



AGENDA FOR THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Members of the Housing Scrutiny Committee are summoned to Committee Room 4, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on, **11 July 2016 at 7.30 pm.**

John Lynch
Head of Democratic Services

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Despatched : 1 July 2016

Membership

Councillor Michael O'Sullivan (Chair)
Councillor Marian Spall (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Gary Doolan
Councillor Aysegul Erdogan
Councillor Osh Gantly
Councillor Mouna Hamitouche MBE
Councillor Una O'Halloran
Councillor Angela Picknell
Rose Marie McDonald (PFI Managed Tenants)
Jim Rooke (Directly Managed Tenants)

Substitute Members

Councillor Raphael Andrews
Councillor Alex Diner
Councillor Satnam Gill OBE
Councillor Gary Heather
Councillor Olly Parker
Councillor Alice Perry
Councillor Dave Poyser

Quorum: is 4 Councillors



A. Formal Matters

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1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declaration of Substitute Members
3. Declarations of Interests

If you have a **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest*** in an item of business:

- if it is not yet on the council's register, you **must** declare both the existence and details of it at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent;
- you may **choose** to declare a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest that is already in the register in the interests of openness and transparency.

In both the above cases, you **must** leave the room without participating in discussion of the item.

If you have a **personal** interest in an item of business **and** you intend to speak or vote on the item you **must** declare both the existence and details of it at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent but you **may** participate in the discussion and vote on the item.

***(a) Employment, etc** - Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.

(b) Sponsorship - Any payment or other financial benefit in respect of your expenses in carrying out duties as a member, or of your election; including from a trade union.

(c) Contracts - Any current contract for goods, services or works, between you or your partner (or a body in which one of you has a beneficial interest) and the council.

(d) Land - Any beneficial interest in land which is within the council's area.

(e) Licences- Any licence to occupy land in the council's area for a month or longer.

(f) Corporate tenancies - Any tenancy between the council and a body in which you or your partner have a beneficial interest.

(g) Securities - Any beneficial interest in securities of a body which has a place of business or land in the council's area, if the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body or of any one class of its issued share capital.

This applies to **all** members present at the meeting.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting
5. Chair's Report
6. Order of Business
7. Public Questions

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B.	Items for Decision/Discussion	Page
1.	Service Review Group: Review of New Build Communications	5 - 24
2.	Responsive Repairs: Final Report	25 - 46
3.	Housing Services for Vulnerable People: Scrutiny Initiation Document	47 - 50
4.	Review of areas of enquiry for registered provider sessions at Housing Scrutiny Committee meetings	51 - 52
5.	Work Programme 2016/17	53 - 54

C. Urgent non-exempt items (if any)

Any non- exempt items which the Chair agrees should be considered urgent by reason of special circumstances. The reasons for urgency will be agreed by the Chair and recorded in the minutes.

D. Exclusion of press and public

To consider whether, in view of the nature of the remaining items on the agenda, any of them are likely to involve the disclosure of exempt or confidential information within the terms of the Access to Information Procedure Rules in the Constitution and, if so, whether to exclude the press and public during discussion thereof.

E. Confidential/exempt items

F. Urgent exempt items (if any)

Any exempt items which the Chair agrees should be considered urgently by reason of special circumstances. The reasons for urgency will be agreed by the Chair and recorded in the minutes.

The next meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee will be on 6 September 2016

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London Borough of Islington

Housing Scrutiny Committee - 26 May 2016

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee held at Committee Room 5, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 26 May 2016 at 7.30 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** O'Sullivan (Chair), Erdogan, Gantly, O'Halloran, and Picknell.

Co-opted members: Rose-Marie McDonald and Jim Rooke.

Councillor Michael O'Sullivan in the Chair

- 184** **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item A1)**
Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Marian Spall and Mouna Hamitouche.
- 185** **DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item A2)**
None.
- 186** **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Item A3)**
None.
- 187** **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item A4)**
RESOLVED:
That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 April 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and the Chair be authorised to sign them.
- 188** **CHAIR'S REPORT (Item A5)**
The Chair reported that the Housing and Planning Act had received royal assent and that further changes to national housing policy would be implemented through secondary legislation.
- 189** **ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item A6)**
No changes were proposed to the order of business.
- 190** **PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item A7)**
The Chair outlined the procedure for public questions and the filming and recording of meetings.
- 191** **MEMBERSHIP, TERMS OF REFERENCE AND DATES OF MEETINGS (Item B1)**
RESOLVED:
That the membership, terms of reference and dates of meetings of the Housing Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2016/17 be noted.
- 192** **RSL SCRUTINY: HYDE HOUSING ASSOCIATION (Item B2)**
Lee Daly, Head of Housing Services, and Chyrel Brown, Regional Director of Resident Services, made a presentation to the Committee on the performance of The Hyde Group.

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The following main points were noted in the discussion:

- Hyde owned or managed over 50,000 homes across London, the south east, and the midlands. Since 2005 the organisation had agreed to four stock transfers with Islington Council and had invested in the regeneration of housing stock.
- Hyde sought to develop innovative housing and was in the process of carrying out 15 garage conversions at the Hyde Village Estate. The organisation would have 2,194 units in the borough following the completion of Hyde Village and regeneration of the Packington Estate.
- The regeneration of the Packington Estate was to increase the number of homes from 558 to 700. It was noted that 475 of these would be general needs units.
- The satisfaction of Hyde residents with their repairs service had increased by 10% to 82% over the previous year. It was commented that some residents had a poor perception of the service and the organisation was working to make improvements, especially in regard to the time taken to complete repairs and keeping residents informed.
- Hyde's anti-social behaviour service had a satisfaction rating of 83%. The organisation considered this to be positive however was reviewing the service in order to improve the level of resident support, as this aspect of the service had only received a satisfaction rating of 67%.
- It was noted that rent arrears in Islington were above target at 5.24%, however this was comparable to other organisations.
- Hyde provided its residents with employment, training, money and debt advice through its Hyde Plus service. This was considered to be a service valued by residents. 154 Islington residents had received advice over the previous year. It was expected for this number to increase following the implementation of welfare reform and universal credit.
- The Committee noted problems with damp and coldbridging at Alderwick Court and commented that this had previously been considered by the Health and Care Scrutiny Committee. The organisation was seeking to work with the council and residents to find alternative accommodation; it was explained that residents affected by the damp would receive additional priority on the council's housing register. A member of the public explained the health issues her family had experienced as a result of the damp. Hyde and the affected residents had found it difficult to engage with each other and the Committee expressed regret at the deterioration of this relationship.
- One challenge to the organisation was managing the performance of its outgoing grounds maintenance contractor, as the contract had been re-tendered and a new contractor would be commencing work in July 2016.
- The Committee noted that Hyde carried out the repairs for Partners' properties and it was suggested that Hyde could better engage with the Partners resident forum. A member of the Partners resident forum thought that Hyde's repairs service required improvement and that the organisation's satisfaction surveys did not provide sufficient scope for explaining any problems experienced. The Committee noted that Hyde's satisfaction surveying was carried out by a third party and requested a copy of the survey questions.
- A discussion was had on the ancillary services provided by Hyde such as community centres. The Committee suggested that hiring Hyde's community facilities was unaffordable for some residents. It was noted that some estates had communal areas which could be hired by residents.
- It was confirmed that Hyde's repairs service was carried out through a partnering contract with Mears. Operatives were highly trained however the organisation was seeking to increase the number of multi-trade staff. A Mears contractor was

embedded within Hyde's customer service team in order to best understand feedback from residents. It was confirmed that residents receiving repairs should receive a text message in advance of their appointment.

