stakeholders lack the knowledge, resources and capacity required to meaningfully contribute (Verbeke & Tung, 2013). Equally, stakeholder theory assumes some loyalty and commonality between the parties (Purnell & Freeman, 2012). Aligning sometimes disparate and conflicting stakeholder motives and opinion can be difficult (Fedorowicz, Gellinas, Grogan & Williams, 2009). Stakeholder groups can be chaotic, their real value is arguably limited or in some cases non-existent (Fassin, 2009; Jensen, 2002; Wiseman, Cuevas-Rodriguez & Gomez-Mejia, 2012). For housing associations operating as NFPs, the shift to a more competitive approach to management can result in increased social disadvantage for some stakeholders, for example; those whose first language is not English, hard to reach minorities, those in remote or isolated communities or in low socio economic groups (Adams & Hess, 2001; Riege and Lyndsay, 2006). This may inhibit particular stakeholder ability and capacity to meaningfully contribute, resulting in underrepresentation in the stakeholder engagement process, possibly leading to unbalanced decision making by managers, not necessarily reflective of wider stakeholder opinion (Lamb, Dowich, Burroughs & Beaty, 2014).

⁷ NFPs use the term 'surplus' as opposed to 'profit', all surpluses being reinvested in the business, not taken as a dividend as is the case in private sector commercial business.

Proponents argue that stakeholders can add both social and economic value, if they are genuinely engaged in decision making through an organisational culture that embraces their involvement (Basu, 2011). Others argue however, that this depends on both shareholder/trustee expectations and meeting stakeholder needs and wants, (Wang & Qian, 2011). Not all commentators agree, maintaining that while it may be to the benefit of management and ‘Corporate Social Responsibility’⁸, that stakeholders are engaged, their needs and wants are not necessarily consistent or defined, and therefore, not essential. The issue is more about perception and stakeholders feeling valued, (Foley 2005). Additionally, stakeholders are not necessarily formally accountable, unlike shareholders (Danker, 2013), their demands may be unrealistic and trying to meet them may have a negative impact on beneficiary organisational value. Others argue that stakeholder engagement potentially constrains outcomes, acting contrary to the organisational purpose and success, wasting time and resources, the process detracting from specific organisational vision (Spitzeck & Hansen, 2010).

Equally, legal responsibility in a business lies with directors. Stakeholders, as defined by many stakeholder theorists, do not have the same level of legal, or indeed moral, responsibility (Saleem et al., 2016). Stakeholder theory therefore, suffers from an incomplete analysis and ideology and takes much for granted (Weiss, 1995). Indeed, some argue there is little relationship between commercial success and social good, often associated with stakeholder engagement and collaboration (Barton, Hill & Sundaram, 1989; Harrison & Freeman, 1999; Preston & Sapienza, 1990. Branzei (2011) argues to the contrary, suggesting that conflict between stakeholders and the organisation, is simply conflict between the need to generate profit and the increasing demands from society, in respect of social responsibility, and this can be addressed through accommodation and understanding of interests. A lack of understanding in this regard has led to a perception, in the private sector, that profit-making, may, as a by-product, create social benefits, but

⁸ Corporate Social responsibility (CSR), actions that appear to further some social good, beyond the interest of the firm and that which is required by law (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001, p 117). Strategies that encourage the organisation to make a positive contribution to the environment and society generally. Consideration of the impact that an organisations has on society (Fallon-Taylor, 2015; Shamir, 2011)

from the perspective of shareholders wanting a financial return, stakeholders are simply a means to an end, which is always the desire to increase profits (Doane, 2005). Moreover, profitability and social responsibility are not consistent because they have different drivers (Halal, 2001). Business is there simply to make profit and this overriding sense of purpose is inconsistent with and resistant to social concerns (Kolk & Francois, 2012). On the contrary, stakeholder theory recognises the genuine claims of those who have a stake in the business, including those whose stake relates to the organisation's social responsibility, and embracing this is a more sustainable route to organisational success (Harrison and Wicks, 2013; Webber, 2008) than is a simple focus on the 'bottom line', which ignores the views of stakeholders (Branzei, 2011; Freeman, 2010; Johansson, 2008). In this regard, stakeholder theory successfully bridges the gap between shareholder/trustee value and social good (Branzei, 2011).

2.2.2 Stakeholder Salience and Categorisation

Essentially, stakeholder salience is based on the notion that management will have regard for particular stakeholders and stakeholder groups in preference to others (Boesso & Kumar, 2016). A number of researchers argue that the attention and priority afforded to stakeholders will depend on their ability to influence business decisions (Bundy, Shropshire & Buchholtz, 2013). Which and when stakeholders receive attention will depend on the balance between particular salient elements (Johansson, 2007; Mitchell et al., 1997; Wynn-Williams, 2012). A stakeholder's ability to contribute is determined by their position or relationship within the organisation, as 'primary' or 'secondary' stakeholders, with different influences over the organisation (Garvare & Johansson, 2007).

Primary stakeholders are in a position to exert considerable influence. They have the power, legitimacy and the urgency needed to press their claims. The support of these groups is central to organisational success (Aaltonen, Jaakko & Tuomas, 2008). The difficulty with this is that it fails to recognise that multiple parties will have conflicting interests. In this sense, stakeholder theory is politically pluralist (Bahn, Greenwood & VanBuren, 2013;

Greenwood, 2013). Contrasting unitarist theories propose a merging of stakeholder/organisational interests (Van Buren & Greenwood, 2011). The pluralist perspective advocates that the organisation and its stakeholders, whilst dependent, to a greater or lesser degree, on each other, may attempt to pursue their individual interests, particularly where there is an unequal balance of power in the relationship. Potentially the opportunity for working together and achieving mutual benefit within the pluralist stakeholder perspective is much higher, assuming there is recognition and honesty in respect of unitarism/self-interest (Dawkins, 2012; Van Buren & Greenwood, 2011).

Primary stakeholders may be encouraged into action by secondary stakeholders. These secondary stakeholders may comprise pressure groups, environmentalists and other interested parties (Deng, Kang & Low, 2013; Reed, Graves, Dandy, Posthumus, Hubacek, 2009). Alternatively, Garvare and Johansson (2007) make reference to 'overt' and 'latent' stakeholders, categorised as such depending on their familiarity and/or relationships with the organisation and its management. Additionally, there are 'interested parties', who have some broad or specific interest in the organisation's activities, not necessarily holding any influence and possibly lacking the power to motivate primary stakeholders to take action (Johansson, 2007). The counter perspective proposes that engaging with stakeholders is not about categorising them, (Podnar & Jancic, 2006). Stakeholder support for the organisation is linked to positive and meaningful relationships rather than simple categorisation (Lozano, 2005). Savage et al., (1991) suggest a model based on four types of stakeholder relationships ranging from threat to cooperation. It is not the intention of this work to examine in detail these perspectives but simply to highlight that there is a range of opinion. Irrespective of any individual or particular philosophical perspective it is important that organisations account for, and are aware of, stakeholders that may have a legitimate claim on the organisation, and are able to influence the business (Bourne & Walker, 2005; Garvare & Johansson, 2010). This, according to proponents of stakeholder theory, will result in improved efficiency and service delivery ensuring resources are effectively targeted (Garvare & Johansson, 2010; Johansson, 2007). In this sense stakeholder

management (discussed at 2.3) becomes a key risk management issue (Deng et al., 2013; Greenwood, 2013). Indeed, Clarkson (1995, 1998) proposes that in the absence of any risk, there is no stake, suggesting that stakeholder engagement can generate enhanced information that will help to mitigate risks (Bryson, 2004; Foo, Asenova, Bailey & Hood, 2011). There are nonetheless, tensions here because stakeholders may have different appetites for risk (Bryson, 2004), and this will influence their contribution and willingness to engage. In this regard, there is both a probability for success and failure in any project; managers are challenged with ensuring that the data used in decision making is reliable. Reliability of information from stakeholders may be influenced by vested interests, beliefs and ideologies, amongst other factors (Barraquier, 2013). Account needs to be taken of the imbalance of power between stakeholders and the organisation (Patrick, 2010) and access to the source of power, which is not necessarily equitable (Podnar & Jancic, 2006).

Whatever view one holds in respect of their value, power and/or influence, the existence of stakeholders means they will require some degree of management, (Mitchell et al., 1997). In this regard, stakeholder identification and analysis is essential (Bryson, 2004). Stakeholder mapping⁹ can assist the process of management by providing a mechanism for identifying and managing stakeholders (Bourne, 2016). Appendices 14A and 14B provide examples of the stakeholder maps utilised to identify relevant stakeholders in respect of this particular study (page 83 also makes a brief reference to the use of stakeholder mapping) .

2.3 **Stakeholder Management**

Stakeholder theory argues that to be sustainable, organisations must balance competing stakeholder interests (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2012; Freeman et al., 2010; Johansson, 2008). This requires an element of management (Ackerman & Eden, 2011).

⁹ A stakeholder map is a means of identifying the stakeholders involved in a business or a project, their interests, possible involvement, influence and groupings – Bourne (2016).

Some authors argue that stakeholder management is linked to strong organisational culture (discussed in chapter three) which recognises and values stakeholders as co-collaborators (Boesso & Kumar, 2016; Carroll & Buchholtz, 2012; Longo & Mura, 2008). Proponents of stakeholder theory argue that stakeholders must be meaningfully engaged, at all levels, in the activities of the company, and it is this culture of genuine engagement that leads to advantage over competitors (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). While not all research supports this perspective, for example, it is not necessarily clear if engagement with stakeholders results in better decision-making (Barnard & Deakin, 2002; Lukasiewicz & Baldwin, 2014). Accepting that all organisations have stakeholders, there will be a corresponding requirement, to some degree, that they are managed, (Johansson, 2008). The interpretation of meaningful engagement and management of stakeholders, is however open to question, (Unerman & Bennett, 2004; Waters, Burnett, Lamm & Lucas, 2009). Stakeholder management can range from a simple exchange of information, to joint working and full collaborative partnerships and governance structures (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012). By way of an example, housing associations in England, are bound by a regulatory framework which requires and assesses stakeholder engagement (The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England, 2012). For some areas of activity there is a statutory requirement to engage and cooperate with stakeholders; changes to tenancy rules, proposals for the introduction of new services and service charges, for example (Housemark, 2013).

Managing stakeholders requires an understanding of their influence on business success (Kazadi, Lievens & Mahr, 2016). Carroll (1979) discusses different approaches to managing stakeholder groups, including pro-action, accommodation, defence and reaction. Frooman and Murrell (2005) consider two basic strategies, coercion and compromise. Susniène and Vanagas (2005) propose managing stakeholders through accommodation of interests, alignment of interests and balancing of interests. Some argue that, often the organisation, compared to its wider stakeholders, has a near monopoly on power and resources, enabling managers to exert disproportionate influence (Jensen, 2010). This highlights a flaw in stakeholder theory, as a possible tool for managers to manipulate and get the answers they want, rather than a two

way exchange to the genuine benefit of all parties, which advocates of stakeholder theory extol (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2014). Mitchell et al., (1997) suggests that irrespective of the various arguments, stakeholders will press their claim, and in the absence of appropriate stakeholder management, business objectives will be hindered (Post, Preston & Sachs, 2002; Zsolnai, 2006). This is countered since managing stakeholders can be complex and time consuming (Banerjee, 2009) where stakeholders decline to cooperate, the organisation's efforts to manage can lead to distrust and disengagement amongst stakeholders, (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Wood & Logsdon, 2008). Stakeholder expectation from the engagement process will influence their willingness to cooperate with management efforts. The motivating factors depend on whether the enterprise is profit or not-for-profit driven and how this accords with stakeholder sympathies (Park & Kim, 2016; Windsor, 2001). Amongst the most difficult challenges in managing stakeholders is the ability to meet all stakeholder demands concurrently (Minoja, 2012). Relative to this Mitchell et al., (1997) argues that in order to manage stakeholders, we must appreciate that they will fall into sub-categories. The imperative for managers is to relate these sub categories to their stakeholders if relations are to be productive. However, strategic stakeholder management involves much more than the identification of groups and deciding whether they should be accommodated separately (Fassin, 2008). It is more complex, and erroneous for managers to simplify the relationship and its importance through mere categorisation. For example, there may be real or perceived imbalances of power (referenced in 2.2) between stakeholders, and those lacking power are unlikely to contribute to the relationship (Homes and Moir, 2007; Mandell & Steelman, 2003; Waddock & Bannister, 1991). Managing stakeholder relations is, arguably, more sophisticated than simply identifying and categorising (Fassin, 2008; Homes & Moir, 2007; Mano, 2010; Van Buren & Greenwood, 2011; Wynn-Williams, 2012).

Numerous research stresses the importance of engaging with stakeholders in a meaningful way, and affording them some influence over corporate decisions and strategic planning (Akisik, 2011; Bahn et al., 2013; Foster & Jonker, 2003; Kazadi et al., 2016; Mano, 2010; Welch, 2006). These researchers, amongst others, make reference to 'strategic stakeholder

governance mechanisms' where stakeholders, particularly the social housing sector, are treated as partners or members (Tenant Services Authority Co-regulatory framework for England, 2010). Critics argue that this effectively 'institutionalises' stakeholders (Hansen 2010; Spitzeck, 2009; Spitzeck & Hansen, 2010; Turnbull, 1997). Others propose that it is not about institutionalising, but more about essential business management, suggesting that stakeholders consider it crucial that they are not only consulted, but are able to influence decision making, and where possible, become part of the corporate decision making process (Bahn et al., 2013; Burchell & Cook, 2006, 2008). This is consistent with expectations in the not-for-profit sector, and for housing associations the approach to 'co-regulation', a term used to describe a tripartite relationship between the organisation, the regulatory body and stakeholders (Mano, 2010; The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England, 2010, 2012). There is a body of research, however, suggesting that stakeholders are not influential in respect of corporate decision making, and their views are not sought in respect of corporate governance arrangements (Spitzeck and Hansen, 2010). Co-regulation is arguably noble, achieving it is challenging, not least of all because of possible opposing motivations and expectations within the organisation/stakeholder demographic (Meek, 2014). Relative to this, Cadbury (2000) and Harjoto (2012) discuss stakeholder involvement through corporate governance frameworks, defined as the system by which organisations are directed and controlled. This provides stakeholders with the ability to influence organisational scope, direction and strategy (Johnson & Scholes, 2008; Spitzeck and Hansen, 2010). This ties stakeholders into organisational policies, procedures, performance management, approach to risk, quality management and value for money. It requires managers to cede elements of control through the various reporting and monitoring mechanisms, to accommodate the stakeholder governance arrangements (Cadbury 2000; MacKenzie, 2007; Spitzeck, Hansen & Grayson, 2011).

Contradictory perspectives argue that stakeholder governance mechanisms and other forms of stakeholder management deliver little value and have limited impact, affording stakeholders a mere non-influential platform to express opinion and share ideas with one another (Letza, Sun & Kirkbride,

2004). In many instances the mechanism for engagement is constructed by the organisation as a means of control (Robertson & Choi, 2012), providing little more than a forum for self-promotion on the part of the organisation (Letza et al., 2004; Spitzeck et al., 2011). Equally managing stakeholders from different backgrounds and with different perspectives, wanting different things from the engagement process in exchange for their involvement, can lead to conflicting outcomes (Cooper & Owen, 2007). As an example, social housing collaborations are likely to involve community groups and other public sector organisations who may have differing views and interests in how to achieve mutually desired outcomes (Milbourne, 2009). Finding common ground can be resource intensive and is not always conducive to efficient decision making. Political allegiances and bureaucracy at micro and macro levels, can hamper progress and development of meaningful and /or constructive relationships (Robertson & Choi, 2012). In some instances, the relationship between stakeholders and corporate decision making, is not necessarily evident or clear, resulting in poor or non-existent exchange of information, few defined examples that stakeholder efforts are leading to positive change, and or that their views are being taken into account (Jonker & Nijhoff, 2006; Lozano, 2005; Spitzeck et al., 2011).

Clarkson (1995) suggests that stakeholders need to be managed according to their ability to exert some power and influence over the organisation. While Donaldson and Preston (1995) maintain that effective stakeholder management and positive organisational results go hand-in-hand, it is imperative that decision-makers understand and are aware of stakeholder expectations, and their ability to influence, which will reflect their importance or salience. For social housing providers this is becoming increasingly challenging because of competing stakeholder expectations. For example, those on low incomes, requiring low cost rented accommodation, which barely covers its costs, in the absence of government subsidy (referred to in Chapter 1), balanced against the need to create new financial capacity from income generating investments, such as shared ownership and market rented accommodation, demanded by more affluent stakeholders.

For housing associations stakeholder salience is not always about formal position or official standing, which makes identifying and managing the key stakeholder ‘influencers’ challenging. NFPs often work in diverse communities where there can be political tensions, not easily aligned or cooperative (Milbourne, 2009). Sometimes the most vociferous as opposed to the most representative dominate, (Cook, 2002; Lowndes & Sullivan, 2006). In this regard, Freeman (2010) discusses the need to identify who and what really counts in relation to stakeholder salience and management. This may be less easy for NFPs than commercial organisations because for NFPs the aspiration is not necessarily singular, as is generally the case in the private sector, where profit is the driver (Lumpkin, Moss, Gras, Kato, & Amezcua, 2013). Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) argue that the stakeholders who merit attention, are those who influence the use of resources, and consequently have some power and control over how the organisation is run. This allows them to influence business priorities and, in turn, organisational success, (Clarkson, 1995; Preble, 2005). However, power alone is insufficient to explain stakeholder importance or indeed the attention that should be afforded by managers (Boesso & Kumar, 2009). Mitchell et al., (1997) suggests that it is legitimacy that gives rise to power, which enables stakeholders to gain influence through the urgency of their claim.

Allowing for the existence of the three attributes power, legitimacy and urgency, Mitchell et al., (1997) discusses the varying ability of stakeholders to affect the strategic priorities and performance of an organisation, suggesting that, in this regard, there is a management imperative not just to recognise the claims of stakeholders, but to understand their ability to press these claims. Not all commentators agree, some argue that it is simply the manager’s view of stakeholders that will determine who deserves attention and this is subjective and not necessarily based on a genuine or justifiable claim by the stakeholder (O’Higgins and Morgan, 2006). Rather, managers will make an assessment of the power, legitimacy and urgency and it is, therefore, for the manager to determine salience rather than this being predetermined by a particular claim that the stakeholder believes they have over the organisation (Boesso & Kumar, 2009). In this regard, stakeholder management will take various forms, ranging from, at one end of the scale

managing open hostility, moving to accommodation of interests, through to full and genuine co-operation and collaboration (O'Higgins & Morgan, 2006). Conflicts experienced on the continuum of involvement, between organisations and their stakeholders can be resolved through an appropriate management model and culture that views stakeholders as equal partners, who add economic and social value (Tencati and Zsolnai, 2009). This, it is argued, helps to align stakeholder support with the organisation's strategic ambitions, through positive challenge, joint problem solving and strategic planning (Halal, 2001).

2.4 Summary

This chapter considers and reviews the relevant literature in respect of stakeholder theory and stakeholder management, in order to contextualise the study. The chapter has identified that there are conflicting views in respect of stakeholder theory and the manner in which stakeholders are managed. The chapter makes reference to certain contingent influences; organisational culture (Boesso & Kumar, 2016; Carroll & Buchholtz, 2012; Longo & Mura, 2008), organisational learning (Basu, 2011; Garvare & Johansson, 2010; Johansson, 2008) and knowledge management (Friedman & Miles, 2006; Kaner, et al., 2014; Mitchell et al., 1997), these are considered further in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE. Culture, learning and knowledge management in the context of Social Housing.

3.1 Introduction

Stakeholder Theory encourages organisations to create a culture of learning and knowledge management. The proposition is that while organisational learning and knowledge management are important to the potential value that stakeholders bring, this will be influenced and underpinned by the organisational culture, which will reflect its attitude to stakeholders, how it manages and learns from them, and how this learning adds potential value (Anitha & Begum, 2016; Riege & Lindsay, 2006). This chapter considers the literature in respect of organisational culture, organisational learning and knowledge management and their relationship to stakeholder theory and management.

3.2 Organisational Culture

3.2.1 The Concept of Organisational Culture

Characteristics typical to a particular organisation, its values, strategic and operational practices, accepted standards of behaviour, will inform and be reflective of its culture (Hofstede, 2001). The prevailing culture will be based on written and unwritten codes of practice, and the manner in which the organisation is led and treats its stakeholders (Smit & Cronje, 1992). Positive organisational cultures ensure that its members behave in a manner acceptable to the whole (Robbins, 1996). Furnham and Gunter (1993) articulate that organisational culture is a process that provides for individuals to be initiated and integrated, helping them to become familiar with accepted boundaries, making them feel that they are part of ‘the team’.

Hofstede (2001 p. 375), discusses organisations as “symbolic entities that function according to the models in the minds of its members”. Culture is communicated through symbols, feelings, language, behaviours, and artefacts

(Martins & Terblanche 2003). McAleese and Hargie (2004), argue that an organisation's culture will influence its success or otherwise; it is the link that joins official organisational policy and actual practice. Schein (2010) discusses culture in the context of assumptions, values and artefacts. Assumptions relate to opinion, views and social relationships. Values relate to preferences and the desired means for achieving outcomes. Artefacts are the physical or tangible representation of culture, including, traditions; stories; slogans and rituals. Some theorists propose tools for assessing organisational culture, Cameron and Quinn, (2011) for example suggest a Competing Values Framework, commonly used by researchers to evaluate organisational culture. They suggest that organisational culture will be based on one or more of four cultural types; Clan; Adhocracy; Market and or Hierarchy. Clan relates to 'friendliness' in the organisation, Adhocracy, suggests a culture of entrepreneurship and creativity, Market suggests a culture where the major focus of the business is to transact with other stakeholders to improve productivity and competitiveness and where processes are standardised to maximise efficiency. Hierarchical structures may discourage the transfer of tacit knowledge. Thus there is a multitude of research and theory in the area of organisational culture. Despite the differences, there is an element of consensus that the prevailing organisational culture, will be a determining factor in how the organisation engages with its stakeholders, and the nature of their relationships (Schein, 2003).

O'Keefe (2002) proposes that successful business will have an emphasis on learning and knowledge, drawn from customers and competitors, this will help it to succeed, because the organisation is able to understand and anticipate where the competition is coming from, and what the customer wants. In this sense, stakeholder focus becomes fundamental to the way knowledge is managed and shared and how the organisation learns what it needs to do to improve its services (Maccoby, 2003). However, Hamel and Prahalad (1991) argue that organisations need to ensure that stakeholder focus is not simply internally focused, which will limit its ability to innovate. They argue that a more comprehensive, external, company-wide approach is necessary for continuous creativity and learning, developing the potential for

improved performance and customer satisfaction. O’Keefe (2000) posits that these processes relate to corporate culture, arguing that this [corporate culture] will enhance performance because individual members feel a sense of worth and belonging in respect of the ‘collective whole’. This is increasingly relevant for housing associations as they develop group structures and operate across multiple sites and geographic areas in a more commercial setting.

