

**REPORT FOR: Tenants', Leaseholders'
and Residents'
Consultative Forum**

Date of Meeting: 19 December 2012

Subject: Head of Asset Management's Report

Responsible Officer: Lynne Pennington
Divisional Director of Housing

Exempt: No

Enclosures: None

Section 1 – Summary

This report sets out a range of information items that the Interim Head of Asset Management would like to bring to the attention of the Tenants', Leaseholders' and Residents' Consultative Forum.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report be noted.

Section 2 – Report

Updates from previous discussions and new items for information

1. Progress with recruitment to the client side structure

- 1.1. Recruitment to the new Asset Management staffing structure is now complete as the two posts (Stock Condition Surveyor and Customer Experience Co-ordinator) that were still vacant at the last TLRCF report have now been filled.
- 1.2. Claire Fairclough is the Customer Experience Co-ordinator and she started with us on 12th November. Claire's first priorities are:
 - Improving our response times to complaints
 - Establishing a mechanism for measuring customer satisfaction with the new repairs contractors in partnership with Access Harrow. This is due to start in December and will enable us to survey 20% of all tenants and leaseholders who have reported responsive repairs. This will be in addition to the 10% of jobs that are post inspected-so there will be a quality check of some kind on 30% of all responsive repair jobs
 - Improve communication with tenants, leaseholders and elected members on the work of the Asset Management team.
 - Develop a Service Level agreement for Housing with Access Harrow.
- 1.3. Nikki Olaitan Yussuf is the Stock Condition Surveyor who started work with us on 22nd November. Nikki's first priorities are:
 - Validation of the draft 2013/14 capital programme to ensure that the kitchen, bathroom, roof, window and heating works carried out next year are to the homes with the most urgent need.
 - Continue the work on identifying the elements to be included in the 2014/15 and 2015/16 capital programmes.

2. Responsive Repairs and Voids Contracts

- 2.1. The new contracts are generally operating well and as reported to the last TLRCF Contractor appraisal panels for the East, West & Central contracts and the borough wide gas contract have been established. These panels include the contract surveyors and a tenant representative who challenge each contractor on areas of performance, cost and customer satisfaction. We would very much like to see more tenants and leaseholders involved in the panels and will be looking to recruit more people to get involved over the next few weeks.

- 2.2. The outcomes of the panels will be reported to the new Asset Management Board, which will be chaired by Councilor Currie. The first meeting of the board is 20th December and the report for that meeting has not been completed at the time of writing the TLRCF report. Full details will follow but in the meantime some highlights on issues arising from the panels are given below.
- 2.3. Early indications are that all 4 contractors are performing well and there are no significant areas of concern. There are some minor concerns with the data provided by contractors on some of the performance measures and steps are being taken to validate the information. However whilst we are being cautious about the quality of the data until it has been verified the figures being reported are very good, and above target particularly on customer satisfaction and repairs completed at first visit. The average value of repairs, whilst fluctuating slightly across the 3 area contracts is when combined very close to target.
- 2.4. Less positive is the performance being reported on the number of appointments made as a % of those where appointments should be offered. This figure is well below the target but we know that there are problems with the methods used to collate this data which involves both the Council and the contractors-so work is underway to address this. A target has been set for improvement by the time the January panels take place.
- 2.5. Performance on voids is poor across all 3 contract areas and it is not yet clear how much of this is down to the contractor performance and how much is due to the Council processes which have changed recently. Work is underway to identify what the problems are and improve this area of work, again with an expectation of improvement by early in 2013.
- 2.6. The customer satisfaction survey, which will be introduced in December, will concentrate on jobs reported as being completed in the last 7 days so that the tenant or leaseholder surveyed will be able to clearly remember any concerns they had with the performance of the contractor. The information gathered in this survey, and from other work Access Harrow are helping us with will help us validate the contractors performance information

3. 2012/13 Capital Programme

- 3.1. Good progress continues to be made with delivery of the £9 million capital programme for the current year. However since the last report to TLRCF it has become clear that one scheme cannot be completed in year and the amount of responsive repairs work that can be charged to capital is currently less than anticipated-but this could

change before the end of the financial year. However we are still on target to deliver most of the agreed programme, although there is a risk that prolonged bad weather over the next few months could delay some of the works.

4. Preparation for future years Capital Programmes

- 4.1 Work is also progressing well towards establishing future year's capital programmes with staff working to validate information held from stock condition surveys and establish the detailed programme for 2013/14 and outlines for future year's programmes. This work is being done alongside the development of the Asset Management Strategy (see section 5 below)
- 4.2 Consultation with TLRCF members on the outline capital programme for 2013/14 is a separate item on the agenda

5. Asset Management Strategy

- 5.1 The Asset Management Strategy is currently in preparation with a first draft due by the end of the calendar year. The strategy will set out the strategic context for Asset Management over the next few years and set out the key priorities for the service, taking on board tenant and leaseholder views
- 5.2 This strategy will include our overarching aims to improve your homes, improve the customer experience and to complete the implementation of our Health and Safety programme. It will also make reference to the various likely outcomes of Housing Changes, the HRA business plan and other strategies currently being developed-such as the garage strategy. These elements will be developed as the implications for Asset Management become clearer.
- 5.3 A draft of the strategy will come to a future TLRCF for consultation.