- Hyde was committed to its relationship with Mears and had no plans to bring its repairs service in-house, however recognised the value of direct labour organisations.
- The Committee noted the importance of fraud detection in relation to housing allocations, especially due to the limited supply of affordable housing in the borough.
- The Committee requested further information on the profile of Hyde properties in Islington.
- Hyde commented on the challenges presented by welfare reform, universal credit and the Housing and Planning Act. The organisation considered that further work with its partners and increased efficiencies would be required, and this could partially be met through the organisation's proposed merger with L&Q. The organisation was also carrying out service reviews in order to realign services to its residents' priorities and was working to improve voids performance in order to decrease the number of empty homes. In terms of the effects on residents, it was thought that providing employment and money advice would help tenants to pay their rent when facing increased financial burdens and develop the sustainability of communities.
- It was confirmed that Hyde did not re-paint void properties unless considered necessary, however a paint pack was available to new tenants on request.

The Committee thanked The Hyde Group for their attendance.

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RESPONSIVE REPAIRS: DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS (Item B3)

The Committee considered the draft recommendations of the Responsive Repairs scrutiny. The recommendations were approved, subject to an amendment for clarity to Recommendation 6.

The Committee thanked the Head of Repairs and Maintenance for his contribution to the review.

RESOLVED:

That the draft recommendations be approved, subject to Recommendation 6 being amended to read: 'The Committee recognises that estate services co-ordinators and caretakers have a wealth of knowledge about their area and suggests that their relationship with the repairs service be developed further, as these staff may be able to assist in the diagnosis of communal repairs, assist with communication, *and champion resident needs in partnership with Resident Liaison Officers*'.

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SCRUTINY TOPICS 2016/17 (Item B4)

The Committee noted that communications, noise nuisance and key worker housing had been suggested for review in 2016/17. It was advised that the constitution required the Committee to identify one main topic for review and the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee could assign another review topic to the Committee as required.

Following a discussion, the Committee identified 'Housing Services for Vulnerable People' as the review topic for 2016/17. In particular, the Committee expressed an interest in reviewing the housing options for vulnerable people, the additional services offered to vulnerable tenants, how vulnerable tenants and their particular needs were identified, how the council communicated and engaged with vulnerable tenants, benchmarking council services and identifying best practice, and joined up working with adult social care.

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It was suggested that housing associations' approaches to housing for vulnerable people be added to the list of standard questions for registered providers attending committee meetings.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Committee review 'Housing Services for Vulnerable People', subject to approval by the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee;
- 2) That the Committee undertake any further reviews as instructed by the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee;
- 3) That a draft work plan and scrutiny initiation document be submitted to the next meeting for consideration.

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm

CHAIR



Housing Scrutiny Committee	Date: 11 July 2016	Ward(s): All
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SUBJECT: Service Review Group - Communications in the new build process

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 Communications in the new build process was identified by residents as a key area for review at the first Service Review Group (SRG) meeting in 2015. This report sets out the background to the review and the recommendations made by SRG members.
- 1.2 The review was resident-led and facilitated by the Principal Resident Participation Officer, Housing Development and Regeneration Manager and the Deputy Head of Strategy and Communications. The members of the Service Review Group who participated in this review were: Annabel Goulding, Nicola Eyidah, Dean Donaghey, Luigi Indri, Peter Owen and Helen Ladele. Review meetings were also attended by Jim Rooke, observer and representative of Housing Scrutiny Committee
- 1.3 The purpose of the review was to look at how the council (the New Build and Communications Teams) communicates with tenants and leaseholders when building new homes on council estates with the aim of improving processes and identifying areas of good practice.
- 1.4 The review has not looked at the role of the Planning Department and planning permissions or the work carried out by contractors.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the recommendations of the Service Review Group be received.

3. Recommendations from the Service Review Group (Set out in detail at Appendix 1)

- 3.1 Obtain feedback and publicise learning achieved so that residents are confident that learning is being used to improve how future projects are managed.
- 3.2 Be clear in all forms of communications to improve resident understanding of the new build process.
- 3.3 Involve the Inclusive Design Team, so that accessibility is at the heart of a new development and publicise this.

- 3.4 Improve the Customer Care experience.
- 3.5 Advise non-resident leaseholders of the scope of the work so they are aware how it may impact on the property they own and any sub-tenants.
- 3.6 Develop a role for a resident's champion.
- 3.7 Promote joint-working.

An action plan is being developed based on the recommendations and is set out at Appendix 2.

4. Background

- 4.1 The SRG first met with officers on 22 October 2015 to scope out the review, and identify the activities that would be undertaken by members of the SRG and officers. Appendix 3 sets out the programme of activities. At the first meeting, the following timetable was agreed:

Agreed task	Task completed
Scope the review	22.10.15
Gather the evidence	October 2015 to February 2016
Evaluate the evidence	4.2.16
Agree recommendations	25.2.16
Present recommendations to panel of officers	13.4.16
Report to Housing Scrutiny	11.7.16

4.2 Evidence gathering

- 4.2.1 A desktop review was carried out and included the following activities:

- Reviewing relevant policies and procedures;
- Reviewing the Local Lettings Policy;
- Reviewing complaints about the Local Lettings Policy;
- Assessing the quality of communications material from Architects, the council, contractors and the council's website;
- A benchmarking exercise looking at websites of other organisations.

- 4.2.2 To test the desktop research, members of the SRG:

- Visited the Parkhurst Road new build scheme;
- Spoke to the Capital Projects Manager from the New Build Team, Communications and Engagement Manager, an Architect, an Inclusive Design Officer and the Housing Mobility Manager;
- Met with a group of residents who were in the process of undergoing a new build programme on their estate;
- Attended two consultation events;
- Spoke to an officer from Camden Council to get information on how another council manages the new build process;
- Carried out a telephone survey of residents who had moved into new homes in the previous 12 months;
- Met with members of the Disability Housing Panel.

- 4.2.3 The evidence gathered from various activities is set out at Appendix 3.

5. Summary of findings

5.1 On examining the evidence and conducting interviews, SRG members found a number of examples where the service provided for residents worked really well and wanted to highlight some of the good practice within the three teams involved in the process; namely the New Build, Communications and Lettings Teams. The good practice identified was:

5.2 New Build Team

- The team use a site finder that will look at a variety of spaces and narrow them to possible options;
- The team carry out a feasibility study by looking at site suitability, considering architects' views and technical surveys. They also assess financial viability and any concerns raised by the area offices;
- Resident consultation using a variety of communications mediums.

