

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

Date of Meeting: 24th April 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 Joint working with the fire service continues with a number of positive ideas being explored. The next partnership meeting is taking place on 19th April. In particular TLRCF members asked for an update on the work to improve the information held about smoke alarms installed in our homes. We have shared information with the London Fire Brigade on where each of us has installed smoke alarms and in addition to Quality Heating checking these and reporting any concerns to us when undertaking annual gas safety inspections, colleagues in Resident Services are also reporting on any missing or broken alarms they see when visiting properties. This has now given us all the tools needed to develop a comprehensive database of where we have alarms installed and whether they are battery or hard wired.

1.2 A verbal update on progress with new initiatives to improve the safety of tenants and leaseholders will be provided at TLRCF, following the partnership meeting on 19th April.

2.0 Quality Heating taking tenant calls direct

2.1 On 2nd April the Asset Management Board endorsed the trial of Quality Heating taking all their own responsive repairs calls direct from tenants during working hours and have asked for a report on how well the trial is working out after 3 months. We will aim to introduce this in June and organise publicity so that tenants are aware of the change.

3.0 Recharges

3.1 As previously reported to TLRCF 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. Whilst the main focus of a recharge policy is to educate tenants not to increase our costs by looking after their properties to the best of their ability while they live there and not leaving properties in poor condition at the end of their tenancy we will seek to recover all monies due from outgoing tenants.

- 3.2** As a result of this dummy run it was decided that all void specifications are now to be passed through the Responsive Repairs Manager, to ensure that the recharges are applied consistently across all 3 contract areas. From 1st January to 12th March 2013 just over £20k has been raised in recharges from voids in 2013. It is too early to provide an update on collection of this money, although final accounts processes will identify any amounts recovered in 2012/13. It is suggested this will come to a future TLRCF.
- 3.3** The proposal was to introduce recharges on responsive repairs from April 2013 but it is now thought it best to bring this in at the same time as the new tenancy agreement (currently out for consultation, but planned for July 2013) as this is an opportunity to underline, and in some instances clarify tenants' responsibilities in relation to repairs. This may lead to a review of the policy document. The Asset Management Board have agreed to postpone the responsive repairs recharges to coordinate with the launch of the new tenancy agreement, which will also allow time for additional publicity on the change.
- 3.4** To compliment the introduction of rechargeable repairs for this years summer events we are working with our contractors to offer best advice to tenants on how they can take better care of their homes. This will include issues such as reducing condensation, clearing rubbish and refixing items before they require replacing. The idea would support the intended outcomes of the rechargeable process positively by demonstrating we are supporting tenants to maintain their homes.

4.0 Launch of the 2013/14 Capital Programme

- 4.1** As TLRCF members will now be aware the launch of the 2013/14 capital programme is taking place on 23rd April. We are working on improving consultation and communication on this years programme and proposals will be going to the May Asset Management Board for discussion. These will be reported to a future TLRCF
- 4.2** A number of new initiatives are in development to help with keeping tenants and leaseholders more involved and informed about works that will affect them and to keep disruption to a minimum. A number of these ideas have been put forward by HFTRA, others by Councillors. These include:
- a) installing a "sample" kitchen in a community centre so that tenants on the kitchen programme can go along to see what they can expect in their own homes

- b) for larger projects looking at introducing an area (possibly a mobile rest area) where residents can go to get away from noise and dust whilst works are ongoing
- c) introducing a joint customer satisfaction survey that will cover areas that both the Council and contractors want to monitor-so customers are only asked for their views once.

Customer Journey Mapping

- 4.3** This is a new technique we are introducing as part of Asset Management's commitment to "get closer to the customer" that will enable us to measure customer perceptions from the point at which they know that improvements are to be made to their homes, right through the process to completion of the works. The Grange Farm Estate Programme is the biggest single year project to be delivered in 2013/14 so we will pilot it here. The project will cover external and communal internal works such as:
- Pod windows
 - Front Doors
 - Enveloping works
 - Communal stairways
 - Bin stores
- 4.4** We want to continue with the effective consultation methods used at Francis Road but also to experiment with new and better ideas aimed at improving how we consult with all residents on such programmes.
- 4.5** The first part of the Grange Farm project is to develop one block as a pilot and to use this as a showpiece for the next phase of works so that people can see the kind of improvements they can expect to their homes. This will start in May.
- 4.6** Customer Journey Mapping is a way to engage with the customer from day one and chart their experience of the project throughout key stages by tracking and describing all the experiences that customers have as they encounter a service or set of services, taking into account not only what happens to them, but also their responses to their experiences. Used as a strategic tool, it can reveal opportunities for improvement and innovation in that experience that we would be able to use to ensure continuous improvement to the service we provide. For the purposes of this programme, this will be split into two main types of research:

- Qualitative (in-depth) research: with a selected number of tenants / leaseholders who are willing to take the time to engage with us throughout the process to describe their experiences and feelings throughout key elements of the programme
- Quantitative (large scale) research: with as many tenants/leaseholders as possible giving us their views-in not quite so much detail.