6 Update on Health and Safety Programme and Cyclical works

- 6.1 Fire Risk Assessments have now been completed for 10 of our 18 Sheltered Housing Schemes. The remaining schemes will be completed and reports produced by the end of the calendar year. The Health and Safety Compliance Officer has now completed a "Fire Risk Assessment in purpose built flats and HMOs" course provided by the Fire Protection Association, which means he is authorised him to carry out assessments on his own. This will speed up the process and our

objective is to have completed all of the Fire Risk Assessments in common areas of general needs blocks by December 2013.

- 6.2 We are also undertaking a programme of asbestos surveys in tenanted flats. To date we have approximately 2000 current surveys and have just employed a temporary asbestos surveyor to enable us to move forward with the outstanding surveys.
- 6.3 The next stage in the implementation of our Health and Safety inspection regime is a programme of Passive Infra Red (PIR) detector testing and hard wired smoke alarm fitting. Planning is in the early stages, so further details will be reported to a future TLRCF.
- 6.4 Progress with developing a programme of cyclical works is moving forward hand in hand with the Health and Safety programme. This involves a fresh approach to all the trade disciplines associated with the sheltered schemes & community centres. This will address some inconsistencies for example where the portable appliance testing (PAT) was not completed for all sites, and those that were done were not undertaken consistently. A clean sweep is now being undertaken which brings all this work into line at one time for all the sites-which will be much easier to monitor going forward.
- 6.5 A similar position applied to dry risers and fire extinguishers. We are currently working to eliminate any anomalies arising from the recent Fire Risk assessments. This work includes having fire document boxes installed at all sheltered schemes which will hold the details the fire service will need should there be a fire such as:
 - the new fire log books
 - individual site fire policies and Fire Risk Assessment
 - List of vulnerable tenants who may need extra help and a plan showing the location of their flats
 - Asbestos Survey.
- 6.6 Further work in progress that will demonstrate both value for money and improved customer service involves exploring the life expectancy of the fire alarm panels & sensors, and drawing up a replacement programme over the next 3 years.
- 6.7 Finally in the next financial year we will introduce dosing of communal heating systems which has never previously been carried out in Harrow. Dosing greatly increases the life span of boiler plant and reduces break downs by ensuring there is no build up of sludge in the systems that can cause valves to stick, and eventually lead to a need for early replacement of the boiler plant, which is a costly exercise.

7 Improving Communication

- 7.1 A recent meeting with the Leaseholders sub group highlighted some areas to officers where improvements in the service have been made but we have not effectively communicated this to all of our tenants and leaseholders. An example was where we have given leaseholders access to information on communal repairs on line-but failed to publicise this or explain to leaseholders how they can now challenge the accuracy of the information and costs, and that we now undertake quality checks on 40% of these works as a matter of course.
- 7.2 In addition we have had some positive feedback on how we are now communicating more effectively with tenants and leaseholders locally, where major works programmes are on site. One example is Francis Road where a monthly progress group meeting takes place to ensure residents know what is happening with the project and can raise any areas of concern. The group has helped with matters that arise-for example we have encountered problems accessing individual flats throughout the blocks. To try and ensure the continuity of the programme, we have worked closely with the local housing officer and resident liaison officer on site. Within one month we have managed to reduce our access issues from 20 properties down to 3, which are now in hand. There has been increased communication between departments addressing all new issues in a timely and efficient manner. It is our aim and hope that this will set the precedent for all future programmes.
- 7.3 We are currently giving more thought to how we get better at telling tenants and leaseholders about the improvements we have put in place and will be bringing forward ideas for discussion with you at a later date.

8 Value for Money

- 8.1 At the November meeting of the Value for Money sub group tenants and leaseholders asked for a report to come to a future meeting that identifies where savings have been made since the new contractors were appointed for responsive repairs, and new ways of procuring major works were introduced.
- 8.2 It is planned to present a full report to that group in February but TLRCF may be interested in the following achievements:
- Where we are upgrading bathrooms in sheltered housing tenants now get a choice between baths and level access showers. Where a shower is chosen a full assessment of individual needs is undertaken to determine the type of shower to install and also positioning of seats, grab rails etc. Previously older tenants living in sheltered housing have

had to apply for bathroom adaptations through the limited grant system which could mean long waiting times. Providing these adaptations through a programme of works, rather than on a demand basis is also better value for money.

- We have saved £124,000 or 44% of the cost by more effective procurement of lifts in sheltered schemes. This can be demonstrated as in 2010/11 replacing 3 lifts cost £282,000. The following year we were able to reduce the cost of the next 3 lifts to £212,000 and in 2012/13 we have procured 3 further lifts for £158,000
- Our 3 star contract with Quality Heating is expected to save approximately £250,000 this year
- Our responsive repairs contracts are currently delivering 15% savings on the average repair order value

8.3 It is likely that further procurement savings will be achieved in future capital programmes and an item is included elsewhere on the agenda as to how we should re-invest the money saved.

Financial Implications

- Any financial issues are contained within the body of the report.

Equalities Implications

- There are no equalities implications associated with this report.
- No Equality Impact Assessments have been carried out.

Corporate Priorities

All of the above contribute to the corporate priorities, in particular:

- Keeping neighbourhoods clean, green and safe.
- United and involved communities: A Council that listens and leads.
- Supporting and protecting people who are most in need.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Roger Hampson



on behalf of the
Chief Financial Officer

Date: 4th December 2012

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

Maggie Challoner
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Background Papers: None