Communications Team

- Act as a critical friend;
- Make sure leaflets and flyers are in plain English;
- Present any visual documents and boards;
- Make sure materials are accessible.

Lettings team

- Learn from each new scheme;
- Now attend the first meeting with residents to talk about the local lettings policy; advising residents how to get on the waiting list and how to use the bidding process.

5.3 SRG members also highlighted where improvements could be made

- Members of the SRG carried out a variety of tasks highlighted above and they have based their suggested improvements through their finding after speaking to residents and staff, attending consultation meetings, looking at survey results, speaking to members of the Disability Housing Panel and benchmarking;
- The table below shows SRG's findings and suggested improvements:

SRG findings based on tasks carried out by the group	Suggested improvements
<p>Staff meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We should consider producing a newsletter about the scheme at the end of the project • Communication materials should say what lessons have been learnt and what changes will be made to improve resident experience. 	<p>Publicise learning achieved so that residents are confident that learning is being used to improve how future projects are managed.</p>
<p>Website and communications review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications material should include the views of people who have experience of completed schemes, using photos and videos from inside their new homes; • Photographs of internal lay outs on completed schemes should be put on the council's website. <p>Staff Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer generated images (CGIs) of internal layouts should be used at the planning stage and include a person to help demonstrate the scale; 	<p>Consider different communication methods to improve customer experience.</p> <p>A review of the new build pages is already underway with the Communications team – this will include uploading the video about the Vaudeville Court scheme.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is difficult to understand flat pictures. 3D images would be better and it would be useful to include a person to help demonstrate the scale. These should be accessible to everyone; imagery should show a person in a wheelchair in adapted properties. • Produce a video of different stages of the development process including resident consultations using officers and residents. <p>Consultation meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The storyboards at the consultation events could be more organised so that residents can gain an understanding of the works to take place; • Information leaflets should be shorter and visually appealing. 	
<p>Staff meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Build Team should consult the Inclusive Design team before pre application stage; • The Inclusive Design team to discuss new design standards with Disability Action in Islington. 	<p>Involve the Inclusive Design Team so that accessibility is at the heart of a new development and publicise their involvement</p>
<p>Consultation meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There seemed to be a lot of anxiety and confusion at the start of the meeting. More information needs to be sent in advance to prepare residents for the drop-in consultation so they can prepare for it. <p>Focus Group meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer care training may be needed. The tone of letters needs to be more professional and empathic; • Consider how the role of the Resident Liaison Officer can be more effective in building trust, dealing with issues that arise and managing the expectations of residents. <p>Telephone Survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider more face to face contact with residents as a telephone survey may not be as effective as discussing issues directly; • Over a 3 year project the council should have knocked on all residents' doors and had more face to face contact. 	<p>Improve the Customer Care experience</p>
<p>Staff meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lettings Team do not carry out satisfaction surveys at the moment but they are going to start doing this; • Communication materials should say what lessons have been learnt and what changes will be made to improve resident experience. <p>Telephone Survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need for a simple explanation of the local lettings policy and timelines for bidding. 	<p>Be open and transparent throughout the whole new build process so residents are aware of the potential impacts the new build scheme will have on the area they live in.</p>
<p>Focus group meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project managers should have better customer care, interpersonal and communications skills training; • Communication needs to be clear and simple with no jargon. <p>Consultation meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The booklet for Parkview Homes was too lengthy and could have been more visually appealing. Use of too many words and not 	<p>Be clear in all forms of communications to improve resident understanding of the new build process.</p>

<p>enough illustration. The information was too technical in nature; use of layman's terms would make it easier for residents to understand;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There should be less text on invites to events and better use of bullet points. <p>Communication materials review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There needs to be better co-ordination of the communications material between the council's Communications Team and the Contractor. 	
<p>Focus Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A non- resident leaseholder who attended the focus group meeting advised that he had received no direct communications from the New Build Team or Home Ownership Team about the proposed works on the Kings Square estate. 	<p>Advise non-resident leaseholders of the scope of the work so they are aware of how it may impact on the property they own and any sub-tenants.</p>
<p>Focus Group meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were concerns expressed that on estates where there is no a tenants' and residents' association (TRA) there is a need for an independent resident champion. <p>Telephone Survey with Vaudeville Court residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A tenant stated 'I do feel that it is not fair that the Council should rely on one person to give out all the messages. If there a new tenant the TRA rep may not know and so this person would miss out on critical information.' 	<p>Develop a role for a residents' champion.</p>
<p>Benchmarking – Camden Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work more closely with other developing councils on best practice for engagement during new build schemes; • Consider joint procurement. <p>Communication materials review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Communications Team should provide the necessary templates and guidance for contractors so that the messages and material to residents is consistent and accurate. <p>Staff meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Build Team should consult the Inclusive Design Officers as early as possible in scheme development (even before pre App stage). 	<p>Promote joint-working between all teams involved in the new build process.</p>

5.4 A summary of findings are set out at Appendix 4.

6. Implications

6.1 Financial Implications

No direct financial implications arise as a result of the recommendations.

6.2 Legal Implications

No direct legal implications arise as a result of the recommendations.

6.3 Environmental Implications

No direct environmental implications arise as a result of the recommendations.

6.4 Resident Impact Assessment

The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

A Resident Impact Assessment has not been completed as the Service Review Group is a resident-led body which is making recommendations to the council. The recommendations made are intended to improve the communications with residents in the new build process. Services would need to consider any resident impacts arising from implementing the recommendations.

7. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 7.1 The recommendations reflect the key issues and areas for improvement identified by the SRG during the review. The recommendations identify that while there are good areas of practice with communication in the new build process, there are areas where some changes will allow for a better resident experience.
- 7.2 The recommendations have been developed into an action plan for consideration and agreement.

Signed by:



Director of Housing and Adult Social Services

Date 28 June 2016

Appendices:

- Appendix 1 - Detailed recommendations
- Appendix 2 - Action Plan
- Appendix 3 - Programme of activities carried out by the SRG
- Appendix 4 - Summary of findings

Background papers:

- None.