3.2.2 The Nature of Culture in NFPs/social Housing as Public Service Organisations

The psychological contract¹⁰ for employees in NFPs is as much about affinity with organisational purpose and mission as it is about equity and fair pay (Beer, 2009). While individual needs and wants may not always be the same, there is generally, some commonality around purpose and rationale for the existence of the organisation amongst employees (Ohana, Meyer & Swaton, 2012). Some researchers have found that prevailing organisational culture is an important indicator of employee commitment, emotional attachment, and belief in organisational values, purpose and mission (Lok & Crawford, 1999; Rashid, Sambasavin & Johari, 2003). This in turn impacts on attitude toward wider stakeholders (Flamholtze, 2001). This can be particularly important for NFPs where there are competing demands on limited resources (Bratt, 2012). Social housing providers, for example, are required, by the regulator, to demonstrate value for money to stakeholders, while meeting the consumer standards set out in the co-regulatory framework (Homes and Communities Agency, 2014), in a more consumer savvy and expectant operating environment (Bradley , 2012; Brown & King (2005). Employee behaviour, motivation and attitude impact directly on performance (Mackey & Boxall, 2007; Rashid et al., 2003). A common commitment to the organisational purpose can help to bind employee drive and support for the mission, translated into successful outcomes and customer satisfaction. (Tippett & Kluvers, 2009).

¹⁰ Psychological contract. The perceptions of the two parties, employee and employer, of what their mutual obligations are towards each other (Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, 2014).

NFPs are mission driven organisations as opposed to profit motivated (Quarter & Richmond, 2001). Sense of purpose in NFPs centres on organisational values linked to social good (Salamon & Wojciech, 2004). The origins of social housing providers can be traced back to Octavia Hill¹¹ and the philanthropic movement in the mid-19th Century (Whelan, 2008). There are nonetheless, similarities between NFP and private sector organisations when it comes to stakeholder motivation related to belief in the mission and organisational purpose, albeit the drivers may be different (Sarros, Cooper & Santora, 2011). Research shows that organisational culture will differ in the NFP and private sectors, as a result of the different drivers (Hume et al., 2012). Similar to profit making business, NFPs are more predisposed to achieving their mission when those involved share common values, purpose and ways of working (Chen, Lune & Queen, 2013). Social housing providers and NFPs generally, place considerable emphasis on stakeholder participation and community service which gives rise to strong collective conscience and helps to ensure that values are maintained (Sarros et al., 2011). In this regard organisational culture will be further influenced by management style and leadership (Bolton, Brunnermeier, & Veldkamp, 2013; Sarros et al., 2011).

Leadership will influence the manner in which organisations operate, share knowledge and the organisation's attitude to stakeholders and learning, all of which will reflect on the organisational culture (Schein, 2010). However, leadership style is not uniform; rather it will be influenced by a range of contextual and situational matters, including sectoral issues and influences, which will include whether or not the primary purpose of the business is to financially benefit shareholders and make profit, or has social purpose and philanthropy, as its overriding aspiration (Pless, Maak & Waldman, 2012). The behaviour of leaders can shape the organisation's response to stakeholder suggestions for service improvement and change (Fishman & Kavanaugh, 1989; Voegtlin, Patzer & Scherer, 2012). The functionalist perspective of organisational leadership and culture, proposes that the strategic positioning of senior managers in an organisation provides them with the autonomy to

¹¹ Octavia Hill (1838 – 1912). English social reformer. Moving force behind social housing (<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/article-1356393664070/>)

shape organisational culture and change (Schein, 2010). However, the anthropological perspective argues that managers are not separate from the culture but ‘part of it’ and therefore, it is not in their gift to create culture (Smircich, 1993). Notwithstanding this, managers determine the environment in which others operate, and this will influence stakeholder attitude toward the organisation, its ambitions, its relationships and perceptions (Pinho, Rodrigues & Dibb, 2014; Schneider, Goldstein & Smith, 1995). It has been argued that organisational behaviour is shaped more by culture than direction from managers, indeed, the behaviour of managers is symbolic of the organisational culture, (Bass, 1999; Tucker & Parker 2013). In this regard, strategy implementation and operational policies and procedure are less effectively implemented, where they are inconsistent with the organisation’s culture (Jarnagin & Slocum, 2007).

In the context of NFPs, organisational culture has moral and ethical linkages, stakeholder relations can be more about hearts and minds or strongly held beliefs (Bishop, 2013). The increasing commercialisation of the social housing sector poses challenges for philanthropically motivated landlords and stakeholders (Hodkinson & Robbins, 2013). A more commercially driven social housing sector raises the potential for conflict between traditional values, charitable objects and the need to create new financial capacity and compete for new business (Knutsen, 2012). Culture change in the sector, is challenging for employees working in large social housing providers, particularly those with commercial trading arms (Hickman & Robinson, 2006; McKee, 2011). Generating new financial capacity while staying true to social purpose is the new reality for social housing providers and many other NFPs (Haywood, 2010). These are however, uneasy bedfellows, a balance is important for maintaining stakeholder loyalty and support (Barlow, Jordan, & Hendrix 2003; Elenkov & Manev, 2005; Manzi & Richardson, 2016). The approach to leadership, in the NFP sector is more transformational than transactional, unlike private sector business, where stakeholder buy-in is more closely aligned with profit, than it is in NFPs where social conscience is often the overriding stakeholder driver, (Bishop, 2013).

In the case of social housing providers stakeholders have raised concerns about changing organisational attitudes and values resulting from the commercialisation of the sector (Smyth, 2012; Morris, 2013). Recognition of these potential cultural changes is important for public service providers generally, to allow appropriate, suitably designed and implemented management strategies to be developed, sufficient to facilitate organisational change (Nica, 2013). A corresponding perspective argues that an understanding of public service culture is in itself the basis for organisational change in public service organisations, and this is not necessarily about being sympathetic to existing culture, but addressing the weaknesses within it, in order to change attitudes (Parker & Bradley, 2000). A further perspective argues that whatever one's view of the organisational culture in public service organisations, an improved understanding will help to facilitate a better appreciation of their attitude to learning and knowledge management, with a view to improving outcomes (Burnell, 2013). Equally recognising organisational culture in public service organisations may provide some understanding in respect of the impact of new public service management expectations, such as the impact that competition has had in respect of customer service delivery and attitudes in the social housing sector (Elvira, 2013).

3.2.3 Defining Organisational Culture with reference to social housing.

There are a range of accepted definitions in respect of organisational culture, the most common definitions are variations on 'the way we do things around here' (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Grassinger, 2014; Schwartz, Gait & Lennich, 2011). Critics suggest that these simplistic definitions conflict with more comprehensive and meaningful definitions (Anderson (2013; Prosser, 2012; Wilson, 2001). These include reference to patterns of accepted behaviour developed over time and taught to new members, (Schein, 2010). Barney (1986) suggests that organisational culture is a system of publicly accepted meanings operating for a particular group, at a particular time, further arguing that organisational culture relates to "a complex set of values, beliefs, assumptions and symbols that define the way in which an organisation conducts its business" (p. 657). Hofstede (2012) discusses

collective programming of the mind that distinguishes members of particular organisations from each other.

These references provide a broad outline in respect of some common elements that are to be found in definitions of organisational culture literature. From these it could be argued that organisational culture is a 'shared phenomenon' (Wilson, 2001), important in the context of this study which relates to stakeholder relations and interaction with the case (One Vision Housing), and co-regulation in social housing generally (The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England, 2012). Also relevant is recognition that there is some emphasis that culture results from learned or shared group experience. However, culture may differ across groups within the same organisation. Wilson (2001) makes reference to subcultures within organisations. This may be particularly important for social housing providers, who operate in group structures or across more than one local authority area, with political, economic and social differences, requiring different strategic and operational approaches to stakeholder engagement (McKee, 2011). Intercompany relationships will impact the corporate culture and may influence the approach to stakeholder engagement and salience (Gould-Williams, 2007), for example, the view of front line employees engaged on a daily basis with customers, compared to back office employees responsible for administrative tasks. The cultural attitude to spending between the budget holders and operational staff may be different and give rise to alternative group cultures that will impact performance (Hofstede, 2012). Recognising the existence of subcultures, will have a bearing on organisational wide 'corporate culture' (Carrington & Combe, 2013). For social housing providers, this is something that the annual regulatory assessment will have regard for. This is pertinent, given the expectation that providers will work with stakeholders, sharing knowledge and implementing new learning, which reflects wider stakeholder expectations, and demonstrating that learning from stakeholders is reflected in corporate strategy.

The relationship between organisational culture and learning is considered in more detail in the following section 3.3.

3.3 Organisational Learning

3.3.1 Defining Organisational Learning (with relevance to this study).

Learning in organisations largely occurs at an individual level (Hislop, 2013). Schofield (2004) suggests that for learning to take place there needs to be a consequential change in behaviour resulting from attempts to deliver policy objectives. Essentially people refine policy and practice through experiential learning (Hayne & Schlosser, 2014; Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Mann, 2011). This individual learning then progresses to the following ‘collective stage’ where at a group or organisational level the refinements become accepted as a better way of doing things, and formally adopted by the organisation as new policy and practice (Argote, 2013; Littlejohn, Milligan & Margaryan, 2012). This in turn impacts the organisational culture (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011; Burton, De Sanctis & Obel, 2011). Not all researchers agree that organisational learning can be defined this easily, Garvin (1993 p. 79) for example, argues that “getting to the heart” of organisational learning is more than a two stage process and most organisations do not understand how to make it happen, focussing on “...grand schemes and sweeping metaphors rather than the gritty detail of practice.” Other researchers suggest that the focus has tended to be on why learning matters rather than how to build learning capacity in organisations, which would be much more helpful to managers (Billington & Davis, 2012; Chinowsky, Molenaar, & Realph, 2007; Hartley & Rashman, 2007; Moynihan, 2005). Still other researchers argue despite differences in approach, there is some consensus in literature with regard to the organisational learning process (Burchell & Cook, 2008; Jimenez-Jimenez & Sanz-Valle, 2011; Rashman & Hartley, 2002; Schechter, 2008).

According to Senge (1990 p. 3) learning organisations are those “where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free and where people are continually learning to see the whole, together”. Other definitions refer to learning organisations

being those that facilitate consistent learning of their members and continuously transforms themselves (Burgoyne & Boydell, 1997); those who develop knowledge and adapt as a result of their changing environment to different expectations, and the pressures facing them, all of which enables the sustainability of their businesses (Auluck 2002; Nevis, Dibella & Gould, 1995; O'Keefe, 2002). Broadly, Organisational learning is about a culture of collective learning, that changes behaviour, addressing those things that are not necessarily operating correctly (Zimbrick, 2010).

Organisational learning is not however, universally accepted as beneficial. Senge's work in particular has its critics (Ortenblad, 2007), suggesting that the model does not account for the social practices involved in learning that establish the ideals of the learning organisation, rather it dilutes human autonomy which then acts contrary to learning and creativity (Caldwell, 2012). Several studies question the organisational learning concepts and if indeed organisations genuinely learn and or whether there is a need for continuous organisational learning (Ugurlu & Kizildag, 2014). Advocates however, suggest that continuous organisational learning is a prerequisite for success (Novak, 2010).

3.3.2 Organisational Learning. Its Importance for Social Housing Providers

Social housing providers are mission driven organisations (Czischke, Gruis & Mullins, 2012). Organisational learning through acquisition of knowledge and experience can be essential to their success and the ability to fulfil their mission (Burfitt & Ferrari, 2008; Richardson, 2016). This is challenged because many social housing providers do not always embrace the practices that allow for continuous organisational learning (Manzi & Richardson, 2016; Parry, 2014). Self-preservation and competition in the social housing sector, may be linked to a reluctance to share information, impacting negatively on the organisation's ability to learn (Board Development Agency, 2013; Lennartz, 2014; Mullins & Rhodes, 2007). There is however, evidence that highlights considerable collaboration both formally and informally within the social housing sector (Apps, 2016b; Bacon, Bartlett & Bradley, 2007; Jenkins, Smith, Pereira & Challen, 2014; Meade, 2013; National

Housing Federation, 2013). Social housing providers have formed formal partnerships and share information and best practice through benchmarking relationships and affiliations (Fox, 2010; Housemark, 2013). Benchmarking has its critics, however, arguing that it is primarily based on selective information sharing (Tillema, 2010). Moreover, social housing providers may be reluctant to share information about failed or problematic projects, for fear of regulatory intervention (Brown, 2014; Spurr, 2016a).

Critics argue that those operating in the NFP sector generally, often espouse the concept of organisational learning, but are too operationally occupied to embrace it (Howieson & Hodges, 2014). Organisational learning relates to culture, centred around how things are done, (Skeriavaj, Stemberger, Skrinjar & Dimovski, 2007), and requires an organisation wide commitment (Moynihan & Landuyt, 2009). An alternative perspective argues that organisations waste time and effort training employees on how to do it, often without success, because processes and systems alone are insufficient (Chu, 2010; Common, 2004). Commitment is required from managers to changing how and why learning and sharing knowledge is necessary (Beattie, 2006; Chu, 2010). This requires consistently reinforcing over the long term and is linked to the organisation's values and culture (Common, 2004; Rashman et al., 2009).

It has been argued that organisational learning is not simply beneficial, it is essential for long term survival (Lipshitz, Popper & Friedman, 2002; Senge, 1990). Critics suggest that there is insufficient empirical evidence to substantiate this (Todnem, 2007). Slater and Narver (1995) on the other hand, argue that the urgency with which organisations learn from stakeholders is paramount and a means for staying ahead of the competition. This being the case, organisational learning is a necessity for success (Fraj, Matute & Melero, 2015; Schein, 1993). This is countered since it is difficult to accept that there can ever be one approach that will fit all circumstances, organisations differ in size, culture and attitude to risk (Alvesson, 2013), it is the organisational learning principles, such as teamwork, collaboration and collective meaning that matter (Jauch, Luse, McConkey, Porter, Rettenmayer & Roshto, 2014).

3.3.3 The Difficulty with Organisational Learning in the NFP/ Social Housing sector.

The literature in respect of organisational learning has tended to have its origins in private sector case studies (Hume, Pope & Hume, 2012; Seba & Rowley, 2010). A shifting political and economic environment has placed considerable pressure on NFPs, to deal with rapid change, involving multiple stakeholders spanning the commercial/public/NFP business divide (Lyndsay, Withers, & Hartley, 2009). However, there is evidence to suggest that organisational learning and knowledge management, in the sector, is under-researched, resulting, in an over reliance on theoretical understanding and empirical research from the private sector, which is not always transferrable, given the different aspirations and purpose of NFPs and private sector business (Lyndsay et al., 2009; Nutt, 2006). The fundamental difference between NFPs and the private sector is discussed variously in this research, however, generally the differences relate to purpose and mission. These differences require conceptual acknowledgment and understanding, through research that recognises and accounts for the peculiarities of NFPs, their values, aims and mission (Hume & Hume, 2008).

Central to organisational learning is learning from the past and adapting this learning to benefit future endeavours (Argote, 2013; Knipfer, Krump, Wessell & Cress, 2013). Lipshitz et al., (2002) argue that organisational learning requires an organisational learning culture where organisational learning mechanisms are designed embedded and institutionalised. The nature of organisational learning requires open and transparent acceptance and communication of errors and failure (Carmeli, Tishler & Edmondson, 2012; Masden & Desai 2010). Learning requires the organisation to embrace errors. This is difficult for social housing providers who can face regulatory and financial penalties where failings are identified (Brown, 2014). A further challenge for organisational learning is that it assumes employees are apolitical and takes no account of affiliations or allegiances, which can frustrate learning opportunities, (Coopey, 1995; Greiling & Halachmi, 2014; Thomas, 2014). Critics argue that any increase in employee empowerment

resulting from organisational learning is likely to be modest (Ortenblad, 2002). Whereas manager's power, is likely to be increased as a consequence of new learning and knowledge, through improved access to learning sources (Pedler, 2012; Wang & Ahmed (2003). It has also been argued that the organisational learning concepts lend themselves to reinforcing managerial ideology, which can constrain and limit other employees, and encourage compliance, rather than empowering or stimulating genuine innovation (Vince & Saleem, 2004).

Social housing provider organisational decision making structures tend to be strongly hierarchical (Bradley, 2008). Group structures and commercial trading arms have, in many cases, increased the number of boards and committees with different levels of delegated powers (Brown & Lowe, 2014). This can make organisational learning difficult, particularly where a group is made up of several housing associations and where previously existing boards, remain in place, answering to the parent board (Went, 2014). Hierarchies can lead to circumstances where people defer to perceived expertise (Lozano, 2005; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). This can result in personal bias and or agendas, not necessarily in the best interests of the whole (Rowley, 1997). While in some situations managers might not necessarily take a leadership role within a collaborative, their seniority, even where they are outside of the collaborative arrangement, may allow them to influence decisions (Mattingly, 2004). Notwithstanding this, there are instances where the support of those in leadership/management positions can have a positive influence, bringing credibility to the relationship. This may be central to achieving positive outcomes (Chrislip & Larson, 1994). However, hierarchical relationships can lead to divisions (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). This can be particularly true where there are complex governing structures as is sometimes the case with social housing providers (Bradley, 2008).

A predilection to comply with rules and regulations, further characterises the social housing sector generally, (Laffin, 2013). In some cases, this may limit knowledge sharing, stifling experiential learning and innovation (Healey & Samanta, 2008). The annual social housing regulatory assessment, can act contrary to organisational learning because of the need to comply. There are

well documented examples of social housing providers being criticised and penalised by the regulator for not following, to the letter, particular regulatory instruction, downgrading of several providers for not following the regulators advice for publishing annual reports being an example (Brown, 2014). This has potential implications for the development of knowledge transfer and management which is considered in more detail as follows.

3.4 Knowledge Management in a Social Housing Context

Knowledge has been defined by different researchers with different emphasis, for example Kanter (1999), suggests that knowledge provides the power to act and upon which informed decisions can be made. Davenport and Prusak (1998) make reference to contextualising information in order to provide an understanding of how it can be used. Bourdreau and Coulliard (1999) argue that knowledge relates to things that can be trusted and has the ability to drive people to action. Other definitions centre on the context in which information is provided, resulting in action that makes a difference (Alavi & Leidner, 1999; Bergeron, 2003; Cooper, 2006; Galup, Dattero & Hicks, 2002; Maglitta, 1996; Veil, 1999; Wig, 2012).

Whatever the definition, of critical importance is that organisations have mechanisms for capturing, storing, processing and disseminating knowledge. (Hanvanich, Droge & Calantone, 2003). The challenge with this is that knowledge transfer is not necessarily formal or systematic (Kholbacher, 2008; Tortoriello, Reagans & McElvey, 2012), nor is knowledge always explicit, it may be tacit (Hislop, 2013). This can make systemising and capturing knowledge complex (Jang, 2013).

The NFP sector comprises heterogeneous groups which range in size, complexity, and agenda. Knowledge capital is often widespread and informal (Lettieri, Borga & Savoldelli, 2004). Stakeholder information can be ambiguous and values driven, interpretation requires expertise. While systems may be crucial, they are dependent on user commitment (Boreham, Samurcay & Fischer, 2003; Meewella & Sandhu, 2012). This is often where the problem in organisational knowledge management begins (Zheng, Young

& McLean, 2010). In the commercial sector knowledge exists in the marketing processes that relate to developing and managing products, establishing relationships with customers and managing suppliers, all linked to the aspiration to make profit. For NFPs there is not always an easily reconcilable common denominator that provides the focus needed for the organisation to gather valuable and reliable knowledge, from which it can learn and use for strategy development and operational planning (Bryson, 2011). Aspiration in NFPs compared to commercial business, in respect of knowledge acquisition and management, are not always consistent (Moxham, 2009). For NFPs success is measured in terms of social value outcomes (Lettieri, 2004). For commercial business, success is measured in financial terms and market share (Abu-Jarad, Yosef & Nikbin, 2010; O'Regan, 2002). In both cases, effective knowledge management can improve decision making leading organisational success, irrespective of the measures used to determine this (Bryson, 2011; Kong, 2007). The notion being that much can be learned about the customer and the sustainability of the product or service, including opportunities for improvement, design and reduction in waste, through stakeholders (Aschehoug, Boks & Storen, 2012; Desouza & Awazu, 2005).

In the context of knowledge management, understanding of the customer and their requirements will help improve service delivery, together with the service delivery processes (Auh, Bell, McLeod & Shih, 2007). Additionally, learning and communication from stakeholders involved in the service development process, from design through to completion, can lead to competitive advantage and success, (Gunasekaran, Lai & Cheng, 2008; Strauss, Milford & De Coster, 2009). This can be difficult, particularly for NFPs because their associative nature means they may need to achieve considerable consensus on strategy development and implementation, requiring high levels of engagement, motivation and buy in from those involved (Chalmers & Balan-Vnuk, 2012). The concept being, one of learning, information sharing and implementation, effectively a cycle of continuous improvement (Drucker, 1995). Desouza and Awazu (2005), make reference to the customer knowledge management construct, defined as a continuous cycle of knowledge gathered in respect of the customer.

However, Ahmadjian (2004) suggests that knowledge is created not only internally or via the customer, but also through the network of relationships across the supply chain including feedback from suppliers. This can be related to experience in social housing, where there is a need to establish cooperative relationships with stakeholder communities, who have particular social needs or issues, all who may have influence on resources needed to support and achieve the organisation's purpose or mission (Lettieri et al., 2004).

There is a perspective that public service organisations have traditionally integrated knowledge management practices whether purposely or otherwise, when developing strategic and operational plans (Riege & Lyndsay, 2006). This is important because the consequences of poor knowledge management may be considerable, leading to organisational memory loss, knowledge gaps and inadequate decision making (Luen & Al-Hawamdeh, 2001). In contrast there is a body of research which suggests that knowledge management is relatively new to public service organisations, and is not imbedded in culture or practice (Harris, Cairns & Hutchinson, 2004; Gaffoor & Cloete, 2010; Seba & Rowley, 2010; Van Slyke, 2007). Social housing providers are closely aligned to the public sector through the provision of community based services and relationships with local authorities and other statutory bodies: Police; Fire; Health; and Social Care providers. Central government influence through legislation and regulation furthers the relationship (Laffin, 2009). Research indicates that knowledge management is central to developing effective public service provision, including those delivered by social housing providers suitable for meeting societal expectations and requirements (Doherty, Horne & Vooton, 2014). As such learning through knowledge transfer in the social housing sector, is central to effective policy development and operational planning (Hodkins, Watt, & Mooney, 2013; Preece & Ward, 2012). Stakeholder communication in respect of policy development and operational implementation, through consultation and collaborative partnerships can be a mechanism for developing creative, knowledge intensive learning organisations delivering efficient, effective and economic services on behalf of the public sector (Argyriou, Fleming & Wright, 2012; Riege & Lyndsay, 2006; Ward & Preece, 2012).

There is however, no standard operating procedure when it comes to knowledge management and often organisations have difficulty making good use of their knowledge networks (Strauss, Milford & DeCoster, 2009). Equally measuring the impact of knowledge management and or the value derived from knowledge assets is challenging and organisational dynamics are not always conducive to knowledge sharing (Birkinshaw, 2001). Inter sectoral knowledge communication is often lacking at strategic and operational levels (Pestoff, Brandson & Verschuere, 2012). Internal communication systems and information monitoring systems are sometimes not used to ensure appropriate knowledge sharing between back office and front line service providers. In other instances the systems are not sufficiently endorsed or monitored by managers to ensure essential knowledge is shared amongst stakeholders (Simons, 2013; Wang, Meister & Gray, 2013.).

