

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

Date of Meeting: 27th February 2013

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 and discussion 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

1.0 Fire Safety

- 1.1 Following discussions at the December TLRCF officers have been talking to colleagues in Community Safety and with the Fire Service to look at ways to work more closely together on fire safety matters. A meeting has been scheduled with the Fire Service Borough Commander on 12th February and if possible a verbal update will be provided at the TLRCF meeting

2.0 Tenant Inspectors in Asset Management

- 2.1 Officers have also taken forward discussions at a previous TLRCF in relation to whether tenants and leaseholders could play a part in assisting with post inspection of completed works and health and safety checks where works are on site. Part of this work has been a discussion with Beverley Bonnefoy on the benefits Estates Services have found from working with trained tenant inspectors across a number of West London Councils.
- 2.2 We have decided to start small and look at establishing a training programme for any tenants and leaseholders that may be interested in undertaking such a role in helping us to monitor our major works projects early in the new financial year. More details will follow once the training programme has been established.

3.0 Service Planning 2013/14

- 3.1 Asset Management have almost completed the service planning process for 2013/14, which includes drafting our team commitments for the year. We have decided to keep our overarching commitment the same as last year, which is:

“To provide a first class asset management service that our customers value, and that protects the Council’s investment in the Housing Service”

- 3.2 As it stands though it is difficult to determine how far we have come in delivering on this commitment, as we have not actually defined what a first class service is, or how we will measure our progress towards this. Members of TLRCF may recall that in earlier versions of the Housing Ambition Plan we defined an excellent service as being one where performance and customer satisfaction were in the upper quartile (the highest group) of the Councils in our benchmarking group - i.e. those of a similar size to us, also in London.
- 3.3 TLRCF members are asked for their views on whether we should use this

methodology to define what a first class asset management service would be. The suggestion is that we use a combination of value for money and quality performance measures, alongside customer satisfaction measures and judge whether we are delivering a first class service on whether we are in the upper quartile for them all. Performance against these can be monitored by the HFTRA HAP Challenge and Scrutiny panel which meets quarterly, with outcomes reported to TLRCF.

3.4 The table below gives a guide as to where improvements would need to be made to achieve this but it should be borne in mind that the upper quartile figures will change from year to year-so it would continue to be a challenge to remain in this highest group. To give an indication of what this would mean, based on 2011/12 figures (which is the most recent benchmarking information we have) we would need to improve the following areas before we could consider ourselves to be delivering a first class service:

Measure	Harrow Performance 2011/12	Upper Quartile	Improvement Needed	Comments
Repairs completed in Target Time - urgent	96.9	97.2	0.3	Current figures are showing an improvement since the new contracts went live
% of properties with current gas servicing certificates (CP12)	99.5	100	0.5	We continue to aspire to reach 100%
Total cost per property of responsive repairs and void work	1.015	717	298	Significant savings from new contractors already being seen
% of respondents very or fairly satisfied with repairs and maintenance	73.39	74.00	0.61	This information relates specifically to the responsive repairs part of the service and will be gathered both through the bi-annual STAR survey and the regular satisfaction survey now undertaken by Access Harrow
% of respondents very or fairly satisfied with the overall quality of their home	75.00	76.90	1.9	This information relates more to the major and cyclical works programme and will be gathered both through the bi-annual STAR survey and the regular satisfaction survey now undertaken by Access

				Harrow
Total cost per property of major works and cyclical maintenance	1,517	1,826	n/a	This information reflects value for money in the capital programme
Average SAP rating of self contained properties	65.3	71.0	5.8	This is the measure of energy efficiency in dwellings. Increased work on insulation, heating, windows, doors etc will assist with improving this figure

4.0 Option for gas heating and hot water repair calls to go direct to Quality Heating, rather than to Access Harrow

4.1 We are considering whether Quality Heating, our gas contractor should start taking calls for heating and hot water breakdowns direct from our tenants, with effect from 1st April 2013, or as soon as possible after this date. There are a number of advantages to this i.e.:

- faster response time as Quality Heating staff will be in direct contact with the engineer by handheld computer.
- dedicated Resident Liaison Officer for the Harrow contract
- specialists answering calls who may be able to diagnose problem more accurately, deal with the problem on the phone and avoid having to send engineer (i.e. if system can be reset)
- Calls covered 8am-8pm Mon-Friday and 8 am – 6 pm on Saturdays much longer hours than Access Harrow who currently provide a 9-5 service from Monday to Friday
- 3* contract service arrangements will continue i.e. same day attendance on report of a gas repair
- Emergency out of hours service will not be affected and this will continue to be administered via Harrow Council outside Quality Heating operating times
- Quality Heating management will continue to be available 24 hours a day 7 days a week

4.2 Quality Heating are keen to take this on, within existing resources, as they believe it will improve the service by improving diagnosis of call -and talking to the tenant direct increases the chance of an appointment being made immediately. The contractor already offers far more flexibility in appointments (evenings and weekends) than the previous contractor did, and handling all calls directly will build on that flexibility.