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Appendix 1 - Service Review Group - Communications in the new build process
Recommendations

	Objective	Actions
1	General for all teams	
1.1	Obtain feedback and publicise learning achieved	Include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All teams to carry out a satisfaction survey at the end of each project • Produce a newsletter about the scheme at the end of the project outlining learning achieved that will improve the resident experience for future schemes
1.2	Look at different communication methods to improve customer experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications material should refer to people who have experience of completed schemes, using photos and videos from inside their new homes • Communications Team should provide the necessary templates and guidance for contractors so that the messages and material given to residents are consistent and accurate • The booklet for Parkview Homes was too lengthy and could have been more visually appealing. There were too many words and not enough illustration. The information was too technical in nature; use of layman's terms would make it easier for residents. • The storyboards at the consultation events could be more organised so that residents can gain an understanding of the works that will take place
1.3	Involve the Inclusive Design Team so that accessibility is at the heart of a new development and publicise this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult the Inclusive Design Team to use the Joseph Rowntree Lifetime Homes Standards (recognising that the standards have changed to new ones that are less demanding)
1.4	Improve the Customer Care experience	a. Consultation meetings should include time slots for residents who work irregular hours b. Project Managers to have customer care and interpersonal and communications skills training c. Refresher courses on use of written material to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The need for communications to be clear and simple with no jargon ➤ That the tone of letters need to be professional and empathic ➤ There should be less text on invites to events ➤ The need to for more use of bullet points ➤ The need for it to be clearer what the council wants residents to do

2	New Build team	
2.1	Make the customer experience real for residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. CGIs or photographs of internal layouts at planning stage including people for scale for boards and website b. 3D presentation boards to include a person to help demonstrate the scale of the property c. Use imagery to show a person in a wheelchair in adapted properties d. Refer to people who have experienced other schemes that have now completed e. Make a video on the different stages of a development project
2.2	Be open and transparent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Changes in design specification or anything else should be highlighted making it easier for residents to track all changes b. Arrange council organised risk management group meeting where residents can contribute on possible risk factors c. Clear role explanations of all experts involved – what they can do and can't do
2.3	Be clear in all forms of communications to improve resident understanding of the new build process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Initial invitation for drop in meetings should prepare residents on what to expect– in and out of project scope b. Comms should have a role in explaining the local lettings policy – standard letters/ posters c. Clear explanation of the local lettings policy but ensure that it is clearly understood to those who are eligible. Consider a quick text survey?
2.4	Advise non-resident leaseholders of the scope of the work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Include as part of current process
2.5	Develop a role for a residents champion	<p>Appoint a designated Resident Liaison Officer (RLO) in the new build team to act as a champion for residents, especially those who are not represented by a Tenants and Residents Association.</p> <p>The RLO would meet everyone affected over the project cycle.</p> <p>Consideration needs to be given to what the best profile of the champion should be for each new build project. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person should not be a Council Officer • The person should not be a resident on the estate where works are being carried out • The person should be an independent, impartial party who provides reassurance to residents and who will assist in addressing issues and concerns from the residents regarding any issues that arise as a result of the New Build works.

3	Joint working	
3.	Promote Joint working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Work closely with other councils on developing best practice for engagement b. Consider joint procurement c. The Inclusive Design team to discuss new New Building Regulations Approved Document M, Volume 1 – 3 categories – see notes d. Consult with Disability Action in Islington on design standards

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Appendix 2 – Service Review Group – Communications in the New Build Process

Action Plan (in development)

	Objective	Required outcome/success criteria	Actions	Responsible officer / team
1. General for all teams				
1.1	Publicise learning achieved from earlier schemes		a. Learning resulting in an improved resident experience for future schemes	Lynn Stratton (<i>Deputy Head of Strategy and Communications</i>) and Stephen Nash (<i>New Homes and Development Programme Manager</i>)
1.2	Look at different communications methods to improve customer experience		a. Communications material should refer to people who have experience of completed schemes, using photos or videos of the inside of their new homes	Lynn Stratton
1.3	Make it accessible		a. Consult the Inclusive Design Team to use the Joseph Rowntree Lifetime Homes Standards (recognising that the standards have changed to new ones that are less demanding)	Stephen Nash and Inclusive Design Team
1.4	Improve the Customer Care experience		a. Consultation meetings should include time slots for residents who work irregular hours b. Project managers to have customer care/ interpersonal / communications skills training c. Refresher courses on use of written material to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The need for communications to be clear and simple with no jargon ➤ That the tone of letters need to be professional and empathic ➤ There should be less text on invites to events ➤ The need to for more use of bullet points 	New Build Team and Service Development team



2.1	Make it real experience for residents		<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. CGIs or photographs of internal layouts at planning stage incl. people for scale for boards and websiteb. 3D on boards to include a person to help demonstrate the scalec. Use imagery to show a person in a wheelchair in adapted propertiesd. refer to people who have experienced other schemes which have now completed	Lynn Stratton
2.2	Openness & transparency		<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Changes in design specification or anything else should be highlighted making it easier for residents to track all changesb. Arrange council organised risk management group meeting where residents can contribute on possible risk factorsc. Clear role explanations of all experts involved – what they can do and can't do	Stephen Nash and Lynn Stratton
2.4	Be clear		<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Initial invitation for drop in meetings should prepare residents on what to expect. Revise the survey used for Parkview consultationb. Communications should have a role in explaining the local lettings policy and designing standard letters and postersc. Communication should have oversight of material produced by contractors by providing templates and guidanced. Clear explanation of the local lettings policy and ensure it is clearly understood by those who are eligible - quick text survey?	Stephen Nash



2.5	Advise non resident leaseholders scope of the work		a. Include as part of current process	New Build Team
2.6	Develop a role for a residents champion		a. Appoint a designated Resident Liaison Officer in the New Build Team to act as a champion for residents especially those who are not represented by a Tenants & Residents Association OR b. Consideration needs to be given to develop a role for a Resident Champion: <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The person should not be a Council Officer➤ The person should not be a resident on the estate where works are being carried out➤ The person should be an independent, impartial party who provides reassurance to residents and who will assist in addressing issues and concerns from the residents regarding the works and any issues which arise as a result of the New Build works.	
3.	Promote Joint working		a. Work closely with other councils on developing best practice for engagement b. Consider joint procurement c. The Inclusive Design team to discuss new New Building Regulations Approved Document M, Volume 1 – 3 categories d. Design standards with DAII	Service Development Team and New Build team

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Appendix 3 – Service Review Group – Communications in the New Build Process
Programme of activities carried out by the SRG
Update 25.2.16
SRG Members
Peter, Annabel, Luigi, Helen, Nicola, Deano and Jim

	Activity	Type of activity	Service review panel lead	Update 25.2.16
1.	Consideration of information on new build process	Overview of the New Build process (Steve's & Lynn's presentation – <i>New Homes and Development Programme Manager and Deputy Head of Strategy and Communications</i>)	All	Completed
2.	Checklist developed by Comms team carried out in 2012/13	Review of the checklist	All	Sent on 19.11.15 via email
3.	Complaints / policies	Desktop exercise – email from Sue Haire on 18.1.16 - no official complaints about local letting policy. Two refusals: 1. The applicant refused because toilet/bathroom were together and he wanted separate WC. 2. The applicant refused a 3-bed property because it was too small but later went on to be successful for one of the 4-bed properties	Nicola and Deano	Complete (see email from Sue Haire)
4.	Look at the Council's website	https://beta.islington.gov.uk/housing/housing-development-and-improvement/new-building	Peter and Helen	Completed
5.	Benchmark what other councils are doing - London Boroughs of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hackney – • Camden - Nicola • Southwark – Peter 	Carry out benchmarking exercise by looking at websites of organisations listed.	Nicola and Nalini - Agree questions and then contact organisations listed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camden - Nicola - done • Southwark – Peter – update 25.2.16
6.	Site visit x 1 at completion stage	Visit the Pankhurst Scheme	All	Completed on Friday 11 December 9.30 to 11.30am at Williamson Street Centre