3.4.1 Public and Private Sector Perceptions of Knowledge Management: Parallels and Differences

There is conflicting opinion concerning the relationship between knowledge management and stakeholder classification (Beckham, 1997; DiBella & Nevis, 1998; McAdam & Reid, 2000). It has been argued that the primary purpose of stakeholder partnerships and involvement is to facilitate the effective transfer of objective and subjective knowledge from stakeholders (Riege and Lindsay, 2006). This will require a suitably effective method of capturing, disseminating and making use of this knowledge, appropriate to the organisational process, practices and culture, in order to achieve value. In the public sector this may be about public policy (Rashman, Withers & Hartley, 2009), in the private sector it will relate to commercial objectives (Neef, 2011), for NFPs generally, it will be about mission (Hume, Pope & Hume, 2012b). For social housing providers, whose business includes profit making and non-profit making activity, it may be about all of these (Mullins et al., (2012).

Blosch (2000) argues that the process in the private sector is essentially one directional, in that knowledge is transferred from the customer to the organisation. However, from a public service/NFP perspective the relationship is more closely aligned to a two way transfer of knowledge (Barnes, Newman, Knops & Sullivan, 2003). This would indicate that NFPs and other public service organisations must have regard for knowledge management processes that transfer knowledge back to stakeholders. This transfer to and from the organisation and stakeholder may help to demonstrate accountability, increase inclusivity and help to achieve more willing stakeholder participation and knowledge sharing (Schlegelmilch & Chini, 2003). This is consistent with Adams and Hess (2001) who discuss inclusive and collaborative partnerships as a prerequisite for positive stakeholder perceptions, resulting in desired outcomes. Notwithstanding this, Barnard and Deakin (2002) caution that, the political and democratic processes involved in public service collaborations and partnerships can be complicated and can thwart knowledge transfer and decision making. Moreover, allegiances in the wider community can sometimes be taken for granted, relationships can be disparate, unstructured and chaotic, making meaningful engagement and knowledge transfer problematic and unreliable (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2012; Sullivan, Down, Entwistle & Sweeting, 2006). This is particularly relevant for social housing providers engaged with, sometimes 'dependent' upon and sometimes 'depended' upon, by a myriad of stakeholders, some formally organised and others acting as individuals or unstructured community representatives (Bovaird, 2007; Gibb & Nygaard, 2006). All may have particular agendas and perspectives (Taut, 2008). These groups may be engaging willingly or reluctantly (Sheate & Partidario, 2010). Knowledge sharing in these instances becomes an imperative, albeit challenging, to ensure communication plans and strategy are well thought out and informed (Hume et al., 2012a). Pertinent social housing examples include consultations in respect of demolition or compulsory purchase where the property is tenanted but not economically viable. The opportunity in these instances for the community to unite against the proposals can be considerable. Getting the consultation wrong, misunderstandings between stakeholders and the landlord can be costly and prevent cooperation (Cameron 2006; Layard, 2010).

Economic and political diversification in recent years has resulted in social housing providers undergoing significant and rapid change (Malpass & Victory, 2010). Amongst the changes is recognition of the potential power and influence, positive or otherwise, that stakeholders have. Tenants, as an example, are increasingly seen at the board table acting as non-executive directors (Bradley, 2011). This may have influenced organisational values and attitudes (McKee, 2011). To survive in an increasingly competitive, economically volatile and unpredictable environment, social housing providers must satisfy numerous stakeholders with varying expectations and requirements (Collier 2005). The demands of sometimes self-interested stakeholders can be conflicting and changeable (McKee, 2011), causing tensions which are not necessarily easily managed. Misinterpretations and misunderstandings can lead to enmity between stakeholder groups and the organisation (Adriaanse, 2011). Understanding these tensions and differences, can provide valuable knowledge for the organisation which may empower people to communicate and act (Ashcroft, 1987). This can help the organisation to better manage the stakeholder engagement process, so that opposing groups are kept away from each other and conflicting opinion is more manageable, more easily segmented and codified for use by the organisation (Marcus & Watters, 2002). This can however, lead to conscious or subconscious misuse of knowledge and/or marginalisation of groups and individuals, depending on prevailing organisational cultural and ethical influences (DeLong & Fahey, 2000). For example, affording more or less value to particular stakeholder groups, or controlling the extent of information shared between groups (Klebe & Brown, 2004). Managing stakeholder influence relies on the transfer of knowledge, however, relationships, (particularly political and community relationships) are beyond the organisations control and can impede stakeholder willingness to cooperate (Shaw, 2008; Jarvis, Berkeley & Broughton, 2012). Housing associations are constantly balancing relationships at both macro and micro political levels, for example, enlisting the cooperation of planners and environmentalists for new housing development, the support of politicians when working on community development initiatives (Elsinga, Haffner, Van Der Heidjen & Oxley, 2009; Mullins, 2006; Rhodes & Mullins, 2009). In

this respect NFPs generally, exemplify the two broad concepts relative to successful business ‘economic sustainability’ and ‘social responsibility’ (Peredo & McLean, 2006). Recognising that they may coexist, albeit with some tension, appropriate knowledge management mechanisms and techniques, can have mutual benefit for stakeholders and corporate profitability (Halal, 2001). Knowledge sharing can increase understanding to the mutual benefit of all stakeholders (Dawes, Cresswell and Pardo, 2009). This assumes that all stakeholders have equal influence, access to the source of knowledge and the routes and means to use them. Often this is not the case and some are denied access to sources of knowledge, others don’t have the means economic, political, and/or social to use what knowledge they have (Perez-Batres, Doh, Miller & Pisani, 2012). Notwithstanding this and the availability of multiple tools and techniques for supporting knowledge management, successful integrated knowledge management in the NFP sector is limited (Birkinshaw, 2001; Hume & Hume, 2008; Murray & Carter, 2005). Knowledge management typically focuses on recycling existing knowledge as opposed to identifying new knowledge. Organisations attempt to reinvent knowledge management networks, failing to recognise that they already exist in the organisation. As a consequence, efforts focus on ‘nice to have’ rather than ‘mission critical knowledge’ (Crump and Raja, 2013; Hume & Hume, 2008; Riege, 2005).

3.4.2 The Knowledge Challenge for Social Housing Providers

Social housing providers share a common objective to improve the life chances of their service users (Boyle & Thomson, 2016; Jenkins, Kneale, Lupton & Tunstall, 2011; National Housing Federation, 2014; Robbins, 2013), which is different to private sector organisations whose primary purpose is to make profit (Harriott & Matthews, 2004; Leblanc, Nitithamyong, & Thomson, 2010). The competing challenge of balancing various stakeholder demands to achieve positive outcomes requires significant organisational knowledge management. As an example, Harriott and Matthews (2004) argue that multiple stakeholder efforts and knowledge sharing are pre-requisites for regeneration of ‘poor’ neighbourhoods, citing the role that housing associations play in tackling crime and anti-social

behaviour. In the absence of social housing, those in poorer socio economic groups may be denied or excluded decent quality housing and forced to live in slums (Leblanc et al., 2010; Campbell, 2016). In this sense, social housing has a considerable impact on society generally (Fujiwara, 2013; Tuffley, 2010). Although there is considerable partnership and collaboration between social housing providers (Rees, Mullins & Bovaird, 2012), there has been criticism relating to transparency and willingness to share particular knowledge. This may be due to a range of factors, including commercial sensitivities, inter-sectoral competition and the potential for regulatory intervention (Fearn, 2012; Stockdale 2012).

Ineffective communication and systems can inhibit knowledge value (Bligh, 2016; Sommerville & McCarney, 2004). Whilst adequate mechanisms for accessing, storing and disseminating knowledge are essential (Perrini & Tencati, 2006), organisational attitude to knowledge management practices, will influence the success of knowledge transfer (Grimsley & Meehan, 2009). Prevailing culture is relative to the organisation's attitude and approach (Chen & Cheng, 2012). The implementation of suitably designed knowledge management frameworks will help, but it is organisational culture and attitude that will determine successful knowledge management on an organisational wide level (Wang & Noe, 2010).

Knowledge may be regarded as the power that leads to innovation (Newman & Clarke, 2009), and it is the power from knowledge that will help the organisation to learn (Garcia-Morales, Jiminez-Barrionvevo & Gutierrez, 2012). For social housing providers, knowledge and learning could be the difference that helps meet the challenge between their social purpose and commercial necessity in a changing operating environment (Billis, 2010).

The conceptual model that follows draws on the literature reviewed in Chapters Two and Three, highlighting the relationships between stakeholders, organisational culture, learning and knowledge. The model shows how these are inexorably linked in a real world situation.

3.5 The Conceptual Model Explained

The idea that all corporate organisations have stakeholders has become “common place in management literature, both academic and professional” (Donaldson and Preston, 1995 p. 65; Mainardes et al., 2011). Freeman (1994, 2010) argues that all organisations have stakeholders that are impacted in some way by the activity of the organisation. These stakeholders have a legitimate claim on the business albeit in sometimes differing capacities (Evans & Freeman, 1988; Freeman et al., 2010; Snow, 2011). Stakeholder theory suggests that organisations can more successfully achieve their mission if they seek to satisfy their stakeholders through engagement and collaboration (Frooman & Murrell, 2005; Hanvanich et al., 2003; Johansson, 2008; Miles & Snow, 1978; Porter, 1985, 1998; Spitzack & Hansen, 2010). To be successful, knowledge derived from stakeholders will form part of the organisational culture (Lundy & Cowling, 1996; Martins & Terblanche, 2003; Schein, 1990). This will translate into a cycle of organisational learning where stakeholders become a key resource for the organisation and a source of knowledge, resulting in organisational goals being more efficiently, effectively and economically achieved (Frooman, 1999; Gurkov et al., 2011). If managed accordingly, collaborative stakeholder relations can result in efficiencies, particularly important in the social housing sector where resources are often limited and or scrutiny from regulators is intense and prescriptive, (Hills, 2007; Hume & Hume, 2008; Malpass & Victory, 2010; Spurr, 2016b). The conceptual model at Figure 1, seeks to highlight the relationships between the organisation, its internal and external stakeholders, organisational culture, learning and knowledge management, relevant to the review of the literature set out in chapters two and three of this work.

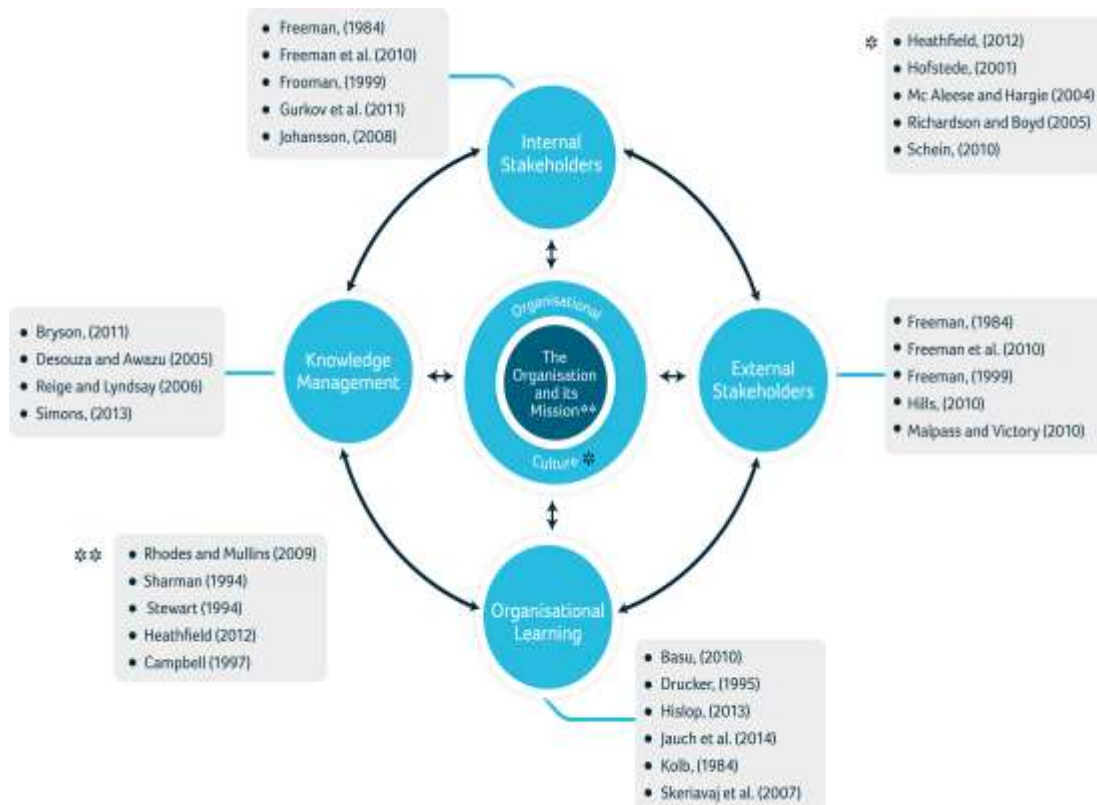
Social housing providers are mission driven organisations (Rhodes & Mullins, 2009), as opposed to profit motivated which is the case in commercial business organisations (Blessing, 2012; Young, 2013; Slawson, 2015). The mission will establish the organisation’s purpose, reinforced and delivered in cooperation with internal (employees/board members) and external (supply chain/customers) stakeholders (Sharman, 1994; Stewart,

1994). The mission will resonate with those who have a stake in the organisation, and help them to feel motivated and part of something much bigger than themselves (Heathfield, 2012). The mission is a precise description of what an organisation does (Campbell, 1997). The mission needs to describe the business the organisation is in, and also define why the organisation exists (Sidhu, 2003). According to Heathfield (2012), if the mission has been assimilated and integrated into the organisational culture, employee actions should demonstrate the mission statement in action, culture being central, as shown in the conceptual model, something that would shape not only the work environment but the work methods and ethos, stakeholder relationships, and work processes (Alvesson, 2013). The success of this concept will inform, and be reinforced in its broadest sense, by the organisation's culture, 'how we do things' (Schein, 1990, 2010).

The model at Figure 1 provides for a cyclical explanation of continuous stakeholder engagement which leads to knowledge and learning, informed by and reinforcing organisational culture (Lundy & Cowling, 1996; Schein, 2010). There are possible linkages with Drucker's (1995) references to a continuous cycle of improvement, through learning and information sharing. Equally, De Souza and Awazu (2005) refer to the 'customer knowledge management construct' as a continuous cycle of learning and knowledge implementation.

The arrows in the model illustrate a two-way transfer of knowledge (Barnes et al., 2003; Bloesch, 2000), communicated through a continuous cycle of engaging, knowledge sharing and learning borne out of the organisation's culture. It should also be understood that this is not a positivist piece of research and therefore, 'cause and effect' is not implied through the arrows in the model.

Figure 1



Reference to the conceptual model and the relationship with existing literature is utilised in developing and shaping questions for the data collection. Further analysis and critique of the model is made in Chapter Six (Findings and Discussion) and Chapter Seven (Conclusions), consistent with Eisenhardt & Graebler (2007), where the story consists of a narrative that is interspersed with quotations from participants, plus other supporting evidence. The story is then intertwined with the theory to demonstrate the connect between empirical evidence and emergent theory.

3.6 Summary

This chapter reviews and considers the relevant literature in relation to organisational culture, organisational learning and knowledge management, in the context of social housing, all of which are underpinned by the review of literature in relation to stakeholder theory and management, highlighted in

chapter two. The relevance of organisational culture and its relationship with organisational learning and knowledge management is made variously throughout the chapter. Essentially the notion is that the organisational culture will impact the approach and commitment to organisational learning, knowledge management and stakeholder relationships, (Hariorimana, 2010).

CHAPTER FOUR. Theoretical Positioning and Methodological Framework

4.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the adopted research philosophy, the development of the research strategy together with the research methodology. The chapter establishes the rationale for a case study approach using qualitative analysis methods. The research takes an idealist ontology using mainly inductive logic. This is consistent with Creswell's (2007) reference to the importance of the researcher setting out an appropriate strategy in order to increase the validity of the research.

4.2 Adopted Research Philosophy

This study has adopted a phenomenological research philosophy consistent with Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, (2001), See appendix 1. The researcher is exploring what the actors believe to be true and their perception of the researched organisation (One Vision Housing, the case). The researcher is not independent in this observation, consistent with the phenomenological paradigm set out by Easterby-Smith et al., (2001).

The researcher is attempting to understand what is occurring through (primarily) induction from data, although there is an element of deduction in the analysis. Hussey and Hussey (1997), suggest that the phenomenological philosophy tends to produce qualitative data, best suited to this particular study which aims to understand perspective relative to the experience of people, and how they interpret and relate to their environment and relationships (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007). This involves people's 'lived experiences' which Cresswell (2007) suggests is consistent with a phenomenological approach. The approach is further justified because qualitative research is, according to Corbetta (2003), interactive, and the research is carried out before the theory is determined. This is philosophically different from the positivist approach, which seeks to confirm

hypothesis, determined before testing through research. Additionally, qualitative research is subjective, open and rich (Maxwell 1998; Miles and Huberman, 1994), and interactive (Bickman & Rog, 2008). This differs considerably from quantitative research which is more objective and based on hard facts rather than opinion and perception (Corbetta, 2003; Myers 1997). Therefore, given the nature of this research and its aims, the phenomenological approach is the most appropriate paradigm.

4.3 Ontological Perspective

The work is based on an idealist ontology, taking an inductive logic, which is appropriate, given the nature of the work and the case study methodology applied. There is, perhaps, a close relationship with the cautious realist ontology, on the basis that, for those involved, there will be the existence of an independent, external reality, albeit there is no surety that the ultimate reality has been uncovered through the research process (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). However, the research approach is more closely aligned to the idealist ontology on the basis that, for the actors involved, whatever is real is only real because they think it is real. Idealism focuses on how human experiences, beliefs and values shape opinion (Macionis, 2012). Thus reality is what those involved in the research (the actors), perceive it to be, for them their reality is what they make or construct and assume to be real in their environment (Blaikie, 2007; Perry, 2001).

4.4 Inductive or Deductive Reasoning

This research seeks to develop theory through observation of empirical reality, which is consistent with the inductive approach, where general influences are induced from particular influences; this is an alternative to deductive methods (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). Copi, Cohen and McMahon (2010) suggests that deduction will start with a premise that is assumed to be true - hypothesis. The next stage is to decide what else needs to be true to confirm the premise is a correct assumption. However, in this study, the researcher is not attempting to prove hypothesis but rather to understand lived experience and perception (Blaikie, 2007), beginning with data which is

then used to determine what general conclusion or theories can logically be drawn, or explained from the data, consistent with induction. While induction allows for observation and experimentation, it does not necessarily, result in actual proof of theory and involves a degree of uncertainty (Copi et al., 2010).

Deductive reasoning lends itself more specifically to quantitative research, whereas inductive reasoning is better suited to qualitative research, although not exclusively (Silverman, 2013). On this basis the research in question has primarily followed an inductive approach. Notwithstanding this, there are elements of deduction utilised in the analysis, consistent with Cavaye (1996) who argues that both deduction and induction may be appropriately used in the same case study. Indeed, Perry (2001, p.307) suggests that there is a balance in respect of both deduction and induction through “theory confirming and disconfirming”.

4.5 Epistemology

A constructivist epistemology is taken because the researcher is attempting to understand the actor's views and perceptions, again based on their experiences in the researched organisation. In other words, what the knower interprets and constructs as their reality, based on their experiences and interactions with the researched environment (Von Glasersfeld, 1995). This is suitable for the case study approach, where knowledge is seen as the outcome of people making sense of their encounters with the environment in which they operate (Blaikie, 2007). Additionally, the researcher has not simply described what has been identified as would be the case with objectivism (Blaikie 2007; Crotty, 2007). Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue that constructivism is opposed to positivism in that constructivists argue that the only authentic knowledge is that which people believe to be true. In this particular study, the researcher is attempting to understand stakeholder truth as they see it, which is subjective and based on their individual and/or collective perceptions and experiences, as is consistent with the constructivist epistemology (Blaikie, 2007).

4.6 Case Study Methodology

The research is presented as a single case study (Siggelkow, 2007) of a housing association, One Vision Housing, based in Sefton, Merseyside. The case study methodology is adopted on the basis that it is contemporary research dealing with a real management situation (Gibbert, Ruigrok & Wicki, 2008). This is based on the desire to understand complex social phenomena (Yin, 2012), investigated in a “real world” context (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007, p. 25) using multiple methods, set within a complex functioning unit (Gillham, 2000; Johansson, 2003; Stake, 1998; Yin, 2014), creating “managerially-relevant knowledge” (Gibbert et al., 2008, p.1).

The case study method facilitates a holistic and meaningful characteristic of real life events, for example, organisational and managerial processes (Ichijo & Kohlbacher, 2008). The researcher has sought to understand ‘how’ and ‘why’ the organisation in question engages with its stakeholders within a real life context (Dubin, 1982; Yin, 2012). Whilst there are alternative research methods including ‘Action Research’ often linked to field experiments (Cavaye, 1996); ‘Grounded Theory’ suitable for longer term observations where theory is generated over time through observations (Hussey & Hussey, 1997; Suddaby 2006). Case studies aim to gain knowledge and understanding of social phenomenon in a particular area (Eisenhardt, 1989; Gilbert, 2005; Yin, 2012), consistent with this work, where research is aimed at capturing the complexity of a single case (Siggelkow, 2007; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007), irrespective of the length of time the research takes, the issue is more about focus and engagement in the study (Starik 1995).

This particular research involves a single organisation. Yin (2012) argues that the use of one case is justified under certain circumstances; challenging or extending theory, uniqueness of the particular case and/or where the case provides unique access for the researcher. In this study the researcher is an employee of the organisation in question (One Vision Housing). The study is being sponsored by the organisation, which has agreed to afford the researcher largely unfettered access, which will enable in-depth investigation (Bickman & Rog, 2008). Further reference to accessibility of data and

sampling is made in chapter five. In addition, Yin (2014) discusses the co-operation, accessibility and relevance in respect of the study and the participating organisation, all of which are central to the feasibility of the research. These three criteria relate positively to this work as a single case, One Vision Housing being the researcher's employer and sponsor. This does, of course, raise questions in relation to conflicts of interest, validity and reliability (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). This is addressed as follows.

4.7 The Researcher's Influence: Validity and Reliability

By virtue of the multiple methods, case studies allow for a triangulated research strategy (Gibbert et al., 2008; Stake, 1998; Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) proposes six primary sources of data collection in respect of case study research, these include, documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation and physical artefacts. Neither of these sources necessarily have advantage over others, it is important however, to utilise as many of the sources as is possible and relevant to the study (Johansson, 2003; Yin, 2014). Gillham (2000) also discusses multiple methods of data gathering, referring to case studies as a main method with a range of sub methods including interviews, observations, document and record analysis. Other researches make reference to a multi layered approach, (Powell, 1997; Saunders et al., 2007) involving secondary data, interviews, questionnaires, artefacts and observation.

In this particular study the researcher has gathered data using all six of Yin's (2014) suggested methods. This has allowed detailed triangulation of the data and the process of gathering it. Specific detail and justification is provided in chapter five.

It should be anticipated, that the researcher's experience and perceptions/possible bias may have some influence (Punch, 2013).