The idea is that we combine the research analysis with project system mapping to produce a report that highlights the customer experience at key aspects of the programme. The result will be an overall diagrammatical “heartbeat” representation of customer satisfaction throughout the process backed by a report including detailed analysis of the data collected throughout the process. If successful we will repeat this with other schemes and projects and can adapt our communication techniques in future to learn lessons from the outcomes.

External Decorations

- 4.7** At TLRCF in January an update on the External Decorations programme was requested. Works for the part of the programme that involves houses have just been procured and works should start in April or May. At the time of writing this report the contract award has not been formally approved but if possible a verbal update will be given at the meeting. There are significant procurement savings in this contract in comparison with the costs of the previous programme undertaken by Kier. The elements of the programme that involve flats have yet to be procured because of the longer lead in time required for leaseholder consultation. However it is proposed that this work will also be completed this year.
- 4.8** Although we still refer to this as an external decorations programme it should be noted that it is no longer an accurate title. This is because more of the work is now targeted to upgrade elements such as soffits and fascia boards so they will not require painting in future.

Linbrook and Quality Heating –Feedback on concerns raised at earlier TLRCF meetings

- 4.9** At the December and February TLRCF meetings concerns were raised that contractors from Linbrook and Quality Heating did not always show their ID to tenants when arriving to undertake repairs. This concern has been raised at Contractor Appraisal Panels and all

operatives have been reminded that their ID should be visible at all times, and shown on request.

- 4.10** In February a request was made for Quality Heating to attend a future meeting of the Forum to answer tenant and leaseholder queries. Quality Heating, along with Linbrook and Slade have been invited to attend the June meeting to undertake a short presentation on their experiences of the first year of the contract, their aspirations for the future and to answer any questions you have.

5.0 Green Deal and Energy Efficiency

- 5.1** Asset Management staff are continuing to work with the Companies appointed by the government to champion the Green Deal-which aims to improve energy efficiency of homes. Some of this work is in partnership with the Council's Climate Change Team and a Housing Association. There is significant grant funding available for this objective and Harrow are currently in active discussions with British Gas who have money to give us to explore the best options to utilise this funding for Harrow's housing stock.

- 5.2** To date we have secured funding to upgrade a terrace of six houses (three council, two A2Dominion, and one private) following a Green Deal assessment. As I write this report I am awaiting confirmation of the exact work that will be done and whether Harrow will need to contribute to the cost, but early indications are that there will be significant reductions in the residents fuel bills at either a very low cost, or no cost at all to Harrow.

- 5.3** This is a pilot and if successful will help us to secure funding for more of this work. We are currently undertaking Green Deal assessments on a further 25 randomly selected properties across the borough to help design a forward plan for energy efficiency works and to attract external funding. Whilst nothing is agreed as yet we hope to secure funding for a wide range of new initiatives to include:

- Heat pumps
- Green roofs
- Solar PV panels
- Solid wall insulation
- Glazing

- 5.4** There is also a possibility that funding can be secured towards some of the energy efficiency work we have already committed to do within the Capital Programme, which would mean that subject to financial approval we would be able to undertake additional works from the HRA money set aside for the current programme-either bringing

forward work from the 2014/15 project or undertaking projects that would not otherwise be done. Depending on the amount of additional funding secured it could be a combination of the 2 options. If there is any more news by the date of the TLRCF meeting a verbal update will be given.

- 5.5** In addition we are looking to use British Gas funding through the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) to complete the cavity wall and loft insulation programme we started in 2012/13 but is not yet complete. If this proves possible it will lead to a marked improvement in our performance in the thermal insulation of our homes, all at no cost to the tenant.

6.0 Feedback from VFM Sub Group

- 6.1** The group met on 19th March and discussed a number of issues relating to Asset Management. The first was a presentation from the Council's Insurance Officer on Housing Liability Claims from 1 April 2006 – 18 March 2013 and Leasehold Buildings Claims 1 April 2007 – 18 March 2013
- 6.2** The group noted that the majority of the claims since 2007 related to water leaks and water ingress and asked to see a further report in June 2013. It was explained that the current Leasehold Building Insurance ends in March 2014, and the contract will go out to tender. Part of the process will include consultation with Leaseholders. The tenders are expected back in November. The group asked to see the results of the tender process.
- 6.3** The Asset Management Strategy was also discussed and it was agreed to consult with the group on one of the key priorities, Value for Money at the April meeting.
- 6.4** Discussion also took place on energy efficiency / green deal and how officers are working to attract grant money so that tenants and leaseholders can take advantage of these offers. The group requested that the officer who has been investigating the various funding strands, be invited to the next meeting.

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: Dave Roberts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 9th April 2013		

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

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Background Papers: None