7.	Attend 2 x consultation events meetings which are usually drop in events	Meeting 1	Helen and Annabel	Parkview estate Completed on 3.2.16
		Meeting 2	Luigi	King Square Estate Completed on 14.1.16
8.	Focus groups with residents who have been through the process	Focus group meeting	Peter & Deano	28.1.16 – notes done
9.	Survey residents where scheme completed 2 x scheme over last 20 months	Assist developing questionnaire Can be done via email	Annabel	Sent 21.1.16 No responses on 4.2.16 –telephone calls completed
10	Visit completed new build scheme – walk around with Project Officer and Comms officer. Lunch Meet with Allocations and Architects:	Visit completed scheme with relevant staff	Deano, Luigi, Peter, Jim, & Helen	Done Wednesday 2 December 10.30 to 3.00pm
		Lunch		
		/ staff interviews	Violet (pm) Deano, Luigi, Peter, Jim, & Helen	Done Wednesday 2 December 10.30 to 3.00pm Notes completed
10.	Housing Disability Panel	Meet members of the Housing Disability Panel on 13.1.16 – 1.30pm Meeting with Karen Ross – Inclusive Design Officer – 25.2.16	Luigi	Done Wednesday 13 January & 25.2.16
11.	Assessment of quality communications material from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Architects • The Council • contractors • The Council's website 	Desktop exercise	All	Discuss on 25.2.16
12.	Next SRG meeting			25 February 2016

Appendix 4 – Service Review Group – Communications in the New Build Process

Summary of learning revised 25.2.16

Officer meetings

Communications and New Build team

- Produce a video of different stages of a development process including resident consultations using officers and residents
- Consider carrying out satisfaction survey on those affected by works at the end of the project
- Consider producing a newsletter about the scheme at the end of the project
- Newsletter should say what lessons have been learnt and that changes will be made to processes to improve resident experience
- Communications should have a role in explaining the local lettings policy
- Difficult to understand flat pictures – 3D images would be good and it would be useful to include a person in the images to demonstrate the scale. These should be accessible to everyone; imagery should show a person in a wheelchair in adapted properties
- Early briefings were described as good and transparent

Architect

- Involve residents as early as possible and at the preliminary stage if possible
- Clear role explanations of all experts involved – what they can do and can't do

Lettings

- Consider carrying out satisfaction survey on lettings process

Inclusive Design team

- New Build Team should consult the Inclusive Design Team before pre Ap stage
- The Inclusive Design Team to discuss new design standards with DAII (see link below)

http://www.islington.gov.uk/services/planning/planningpol/pol_supplement/Pages/inclusivedesign.aspx

From Disability Housing Panel

- The panel should be consulted at design stage
- All homes should be built with accessibility in mind and if it is to be a home for life then it should be designed with the view that the householder could be disabled and could become disabled or elderly
- Disabled people should have been consulted earlier in the planning process
- Why are disabled people, including the panel, not consulted in the planning or design stage of new developments?
- All new developments should include a percentage of specifically designated accessible homes
- All new developments should include planned Lifetime* homes, which have basic accessibility features built in as future-proofing against the need to do more expensive 'back adapting' if need arises
- Deaf residents need to be consulted, and supported as tenants by housing/repair staff by the use of technology where possible, e.g. tablets using BSL apps/sites

- Lack of disabled parking spaces needs to be addressed – only disabled parking available on new schemes

Focus Group meeting

- What is the role of the New Build Team in communicating with leaseholders who do not reside at the property? (*Email from resident unable to attend*)
- As the freeholder of the property we have the contact details of non-resident leaseholders. They should receive letters regarding the initial consultation informing residents there are plans to redevelop and giving them the opportunity to raise any issues or comments they have. They do not necessarily receive a copy of every subsequent letter that goes out.
- Feel that all project managers should have basic customer care/ interpersonal / communications skills training
- Asked communications to be clear/ simple /no jargon
- Fun days are good way communicate as these are family days
- We interviewed the architects, went to a council organised risk management group meeting where we could give the resident point of view
- There are many new build projects in the south of the borough – there seems to be no planned approach between the council another builders so the whole area has become an enormous building site
- Tone of letters need to be professional/ empathic
- Residents should attend a council organised risk management group meeting where residents can contribute on possible risk factors
- Any changes in design specification or anything else should be highlighted – makes it easier for residents to track all changes
- Residents should be given sufficient times to request for action especially over a holiday period
- A council officer should be appointed to act as a champion for residents especially those who do during a new build scheme i.e. designated Resident Liaison officers in the new build team
- The New Build Team's material should now refer to people who have experienced other schemes which have now completed

Telephone Survey – 4 out of 6 responses received

- If long term project try to ensure that meet all affected residents
- Consider more face to face contact with residents as a telephone survey may not be as effective as discussing issues directly
- Check if local lettings policy is accessible on website
- Check that all residents have understood the local lettings policy
- Ring fence bidding to those who are eligible

Consultation meetings

- CGIs of internal layouts for planning stage including a person in the images to give an idea of scale
- Less text on invites to events. Instead make more use of bullet points and also make it clearer what is expected of residents
- Use of too many words and not enough illustration. Found that the information was too technical in nature; use of layman's terms would make it easier for residents
- The storyboards at the consultation events could be more organised so that residents can gain an understanding of the works to take place
- Information leaflets to be shorter and visually appealing
- Time slots for residents who work unsocial hours
- Revised current survey should be sent to prepare the residents for the drop-in consultation as they seemed unprepared for it created an anxious meeting
- Consult with all relevant age groups at design stage

- The local lettings policy can be easily found on the website. It is well laid out and presented. Although, there needs to be clearer communication to residents on the points system for attaining new build flats. This information could be displayed on electronic noticeboards signposting residents to the website where the policy can be accessed

Benchmarking

- Work more closely with other developing councils on best practice for engagement
- Consider joint procurement

Publication material

Islington Council

- Less text on invites to events. Instead make more use of bullet points and also make it clearer what is expected of residents
- Comms material should refer to people who have experienced other completed schemes – using photos/ videos / comments
- Use photographs of residents inside their new homes
- Produce a video of the internal and external communal areas and use real people in the representations.
- Include positive and negative feedback from residents in the communication material – for example on the electronic noticeboards

Contractors

- There needs to be better co-ordination and oversight of the communication material between the council's Communications Team and the contractor prior to residents being informed of the builds. Communications Team should provide the necessary templates and guidance for contractors so that the messages and material to residents is consistent and accurate

Website

Good

- Very positive about the website; there were good drawings of the schemes and it was well laid out. The links on the pages were easy to follow

Learning

- Photos of internal lay outs on completed schemes on website

General Comments

- Consider the establishment of resident representation (trusted resident champions) to relay consistent and accurate information to their fellow residents on the works to be carried out and to communicate any changes and issues, for example, delays during the building process - so that residents feel involved. This could also help with obtaining feedback in an organised way of any issues residents feel need to be addressed during the build
- Follow up on issues raised by residents during the consultation phase of the project
- Consider how the role of the Resident Liaison Officer can be more effective in building trust, dealing with issues that arise and managing the expectations of residents
- Ensuring that consultation is carried out with all relevant groups and in particular those with disabilities who would be affected by the build in line with the disability standards recommended by the DAI

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Responsive Repairs

DRAFT REPORT OF THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**London Borough of Islington
July 2016**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Responsive Repairs

Overall aim: To consider resident experiences of the Responsive Repairs service.