Recognising this, the researcher has sought to mitigate these effects and his influence by:

- i) The questions used in the data collection methods were critiqued and peer reviewed by two experienced academics from the University of Chester, and separately by One Vision Housing's policy and research team. As a consequence, some amendments were made to the structure and order of the questions asked, to improve understanding and remove possible ambiguity.
- ii) The research instruments, where practical, were pilot tested. This was via a group comprising an observer, three tenants (not included in the actual study), a senior manager and two employees at different levels, within One Vision Housing, a senior manager and two employees from the Sovini Group, operating at different levels in the organisation, and an employee from Pine Court Housing Association. The pilot provided an indication of the duration of the interviews/time to complete the questionnaire, and the timescale required to answer the questions. It also provided further feedback in relation to the structure and clarity of the questions from the perspective of the constituent stakeholder groups; service users, employees, wider stakeholders.
- iii) An observer attended all of the interviews and focus groups to ensure the integrity and consistency of the process, and ensure there was no undue influence or bias in respect of the researcher's behaviour.
- iv) Notes of the responses were recorded by a third party (a secretary employed by the Sovini Group). The notes were typed separately by this individual and reviewed by the observer. They were also shared with the participants to confirm accuracy, allow for amendment and further clarification and comment, ensuring the integrity of the data via a signing off procedure with the participants.
- v) Analysed data was later shared with the participants to assess its credibility.

- vi) Triangulation of data in this study has resulted from a range of sources consistent with Bryman (2012); Gillham (2000); Easterby-Smith et al., (2001); Parkhe (1993); Rubin and Rubin (1995); Wolfram and Hassard (2005); Yin (2014). The author was interested in understanding comparative stakeholder perspectives within the organisation, and if there are synergies, or otherwise, between these actors, specifically and generally, and how this correlates or otherwise, with existing literature. This then provides an assessment of how the data compares to existing research.

The approach is supported by Cresswell (2007) who makes reference to eight elements of validity used in respect of qualitative research, suggesting that compliance with at least two of the elements are necessary. Those relevant to this research include; continued engagement and observation in respect of the case, peer review, triangulation, recognition of potential research bias from commencement of the study, external audit, detailed and rich description, and the need for the researcher to obtain the views of the participants in respect of the credibility of the findings, and interpretation of the data. These elements have been adopted in an effort to confirm the validity of this research.

4.8 A Staged Approach

The researcher has taken a staged approach to this research, as a project, consistent with Hussey and Hussey (1997). The selection of One Vision Housing as a case study has been taken in consultation with the organisation's board and executive directors, based on preliminary investigations into alternative possible cases and research approaches. The considerations have regard for the commitment of the organisation in respect of the work, together with consideration of the necessary focus and relevance of the work for the organisation (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2008). The preliminary investigations were carried out before the commencement of the collection of data, taking into consideration expectations and ambitions of the organisation. Subsequently the data collection stage of the process commenced. Data was analysed as it was collected and could therefore, be

used to inform the direction of remaining data collection, an example is supplementary interview questions resulting from responses to the employee and tenant surveys to shed light on particular areas. The reporting stage allowed for elements to be presented to the organisation and the University of Chester, by way of ongoing dialogue up to the point of final submission. This ensured the continued commitment of the case study organisation throughout the project.

4.9 Summary

This chapter has detailed and justified the research strategy used in respect of this research. It has set out the context for the methods and methodology used. This is particularly important because it establishes the basis for the chosen research instruments, their relevance to the study and the justification for their use. Essentially this chapter provides the foundation for the methods, providing a bridge to the data collection and data analysis.

CHAPTER FIVE – Research Design

5.1 Introduction

This chapter details and justifies the development of the particular research instruments, used in this research. It highlights the mechanism adopted for data gathering, the data sample, and the data analysis tools. The chapter concludes with ethical considerations relevant to this research.

5.2 Developing the Research Instruments

In developing the research instruments, regard has been taken of the National Foundation for Educational Research (2013) which highlights a range of issues to be considered when designing research instruments. These include: focus and aims of the research project; how the data will be used; confidentiality; access to the data; how long the interview or survey will take to complete; consideration of age appropriate language; and ensuring the questions to be asked relate to the research question. Additionally the instruments take account of the potential sensitivities of the respondents including; gender, age, race, religion (National Foundation for Educational Research, 2013).

The previous chapter highlights the use of the six sources of data collection proposed by Yin (2014) appropriate to ensure necessary rigour in respect of this case study, as follows:

Documents. Formal reports to One Vision Housing's board and senior managers, minutes of meetings and meeting agendas together with a review of relevant policies and procedures were consulted and analysed. The use of documentary data is endorsed by a range of authors including Powell (1997); Saunders et al., (2007); Yin (2014).

Archival Records. This involved an analysis of the organisation's stakeholder mapping exercise (2014) together with the organisation's tenant satisfaction survey (2014) and employee satisfaction survey (2014)

respectively. The results of the organisation's external assessments including Investors in People (IiP) results and European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) results, Best Companies survey results, and UK Great Places to Work (2015) survey have been analysed.

Interviews (see Appendix 2). Semi Structured interviews using primarily, but not exclusively, open questions are used on an individual and group basis with selected employees, service users, contractors and suppliers. Interviews facilitate a systematic way of talking and listening to people (Kajornboon (2005) and allow for detailed questioning, debate and 'free' discussion, providing potential insight which may be less forthcoming through other methods of data collection (David & Sutton, 2004).

Semi Structured interviews are used for several reasons. Structured interviews can sometimes be too rigid and do not allow for probing or supplementary questions (Corbetta, 2003), important in this study, given its aims and the desire to illicit information rich in detail (Kajornboon, 2005). The researcher was interested in the views and opinions of the respondents, in an attempt to understand their perspective of how the organisation is engaging with its stakeholders from a stakeholder perspective. As a consequence open rather than closed questions are utilised (Anastasi & Urbina, 1996). In this regard the researcher could not anticipate in advance particular responses. Clarification and supplementary questions, in order to gain insight were needed. This was identified, in part, through the piloting exercise referred to in chapter four. Consistent with Corbetta (2003) and Gray (2004), the semi-structured interviews afforded a degree of structure and control for the researcher, that may not be achieved through either a structured or an unstructured interview process (Dearnley, 2005).

Census/Survey Data. The researcher attempted to carry out a census in respect of employees by sending the questionnaire to all employees, however, he recognised that it was unlikely that there would be a 100% return rate (Harding, 2006). Questionnaires were sent out electronically to all 550 employees across the Sovini Group (including 250 from One Vision Housing).

In addition the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with wider service users. These were sourced through various community events held by the organisation. Additionally the researcher interviewed those visiting One Vision Housing's Office during March and April 2014, spending a morning or afternoon catching people as they came into the office/sat in the reception area. One Vision Housing would not sanction a wider survey of service users because of concerns about survey saturation. The organisation was however, comfortable with the researcher speaking to service users who attended events facilitated by the organisation. This provided reasonably convenient access for the researcher (Levy & Lemeshow, 2008). In total 228 questionnaires were completed through this method.

The researcher attempted to avoid the need for the respondents to interpret the questions, which could lead to wide variations in responses, by avoiding vague language and elements of ambiguity in the questions (Rae & Parker, 2012). A Likert scale was used where appropriate to allow for a frame of reference for the respondents (Allen & Seaman 2007; Jamieson, 2004). The researcher has also been careful to avoid leading questions in a further attempt to avoid bias (Groves, Fowler, Couper, Lepkowski & Singer, 2013).

Focus Groups. Data was gathered through a number of focus groups (Appendix 2). Including internal and external stakeholder focus groups. The focus groups provided an opportunity for an organised discussion with selected groups of people aimed at gathering data in respect of their experience and opinion of a particular topic, allowing for different perspectives (Gibbs, 1997). Kitzinger (1994) suggests focus groups are 'organised discussions', Powell et al., (1996) makes reference to 'collective activity', Kitzinger (1995); Watts and Psaila (2013), refer to 'interaction'. Whilst there are some similarities with group interviews, there are significant distinctions (Morgan, 1997). Group interviews place emphasis on questions and responses between the researcher and the group being interviewed (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013). Whereas focus groups rely on interaction between group members based on the topics supplied by the researcher (Liamputtong, 2011; Morgan, 1997).

Focus groups are useful in developing concepts for questionnaires (Powell & Single, 1996). They can have particular value at the preliminary stages of the research in helping to develop and shape interview questions (Hoppe, Wells, Morrison, Gillmore & Wilson, 1995). Based on this, the researcher established the focus groups early on in the data collection process with a view to refining proposed interview questions where appropriate, (all questions are based on the review of literature in chapters two and three). The researcher was mindful of social and cultural characteristics in respect of the participants, and that once the discussions commenced he had less control over proceedings than he would in interviews (Silverman, 2013). Recognising that other than attempting to maintain an element of focus on the topic, he would need to allow the participants to discuss and ask questions of each other largely unfettered (Liamputtong, 2011). This being the case the researcher took account of the ethical considerations to ensure all of those involved fully understood the purpose of the group, why it had been established, confidentiality and issues of respect, integrity and honesty between group members (Watts & Psaila, 2013). The researcher further outlined his role in the group as facilitator and how the data gathered would be used before proceeding (Liamputtong, 2011).

Direct Observations. The researcher attended a number of employee team meetings, some involving external stakeholders, in addition to service user group meetings, see Appendix 2 for specifics. Direct observation allowed the researcher to collect data through visual inspection of people operating in their natural setting (Merriam, 2009), as opposed to engaging directly, as is the case with some other forms of data collection. The researcher sought the permission of the group at the beginning of each observation explaining the purpose and how any information would be used. Assurances were given in respect of anonymity and confidentiality. The researcher then sat to one side and took no part in the meeting (Woodside & Wilson, 2003).

Participant Observation. The researcher gathered data from meetings and events (see Appendix 2), that he was personally involved in. These included meetings with employees, service users, and wider stakeholders. On all of these occasions the researcher sought the permission of those in attendance and provided assurances in respect of confidentiality and anonymity where appropriate. One of the difficulties with this form of data collection relates to the objectivity of the researcher, given his relationship with the participants (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2001). Equally the researcher had concerns about possible changes in individual behaviour because participants were aware that the researcher was observing. In an attempt to overcome this and researcher bias, the researcher enlisted the support of an additional observer to take notes. Both the researcher's own observations and those of the additional observer were shared with the group at the end of each meeting. This allowed for a form of triangulation rigour/validation of the researcher's interpretations in respect of the meeting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Physical Artefacts. These include a review of the organisations art work around its building, posters, notice boards, signage, branding material and awards (Gillham, 2000). When studying matters that relate to culture and attitude, physical artefacts produced by members can be particularly valuable, providing insight and fostering understanding of what the entity being studied values and believes is important (Robertwood Johnson Foundation, 2014; Silverman, 2001). This is relevant given the relationship between stakeholders and organisational culture, referred to in chapters two and three.

5.3 Data Collection: Questions for the Interviews, Focus Groups and Surveys

The detail in respect of the sample size for each of the data collection methods is outlined in Appendix 2. The questions for all sources of data gathering are drawn from the review of literature outlined in chapters two and three. The questions are structured in a logical sequence (Collins & Hussey, 2003). Where appropriate supplementary questions were asked, allowing for

probing by the researcher (Corbetta, 2003; Fisher, 2007; Gray, 2004). In addition, more “closed” “yes” or “no” questions, (questions 11 and 16, Appendix 4) aimed at obtaining and encouraging respondents’ initial response to the questions were included, sometimes referred to as “unaided recall” (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1998, p.604). This was then cross-referenced to the more considered answers provided by the respondents to the open questions. Subsequent to their initial response (to questions 11 and 16), respondents were allowed to share their more considered views and/or elaborate and comment on their initial responses (Fisher, 2007).

Appendix 3 provides a copy of the questionnaire used in the employee census/survey. The same or similar questions (amended where appropriate) were used in the interviews. The questions are colour coded in Appendix 4 to highlight their relationship and relevance to the review of literature. Focus Group questions are attached at Appendix 5.

5.4 Data Sampling

Recognising that numerous researchers have identified a range of sampling methods, (Corbetta, 2003; Hussey & Hussey, 1997; Kumar, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Powell, 1997), the author determined to consider and justify the most appropriate approach for this particular research. Kumar (1999) makes reference to three broad categories of sampling: Random, Probability and Mixed sampling. Sampling is about observing a proportion of the whole to obtain information (Corbetta, 2003). Corbetta (2003) further makes reference to probability and non-probability sampling; essentially the difference is that non probability sampling is not a random selection of participants, whereas probability sampling is (Levy & Lemeshow, 2008). Based on Corbetta’s sampling design, the author of this research has followed non-probability judgement purposive sampling as the most appropriate. This is justified on the basis that judgement/purposive sampling accommodates a sample that is not random but chosen on the basis of the sample’s characteristics (Corbetta, 2003). In this instance all participants have some stake in One Vision Housing, for example, as employees, service users, suppliers, partners or some other form of relationship. Those who could not

demonstrate a stake were excluded. This is consistent with Freeman's (1984) definition of stakeholders. This sampling approach is more suitable for this research than other types of sampling because, for example, a random sample was more likely to 'catch' those who have little knowledge, experience and expertise within One Vision Housing. The author was also anxious to guard against extreme fluctuations in response, and non-relevant information based on guesswork, rather than lived experience, which is consistent with the phenomenological approach (Cresswell, 2007), and consistent with the aims of this research. This was best avoided by using actors who have some or indeed can claim some relationship with the organisation, and therefore, some knowledge/experience to draw from, consistent with various definitions of organisational stakeholders (Freeman, 1984; Johannsson, 2007; Mainardes et al., 2011; Mitchel et al., 1997).

There is also an element of convenience sampling (Levy & Lemeshow, 2008), in respect of both the tenant survey, through the community events, and the focus groups and the group interviews. All of which the researcher had convenient access, for example, the Resident Involvement Team, Managers Forum, the Executive Management Team, The Staff Group, the Tenant Scrutiny Team, The Tenant Inspectors, The Service Review Groups and Tenant Associations. The researcher was mindful that convenient samples may not necessarily be representative (Gile & Hancock, 2010; Levy & Lemeshow, 2008). Attempts to overcome this have been made through the various other data collection methods, consistent with the rigour required in respect of case study research (Yin, 2014). Efforts were made by the researcher to obtain data from wider stakeholders, that may have less contact or contact on a more ad hoc basis, through inclusion in groups and the interview/questionnaire of people visiting the office/community events. Again however, a non-probability sample approach was used on the basis that participants were asked about their relationship with One Vision Housing, those who did not have a stake in the organisation, based on definitions by Freeman (1984, 2010); Mitchell et al., (1997); Mainardes (2011) were excluded.

The approach is further supported by Miles and Huberman (1994), who make reference to qualitative samples tending to be purposive, as opposed to random.

Details of the sample are included in Appendix 2.

5.4.1 **The Sample Size**

The researcher has attempted to obtain data from a wide sample of actors engaged with One Vision Housing. For employees a census has been attempted and is supported by individual and group interviews, together with participant and non-participant observation. One Vision Housing would not permit a detailed survey of its tenants for operational reasons, outlined earlier. However, data from the organisation's own 2014 tenant survey (12% return rate) is utilised, and through a combination of interviews and surveys, additional data has been collected from 267 tenants representing just over 2% of the total number of One Vision Housing's homes. The author acknowledges that in isolation this (element of the sample) may be considered comparatively small, compared to the total number of individuals living in the organisation's homes. However, they are relevant, which is arguably, more important than volume (Siggelkow, 2007) and circa 39 of the tenants are representatives of their wider respective tenants' associations representing 47% of the total (source: OVH, TPAS submission documents). Several authors highlight the importance of engaging the most appropriate sample and sampling method, for particular research (Corbetta, 2003; Leedy & Ormrod 2001; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Acknowledging this, there is a need to ensure the sample has knowledge and experience of the research topic in order to maintain relevance and avoid the inclusion of non-relevant data collection that might distort the findings (Corbetta, 2003).

In respect of wider stakeholders, the author sought to obtain data from those that the organisation has identified through its stakeholder mapping exercise, see Appendices 14A and 14B (stakeholder mapping is also referred to in Section 2.2.2, page 37). The researcher attempted to contact all of these stakeholders asking if they would participate in the focus groups. The researcher was keen to engage with these actors through focus groups, which

has the potential to produce richer detail and insight than potentially would other forms of data collection, because participants would be able to comment and reflect on respective experiences that may differ (Barbour, 2007) and given the timescales available for the research. Of the 46 key stakeholders identified by One Vision Housing, excluding employees and service users, 16 separate organisations, totalling 23 individuals, agreed to take part in the focus groups, plus two Elected Members from Sefton Council who were interviewed, but did not attend the focus groups.

5.5 **Designing and Justifying the Data Analysis**

Recognising that the researcher needs to maintain an open mind to the qualitative data analysis, and should not force data to fit any a priori issues (Srivastava & Thomson 2009), the researcher nonetheless wanted to ensure a progressive and systematic mechanism that afforded an element of structure, and would add rigour. As such, the principles of framework analysis were adopted.

Smith and Frith (2011) argue that framework analysis provides an effective route map for qualitative research, providing a systematic and phased approach. Specifically, the framework in respect of this research was drawn from Ritchie and Spencer (1994), and comprised the following:

- i) **Familiarisation.** This involved the researcher reading and re-reading the collected data. Essentially, this was about the researcher immersing himself in the data in order to gain an awareness of key issues, words and emerging themes (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009).
- ii) **Identifying a thematic framework.** Subsequent to familiarisation, the researcher began to identify emerging themes, issues and concepts (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). This is not a mechanical process, it involves logical thinking in an attempt to understand meaning and make judgements about relevance and connectedness of particular issues (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009).

- iii) **Indexing.** This stage includes segmenting corresponding portions of the data with particular themes. A numbering system (recommended by Ritchie and Spencer (1994), using textual analysis software was used, as a means of linking the themes to particular portions of the information drawn from each of the constituent data collection methods. The themes were developed manually by the researcher through familiarisation with the data, although this incorporated common word and phrase searches using the software, to provide an initial and early indication of the most common and salient words used (DeNardo & Levers, 2002; McLafferty, 2006). Manual identification of the themes is important for accurate charting to ensure interpretation is considered in context, particularly where words or phrases may have multiple meanings (McLafferty, 2006).
- iv) **Charting.** This stage in the ‘framework’ involves arranging the pieces of indexed data into charts based on the thematic headings and subheadings identified at the indexing stage. Effectively the data is lifted from its original textual context, (although the indexed references are retained for referencing back to the original content if/when required).
- v) **Mapping and Interpretation.** This final stage involves analysing the characteristics of the ‘charted’ information, which essentially guided the researcher and facilitated the interpretation of the data gathered (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994; Srivastava & Thomson, 2009).

5.6 **Ethical Considerations**

The researcher has given consideration to damage that could occur and ensured that mechanisms are instituted to remove it (American Marketing Association (AMA), 2009; Beauchamp, Bowie & Arnold, 2008). The researcher has considered and evaluated the potential for harm to arise, and engaged in discussion with the executive management team in One Vision Housing, consistent with the European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research (2003) and the University of Chester Research

Governance Handbook in respect of the ethical considerations to ensure that:

- i) In undertaking the research his behaviour is in accordance with appropriate ethical standards, outlining for all participants, the purpose of the research and how the data collected will be used and reported.
- ii) Discussions were held with One Vision Housing's senior management team to consider potential issues, negative impacts and ensure that One Vision Housing, its employees, service users and wider stakeholders are not exposed to any risk that could be damaging in anyway. Where possible the confidentiality and anonymity of participants has been protected. Where it may be possible to identify participants they have been made aware in advance and their consent sought (Polonsky, 1998).
- iii) The researcher has sought to protect himself, his research supervisors, any other participants and stakeholders, including the researcher's employer, from being placed in situations where individuals or organisations could make claims of inappropriate behaviour, and the consequences of this.
- iv) In gathering and storing data the researcher sought to comply with the Data Protection Act (1998) and in particular the eight core principles set out in the Act, albeit there is limited personal data collected in respect of this work. Assurances were given to the participants that the raw data will not be shared with third parties and will be retained securely and solely by the researcher, to be disposed of securely, once the project has been completed.
- v) Electronic data is stored on the researchers lap top and password protected, backed up via a portable memory device, encrypted for added security. Interview notes were held in a locked cupboard with the only key being retained by the researcher.

The researcher has sought to guard all participants from any reputational damage and/or embarrassment, seeking the necessary approvals, where particular individuals and/or organisations have been identified as a consequence of this research (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2003). In this regard the researcher has provided a briefing for participants, stressing that participation was voluntary and participants could withdraw from the process at any time should they wish to. Attached at Appendix 6 is a copy of the consent form, and at Appendix 7 is a copy of the covering letter sent out with the questionnaire.

This particular research does not require the permission/authorisation of an ethics committee (Polonsky, 1998). Furthermore, it does not involve the disclosure of any commercially sensitive information and/or information that is likely to embarrass or undermine any of the participating organisations or any individual participants. Where appropriate, information sources including names of those being interviewed and/or observed have been omitted or anonymised (Skinner, Farrell & Dubinsky, 1988).

5.7 Summary

This chapter details the justification and design of the research instruments, together with the sampling techniques. It highlights the specific sources of data collection, and justifies these methods, together with the data sampling, sample size, data analysis methods and techniques used by the researcher to analyse the data. The chapter further outlines the ethical considerations relevant to the study.

CHAPTER SIX. Findings and Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion and analysis of the findings, cross referenced with the review of literature in chapters two and three, together with the conceptual model at 3.5. The participants are referred to by letter, number or pseudonym, to protect their identity. In some instances, it may be possible to attribute particular references to individuals. Participants were made aware of this as part of the consent process.

The researcher began to analyse data as it was collected. This helped to inform the ongoing data collection. The researcher was able to start to identify and refine emerging themes as data collection and analysis progressed. This was then used to inform the subsequent data collection processes (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994; Srivastava & Thomson, 2009).

In analysing the data a range of common themes began to emerge. The researcher refined these themes into four broad areas (the process for determining the themes is outlined in chapter 5, section 5.5). The emerging themes are presented as Conditions Precedent, Facilitating, Influencing and Locus of Control

- **Conditions Precedent theme** captures stakeholder perspective in respect of the conditional requirements for collaborative working and stakeholder engagement (Devine-Wright, 2011; Gopnik et al., 2012).
- **Facilitating theme** includes data in respect of stakeholder knowledge and organisational learning. The theme is based on the perception that stakeholders have the potential to impart knowledge and ‘facilitate organisational learning’ (Haywood-Walker, Scholz, & Ott, 2014; Voinov & Bousquet, 2010).
- **Influencing theme** draws together the data regarding stakeholder impact on decision making, performance and strategy (Lee, 2011; Manetti, 2011).

- **Locus of Control theme** refers to data which centres around stakeholder salience and power (Bundy et al., 2013; Crawford, Williams & Berman, 2011, DeBussy & Kelly, 2010).

The Venn diagram at Figure 2 provides a visual interpretation of the themes. This is used at the head of each page to denote the theme being discussed, to aid the reader. The diagram shows the interlinking relationships between the themes and, where relevant, these relationships are highlighted in the discussion and analysis. Stakeholders are at the centre on the basis that they are the focus of the study and inevitably become part of the discussion.

Figure 2



The researcher identified ‘common thread’ which he has referred to in the text as sub-themes running through the data. These relate to (i) **Economic sub-theme** (stakeholder references to financial matters, efficiency and value for money) (ii) **Structural sub-theme** (organisational structure/strategy/policies/procedures/ achievements) and (iii) **Social sub-theme** (relationships/networking). These are highlighted generally, where appropriate to particular findings and do not form the basis of detailed analysis in themselves. Essentially, the researcher is highlighting commonality or linkages in the responses provided by the sample through the different methods of data collection.

