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

Date of Meeting:	26th June 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 (TLRCF)

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report be noted

Section 2 – Report

Updates from previous discussions and new items for information

1.0   Quality Heating

1.1   Quality Heating began taking calls for domestic heating and hot water breakdowns direct from tenants on 5th June 2013. Asset Management staff are working very closely with Quality Heating to support the change and resolve any problems that arise as quickly as possible. This includes Council staff spending time at Quality Heating's office to monitor the transition. As agreed at a previous TLRCF a report on how well the trial is working out will be brought to the September meeting.

2.0   Void Properties

2.1   Since the change in working arrangements that took place last July following the move to our new responsive repairs contractors and the Asset Management restructure, one of the performance figures we have struggled to improve has been the void turnaround time. There are in effect 3 separate processes running concurrently to let a vacated property involving Asset Management, Housing Needs and Resident Services.

2.2   However this report concentrates on the element of the process that involves repairs. The figure monitored is the average time taken for repairs works to be completed on a void, so it is ready to let. This figure excludes any major works undertaken in the property whilst it is void.

2.3   The turnaround time was improving towards the end of the last financial year, and the target of 14 days was met in January and February but slipped again during March to 16 days. Because of the slow progress in improving void turnaround times TLRCF asked for an update on progress.

2.4   Officers in Asset Management, Resident Services and Housing Needs are working together to improve existing procedures across the whole void process. From an Asset Management perspective we have been working very closely with the contractors to improve understanding of our voids standards, partnership working and turnaround times with some positive results. This work has included monitoring the level of works undertaken at the void stage and improving communication between contractors where more than one

is working on a single property to avoid delays.

2.5   April figures were 14 days and May figures were 10 days. This is showing an improvement and there is every indication from our contractors that this improvement can be sustained.

3.0   The Green Deal

3.1   Since the last TLRCF report we have, following a great deal of preparatory work by members of the Asset Management team to provide details of the current condition of our housing stock, received a verbal offer from British Gas for funding under Green Deal to undertake energy efficiency works that will reduce carbon emissions.

3.2   As this report is being written we are still awaiting confirmation in writing of the offer and how it is structured but we are expecting that offer to bring in £6.5 million over 2 years. This is very exciting news for us as not only will the funding enable us to bring forward energy efficiency works from future years capital programmes, some of the funding is expected to be for works we were undertaking anyway which will free up capital funding for other purposes.

3.3   We believe this to be particularly good news for tenants and leaseholders as in addition to the opportunity to carry out certain works sooner than anticipated there are likely to be savings on tenants fuel bills, and reductions on certain leaseholder charges for major works as a result.

3.4   More details will follow once the written offer has been received and an action plan has been devised.

4.0   Grange Farm Estate Project

4.1   At the April TLRCF meeting members asked for a regular progress report to be provided on the Grange Farm Estate Programme as it is the biggest single project to be delivered in 2013/14. The project covers external and internal communal works including:

- Replacement of living room and bedroom bay windows
- Replacement of individual flat front doors
- Replacement of communal windows to staircases
- Replacement of bin store doors
- Replacement of individual store doors
- Redecoration of communal areas
- Cleaning of external wall cladding by water jetting

4.2   The first part of the Grange Farm project is to develop a block where there are no leaseholders 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.

4.3   Initial plans to be on site by June to work on the pilot block have been delayed in order to facilitate our commitment to supporting the local economy by placing advertisements in the Harrow press to encourage more local contractors to express an interest in tendering for these projects. We have asked local contractors to express an interest by 21st June. Once we have all expressions of interest, we will put the pilot phase out to tender.

4.4   We plan to refurbish a pilot block over the next few months. We will then have a consultation event allowing residents to view the type of work we are proposing and get feedback to help inform the next phase of refurbishment. We will start official section 20 consultation with leaseholders and plan to start work on the main estate refurbishment in spring next year.

5.0   Customer Journey Mapping

5.1   One of the difficulties we have had as an Asset Management team is to develop an effective system to measure customer satisfaction with our major works in a meaningful way. Although we have been reporting customer satisfaction from the contractors own survey, we have not until now found a reliable way to validate this information.

5.2   We aim to continue with the good consultation work that has happened at Francis Road to continue to experiment with new and better ideas and improve how we consult with all residents on such programmes. We are doing this by introducing a new technique called Customer Journey Mapping which 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.

5.3   As the largest single programme of work that we are delivering in 2013/14, we will be piloting the use of customer journey mapping for the Grange Farm Estate project. This 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 (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.

5.4 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.

5.5 We started this process by sending out a baseline questionnaire to all tenants and leaseholders of the Grange Farm Estate on the week commencing 27th May 2013, with an accompanying letter explaining who the Asset Management Team are and asking for feedback. This questionnaire has also been placed online to encourage greater participation and it is anticipated that this will be followed up by door knocking site visits by the Customer Experience Coordinator and the Resident Consultation Officer in order to get as many forms filled in as possible.

5.6 We will then liaise with the Grange Farm Estate TRA in order to discuss the best way forward to get interested tenants and leaseholders to take part in the qualitative part of the research.

6.0 Feedback from VFM Sub Group

6.1 The group met on 21st May and discussed a number of issues relating to Asset Management.

6.2 A problem the group had raised before involved the 'secure by design' locks on new front and back doors. These can be difficult to use and some tenants are struggling to use them and there do appear to be faults with some of them. To address this it was agreed to put an article into Homing In telling tenants who to contact and we will arrange for someone (possibly a trainee surveyor) to go out and assess the problem and / or provide training on how locks work. We agreed to let TRAs know in advance of Homing In article being published in case they get concerns raised directly with them.

6.3 Warranties. The group previously discussed an ongoing problem here Access Harrow did not have information readily available when receiving a repair call, to enable them to determine if works were under warranty. This meant sometimes works that were covered by warranty were processed as a responsive repair.

6.4 Officers have met and discussed the problem and discovered that information on warranties has been supplied to Access Harrow in bulk, but this meant information was not available instantly on individual addresses. This has now been resolved so that details will be input onto individual addresses.

6.5 We are also developing aftercare packages for tenants when works are completed to include details of who to contact if things go wrong. Consideration is also being given to providing direct contact information on stickers where works were completed-for example stickers will placed under basin in bathrooms, under sinks in kitchen, etc to help ensure tenants do not lose the contact details.

6.6 **Prioritising Capital Projects for Assets other than Homes**. The group had previously discussed a process for identifying and prioritising projects not currently on the capital programme, that could be progressed using any procurement savings that arise. As a process for Member sign off has now been agreed this procedure was reviewed. A new draft will go back to the group once officers and Members have an opportunity to discuss it.

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 X	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 4 June 2013	

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

Maggie Challoner
Interim Head of Asset Management
Tel: 020 8424 2473
Email: Maggie.challoner@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers: None