Objectives:

- To identify the different types of responsive repairs carried out
- To measure the satisfaction of residents with responsive repairs, and to evaluate the utility of the metrics used
- To consider how works are reported, planned, prioritised, responded to, and communicated to residents
- To evaluate how the service compares to the services of other London Boroughs and registered providers
- To confirm that the services are designed to deliver customer focused outcomes
- To identify any areas for improvement

Evidence

The review ran from January to May 2016 and evidence was received from a variety of sources:

1. Witness evidence including:
 - Matt West, Head of Repairs and Maintenance
 - Paul Lightfoot, Group Leader for Direct Works
 - The views of tenants and leaseholders from the repairs Reference Group
 - Susan Richmond, Kwest Research – presentation regarding how impartial data is collected
 - Lorenzo Heanue, Productivity and Compliance Group Leader – details of call centre customer excellence accreditation
 - Michelle Reynolds, Group Commercial Director at Affinity Sutton and John Bell, Managing Director of CBS – presentation on Affinity Sutton's repairs service
 - Kim Wells, Head of Repairs at LB Camden – presentation on the organisation's repairs service
2. Documentary evidence
 - Introductory report
 - Details of call centre accreditation
 - Extract of new ICT system specification
 - Details of repairs apprentice scheme
 - Details of Kwest resident satisfaction survey and sample responses
 - Housing Direct key performance indicators

Main Findings

The council's responsive repairs service was brought back in-house in August 2014. The service carries out approximately 55,000 repairs each year and employs 105 trade staff, supported by contractors as demand requires. Since the service was brought back-in house performance levels have not been as high as expected; with monthly overall satisfaction ratings of around 70%. Councillors have also frequently received casework arising from the repairs service. For this reason the Committee sought to review resident experiences of the repairs service and identify areas for improvement.

The service has three categories of repair relating to severity and the expected wait from the time the repair is raised; 'emergency work' requires attendance within two hours; 'urgent work' requires attendance within 24 hours; and 'non-urgent work' is carried out within 20 calendar days. Approximately one third of repairs are categorised as urgent, however the service was working to reduce this number as it was thought that some repairs were misdiagnosed and a more accurate diagnosis would lead to a more effective use of resources.

Members gave examples of performance issues reported through case work. Evidence was also received from local residents, including members of the Repairs Reference Group, a resident panel appointed to provide detailed feedback on the council's repairs service. This indicated that experiences of the service varied considerably, which was consistent with the feedback reported to the service. Frequently arising complaints included repairs not being completed on the first visit; waiting too long to get through to Housing Direct; the wrong tradesperson being sent to complete the repair; repairs having to be chased up; residents not knowing when operatives will attend or operatives attending unannounced.

Whilst officers acknowledged that performance had not been satisfactory in all cases, constructive feedback was welcomed and a plan had been developed to improve the service. It was thought that service satisfaction and efficiency could be significantly improved by focusing on the number of repairs completed first time – the 'first time fix rate'. Evidence received from residents, officers and representatives of other repairs services indicated that fixing repairs first time was one of the biggest drivers of service satisfaction. This was not only convenient to residents, but was cost effective to the service by reducing the time spent on any one repair.

One significant piece of work to increase the first time fix rate was multi-skilling operatives. It was noted that many operatives were specialists in a particular trades, whereas a service prioritising completing repairs first time required a greater number of operatives sufficiently skilled in multiple trades to complete all aspects of a repair. Another key aspect of improving the first time fix rate would be reducing the time spent by operatives travelling to collect parts. It was noted that some repair services had a parts delivery service and the Committee suggested that this be explored further.

The Committee recommended that the service prioritise increasing the number of "first time fixes" in order to improve efficiency and tenant satisfaction. To achieve this it is suggested that officers further investigate the feasibility of a "ring and bring" service, to enable parts to be delivered to a repair without the operative leaving the property, and continue to invest in the multi-skilling of staff. The council should aspire for all operatives to be skilled in multiple trades as part of a "first time fix culture".

Service satisfaction is independently monitored by Kwest, a housing research company commissioned to interview around 400 Islington residents receiving repairs per month. The Committee noted the headline satisfaction statistics obtained from Kwest and decided to investigate surveying methods and satisfaction levels further, as the feedback councillors received on repairs suggested that satisfaction may not be as high as reported.

Reported satisfaction levels had increased since the survey questions were revised in December 2015. This is because the council had asked Kwest to survey satisfaction with the repair received '*on this occasion*' as opposed to '*overall satisfaction with the way Islington Council deals with repairs and maintenance*', which tended to yield lower results as residents included wider factors in their response. Data for the first part of 2015/16 indicated an '*overall satisfaction*' rating of around 70%, whereas service satisfaction '*on this occasion*' was higher at around 88% from December 2015 to the end of February 2016. Kwest emphasised that due to the change in interview questions it was not possible to provide a direct comparison to historic satisfaction data.

It was thought that the specific questions asked of respondents could be a factor in the discrepancy between the surveyed levels of satisfaction and that reported directly to councillors. Another factor may be differences in the sample of residents asked to respond to the survey. Kwest only surveyed residents once their repair had been resolved, whereas casework was more likely to relate to incomplete repairs. The survey also excluded those who had received multiple repairs to their property in order to link each interview to a single repair and Kwest did not survey those already interviewed in the last three months to avoid survey fatigue; the reasoning for these restrictions is clear, however one consequence of this could be that particularly complex cases are excluded from the survey, yet these are the cases which are more likely to generate councillor casework. Whilst it is welcomed that the survey data indicates that many residents are satisfied with the repairs to their property, it is important to view this data within the context of the survey's limits.

The Committee considered internal processes and the improvements in progress to the council's systems. Officers stressed that internal processes would be improved considerably following the implementation of a new ICT system in Autumn 2016. The new system was to feature an improved diagnostic script developed with trade staff, this was to ensure that operatives had all of the information they needed to carry out the repair and increased accuracy would also assist with prioritisation. The new system would ensure that appointments are made at a time when the required resources are available and automatically allocate repairs to trade staff based on their skill set, this would improve the number of appointments being kept, remove the need to manually allocate jobs, and ensure that the right staff attend the repair with the right resources. Following implementation of the new system trade staff would be issued with one job at a time through the use of mobile technology to ensure complete focus on each repair, and staff would be able order materials and book follow-up appointments as required with tenants while in their home. Remote tracking would also be available through the new system, and this would enable the service to provide time estimates for when staff would attend each property. These are thought to be considerable service improvements and members are keen for the new technology to be used to its full capacity. The Committee suggested that handled technology could also be used to provide checklists for operatives when completing repairs.