6.2 Overview

As outlined in chapter two, the notion that organisations have stakeholders is generally accepted in management literature, both academic and professional (Freeman, 2010; Mainardes et al., 2011). Stakeholder theory suggests organisations should have regard for their stakeholders when making strategic decisions (Mitchell et al., 1997). Stakeholders in the researched organisation would appear to support this general notion.

For example, Individual Interviewee D, Director, advised *“the organisation engages ... they [stakeholders] give us feedback and help us achieve ... we have been able to avoid loan repricing by funders (economic sub-theme) and have tried to keep the regulator informed of what we are doing”* (social sub-theme).

External focus group 1 also made reference to the level of engagement between their respective organisations and One Vision Housing, the consensus being that there are regular engagement meetings between their own organisations and representatives of One Vision Housing at appropriate levels. There was a general feeling that One Vision Housing consults with external stakeholders when developing its strategic plans (structural sub-theme). This is consistent with Johansson (2008) who suggests that learning from stakeholders is essential to organisational strategy development and sustainability. An example provided by the sample is consultation in respect of One Vision Housing’s policy regarding anti-social behaviour, where representatives from the local authority, the police and fire services agreed, *“we have a close working relationship ... we share information and work in partnership ... we feed into policy development”* participant “Rob”, Fire Officer, external focus group 1. This is also supported by the employee survey which returned a response rate of 72% and indicates that 94% of these employees believe that there are high levels of stakeholder engagement in One Vision Housing.

Stakeholder engagement in One Vision Housing generally, is reinforced through external validation with regard to the organisation’s accreditations

including the Investors in People Gold Standard award which relates to excellence in employee engagement. One Vision Housing achieved first place in the Sunday Times, Best Not-for-Profit Organisation to Work For (2012) and (2013) respectively. Essentially, this is an employee survey which returned a response rate of 83% and 89% for One Vision Housing (2012 and 2013 respectively). In 2014, the organisation achieved first place in the UK Great Workplaces employee survey (survey return rate 88%). In 2015, the organisation achieved second place in the UK Great Workplaces employee survey. This would indicate that there is positive employee engagement, these awards having been achieved and awarded through external workplace engagement specialists, Best Companies UK, and the UK Great Workplaces Institute, respectively.

In 2014, the organisation was assessed for the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence award (Europe-wide version of the EFQM) subsequent to its success in the UK (EFQM) Excellence awards 2013, where the organisation achieved first place. In their feedback with regard to stakeholder engagement, the assessors noted *“Customers and OVH people are deeply involved in the development and review of [One Vision Housing’s] products and services”, “OVH has service level agreements with partners in place to build sustainable and performance based relationships ... “empowerment of people is strongly supported in the organisation ... this is reflected in the comprehensive strategic planning process”* (EFQM Excellence Award, 2014). At a more operational level, a representative from the Fire Service advised *“mischief night is an example of collaboration between One Vision Housing and the emergency service, to tackle anti-social behaviour on Halloween”*, external focus group 1. This is consistent with Burchell and Cook (2006, 2008) who highlight that stakeholders consider it crucial that they are able to influence decision making. The author’s conceptual model proposes a framework by which stakeholders engage, sharing knowledge which results in learning, reinforced by the organisation’s culture and impacting on decision making with the potential to continually improve performance.

As an indication of sustainable stakeholder collaboration with regard to customer engagement, One Vision Housing originally achieved the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) accreditation for excellence in customer engagement in 2010. The retention of this award is based on an annual reassessment. One Vision Housing has retained the award as of July 2016. Additionally, One Vision Housing achieved the TPAS Quality Assured Standard for Tenant Scrutiny, being the only organisation in England, at that time (2013) to have achieved both standards. The process requires an onsite assessment of the organisation's commitment to customer engagement and collaborative working. This is then cross-referenced to actual stakeholder experience through individual interviews involving wider stakeholders. In an article from the social housing internet news provider, 24Dash.com dated 18th October 2013, Michelle Reid, the Chief Executive of TPAS commented *"the achievement is a result of [One Vision Housing's] commitment to customer participation and empowerment throughout its services* (structural sub-theme).

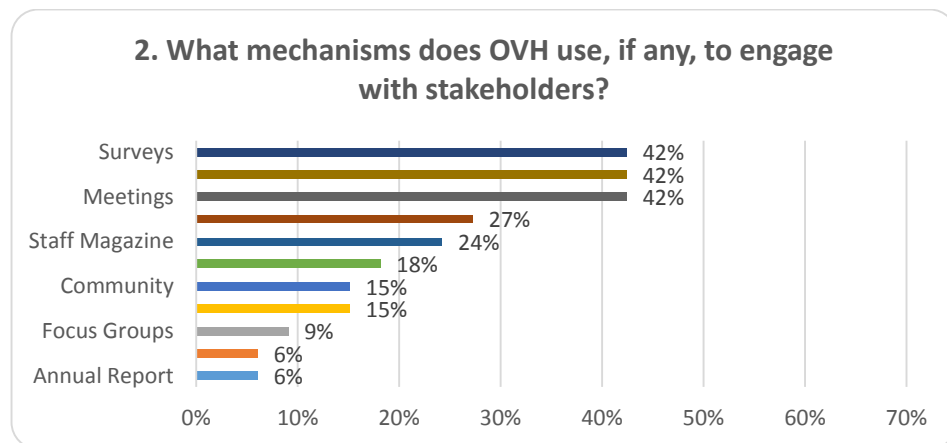
6.2.1 Opportunities for Engagement

There are a number of opportunities for stakeholders to engage with the organisation, see Figure 3. These bring stakeholders into direct and indirect contact with management at a range of levels, and afford stakeholders the potential opportunity to influence business priorities (economic sub-theme) *"Partnership/activity is managed with a number of organisations, notably departments in the council, police ... a range of special interest groups ... local schools"* (One Vision Housing EFQM Excellence Award (2014) feedback report). *"Through different methods of engagement, for instance, we saved them £50k per year on new tenant welcome packs ..."* participant "E", Tenant Scrutiny Team, (economic sub-theme). Carroll and Buchholtz (2012) discuss meaningful engagement with stakeholders at different levels, Johansson (2008) makes reference to meeting stakeholder interest. The researcher also observed a discussion about the 'disaster recovery strategy' (structural sub-theme) whilst directly observing the Strategic Health and Safety Group, *"EMT (Executive management Team) have asked us to review and make recommendations..."*, Health and Safety Manager. This is

consistent with Mitchell et al., (1997) who argue that the actions of a particular organisation will be guided by its stakeholders. The author's conceptual model proposes a direct relationship between organisational learning, knowledge management and stakeholders, central to which is an organisational culture reflective of and committed to these relationships.

While this introductory commentary provides examples of engagement and elements of collaboration, this is explored in more detail through the emerging themes that follow. The emerging themes have regard for and reference to existing literature together with the author's conceptual model, where appropriate.

Figure 3



6.3 Conditions Precedent Theme

6.3.1 **Organisational Culture and Stakeholder Motivation**



The researcher found that respondents believe stakeholder engagement in the organisation is related to organisational culture, and genuine collaboration amongst stakeholders can only be achieved where there is support across the organisation. In other words, it is about 'how we do things around here' (Alvesson, 2013; Schein, 1990). A strong organisational culture will provide the values that ensure everyone in the organisation operates in the same manner (Stanko, Jackson, Bradford & Hohl, 2012; Pinho et al., 2014).

However, whilst the data collected appears to indicate that there are high levels of employee engagement and collaboration in the organisation, a number of respondents suggested that there are social barriers (social sub-theme) which exist that inhibit collaboration between stakeholders and the organisation, and whilst collaboration is generally high, they also indicated that the level differs across the organisation.



An explanation for this could relate to stakeholder salience and the notion that some stakeholders are recognised by management as being more important than others, consistent with Garvare and Johansson (2007). There is a relevance here to the locus of control theme. (Stakeholder salience is discussed in detail later in this chapter). *“Some managers are more predisposed than others to engaging”*, participant 4, Customer Empowerment Officer, Customer Empowerment Team. The sample identified a relationship between employees in the organisation, which they believe in some instances, impacts stakeholder relations and particular individuals’ willingness to engage (social sub-theme).

Respondents argue that the level of collaboration is dependent upon relationships that are developed internally and externally (social sub-theme), highlighted in the conceptual model, *“the responsibility for developing relationships, to a large extent, is dependent upon management culture”*, participant C, mixed service review group, tenant. Longo and Mura (2008) propose that stakeholder management is linked to organisational culture, consistent with the conceptual model. This is considered further in the locus of control theme, it is included here on the basis of its relevance to ‘conditions precedent’ for positive stakeholder relations. Respondent 7, Operations Director, Group Executive Management Team Interviews, suggests *“there are differing levels of collaboration. Engagement with staff and customers is high ... the level of collaboration with external stakeholders is not always as high, it depends on who they are.”* There is a possible linkage here with research referring to stakeholder salience, by Clarkson (1995); Goodstein and Wicks (2007); Mano (2010), who discuss who and what really counts in respect of stakeholder relationships.

Adding to this, individual interviewee B, (Operations Director), suggested that *“both internal and external collaborations often depend on personal relationships (social sub-theme), but also organisational attitudes, this is about culture (structural sub-theme). For example we expect everyone who works for us to be ambassadors for the organisation”*. This resonates with the discussion in the “Joint Chairs’ Team” about the ambassadorial role of board members in developing collaborative relationships (social sub-theme), team member 3 suggesting *“As board members, we represent One Vision Housing in an ambassadorial role this is part of how we do things”*. Once again, this is supported by existing research: Cadbury (2000) Corporate Governance; Donaldson and Preston (1995) positive relationships; Mitchell et al., (1997) identification; Friedman and Miles (2006) manager perceptions.



Team member “Tony”, Policy Officer in the Policy Team proposed that stakeholders will only collaborate where they have a personal interest and/or a particular need. The tenant inspector team generally agreed, suggesting that self-interest is a motivator for engagement. Susniène and Vanagas (2005) propose that satisfying stakeholders is linked to accommodating and validating their interest. The literature indicates that for collaboration to be successful, there needs to be the commitment of credible leaders, together with high levels of inclusivity and inter-dependency (Chrislip & Larson, 1994). This appears to be consistent with the findings in this research, stakeholders recognising the need for ‘relationship’ in respect of collaboration (social sub-theme), *“we need each other, they [One Vision Housing] need to learn from us and we need them to provide a service”*, participant 4, tenant, Service Review Group, group interviews.

Respondents drew a distinction between levels of engagement and collaboration, suggesting that engaging does not necessarily mean collaborating. Collaboration was seen as something more substantial than simple engagement. Respondent G, Head of Service, Individual Interviews argued that *“engagement and collaboration are different ... engagement is about simple communication, collaboration is much more comprehensive and*

about joint working.” The view of the sample appears to be that collaboration is aligned with joint action, working together on a project that results in change and/or joint problem solving. Engagement is more closely related to consultation. Both



engagement and collaboration were seen by stakeholders as different measures on the continuum of ‘involvement’, *“there are different levels of involvement, some [stakeholders] just want to be consulted, others want more detailed involvement and still others want to collaborate to tackle problems or improve the service”*, participant 2, Tenant Scrutiny Team. There is a possible association here with Orr and McHugh (2013); Rylie, Breanach and Grundy (2013) who discuss engagement as a spectrum of activities, from newsletters through to collaborative partnerships. Johannson (2007), makes reference to overt and latent stakeholders depending on their familiarity with the organisation and its management, further making reference to “interested parties” who are stakeholders that do not necessarily hold power or influence but may simply be consulted with, as opposed to being directly involved in collaborative enterprise.

6.3.2 Trust

Trust, as a concept, is not identified in the review of existing literature in chapters two and three, however, it emerged as a theme highlighted by the sample. Initial responses from the sample indicated that trust is the most essential condition precedent for collaboration. However, further discussion indicated that whilst trust is important, there are instances where stakeholders collaborate with those who they do not necessarily trust, if it achieves a desired outcome or a shared goal *“... we work with people we don’t necessarily trust e.g. the dolphins [pseudonym], because we have to ...”* Middle Manager “L”, Individual Interviews. This resonates with the mixed internal focus group (operational staff) participant 4, Housing Assistant, *“trust is important, but you can work with people you don’t trust, to achieve a mutually desirable outcome”*. Participant “Jan”, Benefit Adviser, Income Management Team (direct observations), also made reference to trust in a discussion about joint working *“... but I don’t trust them even though we have to work with them ...”* participant “Tom”, Income Officer, in the same

group, added “... *we need their co-operation*”. In some respects this would support existing literature, particularly in relation to interdependency (Chrislip & Larson, 1994).



However, some commentators make reference to a pre-requisite for collaboration being inclusive entities (Greenwood, 2001). Morgan and Hunt (1994) discuss trust as being fundamental to a partner’s reliability and integrity. Correspondingly, Govier (1994) discusses ‘distrust’ in the context of a lack of confidence seeking to harm, hostility and not having regard for another’s welfare.

Welch (2006, p4) refers to stakeholders as “intuitive scientists” who may keep trust in “abeyance” until an organisation has passed a trustworthiness test created by the stakeholder. This allows stakeholders to work together whilst holding a “rational distrust” and remaining “on their guard”. Chia (2005) discusses trust as an important factor in relationships, stating that it is not, however, the primary element for public relations practice.

Respondents provided examples of working relationships where there are elements of ‘distrust’. In particular, the ‘Sea lions’ (pseudonym) were identified as an organisation that tenants and employees do not necessarily always trust but, “*we are forced to work with*” participant 3, Tenant Inspectors, “*if we could get the service somewhere else we would ... I don’t always trust them*” individual interviewee “K”, Manager. Respondents to the employee survey, 12% (return rate 396 from 550 in total) suggested that trust is a condition precedent for positive employee engagement, whereas 52% of the respondents highlighted that having a shared goal was more important. It may be possible to draw a relationship with existing literature, emphasising the need to balance stakeholder interests (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2012; Freeman et al., 2010; Johannson, 2008; Susniène & Vanagas, 2005); together with “meaningful relationships” (Lozano, 2005), as essentials for building trust.

6.4 Facilitating Theme



87% of respondents to the employee survey suggested that One Vision Housing learns from its stakeholders. This view was generally supported throughout the sample “... *management take account of our views and seek our opinion...*” participant 3, Brand Manager, Marketing and Communication Team, group interview “*I can give examples where management have listened and learned and implemented our recommendations ...*”, participant 1, Tenant Inspectors “*OVH have changed their policy on day to day repairs as a consequence of our advice,*” participant A, Supervisor, Sovini Property Services group level focus group.

It has been argued that the only sustainable competitive advantage in an organisation, is its ability to learn faster than its competitors (Senge, 1990). Knowledge dissemination across the organisation is vital for organisational effectiveness (O’Keefe, 2002). However, 14% of the respondents reported that although the organisation learns from its involved tenants, it does not necessarily learn from its wider supply chain. Participant Sally, Assistant Director, external focus group 1 suggested “*we learn from each other and from tenants, but not necessarily wider stakeholders*”. Additionally, participant yellow, Chair, Tenant Scrutiny Team, suggested “*although the organisation learns from its stakeholders our ability to influence is sometimes constrained by financial considerations*” (economic sub-theme). This could be an issue for the organisation, stakeholder theory advocates the need for comprehensive engagement, involving all those who have a stake in the business, (Ackerman & Eden, 2011). Moreover, a number of the sample shared experiences where stakeholder knowledge had been acted upon and resulted in benefits for the organisation, and other situations where stakeholder knowledge has not been acted upon, and the organisation has suffered, as a consequence.

External focus group 1 participant Jayne, Director, shared “... *when we let the contract to One Vision, we spoke to tenants and suppliers to get their views, these were positive otherwise they [One Vision Housing] may not have got the contract ...*” (economic sub-theme). Participant 3, Empowerment

Officer, Customer Empowerment Team, stated *“You can only get the TPAS standard if you involve stakeholders and can demonstrate they are listened to and you learn from their knowledge and experience ...”*. Participant B, Housing



Officer, individual interviews advised *“we work closely with stakeholders and we learn from them”*. These statements appear to support the author’s conceptual model highlighting the relationship between effective stakeholder engagement, learning and knowledge management.

Participant 10, Executive Director, in the Executive Management Team (group interview) advised *“OVH is a learning organisation and continually strives to improve, it builds stakeholder knowledge into everything it does e.g. scrutiny team events, and SRGs [Service Review Groups] all of which help to shape the service.”* (structural sub-theme) *“OVH would not have achieved Top 100 status if it had not listened and learned from staff”*

participant 8, Operations Director, Executive Management Team group interviews. *“We work in collaboration, and have developed policies to tackle problems e.g. illegal tipping, anti-social behaviour and overgrown areas”*, participant 6, Tenant Inspectors’, Group interview.

Existing literature highlights that learning is a key variable influencing an organisation’s success (Bapuji & Crossan, 2004) and learning from stakeholders can provide benefits and advantages, in areas including: customer perspective; market orientation; new services/product development; and supply chain effectiveness (Hult & Ketchen, 2001; Porter, 1985; Santos, Antunes, Baptista, Mateus & Madruga, 2006). The data collected would appear to support this. In both the employee data and the wider stakeholder data, the majority of respondents agree that One Vision Housing is more efficient (economic sub-theme) as a consequence of stakeholder involvement. 83% of the respondents in the employee survey indicated that stakeholders impart knowledge; the remaining 17% believe their ability to impart knowledge will vary depending upon the stakeholder group. This is linked to the locus of control theme in that it may indicate that some stakeholders will have more salience than others, depending on the stakeholder group. Making further reference to efficiency and competitiveness (economic sub-theme)

participant C, one of the Operations Directors, individual interviews proposed One Vision Housing *“is more efficient because of its stakeholder involvement ...”*. While participant 7, team Leader internal focus group *stated “Our stakeholder relationships increase our efficiency ..., we can resolve queries faster ...”* (social and economic sub-themes), and participant 2, Manager, Customer Empowerment Team, group interviews advised *“£8,000 has been saved by having the ‘mystery shopping’ exercises conducted by tenants rather than paying consultants [name redacted] like we used to”*. This culture of learning, derived from stakeholder knowledge, is consistent with the conceptual model proposed in Chapter three. In successful organisations, stakeholder knowledge is shared in order to maximise its potential and value, creating an opportunity for competitive advantage and organisational success (Johansson, 2007; Tencati & Zsolnai, 2009).



67% of the respondents in the employee survey agreed that they jointly problem solve with the organisation, a further 50% of these respondents suggesting that this is central to their willingness to engage. This is consistent with Hoffman et al., (2010) willingness to engage; Alexander (2009) self-interest and expectation; Garvare and Johansson (2010) listened to; and Chesbrough (2003) problem solving. Participant F, Executive Director, indicated *“this [joint problem solving] is one of the main reasons we engage ... we need to understand problems and barriers that stakeholders face, if we don’t have their views, how can we shape policy and service delivery?”* (structural sub-theme). Executive Director, individual interview E, adding, *“Examples of this [joint problem solving] are Managers’ Forum and steering groups, we empower managers to take decisions”*. Participant Paul, Policy Officer, Policy Team group interviews, insisting *“We are empowered to make decisions, this is also about accountability to all stakeholders, we seek their views so that we make better decisions and develop our strategies and policies accordingly”* (structural sub-theme). This is supported by participant 2, Sales Manager, Sovini Trade Supplies, Group level focus group *“We have regular meetings with our counterparts in One Vision Housing”* and participant 1, Manager, Organisational Development, Departmental Management Team, participant observations, *“A good example is the*

Merseyside Financial Inclusion Group ... the issues needed multiple partners working together and contributing to the solutions ...



“Socially responsible organisations, like One Vision Housing, have the good business sense to recognise their responsibility to stakeholders and the value it can add to the business, stakeholders have knowledge, working with them is clearly the right thing to do, but it also makes financial sense. One Vision do this well” (economic sub-theme) participant 2, Supplier, external focus group. Engaging stakeholders in joint problem solving across the organisation is central if the organisation is to truly develop a collaborative enterprise, (Halal, 2001; Tencati & Zsolnai, 2009). There is a correlation with the author’s conceptual model, based on a continuous cycle of engagement, which may lend itself to joint problem solving, through a two way transfer of knowledge and learning to and from the organisation and its stakeholders.

6.5 Influencing Theme



The data indicates that stakeholders in One Vision Housing largely believe that they make an important difference to the organisation, that they are listened to, that their views are taken into account and that they add value and are able to influence corporate decision making. *“The whole performance culture here is about keeping staff up to date with our results which helps the organisation to improve”*, Operations Director, individual interview, Participant A. *“In 2006, sickness levels were 8% they [employees] are now more willing to come to work, consequently, sickness levels are now 2% and performance is higher, stakeholders clearly influence performance ...”* participant 8, Executive Director, group executive management team interviews. *“SRGs [Service Review Groups] have been set up to influence policy development and performance. The Scrutiny Team examine policies and procedures, we make recommendations to senior management and things have changed as a result”* participant Green, Tenant Scrutiny Team. This relates positively to the author’s conceptual model drawn from the review of literature highlighting the relationship between stakeholders, organisational culture, learning and knowledge.

Cross referencing this with data from the employee survey in respect of stakeholder ability to influence corporate decision making, 88% of responses to the survey suggested that influencing corporate decision making is important to them, with 69% suggesting that they had a high level of influence and a further 24% indicating a score of “3” on the Likert scale 1-5 (one being the lowest, five being the highest). This would suggest that the majority of the workforce believe they have some influence on corporate decision making. From the wider data collected from stakeholders visiting the head office and attending community events, 82% suggest they believe they should be able to influence strategy and policy development with 74% indicating that they do actually influence organisational strategy and policy decisions. This compares favourably with One Vision Housing’s own annual Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR survey) where 77% of respondents suggested they were very satisfied or fairly satisfied (the two highest measures) that their views are taken into account.



In respect of wider stakeholders, there was broad consensus in respect of high levels of engagement, “*One Vision Housing consults and involves us through various means*”, participant Jennifer, Council Officer, external focus group 1. “*We meet at least four times a year*”, participant G, Insurance Broker, external focus group 2. “*I produce monthly statistics on performance which is included in the One Vision Housing performance meetings, it goes to their board*”, participant A, Head of Service, group level focus group, Sovini Property Services.

In January 2014, One Vision Housing completed an external stakeholder survey. 46 external stakeholder organisations were identified as key (business to business) stakeholders and invited to participate in the survey. 27 responses were received. 13 (49%) of the respondents felt they could influence One Vision Housing’s strategic direction ‘to a reasonable extent’. Nine of the respondents (34.6%) indicating that they influence to a less than reasonable extent, with four respondents (15.4%) advising they had no influence. The Director responsible for the team that organises this survey

suggested to the researcher *“perhaps interviews or focus groups would better illicit information from stakeholders, the survey doesn’t allow for a two way conversation which would provide more detailed information ...”*



This, in itself, arguably suggests a desire to learn from and better understand the perspective of stakeholders, indicating the value that the organisation places on stakeholder generated knowledge and learning. This corresponds with the author’s conceptual model, which, with cultural commitment being central, proposes a cycle of stakeholder engagement, highlighting the relationships between stakeholders and organisational knowledge and learning. There are also synergies with existing literature highlighting that stakeholders consider it crucial that they are not only engaged, but are able to influence corporate decision making, and the key to this is their feeling a sense of worth, value and ownership in the organisation (Burchell & Cook, 2008). However, some researchers argue that stakeholder engagement is an organisational construct providing little more than a forum for dialogue, resulting in few if any positive outcomes (Lozano, 2005). This is not necessarily consistent with the findings of this author’s research. While stakeholders in the sample generally agree that stakeholder engagement is an organisational construct, they do not believe that this dilutes their contribution and / or influence. They see the construct as simply a willingness by the organisation to engage. This, they suggest is about organisational culture and willingness to facilitate engagement, encouraging stakeholder collaboration. Arguably, one interpretation is that the construct does not matter and it is more important that, first, there is a mechanism for engagement and, second, a forum and process is provided for meaningful engagement to the mutual benefit of all. *“This is not about constraining, it is about the essentials of providing opportunity to influence”* participant 2, Empowerment Officer, Customer Empowerment Team, group interview. *“We know we are here because One Vision provides the platform. This doesn’t alter our effectiveness,”* participant 9, Tenant Scrutiny Team group interviews. *“The staff and customer surveys are organised by One Vision Housing, but they are anonymous, so we can say what we want”* participant

4, tenant, Internal Focus Group, mixed group business support staff, (there are linkages here with the conditions precedent theme).