The only costs to this proposal will be:

- £5,000 for an IT upgrade of the contractors system to enable it to report to the Council's system in real time as jobs are raised.
- Capita costs in making the IT interface work with the Council's Northgate (exact cost to be determined)

- Communicating the new number to tenants. However Access Harrow can set up a message to give the number to any tenants who continue to call Access Harrow.

4.3 Financial Issues. All of these are "one off" rather than on-going costs- which can be funded from existing budgets. There should be a saving on the Access Harrow Support Services charge in due course (but not next year as this proposal comes too late for budget setting) as the number of calls Access Harrow take on our behalf will decrease considerably.

4.4 The proposed change is a win:win situation for the following reasons:

- Other than the IT set up costs there are no budget implications for the £450k contract
- The contract Surveyor, Barry Coady already audits routinely invoices for cost compliance before payment is made and manages orders/variations outside the contract and agreed communication processes are in place to prevent avoidable contacts
- Quality Heating will only be raising zero value orders on the Council's system and will be prohibited from raising any orders with a financial value. Any gas repair outside the 3* contract will be raised by the Asset Management gas team-so we will retain financial control.
- Monthly contract appraisal panels will ensure operational management of the contract is robust and compliant. Specified Key Performance Indicators are already in place and both customer satisfaction and quality assessments are already being developed and fine tuned. This work includes adding Quality Heating to the Customer Satisfaction survey work with Linbrook and Slade jobs currently being piloted with Access Harrow. The proposal would be to add Quality Heating to these surveys from April 2013.
- We would look to introduce the change with intensive management for the first 3-6 months, until we are satisfied it is working well. This would include fortnightly reviews on telephone answering in terms of quality of call handling and duration. This would include a member of the responsive repairs team being located at Quality Heating's offices to monitor progress during the initial period.
- We will include call volumes and call handling performance in KPI reports for gas repairs, which will be monitored at the Contractor Appraisal Panels. Quality Heating will need to report on any issues arising in between panels to the Contracts Surveyor.
- To date Quality Heating are providing a service which meets client expectations and is good. The service is continuing to be monitored as this is their first winter season with us but the position is promising.
- Quality Heating would provide a call handling procedure when raising orders with particular emphasis on customer service to include style, accurate diagnosis of problems and dealing with complaints so that there escalations are minimised.
- Quality Heating already record all incoming calls so client side audits can be carried out routinely.

4.5 As with any customer service there are risks and to minimise these part of the preparation for this handover would be to confirm with Quality Heating all procedures are in place and if it should prove necessary to work in partnership with the Council's Gas Team and Access Harrow in the event of

- § Call centre staff shortages
- § IT failures
- § Service recovery process
- § QH v LBH Northgate interface failures from initial order placement to final payment approval - 3* gas contract orders completion dates only/gas -orders outside the contract invoice approval

4.6 Members of TLRCF's views on this proposal are sought. If generally in favour officers will continue working on the proposal.

5.0 Repairs MOT's

5.1 After the delayed start work has now begun on the Repair MOT's with 5 completed as this report is written, but 15 anticipated by the end of February.

5.2 The target groups for these are:-

The top 100 prolific callers to the repairs system
Elderly and disabled tenants – Both Sheltered schemes and those living in general needs housing.

5.3 The program involves a full assessment of the property with minor repairs undertaken during the MOT assessment, and work-orders raised for those works which cannot be done during the MOT visit.

5.4 Work is also underway to link this project with gas safety inspections, as the main hurdle to both is gaining access. A further update will be provided to a future TLRCF.

6.0 Recharge Procedure

6.1 After another delayed start the process for recharges in voids went live from 1st January 2013, following a dummy run throughout the month of December. The dummy run enabled the system to be tested with both officers and contractors to ensure it is applied consistently, and that we treat all outgoing tenants fairly. Whilst the main focus of a recharge policy is to educate tenants to look after their properties to the best of their ability while they live there and not leave them in a poor condition at the end of their tenancy we will seek to recover all monies due from outgoing tenants.

6.2 During January £6706 has been raised as recharges for outgoing tenants. This information was passed to the Income team at the beginning of February 2013 so it is too early to provide an update on collection.

6.3 It is proposed to go live with recharges for responsive repairs from April 2013. A further update will be provided to a future TLRCF

7.0 Financial Implications

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

8.0 Equalities Implications

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

9.0 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: 12th February 2013

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

Maggie Challoner
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Background Papers: None