The Committee welcomes the improvements expected through service's new ICT system, to be implemented in Autumn 2016. The system is intended to lead to a number of service improvements including improved diagnostic processes, automated repair allocations to staff, greater use of handheld technology, the ability to track operative progress remotely and improved communication with residents via the use of text messaging. It is hoped that the implementation of the system will lead to a corresponding increases in efficiency and satisfaction, and it is suggested that performance be reviewed after the new system has bedded-in to ensure that the improvements have been achieved. The Committee is keen to see the new technology fully utilised and supporting all aspects of the service, and in particular suggests that electronic checklists or scripts be introduced as an aide-memoire for operatives to check that all aspects of a repair are completed in line with service standards.

Some residents highlighted communications issues, particularly around missed appointments and communal repairs, and the Committee identified this as an area for improvement. The new ICT system will allow the use of text messaging and residents were particularly keen for this to be

utilised; advising when operatives were on route to a property, their estimated time of arrival, and if they were going to be late. The Committee agreed that the use of text messaging was a positive development, however noted that not all residents may want to be contacted in this way and suggested the service should always use the resident's preferred method of communication.

The Committee heard from residents that communication is key to a positive customer experience. The Committee recognises the work already underway to improve this aspect of the service, however notes that residents should be made aware as soon as possible if the operative is running late, if their appointment has been rescheduled, or if a communal repair has been completed. It is recommended that the service makes use of the resident's preferred communications channel; this may be telephone, text message, email, or for a message to be delivered through estates staff in the case of vulnerable residents.

The Committee also considered communication between services. It was confirmed that the responsive repairs service had positive working relationships with the capital programming team, the gas team and the estate maintenance team. When repairs occurred frequently due to failing components then referrals were made to the capital works programme. However, some of the residents interviewed were not aware of this referral process and it was thought that clearer communication surrounding this would be helpful.

The Committee notes the positive working relationship between responsive repairs and capital programming teams and how defects identified through the responsive repairs service are fed into the capital programme. To reassure residents that such defects will be rectified, it is recommended that clear escalation policies are established and residents are advised when defects are referred to the capital programming team.

The Committee received evidence on the repair services of Affinity Sutton and the London Borough of Camden to compare the council's service to that of others and identify any areas of best practice. Affinity Sutton and Camden had sought to improve service efficiency and tenant satisfaction by focusing on similar areas to Islington's repairs service – the first time fix rate and the multi-skilling of operatives. Both organisations had also made improvements by empowering operatives to take decisions at the front line. Operatives are responsible for deciding how repairs are to be carried out, for example whether to fix or replace a component. The evidence received suggested that this increased accountability, increased the speed of repairs, and resulted in efficiency savings through decreased levels of supervision.

Following the best practice of other in-house repairs services, the Committee recommends that operatives be empowered and supported to take decisions at the front-line in order to increase the speed of repairs, drive efficiencies and improve accountability. Operatives should be supported in identifying and completing any additional repairs required while at the property, as part of the "first time fix culture".

It was found that other repair services also placed a great importance on the quality of performance data. The London Borough of Camden used 'Clickview', software which allowed satisfaction and performance to be analysed daily on a team, trade and operative basis, and the Committee suggested that this would be a useful tool for Islington. The Committee also suggested that operatives could play a crucial role in collecting property asset data by taking photographs on their handheld devices. This could identify the particular arrangement of fixtures and fittings in properties to contribute towards the effective management of future repairs and capital improvements, and also assist with complaint resolution.

The Committee recommended that **the service should seek to improve the quality of its data through investment in detailed performance reporting software and the use of photography. The Committee would support the implementation of software such as Clickview, which enables repairs satisfaction and other metrics to be analysed in depth. The use of such**

technology would assist in the identification of areas for further improvement. Operatives could assist the service in further developing its asset data by taking photographs of the repair and other fixtures and fittings while at the property. Analysis of the most frequently requested repairs could contribute to effective asset management.

Members commented that the repairs services of both Islington and Camden faced many of the same challenges in terms of asset management, procurement and logistics. **The Committee notes the similarities between the in-house repairs services of Islington and Camden and recommends that the scope for joint working opportunities be explored in order to generate efficiencies and share best practice.**

One objective of the review was to confirm that the service is designed to deliver customer focused outcomes. Although the evidence received confirmed that there were some known performance issues, there was no suggestion that the service was not designed with customer service in mind.

One service improvement already implemented is the online repairs reporting system. This was well received by the residents interviewed, however some improvements were suggested. **The Committee welcomes the recent implementation of online repairs reporting and is keen to see this develop in usage and effectiveness. It is recommended that detailed resident feedback on this is sought in order to improve the customer experience.**

The residents interviewed commented that estates staff were very knowledgeable of their local area and felt they should play a role in the repairs service. **The Committee recognises that estate services co-ordinators and caretakers have a wealth of knowledge about their area and suggests that their relationship with the repairs service be developed further, as these staff may be able to assist in the diagnosis of communal repairs, assist with communication, and champion resident needs in partnership with Resident Liaison Officers.**

The Committee was pleased that the repairs service had implemented an apprenticeship scheme since coming back in-house and was providing local employment. The Committee concluded that **the repairs service should have a diverse workforce which reflects the residents of the borough. The Committee is encouraged by the service's introduction of an apprenticeship scheme and would like to see this expand over time as the service has the potential to provide quality employment and training to local people. It is hoped that, following the successful implementation of service improvements, the service will be able to seek commercial opportunities in order to generate income and expand the service.**

Conclusions

The Committee concluded that resident experiences of the repairs service varied and that further work was required to develop the service, particularly in regard to completing repairs first time and communications. The Committee was satisfied that officers have a plan to achieve service improvements and hope that the changes proposed will lead to a corresponding increase in resident satisfaction.

In carrying out the review, the Committee met with officers, members of the public and others to gain a balanced view. The Committee would like to thank witnesses that gave evidence in relation to the scrutiny. The Executive is asked to endorse the Committee's recommendations.

Recommendations

1. The service prioritise increasing the number of “first time fixes” in order to improve efficiency and tenant satisfaction. To achieve this it is suggested that officers further investigate the feasibility of a “ring and bring” service, to enable parts to be delivered to a repair without the operative leaving the property, and continue to invest in the multi-skilling of staff. The council should aspire for all operatives to be skilled in multiple trades as part of a “first time fix culture”.
2. The Committee welcomes the improvements expected through service’s new ICT system, to be implemented in Autumn 2016. The system is intended to lead to a number of service improvements including improved diagnostic processes, automated repair allocations to staff, greater use of handheld technology, the ability to track operative progress remotely and improved communication with residents via the use of text messaging. It is hoped that the implementation of the system will lead to a corresponding increases in efficiency and satisfaction, and it is suggested that performance be reviewed after the new system has bedded-in to ensure that the improvements have been achieved. The Committee is keen to see the new technology fully utilised and supporting all aspects of the service, and in particular suggests that electronic checklists or scripts be introduced as an aide-memoire for operatives to check that all aspects of a repair are completed in line with service standards.
3. The Committee heard from residents that communication is key to a positive customer experience. The Committee recognises the work already underway to improve this aspect of the service, however notes that residents should be made aware as soon as possible if the operative is running late, if their appointment has been rescheduled, or if a communal repair has been completed. It is recommended that the service makes use of the resident’s preferred communications channel; this may be telephone, text message, email, or for a message to be delivered through estates staff in the case of vulnerable residents.
4. Following the best practice of other in-house repairs services, the Committee recommends that operatives be empowered and supported to take decisions at the front-line in order to increase the speed of repairs, drive efficiencies and improve accountability. Operatives should be supported in identifying and completing any additional repairs required while at the property, as part of the “first time fix culture”.
5. The Committee notes the positive working relationship between responsive repairs and capital programming teams and how defects identified through the responsive repairs service are fed into the capital programme. To reassure residents that such defects will be rectified, it is recommended that clear escalation policies are established and residents are advised when defects are referred to the capital programming team.
6. The Committee recognises that estate services co-ordinators and caretakers have a wealth of knowledge about their area and suggests that their relationship with the repairs service be developed further, as these staff may be able to assist in the diagnosis of communal repairs, assist with communication, and champion resident needs in partnership with Resident Liaison Officers