One Vision Housing stakeholders' apparent indifference to the idea of organisation construct may be because they feel they are meaningfully engaged as co-collaborators working towards the success of the organisation (Freeman, 1994; Mitchell et al., 1997) and therefore, the notion that the mechanism for engagement is an organisational construct is irrelevant. Arguably, in all cases, there must be some facilitation and willingness, by the organisation in respect of stakeholder involvement. The issue is perhaps, more about the organisation's commitment and the value it places on stakeholders, together with the organisational culture that surrounds its approach (conditions precedent theme). This being the case, it would question arguments that stakeholder governance mechanisms deliver little value, have limited positive impact and simply pacify and afford stakeholders a non-influential platform to develop relationships with each other (Jonker & Nijhoff, 2006).

The respondents were particularly positive in their view that they influence organisational performance through various mechanisms *"in my monthly one to ones, I get to discuss my targets with my manager"* participant R, individual interviews, clerical/administration staff. *"We scrutinise performance at the quarterly performance management meetings"* participant 10, internal focus group, Team Leaders. *"We start in October each year to consult on next year's priorities and targets ... this then feeds into the corporate plan. It also links to individual appraisals, this way, everyone gets to influence performance"*, participant Paul, Policy Officer, (Policy Team group interviews). *"We examine performance to identify ideas for scrutiny and review,"* participant Orange, Tenant Scrutiny Team, group interviews.

The researcher observed a discussion involving the Finance team, relating to neighbourhood spending and the proposed strategy for the following year's investment priorities *"once we have completed the cost-benefit analysis, we*

can discuss with neighbourhood teams, the targets for next year and how this will inform the five year strategic plan”
 participant 15, Manager, Finance Team direct observations.



The Team Leader focus group discussed the importance of capturing stakeholder views in respect of performance and business priorities, “*we benchmark with a range of organisations to improve our performance in all areas, with Housemark [sector benchmarking club], for example”*
 participant 8, Team Leader. “*...These are the benchmark results from our peer group they will help to inform our target setting for next year”*
 participant 14, Head of Service, Finance Team direct observation.

Appendix 8 provides a photograph of a notice to employees, advertising a SWOT analysis ‘The Big SWOT’ conducted by the organisation, during August/September 2014, involving all employees of One Vision Housing. The caption reads “*Have your say about the direction of the business ... share your thoughts on how to make us better”*.”

The data highlights examples of where stakeholders believe they have made a difference and influenced positively, the performance of the organisation, adding value and financial benefit (economic sub-theme). This is consistent with Sundaram and Inkpen (2004); Mainardes et al., (2011), who discuss stakeholder value which can improve quality and efficiency, reduce waste and increase value for money.

Involved tenants and One Vision Housing employees largely believe that they are able to influence strategic decision making and business planning, through the various organisational structures that facilitate engagement (economic and structural sub-themes). For employees, this includes annual appraisals, team meetings, structured, monthly one-to-one meetings with line managers. Through interviews with the Policy Team, the researcher identified that policies and procedures are consulted upon in the development stage (structural sub-theme). Archival records, including ‘all staff’ emails, were provided to the researcher, asking for comments/views in respect of particular policy documents in draft form. Attached at Appendix 9, is an

example. The researcher further examined meeting agendas for ‘Manager’s Forum’ (quarterly meeting of all One Vision Housing managers) which contained reference to “new policy items for discussion” a copy is attached at Appendix



10. Appendix 11 details the Executive Management Team agenda, which includes several new policy items for discussion and approval, having been commented on by relevant stakeholders/interested parties. There is some commonality here with existing literature recognising the value and influence of employees and the importance of employee engagement in determining a positive organisational culture (Johansson (2008; Longo & Mura, 2008), the psychological contract (Beer, 2009), shared values (Cunningham et al., 2011).

In respect of involved tenants’ ability to influence strategic decision making, the researcher sought to ‘test’ the perception, through document examination. Appendix 12 provides an agenda for Tenant Scrutiny meetings, together with a set of minutes, the minutes reflect a discussion in relation to tenant scrutiny of particular services provided by One Vision Housing. Attached at Appendix 13 is a report/presentation carried out by the Tenant Scrutiny Team to senior managers, setting out recommendations for improvements resulting from the examination (scrutiny) by tenants, of the gas service. Comparisons can be made with research in respect of customer orientation (Dickinson-Dalaporte et al., 2010). Further comparisons include work by Young and Salmon (2002); Palazzo and Basu (2007); Mullins (2012), emphasising that a more competitive NFP sector, which includes housing associations, has resulted in customers taking a more strategic role in decision making and governance.

The researcher was able to identify examples of wider stakeholder influence in strategic decision making. The data provides evidence of meetings at strategic and operational levels to demonstrate that One Vision Housing has an extensive stakeholder network and engages at a strategic level both locally and regionally. The researcher examined minutes of the Sefton Strategic Housing Forum, invitations to the Liverpool City Region Housing Strategic Group, meetings between One Vision Housing, and senior managers and

elected members of the Council, both in Sefton and Liverpool. Equally, there is a belief in One Vision Housing that its strategic decision making is informed through strategic stakeholder partnerships *“our approach to new housing development reflects the Council’s local plans and we meet regularly with the Director responsible for housing strategy in the Council, to share our proposals, negotiate development and get their [Council’s] input into our strategy ...”* participant F, Executive Director, individual interviews.



External Focus Group 1, which included a senior manager from the local authority, advised *“... they [One Vision Housing] share their plans with us and ask for our opinion.”* participant Samantha, Manager, external focus group 1. *“We are waiting for feedback from the Council on the policy change discussions before we implement ...”* participant A, Manager, direct observations, Supported Housing Team. The Director responsible for new housing development provided a specific example of how stakeholders have influenced One Vision Housing strategy in respect of its new housing development *“We wanted to develop certain sites ... however, we decided to look at alternative options in co-operation with the Council”*.

This would appear to indicate that One Vision Housing consults with wider stakeholders, outside of The Sovini Group, and there is potential for stakeholders to influence strategy and policy development, given the specific examples.

The STAR survey 2013/14 highlights that 77% of tenants believe that One Vision Housing listens and acts on tenants’ views. In respect of the external partner survey completed by One Vision Housing in January 2014, 81% of respondents (22 from 27 chose the available answer ‘to a large extent’ to the question ‘do you feel listened to, are your views taken into account?’

From the data, stakeholder ability to influence falls into two categories, direct influence and indirect influence. The employee groups suggested that they were directly involved in what they described as a top down, bottom up approach in developing strategy and business planning. They also made

reference to the organisation's performance management framework and service planning process which they believed were linked to team objectives and individual appraisals, providing key stakeholders across the



organisation, with the opportunity to directly inform strategy, and business planning. *“All our employees are involved, from the bottom up, and down again, in establishing strategic priorities ...”* participant G, board member, individual interviews. *“We take a top down, bottom up approach to strategic planning ...”* participant F, Executive Director, individual interviews. *“Yes, I can influence strategy, we discuss this at our away days. “.... we are directly involved in the decision making”* participant W, Neighbourhood Housing Manager. Stakeholders also suggested that they influence indirectly through employee satisfaction surveys, staff suggestions, general team meetings and one-to-one meetings with their managers, where their performance is discussed and they have the opportunity to comment and share their views. *“It was my team that proposed the One Vision Housing rebrand ...”* participant 1, Manager, Marketing and Communications Team. *“Everyone got involved in the rebranding ..., we had workshops with lots of stakeholders”* participant 3, Graphic Designer, Marketing and Communications Team. *“We changed our policy on recycling because it was highlighted in the staff survey as a concern ...”* participant 5, Personal Assistant, Sovini/One Vision Housing Secretariat group interviews.

To test these assertions, the researcher spoke informally to employees, tenants and wider stakeholders, to whom he had access. Internal stakeholders, both employees of One Vision Housing, wider Sovini Group employees and tenants, confirmed their understanding of the stakeholder engagement process. However, external stakeholders were less aware of the corporate plan and how they influence it. The researcher asked employees for their perspective on this finding. Opinion was generally divided. It was not necessarily seen as significant. *“It’s important for staff and involved tenants to understand the structure, but as long as we provide other stakeholders with the ability to influence, what is the benefit of them understanding the corporate planning framework?”*, Housing Officer. The researcher’s



concern is that, given the corporate planning process is an annual cyclical event, it provides the opportunity for stakeholders to comprehensively engage directly in the decision making process and influence strategic direction (Johnson & Scholes, 2001).



In respect of the customer groups, they further confirmed their view that they influence strategy and business planning by their direct involvement. They cited impact assessments, which is a mechanism whereby stakeholders are involved in assessing the impact of particular policies, and initiatives, which is fed back into the organisation and then utilised to shape policy and organisational direction. Stakeholders further suggest that indirectly, they believe they are able to influence business planning through customer satisfaction surveys together with their direct involvement in the organisation's complaints procedure, through the complaints panel. The panel includes tenants, who decide whether a complaint is upheld or otherwise. Tenants suggested that the organisation uses knowledge gathered from the complaints panel, as learning to improve performance and business strategy. Conversely, it is noted that when asked "does management seek your views, act on them and incorporate them and do they feedback outcomes and share strategy and/or proposals with you?" there were some question marks over the extent to which both employee and customer stakeholder group feedback was provided, and a view that there is opportunity for improvement. This was explained, to some extent, with an example, suggesting that not all employees or tenants have access to new technology which is one of the key sources of both information gathering and feedback for the organisation. Equally, the Tenant Scrutiny Team did not believe that all management sought their views, although they suggested that managers generally acted upon their feedback. The group drew a distinction between what they believed is 'having their views taken into account' and 'their feedback listened to'. Feedback, they believed, was something that they receive after the event, whereas views are something that should be taken into consideration prior to the implementation of an event and during the consultation stage.

However, the Tenant Scrutiny Team's view was not consistent with that of the other groups and in particular, the Tenant Inspector focus group, who suggested that their views are taken into account and that outcomes are fed back to them.



This could be explained on the basis of the nature of this stakeholder group's involvement with the organisation. They are engaged in inspecting particular elements of the service, and making recommendations, from a customer perspective, for improvement. This provides a forum whereby they are afforded the opportunity to discuss their views and opinions and receive feedback directly, as a consequence of the process.

It could be argued that these groups generally, are not necessarily typical stakeholders. They have a particular role in the organisation and closer relationships with management than others. However, both the tenant inspectors and tenant scrutiny team have similar status and access to management. Indeed, scrutiny is a more in-depth assessment of the service than tenant inspection, which in many cases is akin to simple 'mystery shopping', reference group interview, Customer Empowerment Team *"our tenant inspectors carry out mystery shopping exercises ..."* participant 5, Team Leader. It is the manner in which the tenant scrutiny stakeholder group reports that differs. Subsequent to 'scrutinising' a particular service area they will submit a report to senior managers in relation to their findings, which are not commented upon immediately. This may not necessarily provide the same platform for these stakeholders to express their individual views and/or receive direct feedback, as is the case with tenant inspectors.

Wider stakeholders will not necessarily have the same access to management and therefore, the perspective of involved tenants may be different to those who are 'not as involved'. A criticism of stakeholder theory argues that access to management is not always equitable and this fetters the ability of some stakeholders to contribute (Adams & Hess, 2001). Mitchell et al., (1997) however, proposes access to management is not necessarily about equity and is dependent on a combination of three characteristics, power, influence and legitimacy. This is borne out through data collected from the sample. Indications are that access can relate to these salient elements *"I*

usually deal with the local office, but sometimes I need access to senior people ...” individual interview with elected member of the Council, participant Y. *“When I have a constituent raising an issue about a policy ... I ask for a meeting with the director or CEO” [Chief Executive Officer],* elected member, individual interview, and participant Z.



The experience of the employees was consistent both across the employee focus group and the individual employee interviews. All of whom indicated that they believed their views are taken into account and that there are mechanisms across the organisation for feeding back. Comparisons can be drawn in respect of stakeholder management theory and practice. Blair et al., (2002) discusses how stakeholders might attempt to influence the organisation’s decision making and seek to ensure that it is consistent with their own needs and priorities. Mitchell et al., (1997), Waxenberger and Spence (2003), further reference the dynamics amongst stakeholders, discussing the ability of stakeholders to influence organisational outcomes.

6.6 Locus of Control Theme

The data indicates that stakeholders generally feel valued by the organisation and believe that they are taken seriously.



However, a range of stakeholders did not believe that their needs and wants are always aligned with strategy. There is perhaps a paradox here, given that, in the main, stakeholders feel they have a positive impact on the organisation and are able to provide examples of how they add value. There are linkages with the ‘conditions precedent’ theme and the ‘influencing’ theme. However, it is included in the locus of control theme recognising the potential relationship between stakeholder salience and power and the ability for stakeholders to press management into meeting their needs and wants (Clarkson, 1995). Johansson (2008) argues that ability to exert influence is an important factor in how stakeholders should be managed.

There was acceptance amongst the general stakeholder sample, that some stakeholders have more power and influence than others (Mitchell et al.,

1997). *“The bank can stop our credit lines, call in our loans if we breach covenants ... they are powerful when it comes to our business”* participant F, Head of Service, individual interviews.



References to the regulator further highlight it as being a key stakeholder having the power and influence to act. *“If our regulatory judgement is poor, the HCA will intervene,”* participant Tony, Policy Officer, Policy Team group interview. Equally, the local authority is seen by One Vision Housing as an important stakeholder *“the local authority holds the key to opportunity ...”* participant 2, Team Leaders’ internal focus group.

There was general consensus, across the sample that tenants in particular are important stakeholders *“they [tenants] are amongst our most important stakeholders ...”* participant J, Head of Service, individual interviews. Employees were also recognised as central to the organisation’s ambition *“any organisation is only as good as the people it employs”* participant H, board member individual interviews.

6.6.1 Social Housing Tenants as Consumers

There was a view amongst stakeholders that, as consumers, social housing tenants are distinct from consumers in other circumstances. *“Our tenants, as customers, are different from customers of a shop, for example. What we do impacts their life chances”*, individual interview participant B, Housing Officer. *“Tenants have a right to performance information because we pay for the services and the quality impacts on us directly, the relationship between landlord and tenant is the most important relationship in your life, ...”* participant 4, Tenant Scrutiny Team group interviews.

There was resonance with this view from the wider ‘less involved tenants’, *“It is our rent money that they [One Vision Housing] use so we want to know that it is being spent wisely, it’s our moral right”* participant 31, tenant, individual interview at a community event (economic sub-theme). *“Our tenants deserve to know how we are performing ... our customers have a vested interest because what we provide has a profound impact on their*

lives” (social sub-theme) participant 1, Manager, Customer Empowerment Team, group interview. *“Social housing tenants should have the same access to performance information that shareholders have in private companies”* participant, 3



Empowerment Officer, Customer Empowerment Team group interview.

The regulatory consumer standards place emphasis, not just on the quality of service to tenants, but also the ability for tenants to engage meaningfully in the decision making process (The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England, 2012). One Vision Housing has four tenants on its board, acting as non-executive directors. This, combined with the resident involvement structure, the organisation argues, provides tenants, with the ability to influence decisions. It also affords them an element of power. One of the tenant board members on the One Vision Housing board is also Chair of the Sovini Group Business Assurance Committee, responsible for group risk. Recruitment to (tenant) board positions is open to all tenants and vacancies advertised across the tenant base (Rules of One Vision Housing, 2013).

The Tenant Scrutiny Team and Tenant Inspectors, believe that they have power to influence, that their claims over the organisation are legitimate and their unique status as tenants, as recognised by the regulator, gives them the urgency to act. Employees in One Vision Housing appear to agree that tenants are powerful stakeholders. *“Tenants can report us to the regulator”* participant Simon, Manager, policy team group interviews.

“Some organisations have been downgraded ... because they couldn’t show value for money to their tenants”, (economic sub-theme) participant 7, Team Leaders and internal focus group. This being the case, it is notable that the tenant groups in particular do not feel their needs and wants are being met. Notwithstanding the apparent recognition of tenants as powerful stakeholders, there is a view amongst tenants and employee stakeholders that involved tenants are not valued by all managers *“... valued by some but not all”*, participant 6, Tenant Scrutiny Team, group interview. *“Some managers engage with us reluctantly, others are more enthusiastic ...”*, participant 2, Tenant Inspectors, group interview. *“It’s definitely*

management who decide how much influence stakeholders have, for example if directors didn't want to see us, they would just delegate to more junior staff", participant 4, Tenant Scrutiny Team.



These comments appear to conflict with employee views of tenants, from the data collected which was extremely positive *"we are here to provide a good service to our tenants, they are our customers and we care about them"*.

Equally, tenant satisfaction with One Vision Housing as a landlord is high, at 94% (2015) and 95% (2016) which is above top quartile for the sector (91%) (One Vision Housing, Survey of Tenants and Residents, 2015; 2016). It appears, therefore, that the issue of value relates to the 'involved tenants' experience or perception rather than the wider tenant base. This possibly highlights a difference between how management view tenants as customers, and how they value them as co-collaborators in the stakeholder relationship. The data indicating that tenants as customers, feel highly valued; however, as involved tenants and co-collaborators, they feel less valued by some managers. Moreover, tenants suggest that the determinants of their influence are managers. This is consistent with existing literature (Friedman & Miles, 2006) the perception of managers towards stakeholders; (Johansson, 2008) Managers determine which stakeholders receive attention; (Garvare & Johansson, 2010) overt and latent stakeholders.

The data also highlights the role that managers play in legitimising stakeholder claims *"certain relationships will bring greater benefit and the organisation puts more time into those relationships"*, participant C, operations director interviews. Clarkson (1995) makes reference to managing stakeholders according to their ability to exert some power or influence. Freeman (1994) refers to identifying who and what really counts in respect of stakeholder salience. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) discuss stakeholders who merit attention are those that influence the use of resources and therefore, can exercise control over the organisation. This is consistent with findings of this research where data identifies employees, tenants, the local authority, the regulator and funders, amongst the most salient stakeholders. All of whom influence, the use of resources.

6.7 Summary

This chapter discusses the findings resulting from the collected data, referencing existing literature and drawing potential linkages where appropriate with the author's conceptual model. The chapter has identified a number of areas where the research does not necessarily concur with existing literature, raising some questions in this regard. It also identifies new knowledge which may be of value to both theory and practice, in particular One Vision Housing and, potentially, the social housing sector generally. Elements of the findings have potential wider value for the body of research and practice in relation to stakeholder theory, stakeholder management and the notion of collaborative enterprise.

CHAPTER SEVEN. Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

This chapter will reflect on the conclusions and contribution to knowledge resulting from the work and provide a critique of the adopted approach in addition to consideration of the implications and limitations of the work for theory and practice. The chapter concludes by setting out the recommendations resulting from the research.

7.2 Limitations and Critique of the Adopted Approach

Researchers are divided on the value of case studies. Some have argued that they can be somewhat narrow and limiting (Mazumdar & Geis, 2001; Siggelkow, 2007; Tellis, 1997). While this work provides data from one particular organisation, it is not necessarily reflective of the wider social housing sector. The generalisability (Patton, 1990; 2002), is therefore, limited. The work involves a single case and, whilst this has been justified, further study would build on this through the use of multiple cases (Yin, 2004), across the wider social housing sector. Research involving not just social housing providers, but including the wider public and private sector housing providers, would allow for potentially valuable comparisons. This would allow the work to be incrementally built upon (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Whilst the author has justified the methodology, further study would arguably lend itself to 'grounded theory'. Grounded theory would facilitate further empirical knowledge and testing of this knowledge over a longer period involving either single or multiple cases, to assess underlying process and experience (Glaser, 1978). Grounded theory being particularly useful for exploring social relationships and behaviour (Crooks, 2001) and assessing meaning based on social interaction interpreted by individuals and groups through their encounters (Blumer, 1992). This approach could also meaningfully build on the methods adopted in this research, grounded theory lending itself to detailed interviews, open ended questions, observation and focus groups (Geiger & Turley, 2003).

7.3 **Conclusions and Theoretical Contribution**

In reviewing the relevant literature, the researcher identified three elements relative to collaborative stakeholder engagement: Organisational Culture; Organisational Learning; and Knowledge Management, from which a conceptual model has been proposed. Four themes emerged as a consequence of the data analysis: Conditions Precedent; Facilitating; Influencing; and Locus of Control. The research confirms that collaborative enterprise requires willingness on the part of the organisation, to manage knowledge gained from its stakeholders through a culture of organisational learning (Hicks, 2006; O’Keefe, 2002; Seba & Rowley, 2010; Schein, 1993), consistent with the author’s conceptual model.

The aim of the research is to explore and understand the extent to which the organisation derives value from its stakeholders (Chapter One, p. 21).

In addressing the research objectives (Chapter One, pp. 21-22), the research concludes:

- i) Stakeholder knowledge in the organisation is translated into organisational learning to the benefit of One Vision Housing. The findings in respect of knowledge management and organisational learning largely support existing literature, 87% of respondents in the researcher’s employee survey, suggesting that One Vision Housing learns from stakeholders. Feelings of salience, power and legitimacy are consistent with a range of authors including (Basu, 2011; Burfitt & Ferrari, 2008; Hicks et al., 2006; O’Keefe, 2002). Knowledge management supports the process of learning, there being a range of mechanisms, by which the organisation derives knowledge and learns from its stakeholders, Figure 3 page 92. The organisation then translates this knowledge into organisational learning to improve services and productivity “*OVH would not have achieved Top 100 status if it had not listened and learned from staff*” (Operations Director). This relates positively to the author’s conceptual model,

which proposes a cycle of engagement where knowledge from stakeholders is translated into organisational learning. In this sense, the organisation might be described as 'knowledge based', its success to date and future survival, in the view of stakeholders, shaped by and informed by the engagement process and stakeholder collaborations (Martins & Terblanche, 2003). The conceptual model supports this, indicating a two way transfer of knowledge and learning involving both internal and external stakeholders (Barnes et al., 2003; Blosch, 2000; Szulanski, Ringov & Jensen, 2016)

- ii) Stakeholder perceptions of the organisation have a bearing on their willingness to positively engage. The conditions precedent theme identifies the expectations of stakeholders if they are to engage and collaborate. The work identifies that, whilst there are high levels of stakeholder satisfaction, stakeholders believe there are 'social barriers' which inhibit engagement in the organisation, depending on manager perceptions and personal stakeholder/manager relations. This resonates with research in respect of stakeholder salience. Mitchell et al., (1997), for example, highlight that not all stakeholders will have the power, influence or legitimacy of claim and therefore, access to management. Adams and Hess (2001) suggest that stakeholder theory is inequitable because not all stakeholders will have the same access to management. O'Keefe (2002); Wynn-Williams (2012) posit that it is managers who determine stakeholder salience.
- iii) The findings highlight that managers play a significant role in determining stakeholder salience. This would appear to support existing research indicating that it is managers who determine which stakeholders receive attention, and who they have access to in the organisation (Freeman, 2010; Mainardes et al., 2011; O'Keefe (2002), Wynn-Williams, 2012), one of the Operations Directors, suggesting that more time is devoted to relationships that *'bring greater benefit'*.

- iv) The research shows a relationship between stakeholder, collaboration and organisational achievement. Stakeholders were able to provide a range of examples where they have positively contributed to the achievement of accreditations, awards and successful tendering for contracts. Respondents also suggested that the organisation is more efficient and offers greater value for money as a consequence of its stakeholder engagement. Again, this is supported by existing research (Basu, 2011; Garvare & Johansson, 2010; Mainardes et al., 2011).
- v) The relevance of organisational culture in respect of collaborative stakeholder relations is seen as one of the most important factors influencing the organisation/stakeholder relationship. Existing research argues that the prevailing organisational culture is paramount to successful stakeholder engagement (Pinho, 2014; Schein, 1990; Tippet & Kluvers, 2009), the respondents in this work confirming their view that collaboration is an organisational wide imperative, impacted by employee and management attitude (Spitzeck & Hansen, 2010). This is consistent with the author's conceptual model which proposes organisational culture as central to effective stakeholder engagement.

The research also challenges areas of existing literature and identifies new knowledge which has relevance for theory and practice. In summary, this relates to:

- i) A view that social housing tenants are not simply service users exchanging money for services or goods as in other consumer relationships. Stakeholders in One Vision Housing, associating the tenant consumer relationship with 'quality of life' "*the relationship between landlord and tenants is the most important relationship of your life*"(tenant). This is an important finding, placing a higher level of responsibility on the organisation, morally and ethically, not only to engage, but take the further step of genuine collaboration. Potentially, this has implications for regulation, in particular: the relevance of the 'consumer standards' within the framework of

regulation; where social housing sits on the political spectrum and agenda; the resources it receives; its relationship with social class and wider quality of life indicators such as educational attainment, employment, crime, health and wellbeing. This also gives rise to the potential need for research into the perceptions of tenants in the Private Sector Rented market which is significant in the UK (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2014). It may also have significance for central government policy in respect of new housing provision, housing tenure and welfare reform.

- ii) Stakeholder engagement is an organisational construct largely out of necessity, however, this has no apparent implications in respect of stakeholder contribution. This is contrary to research that argues as an organisational construct, stakeholder engagement is a mechanism for pacifying stakeholders and adds little value, (Jonker & Nijhoff, 2006; Letza et al., 2004; Lozano, 2005). In this particular research stakeholders agree that engagement is facilitated by the organisation, however, they propose that considerable tangible value has resulted. The key component to meaningful collaboration in this respect is culture and commitment of management.
- iii) Stakeholder theory does not necessarily deny the fiduciary duty owed to shareholders (Saleem et al., 2016). Stakeholders in this research provided examples where they have added value, contributing to organisational achievements including economic outcomes.
- iv) Stakeholder needs and wants do not necessarily have to be met for collaboration to be successful. Both stakeholder theory and existing research into stakeholder management, argue that a prerequisite for successful stakeholder engagement is that stakeholder needs and wants must be met (Basu, 2011; Garvare & Johansson, 2008). This research highlights that, notwithstanding One Vision Housing being an organisation that can demonstrate some measure of success, (high levels of employee and customer satisfaction, a range of quality accreditations requiring stakeholder support), stakeholders do not

believe that their needs and wants are always met. Further research should seek to explore and understand this further, building on this author's work.

- v) The notion of trust emerged through the collected data as important. Initial responses to the question about prerequisites for collaboration suggest that 'trust' is an imperative. Only on further examination and discussion did it become evident to the respondents that there are numerous occasions when they collaborate with those who they do not necessarily trust. This is justified on the basis of achieving jointly desired outcomes. Welch (2006, p. 4), tackles this issue referring to "*rational distrust*" which allows parties to cooperate in an environment where there may not be "*full trust*", noting that trust is not the primary element for public relations practice. The point to be made in One Vision Housing's circumstance, is that stakeholders' initial perception is that they would only work in trusting environments, this new knowledge provides them with the learning that this is not actually the case in practice. It may also have value for theory. While there is considerable research in the area of trust generally, there appears to be a paucity of reference to issues of trust in stakeholder theory literature. The review of literature in chapters two and three does not reference a relationship between stakeholder theory and trust. Further research should consider this.

7.4 Contribution to Practice

The findings in this research confirm the value of stakeholders in One Vision Housing, and that collaboration can improve the opportunity for success (Johansson, 2008; Spitzec & Hansen, 2010). The work provides, for the social housing regulator, albeit based on a single case study (Siggelkow, 2007; Yin, 2012), support for the framework of regulation and makes the case for stakeholder engagement, supporting the regulator's notion of co-regulation, referenced variously throughout the research (The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England, 2012). The research has potential value for housing association governing bodies and senior managers in

assessing their approaches and attitudes to stakeholder engagement, learning and collaboration.

The work provides knowledge for One Vision Housing, both in terms of stakeholder expectations and experience in the organisation. The organisation invests significant resources in stakeholder relations through a range of initiatives, for example: the cost of employing a Customer Empowerment Team; the resources involved in managing and supporting the tenant led Scrutiny Team and Tenant Inspectors; there are three customer representatives on the board of directors; the organisation carries out numerous customer information and satisfaction surveys. There are a range of other mechanisms for gathering, sharing and disseminating knowledge in the organisation, all of which comes at a cost in time and resources. The research supports the organisation's approach to stakeholder engagement and identifies the perceptions of those engaged. Further study might consider this from the perspective of value for money, which has not been the purpose of this study.

The research provides essential knowledge for managers in respect of their personal relationships and involvement in the collaborative process, and the potential in respect of performance outcomes and efficiency (Burnell, 2013; Homes & Communities Agency, 2014; Tippet & Kluvers, 2009)

From a strategic organisational planning perspective, the research provides potential value and knowledge for the social housing sector generally. All social housing providers will be engaging in some form with their respective stakeholders, it is after all, a regulatory requirement (The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England, 2012). This research highlights the benefits of positive engagement, detailing what stakeholders, in One Vision Housing, expect if they are to positively engage.

There is potential value in the research for wider public and private sector practice. The study details how collaboration with stakeholders can contribute to competitive advantage and outcomes (Barney, 2006; Desouza & Awazu, 2005; Elvira, 2013; Garvare and Johansson, 2010). This is

particularly important in the increasingly competitive social housing operating environment (Cave, 2007; Hills, 2007). The previous Labour Government advocated ‘Social Inclusion’¹² (Blair, (2000). The current Government advocates ‘Big Society’¹³ (Kisby, 2010; Smith 2010). In their broadest sense both propositions amount to ‘stakeholder collaboration’ (Jenkins et al., 2014; Spitzec and Hansen, 2010). This research outlines what is necessary for successful stakeholder collaboration, providing knowledge in respect of stakeholder expectations if value is to be added.

7.5 Recommendations

It is proposed that this work is shared with the Directors and senior managers in One Vision Housing. Secondly that the policy and research team utilise the study to identify opportunities for building on existing relationships with stakeholders, using the knowledge presented to consider and inform what the organisation does well and where there are opportunities for improvement. It is further recommended that One Vision Housing extends its network of engaged stakeholders to include more formal involvement in the annual corporate planning process which will provide a wider stakeholder perspective.

The work raises questions in relation to variances in engagement depending on individual managers, which requires further examination and assessment by the organisation, to understand why this is the case, and what impact this is having on the organisation. The author recommends further research in this regard, and in particular the importance of the tenant/landlord consumer relationship. Stakeholders do not believe their needs and wants are being met and, whilst this is not, apparently, adversely impacting their contribution, investigation into why this is the case, may have benefits for the organisation together with future stakeholder contribution, relations and value.

¹² Social Inclusion. A partnership between Government and the people in an attempt to encourage stronger communities and public participation and engagement.

¹³ Big Society. A proposal to empower communities, develop community involvement and citizens engagement.

7.6 Opportunities for Further Research

Discussions have taken place with the Sovini Group to broaden and build on this research across the wider organisation which includes NFP and commercial subsidiaries. Additionally the researcher has agreed further study involving five housing providers ranging in size and complexity, operating across the Northwest of England. This will allow comparisons to broaden the knowledge and confirm or otherwise, the findings in respect of this work.

The author has discussed the research and shared the findings with his peers and professional networks. He has met with senior politicians and policy makers concerning the potential implications of this research for policy and practice. The researcher is in discussions with the Office of the Housing Minister with regard to sharing the findings and possible support for further research, building on the current study. The author plans discussions with the Homes and Communities Agency, the Chartered Institute of Housing and the National Housing Federation, in respect of the potential for further research, publication in an academic journal (Housing Studies and/or the International Journal of Housing Policy), and sharing of this knowledge with the community of practice.

7.7 Personal Reflection

Major research projects can be daunting. Whilst a well thought out research proposal is helpful, the researcher found that a range of competing priorities impacted on planned targets and milestones. The researcher's well-intentioned research proposal and plan required ongoing review and amendment to accommodate events, some of which, were outside of the researcher's control. An example is the availability of interviewees.

In preparing for this study, the researcher considered others' experience of Doctoral Research including works and guides by Dunleavy (2003), Thomson and Walker (2010), which advise that doctoral research can sometimes be a lonely and isolated experience. Regular meetings with the researcher's supervisors were helpful in this regard.

The researcher developed a wider network of relationships with DBA and PhD students which provided a valuable source of support, recognising that the DBA is a professional doctorate and differs significantly in content to a PhD (DBA being two years taught modules and assessment with a 35 thousand word thesis element, considerably less than a PhD thesis). The limited word allowance does not realistically allow the concepts identified, to be explored to the same extent as is facilitated through a PhD. This was challenging for the author and required careful consideration to ensure focus, rigour and sufficient depth and detail, where particularly relevant. This conceptual understanding from the outset, may provide valuable knowledge and insight for future DBA students both pre and post research planning, data collection and analysis.

In 2012 the researcher presented an outline of this research to a research Colloquium facilitated by the University of Chester and attended by various senior academics. This provided invaluable critique, affording the researcher the opportunity to both defend the work and obtain support for the proposed methods.

As part of the work the researcher underwent several annual progress reviews with: a visiting Professor from Harvard Business School (2012); a visiting professor from the University of Maine (2013); and two senior academics from the University of Chester (2014 and 2016 respectively). This provided an opportunity to defend the approach and satisfy the respective academics that the work was of value and the researcher had both sufficient knowledge, and commitment to complete the work.

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APPENDIX 1 – Easterby-Smith et al., (2001) Key Elements of the Two Paradigm Choices

	Positivist Paradigm	Phenomenological Paradigm
Basic beliefs	The world is external and objective.	The world is socially constructed and subjective.
	The observer is independent.	The observer is part of what is observed.
	Science is free of values.	Science is driven by human interests.
The Researcher	Should focus on facts.	Should focus on meanings.
	Should look for causality and fundamental laws.	Should try to understand what is occurring.
	Should reduce phenomenon to its simplest elements.	Should look at the totality of each situation.
	Should formulate hypotheses and test them.	Should develop ideas through induction from data.
The preferred methods	Include operationalising concepts so that they can be measured.	Include utilising multiple methods to establish different views of phenomena.
	Involve taking large samples.	Involve taking small samples investigated in depth, over time.

Easterby-Smith et al., (2001).

APPENDIX 2 – Sample

Type of Interview	Personnel Involved	Composition
Individual Interview	2 x Operations Directors in OVH 2 x Operations Directors in Sovini 2 x Executive Directors in Sovini 2 x Board Members of OVH 1 x Board Member of Sovini 2 x Heads of Service in OVH 3 x Middle Managers in OVH 3 x Housing Officers in OVH 3 x Clerical/Admin. Staff in OVH 1 x Head of Service in Sovini 1 x Supported Housing Manager 1 x Neighbourhood Housing Manager 2 x elected Members – Sefton Council	
Group Interviews x 10 Separate Groups	1. Group Executive Management Team	10 x people (includes 2 x Executive Directors and 8 x Operations Directors)
	2. Customer Empowerment Team	5 x people
	3. Pine Court Housing Association	4 x people in attendance
	4. Sovini/OVH Secretariat	6 x people
	5. Tenant Inspectors	6 x people
	6. Marketing & Communications Team	6 x people
	7. Tenant Scrutiny Team	9 x people
	8. Joint Chairs' Team	3 x people
	9. Policy Team	4 x people
	10. Tenant Service/Review Group	9 x people
	11. Mixed Tenant Service Review Group	15 x people
Internal Focus Groups x 4 Separate Groups	1. People and Learning Team	9 x people
	2. Mixed Group Operational Staff	8 x people
	3. Mixed Group Business Support Staff	8 x people
	4. Team Leaders across group. Team leaders are essentially supervisors/first tier level managers responsible for day to day tenant/landlord relationships.	10 x people
Wider Tenants	(Interviewed through community events/visiting the office)	228 x people

Type of Interview	Personnel Involved	Composition	
Directors' Observations x 5 Separate Groups	1. Supported Housing Team	18 x people	
	2. Income Management Team	15 x people	
	3. IT Team	13 x people	
	4. Finance Team	20 x people	
	5. Strategy Health & Safety Group. The 12 people are nominees from across the Sovini Group who act as representatives for the group as a whole including One Vision Housing. The individuals range in seniority from middle managers to Operations Directors	12 x people	
External Focus Group 1* (partners/suppliers)	2 x Senior Managers from two separate housing associations operating in Merseyside Includes representatives from key partner agencies identified by One Vision Housing	8 x people in total)))) N.B. these) total 16) separate
External Focus Group 2*	Includes One Vision Housing Suppliers	6 x people in total) organisations))
Group Level Focus Group	Sovini Property Services Sovini Trade Supplies	5 x people 4 x people))
Participant Observation x 5	Managers' Forum	30 x managers	
	One Vision Housing Organisational Development Departmental Management Team	4 x managers	
	One Vision Housing Board Meeting	9 x Board Members	

*For the purpose of the external focus groups, the research has differentiated between partner stakeholders and supplier stakeholders. Partners are those organisations that One Vision Housing works with to deliver services e.g. the local authority and the police. Suppliers are those organisations that One Vision Housing contracts with to provide professional advice and support e.g. legal advisors and financial advisors.

APPENDIX 3

Employee Questionnaire

Are you employed by:

One Vision Housing?

☐

Sovini?

☐

Sovini Property Services?

☐

Sovini Trade Supplies?

☐

Pine Court Housing Association?

☐

Do you consider yourself to be:

Senior Management?

☐

Manager?

☐

Officer?

☐

Please tick as appropriate

How long have you worked for the organisation?

Less than 12 months?

☐

12 – 24 months?

☐

More than 24 months?

☐

Question	Where appropriate, please rate/score answers on a scale of 1-5 (where applicable) where 1 is a low score and 5 is a high score				
1. What is your experience of stakeholder engagement in One Vision Housing compared with other organisations that you have worked in/have knowledge of?	1	2	3	4	5
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:					

Question	Where appropriate, please rate/score answers on a scale of 1-5 (where applicable) where 1 is a low score and 5 is a high score
2. What mechanisms does One Vision Housing use, if any, to engage with stakeholders? For example, meetings/newsletters/other formal or informal methods – please list them here. (Please say “none” if you do not believe there are any).	Please list here:
3. How well do you feel that One Vision Housing collaborates with its stakeholders generally?	<div data-bbox="958 683 987 707">1</div> <div data-bbox="1285 683 1314 707">2</div> <div data-bbox="1507 683 1536 707">3</div> <div data-bbox="1731 683 1760 707">4</div> <div data-bbox="1977 683 2007 707">5</div> <div data-bbox="954 743 1005 796"><input type="checkbox"/></div> <div data-bbox="1270 743 1323 796"><input type="checkbox"/></div> <div data-bbox="1489 743 1543 796"><input type="checkbox"/></div> <div data-bbox="1715 743 1769 796"><input type="checkbox"/></div> <div data-bbox="1964 743 2018 796"><input type="checkbox"/></div> <div data-bbox="788 858 938 882">Comments:</div>
4. What do you believe is needed for positive stakeholder engagement/ collaboration (for example, are there any prerequisites and what might they be?	Please list here:
5. Does One Vision Housing learn from you/your involvement?	<div data-bbox="969 1233 999 1257">1</div> <div data-bbox="1285 1233 1314 1257">2</div> <div data-bbox="1507 1233 1536 1257">3</div> <div data-bbox="1731 1233 1760 1257">4</div> <div data-bbox="1977 1233 2007 1257">5</div> <div data-bbox="954 1294 1005 1347"><input type="checkbox"/></div> <div data-bbox="1270 1294 1323 1347"><input type="checkbox"/></div> <div data-bbox="1489 1294 1543 1347"><input type="checkbox"/></div> <div data-bbox="1715 1294 1769 1347"><input type="checkbox"/></div> <div data-bbox="1964 1294 2018 1347"><input type="checkbox"/></div>

Question	Where appropriate, please rate/score answers on a scale of 1-5 (where applicable) where 1 is a low score and 5 is a high score																								
	Comments:																								
<p>6. a) Do you have access to different levels of management? Please tick as appropriate.</p> <p>b) Do other stakeholders have access to different levels of management? Please tick as appropriate.</p>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>CEO</td><td>Directors</td><td>Board Members</td><td>Managers</td><td>Colleagues</td><td>All of the above</td></tr> <tr> <td>(a) <input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr> <td>CEO</td><td>Directors</td><td>Board Members</td><td>Managers</td><td>Colleagues</td><td>All of the above</td></tr> <tr> <td>(b) <input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> </table> <p>Comments:</p>	CEO	Directors	Board Members	Managers	Colleagues	All of the above	(a) <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	CEO	Directors	Board Members	Managers	Colleagues	All of the above	(b) <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CEO	Directors	Board Members	Managers	Colleagues	All of the above																				
(a) <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>																				
CEO	Directors	Board Members	Managers	Colleagues	All of the above																				
(b) <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>																				
7. In your opinion, is One Vision Housing any more or less efficient as a result of stakeholder involvement?	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>														
1	2	3	4	5																					
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>																					

Question	Where appropriate, please rate/score answers on a scale of 1-5 (where applicable) where 1 is a low score and 5 is a high score										
	Comments:										
8. Does One Vision Housing value stakeholder knowledge generally?	<table border="0" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table> Comments:	1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5							
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>							
9. Do you have any examples of how you, other employees or wider stakeholders, impart knowledge?	Please specify:										

Question	Where appropriate, please rate/score answers on a scale of 1-5 (where applicable) where 1 is a low score and 5 is a high score					
10. Are stakeholders (generally) influential in the success of One Vision Housing?	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
	Comments:					
10. Do you believe that you, as a stakeholder (in One Vision Housing) ...	Not at all 1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	Very much so 5 <input type="checkbox"/>	
a) make a difference?	Comments:					
b) are listened to?	Not at all 1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	Very much so 5 <input type="checkbox"/>	

Question	Where appropriate, please rate/score answers on a scale of 1-5 (where applicable) where 1 is a low score and 5 is a high score
c) have your views taken into account?	<div> <div>Not at all</div> <div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>Very much so</div> <div>5</div> </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </div>
d) are valued by the organisation?	<div> <div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div> </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </div> <div> Comments: </div>
e) influence corporate decision making in One Vision Housing?	<div> <div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div> </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </div> <div> Comments: </div>

Question	Where appropriate, please rate/score answers on a scale of 1-5 (where applicable) where 1 is a low score and 5 is a high score				
f) Is influencing corporate decision making (in One Vision Housing) important to you?	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Comments:				
g) Is stakeholder involvement in One Vision Housing, an organisational construct e.g. something that the organisation has produced, shapes and controls?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Comments (e.g. if it is an organisational construct, does it matter?):		
12. Do you jointly problem solve with the organisation?	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Comments:				

Question	Where appropriate, please rate/score answers on a scale of 1-5 (where applicable) where 1 is a low score and 5 is a high score				
13. Do you influence performance?	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Comments:				
14. Do you influence strategy/business planning?	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Comments:				
15. Does management seek your views/act on them/incorporate them?	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Comments:				

Question	Where appropriate, please rate/score answers on a scale of 1-5 (where applicable) where 1 is a low score and 5 is a high score
16. Does management feedback outcomes/share strategy and/or proposals with you?	<div> <div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div> </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </div> <div>Comments:</div>
17. What do you think senior management (in One Vision Housing) think of you as a stakeholder?	<div> <div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div> </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </div> <div>Comments:</div>
a) Do you feel valued?	<div> <div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div> </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </div> <div>Comments:</div>


Question	Where appropriate, please rate/score answers on a scale of 1-5 (where applicable) where 1 is a low score and 5 is a high score
b) Do they take you seriously?	<div> <div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div> </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </div> <div>Comments:</div>
c) Do you influence their decisions?	<div> <div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div> </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </div> <div>Comments:</div>
d) Are they aware of your needs/wants? Are these aligned with strategy/the big organisational goals?	<div> <div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div> </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </div>

Question	Where appropriate, please rate/score answers on a scale of 1-5 (where applicable) where 1 is a low score and 5 is a high score
	Comments:
18. Are some stakeholders more important than others?	<div> <div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div> </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </div> Comments:
19. Do you believe that there is a difference between the “power”/influence held by different stakeholders/stakeholder groups?	<div> <div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div> </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </div> Can you list any that you think are more or less powerful than others? Please say if you think they are more power or less powerful than others.
20. Do you believe that stakeholder engagement (generally) can make One Vision Housing better than other housing organisations/competitors?	<div> <div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div> </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </div>


Question	Where appropriate, please rate/score answers on a scale of 1-5 (where applicable) where 1 is a low score and 5 is a high score
	Please give details:
21. What more could the organisation do to involve stakeholders/improve stakeholder relations?	Please give details:


APPENDIX 4 – Colour Coded Interview Questions













Key  = stakeholder theory


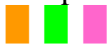




Key  = stakeholder management



Key  = knowledge management





Key  = organisational learning










Key  = organisational culture

Question	Link to existing literature and theory	Key references
1. What is your experience of stakeholder engagement in One Vision Housing compared to other social housing providers that you have knowledge/experience of.	Stakeholder theory – acknowledgement that all organisations have stakeholders.  	Freeman (2010) Clarkson (1994, 1995) Donaldson and Preston (1995)
2. How does One Vision Housing engage or involve stakeholders?	Stakeholder management – strategic perspective.   	Mitchell et al., (1997) Mainardes et al., (2011)
3. How well do you believe that One Vision Housing Collaborates with its stakeholders generally?	Stakeholder influence – the dynamics of interaction.  	Mitchell et al., (1997) Blair et al. (2002) Spitzeck et al., (2011)
4. What do you believe is needed for positive stakeholder engagement/collaboration (e.g. are there any prerequisites?)	Levels of inclusivity – motivations for stakeholder involvement and collaboration.  	Garvare and Johansson (2010) Freeman et al., (2010)
5. Does the organisation learn from your involvement?	Organisational culture, learning and knowledge management.   	Martins & Terblanche (2003) Furnham & Gunter (1993)

Question	Link to existing literature and theory	Key references
6. Do you have access to different levels of management? CEO? Directors? Board Members? Operational Staff?	Stakeholder management – links to culture, relationships and leadership. 	O’Keefe (2002) Schein (2010) Chrislip & Larson (1994)
7. Is the organisation any more or less efficient for its stakeholder involvement?	Value co-creation and efficiency – are stakeholders making a difference - links to competitive advantage. 	Freeman (2010) Basu (2011) Owen et al., (2008)
8. Does One Vision Housing value stakeholder knowledge generally? (Examples?)	Intellectual capital – stakeholders as a resource. 	O’Keefe (2002) Schein (1993)
9. How is this knowledge used/acted upon?	Organisational learning and knowledge management – how integrated is the approach? 	Hicks et al. (2006) Hanvanich et al. (2003)
10. Are stakeholders influential in the success of One Vision Housing why/why not?	Productivity, value added, stakeholder influence in corporate decision making. 	Mitchell et al., (1997) Spitzeck & Hansen (2010) Cadbury (2000)
11. Do you believe that you as a stakeholder: a) Make a difference? How? b) Are you listened to? c) Are your views taken into account? d) Do you add value? How? Examples?	Stakeholder significance, salience and effectiveness and control - genuine influence or a clever means for management to pacify and control? 	Owen et al., (2008) Letza et al., (2004) Lozano (2005) Jonker & Nijhoff (2006) Spitzeck et al., (2011)

Question	Link to existing literature and theory	Key references
<p>e) Do stakeholders influence corporate decision making in social housing? How?</p> <p>f) Is influencing corporate decision making important to you?</p> <p>g) Is stakeholder involvement an organisational construct – e.g. are you managed/ controlled by the organisation?</p>		
<p>12. Does the organisations seek your support to problem solve?</p>	<p>Strategic influences – the position stakeholders hold in the company. Power and legitimacy.</p> <p> </p>	<p>Freeman & Reed (1983) Carroll (1989, 1993) Evans & Freeman (1988) Friedman & Miles (2006) Mainardes & Raposo (2011) Garvare & Johansson (2007) Spitzeck et al., (2011)</p>
<p>13. Do you influence performance? How? Examples?</p>	<p>Providing insight and knowledge that adds value – does the organisation learn from stakeholders? Is it making a difference? Links to legitimacy and survival.</p>	<p>Chesbrough (2003) Bapuji & Crossman (2004)</p>

Question	Link to existing literature and theory	Key references
14. Do you influence strategy/business planning? If so how?	Impact on mission, vision, organisational values and strategic direction – links to legitimacy. 	Sundaram & Inkpen (2004) Radder (1998) Johansson (2008) Bourne & Walker (2005)
15. Does management seek your views/act on them/incorporate them? Do they feed back outcomes/share strategy and/or proposals with you?	Linkages to “the way we do things around here” – organisational culture. Impact of leadership and management. Internal integration and co-ordination, validity and strategic business planning. 	Schein (1990) Furnham & Gunter (1993) Robbins (1996) Martins (2000) Martins and Terblanche (2003)
16. What do you think senior management think of you as a stakeholder? a) Do you feel valued? b) Do they take you seriously? c) Do you influence their decisions? d) Are they aware of your needs/wants? Are these aligned with strategy?	Power, legitimacy and urgency – control or genuine collaboration? 	O’Higgins & Morgan (2006) Mitchell et al., (1997) Letza et al., (2004) Lozano (2005) Foley (2005)
17. Are some stakeholders more important than others?	Stakeholder categorisation and salience. Primary and secondary stakeholder categories. 	Garvare & Johansson (2007) Johansson (2007)

Question	Link to existing literature and theory	Key references
18. Do you believe that there is a difference between the power/influence held by different stakeholders/ stakeholder groups?	Stakeholder legitimacy and management.  	Johannson (2007) Mitchell et al., (1997) Lozano (2005) Susniène & Vanagas (2005)
19. Do you believe that stakeholder engagement can lead to service improvements and organisational success? Do you have any examples of how?	Do these particular stakeholders agree with the general theory and the conceptual framework proposition or self-interest?  	Freeman (2010) Mitchell et al., (1997) Barret (1997) Robbins (1996) Prahalad & Raposo (2011)
20. What more could the One Vision Housing do to involve stakeholders?	Continuous improvement and mutual dependency – an ongoing relationship – sustainable management.     	Sundaram & Inkpen (2004) Johannson (2008) Radder (1998)

APPENDIX 5

Focus Group Discussion Topics

- Is stakeholder engagement important in One Vision Housing and why?
- Does One Vision Housing make the most of its stakeholder relations?
- Does One Vision Housing actively seek to have a positive relationship with you/its stakeholders generally?
- Can you think of any benefits directly resulting from stakeholder involvement in One Vision Housing
- Why should One Vision Housing bother with stakeholders?
- What is important in the organisation/stakeholder relationship generally and with particular reference to One Vision Housing
- Who or what influences/determines a successful/unsuccessful organisational/stakeholder relationships generally and with particular reference to One Vision Housing?

APPENDIX 6

Consent Form/Agreement to Participate	
Research conducted by:	Roy Williams
Research title:	“Towards a Collaborative Enterprise”
Broad research purpose:	Understanding stakeholder engagement/ involvement/collaboration in One Vision Housing
<p>I, _____ have read the information sheet on the research project “towards a collaborative enterprise”, being conducted by Roy Williams as part of his studies for the qualification of Doctor of Business Administration at the University of Chester. Any questions that I have about the work have been answered to my satisfaction.</p> <p>I agree to participate in this interview/group interview/focus group/observation process and I agree to keep all information confidential and not discuss any comments made by others, outside of this forum, other than with the researcher (Roy Williams).</p> <p>I understand that my participation is voluntary and I can withdraw at any time should I wish to, without any consequences. My identity will not be made known and all reference/ quotes will be anonymised.</p> <p>It has, however, been explained to me that, in some instances, it may be possible to identify me through my comments because reference to my team or job title may be made.</p> <p>I further understand that the results of the study will be shared with the One Vision Housing Board and senior managers and potentially used for wider professional or academic purposes. It has further been explained to me that interview notes/audio visual recordings, will be destroyed once the project has been completed.</p>	
Signed:	Date:

APPENDIX 7 – Letter to Participants

Stakeholder Questionnaire

Dear All,

Employee Stakeholder Questionnaire

Your assistance in a piece of research that I am carrying out as part of my Doctorate in Business Administration would be very much appreciated.

I am attempting to understand stakeholder engagement/involvement in One Vision Housing. For the purpose of this study, stakeholders are those people who are involved in some way with One Vision Housing. This includes employees, tenants, suppliers, partners, any other agencies or organisations that we work with, formally or informally, people/groups that are affected by what One Vision Housing does. You, as an employee (of One Vision Housing or in the Sovini Group), are therefore, included as a stakeholder.

Through the questionnaire, I am attempting to obtain your views/opinions and experiences. Some of the questions relate to you specifically as an employee, some relate to stakeholders generally (including employees). The questionnaire should take around 10-20 minutes to complete. Your time and assistance is very much appreciated. There are no right or wrong answers and none of the answers, whether positive or negative, are any more important than others: most important is that you answer honestly.

I have attempted to keep a balance between giving as much information as possible and keeping the question as short and convenient for you to complete, as possible. However, please do feel free to make any additional comments that you would like to, and to qualify any of your answers. If you would like to use additional sheets, this would also be acceptable.

Any information provided is anonymous. I have been given the general consent of the board to carry out this work and will feed back the results to One Vision Housing once I have completed the research. I am hopeful that the outcome will be of value to One Vision Housing, the Sovini Group and possibly the social housing sector generally.

If you could return the completed questionnaire by that would be most helpful.

Thank you in anticipation, for your time and consideration of this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Roy Williams



APPENDIX 9 – Archival Example Email

From: John Rice
Sent: 19 June 2014 14:33
To: All Staff - Group
Subject: Revised Gas Safety Policy Consultation

Dear All,

We have recently reviewed the 'Sovini Gas Safety Policy' please follow the link below for details:

http://intranet/sorce/launcher.aspx?menuno=1&fhandle=s_news_disp&elemid=367

Please have a look over the Policy and get back to me by return of e-mail by the end of Thursday 26th 2014 with any comments you may have.

Many thanks

Policy and Strategy Manager
0151 530 5577

The Sovini Group
Atlantic House, Dunnings Bridge Road, Bootle, Merseyside, L30 4TH
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Sovini

APPENDIX 10 – Managers’ Forum Agenda



Managers’ Forum agenda

Date: 27th January 2014		Time: 10.00 a.m.	Location: Training Rooms 2 and 3
1	Apologies		
2	Confirmation of Minute Taker:		
3	Introduction	RW	
4	Welfare Reform Update	KA	
5	Talent Management – Appraisals Process	KB	
6	Corporate Plan/Strategic Plan Updates	IM	
7	High Rise Demolitions Update	PS	
8	Governance Update	ME	
9	IT Policy Consultation	KC	
10	Team Updates/Health and Safety Issues		
11	Date and Time of Next Meeting		
11.1	10.00 a.m. Monday 31st March 2014		



One Vision Housing

Executive Management Team Meeting Agenda

Date: 24 th June 2014	Time: 9.30 a.m.	Location: RW's Office
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1	EMT "Check In"
2	Attendance and Apologies:
3	Matters Arising from Previous Minutes
4	Key Risks Update
5	Key Project Updates (e.g. Demand Project IT)
6	Management Accounts
6.1	OVH Management Accounts – April 2014 (GR) (Paper attached)
6.2	OVH Management Accounts – May 2014 (GR) (Paper attached)
7	SDPs to Include KPIs
7.1	Executive Scorecard – May 2014 (ME) (Paper attached)
8	Growth Items
9	Staff Suggestions – (Once Approved at DMTs)
10	EORs Requiring Additional Finance
10.1	None for this meeting.
11	Forthcoming Board Reports (None for this meeting)

12	Individual Director Items
12.1	Awards Matrix (IM) (Paper attached)
12.2	Repairs and Maintenance Policy (AG) (Paper attached)
12.3	Employee of the Month (April) – Sovini/OVH (IM) (Paper attached)
12.4	Employee of the Month (April) – SPS (PP) (Paper attached)
12.5	Employee of the Month (May) – Sovini/OVH (IM) (Paper attached)
12.6	Employee of the Month (May) – SPS (PP) (Paper attached)
12.7	Aerials, Antennas and Satellite Dishes Policy (AG) (Paper attached)
12.8	Staff Group Input into Employee of the Month Awards (IM)
12.9	Tea and Coffee Provision for Staff (IM)
12.10	OVH’s Value for Money Statement 2013/14 (ME) (Paper attached)
12.11	Proposed Changes to HCA Regulatory Framework (ME) (Paper attached)
12.12	Professional Qualifications (KB)
12.13	Appraisals Update (KB)
12.14	ISO27001 accreditation (KC)
12.15	Digital Inclusion (KC)
12.16	Use of Churchill House by Merseyside Fire Service (GR)
12.17	Funding Update (TL)
12.18	Demand Briefing Paper (SJS) (Paper attached)
13	Any Other Business
14	Date and Time of Next Meeting
14.1	9.30 a.m. Tuesday 8 th July 2014.
15	EMT “Check Out”



One Vision Housing

Scrutiny Team Meeting Agenda

Date: 6 th January 2012	Time: 1.30 – 2.30pm	Location: Atlantic House, Training Room 2 & 3
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1	Attendance:
2	Apologies:
3	Introduction
4	Presentation
4.1	Recommendations and Findings from the Scrutiny Review of “The Gas Repairs Service” – KW.
5	Question and Answer Session
5.1	All

Scrutiny Team Meeting minutes

Date: 6 th January 2012	Time: 1.30 – 2.30pm	Location: Atlantic House, Training Room 2 & 3
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1	Attendance:
2	Apologies: None
3	Review of the Gas Repair Service
3.1	The Scrutiny Aims
3.1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through our work as a Scrutiny Team, we aim to offer a valuable perspective on the actual experience of customers, therefore, allowing us to help shape and improve OVH services From the information presented to us the area around 'Gas Repair Service' was identified as the topic for the next Scrutiny From we undertook a 13 week scrutiny of this service The Scrutiny Team agreed the Lines of Enquiry detailing what information we required as part of our Scrutiny.
3.2	Our Findings and Recommendations
3.2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a result of our investigations, we identified 9 findings and recommendations. Satisfaction questionnaire – review wording of question of 'correct tools used'. Low satisfaction on 'ID Shown' – investigate new way of displaying ID Badges. Review gas servicing letters. Communication improvement between OVH and Contractor – develop suite of questions to establish type of gas repair. Review communication on overbooking of appointments at busy periods. Agree a written process for rescheduled appointments. We consider that annual gas safety checks should be carried out in all high rises with gas risers to avoid any potential danger. Carbon monoxide detectors – consider installing detectors in all properties. Review the preparation of a gas / general repair leaflet that highlights stages of the repair process once the initial call has been received.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Servicing of tenants own gas appliances – provide clarification of what OVH intentions are of servicing tenants own gas appliances.
3.3	Conclusions
3.3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the benefits of bringing the gas repairs service in-house, with a view to improving the communication processes, systems used and potential financial savings.

APPENDIX 13

Satisfaction of the Gas Repairs Service



Scrutiny Report

Of the Gas Repairs Service

Report Compiled by: OVH Tenant Scrutiny Team

Contents

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3.	Process	4
4.	Findings and Recommendations	5
5.	Appendices	6

Acknowledgement

The Scrutiny Team would like to record thanks to all the One Vision Housing (OVH) staff involved in this scrutiny process for their assistance and co-operation. Particular acknowledgment to the following teams:

Customer Service Centre
Facilities Management
Contractor Gas
OVH Property Services
Performance Management
Resident Involvement

1. Introduction

1.1 What are the benefits of Co-Regulation?

Tenant scrutiny is a key aspect of co-regulation and allows for the following benefits:

- Continuous monitoring of performance allows the customer and association to improve the services customers receive
- Customers have the opportunity to take part in monitoring the organisation and influencing service provisions
- Customers can offer a valuable perspective on the actual experience of customers which can help shape and improve OVH services.

1.2 What are the benefits of Scrutiny?

Tenant scrutiny can bring benefits for all stakeholders, as follows:

- **Residents** – improves services
- **OVH** – identifies underperforming areas
- **Regulators** – demonstrates compliance with regulatory standards
- **Partners and Stakeholders** – it illustrates the benefits of partnership working and continuous improvement.

1.3 Selecting Service for Scrutiny

A key role of the Scrutiny Team is to review key service areas by scrutinising the performance and customer intelligence data, identifying areas of concern and making suggestions for how to improve the service.

In identifying what aspect of OVH's services would be the subject of scrutiny, the Performance Management team produced a 'Scorecard' for each service area of the business. The information produced focused particularly on the views of the wider customer base ('customer intelligence'). The Scrutiny Team viewed the information and noted the areas where performance could be improved.

This scrutiny exercise followed a pre-agreed 13 week programme which consisted of agreeing the scope, data gathering, reality checking and formulation of this report.

The Scrutiny Team members involved in undertaking this scrutiny were:

AB; BB; GD; GE; MH; PH; JK; KW.

2. Scope of the Review

In selecting the areas for scrutiny the team considered information presented by the Performance Management team, which placed emphasis on customer intelligence data.

It became evident from the customer intelligence data that an area which needed to be looked at was around 'the gas repair service'. The Scrutiny Team then agreed this would be the area for this scrutiny exercise.

The Scrutiny Team agreed a number of 'Lines of Enquiries', which is a request for further evidence detailing what information is required as part of the Scrutiny review.

When requesting further information, timescales are set out for the provision of the evidence, and it is vital that these deadlines are met in order for the review to be effective. Below is a summary of the information requested.

- Repairs Processes
- Customer Intelligence
- OVH Quality Standards

3. Scrutiny Process

The scrutiny process followed a 13 week programme and covered the following stages:

- Identify service for review
- Agree scope and identify evidence requirements
- Desktop review of evidence
- Reality checking
- Development of final report

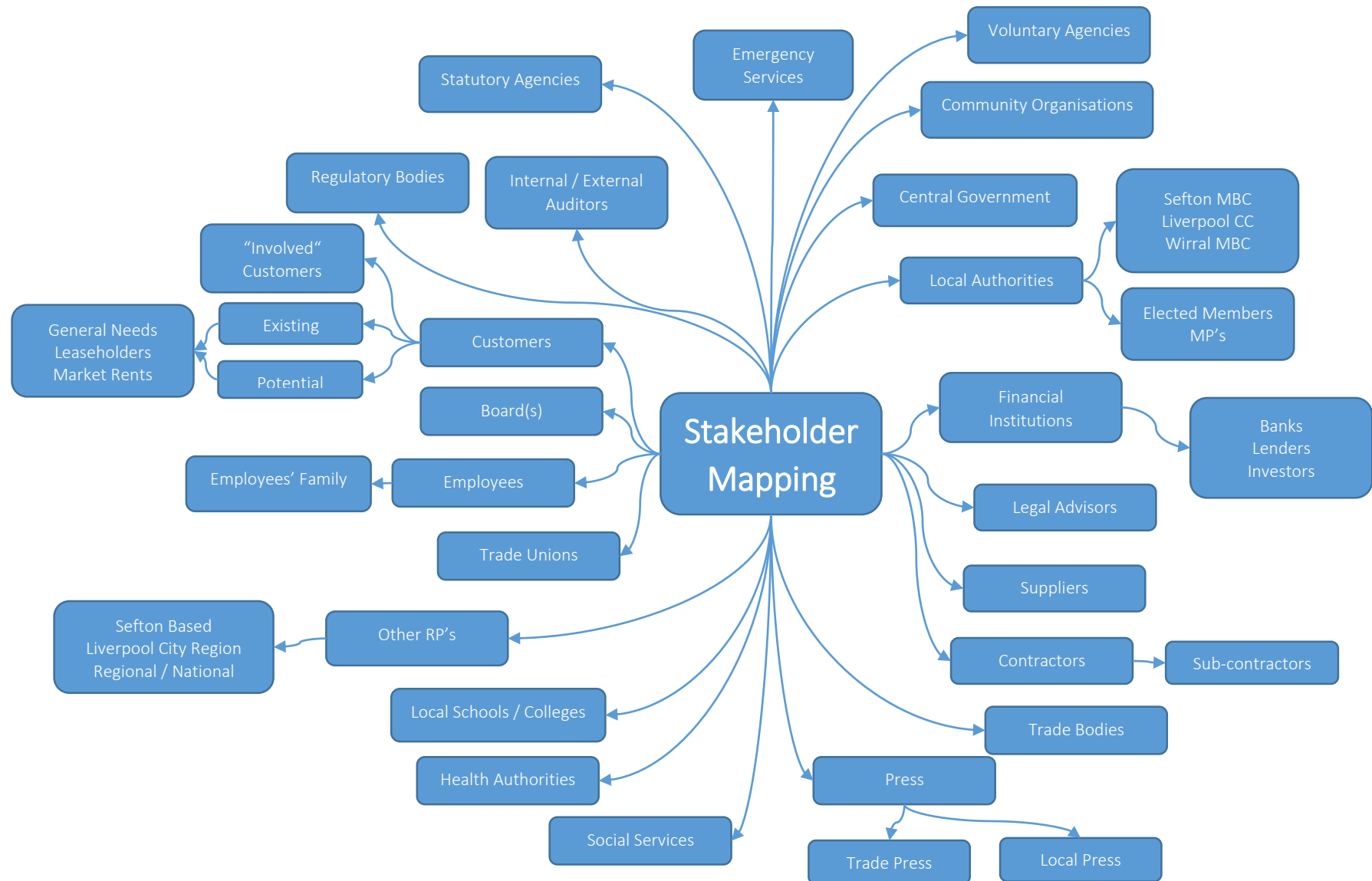
4. Findings and Recommendations

This section will be used to outline our agreed finding and recommendations. On the 15th and 22nd November 2011, meetings were held with the Scrutiny Team to agree our recommendations, during this meeting we summarized all the evidence presented over 13 weeks and discussed areas for improvement.

	Findings	Recommendations
1.0		
1.1	The satisfaction questionnaire includes a question of 'correct tools used' it is felt this question is ambiguous	Wording of the question to be reviewed
1.2	Satisfaction low on 'ID Shown'	Investigate a new way of displaying ID badges - (i.e. extendable toggle / pocket in high visibility vest)
1.3	Further to the specific request from the Head of Service to review of the Annual Gas Servicing letters	Review of gas servicing letters (examples attached found issues with repetition and tone)
1.4	Opportunity for Customer Service Centre Staff to improve on diagnostics and communication between OVH and Contractor	Develop of suite of questions to establish the type of gas repair Review and improve how communication on the number of appointments available for gas engineers to reduce over booking (NOTE: the above may be addressed depending on outcome of the trial of new Contractor Gas IT system)
1.5	Unclear process for recording Gas Repairs if additional works required / parts needed	Agree a written process for dealing with re-scheduled appointments
1.6	Tenants of high rise blocks are asked to complete an annual questionnaire and inform OVH of installation of any gas appliances	To consider carrying out annual gas safety checks in high rise flats with gas risers - regardless of tenants having gas appliances due to potential danger
1.7	No evidence of Carbon Monoxide detectors	Consider installing carbon monoxide testing devices in all properties
1.8	Ambiguity around gas safety servicing of tenants own appliance	Provide clarification going forward of what are OVH's intentions regarding servicing tenants own appliances
1.9	The gas repairs service at present has room for improvement in terms of communication between OVH, Contractor & customers; and in terms of the systems used.	Consider the benefits of bringing the gas repairs service in-house, with a view to improving the communication processes, systems used and potential financial savings.

APPENDIX 14A

OVH Stakeholder Map – Broad Categories



APPENDIX 14B

One Vision Housing Stakeholder Map Interest/Influence Matrix

The following stakeholder map was developed as part of the annual strategic planning process. It makes use of the familiar ‘stakeholder map’, which considers the level of interest and the level of influence a stakeholder has in the organisation. By plotting these accordingly, they are then categorised into the following categories:

Low interest / Low influence	=	Monitor
Low interest / High influence	=	Keep Satisfied
High interest / Low influence	=	Keep Informed
High Informed / High influence	=	Manage Closely

The grid below does not include specific names of individuals or companies, but does include the type of stakeholder. The ranking is subjective and fluid, and can vary depending on time and circumstances.

<p>HIGH</p> <p>↑</p> <p>Influence</p>	<p>Keep satisfied</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Other] Local Authorities • MP’s / Local Councillors • Unions • Statutory agencies • Voluntary agencies • Employees families 	<p>Manage closely</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • Banks / Lenders / Investors • Regulatory Bodies • Contractors / Sub-contractors • Board of Management • Customers / Residents • Internal / External Auditors • Employed Consultants / Suppliers • Lawyers • Sefton MBC (Authority & Members) • Group Partners
	<p>Monitor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other Registered Providers • Local Schools, Colleges etc. • Trade Bodies • Benchmarking Forums • Trade / Local Press • Property Development Agencies • Health Authorities • Central Government (general) 	<p>Keep informed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future / Potential Customers • Community Groups • Third sector orgs. • Suppliers • Trade Unions • Social Services • Emergency / Public Services
<p>LOW</p> <p>↓</p>	<p>← Interest →</p> <p>LOW HIGH</p>	