7. The service should seek to improve the quality of its data through investment in detailed performance reporting software and the use of photography. The Committee would support the implementation of software such as Clickview, which enables repairs satisfaction and other metrics to be analysed in depth. The use of such technology would assist in the identification of areas for further improvement. Operatives could assist the service in further developing its asset data by taking photographs of the repair and other fixtures and fittings while at the property. Analysis of the most frequently requested repairs could contribute to effective asset management.
8. The repairs service should have a diverse workforce which reflects the residents of the borough. The Committee is encouraged by the service's introduction of an apprenticeship scheme and would like to see this expand over time as the service has the potential to provide quality employment and training to local people. It is hoped that, following the successful implementation of service improvements, the service will be able to seek commercial opportunities in order to generate income and expand the service.
9. The Committee notes the similarities between the in-house repairs services of Islington and Camden and recommends that the scope for joint working opportunities be explored in order to generate efficiencies and share best practice.
10. The Committee welcomes the recent implementation of online repairs reporting and is keen to see this develop in usage and effectiveness. It is recommended that detailed resident feedback on this is sought in order to improve the customer experience.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 2015/16

Councillors:

Councillor Michael O'Sullivan (Chair)
Councillor David Poyser (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Raphael Andrews
Councillor Alex Diner
Councillor Aysegul Erdogan
Councillor Mouna Hamitouche MBE
Councillor Una O'Halloran
Councillor Flora Williamson

Co-opted members:

Rose-Marie McDonald – PFI Managed Tenants
Jim Rooke – Directly Managed Tenants

Substitutes:

Councillor Gary Heather
Councillor Olly Parker
Councillor Alice Perry
Councillor Gary Doolan
Councillor Rakhia Ismail
Councillor Jenny Kay
Councillor Angela Picknell
Councillor Nurullah Turan

Acknowledgements:

The Committee would like to thank all the witnesses who gave evidence to the review.

Officer Support:

*Matt West – Head of Repairs and Maintenance
Jonathan Moore – Senior Democratic Services Officer*

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Committee commenced the review in January 2016 with the overall aim of considering resident experiences of the Responsive Repairs service.

The Committee also agreed to the following objectives:

- To identify the different types of responsive repairs carried out
 - To measure the satisfaction of residents with responsive repairs, and to evaluate the utility of the metrics used
 - To consider how works are reported, planned, prioritised, responded to, and communicated to residents
 - To evaluate how the service compares to the services of other London Boroughs and registered providers
 - To confirm that the services are designed to deliver customer focused outcomes
 - To identify any areas for improvement
- 1.2 In carrying out the review the Committee met with residents, officers, and representatives of other housing providers. The Committee also considered evidence from Kwest, the council's independent surveying organisation, and performance data relating to the service.

Local context

- 1.3 The council's responsive repairs service was brought back in-house in August 2014 and carries out approximately 55,000 repairs each year. The service is primarily available to council tenants; however leaseholders are entitled to a limited range of repairs, including repairs to communal areas. The service is comprised of several teams: Housing Direct receive calls reporting repairs and make appointments with residents; the Schedule Planning Team allocate repairs to trade staff; the technical Surveying Team attend properties in order to assess more complex repairs; and works are carried out by 105 trade staff, supported by contractors as demand requires. The management of the service is supported by the Legal Disrepair Team that manage any disrepair claims alongside Legal Services; the Customer Excellence Team that deal with complaints; and the Procurement and Contract Management Team.
- 1.4 Since the service was brought back-in house performance levels have not been as high as expected; with monthly overall satisfaction ratings of around 70%. Councillors have also frequently received casework arising from the repairs service which indicates that further development of the service is required. For this reason the Committee sought to review resident experiences of the repairs service and identify areas for improvement.

2. Findings

The different types of repairs carried out

- 2.1 The service has three categories of repair relating to severity and the expected wait from the time the repair is raised; 'emergency work' such as loss of power to a property requires attendance within two hours; 'urgent work' such as repairing the front door to a property requires attendance within 24 hours; and 'non-urgent work' such as re-plastering a wall is carried out within 20 calendar days. High value works, such as renewing a boundary wall, are also carried out within a 20 calendar day period. The service also delivers a handyperson service to vulnerable tenants in partnership with Adult Social Services.
- 2.2 Approximately one third of repairs are categorised as urgent, however the service was working to reduce this number as it was thought that some repairs were misdiagnosed and a more accurate

diagnosis would lead to a more effective use of resources. Some complex repairs had to be carried out by specialist contractors, however the service was working to develop the skills of its workforce and as a result the number of works contracted out had reduced over the previous year.

The satisfaction of residents with responsive repairs

- 2.3 Service satisfaction is independently monitored by Kwest, a housing research company commissioned to interview around 400 Islington residents receiving repairs per month. Performance is monitored on a daily basis, with the latest performance statistics displayed in a prominent location in the office accessible to all staff. Islington' service attained an overall satisfaction rating of around 70% for the first part of 2015/16.
- 2.4 Members gave examples of performance issues reported through case work, such as one repair which required six visits to complete. The Committee commented on the consequences of this, such as tenants having to take significant amounts of time off work for repairs to be completed. Evidence was also received from local residents, including members of the Repairs Reference Group, a resident panel appointed to provide detailed feedback on the council's repairs service. This indicated that experiences of the service varied considerably. Whilst residents emphasised that some operatives were very good, examples were given of some operatives carrying out a "quick fix" as opposed to a comprehensive repair. Examples were also given of misdiagnosis and consequential problems, such as a metal worker arriving to repair a wooden fence. Some residents provided examples of missed appointments or operatives arriving to complete repairs outside of the agreed time period; and others reported staff not being empathetic to resident concerns and difficulties in escalating complaints.
- 2.5 The evidence received from residents was consistent with the feedback reported to the service. Frequently arising complaints included repairs not being completed on the first visit; waiting too long to get through to Housing Direct; the wrong tradesperson being sent to complete the repair; repairs having to be chased up; residents not knowing when operatives will attend or operatives attending unannounced. These themes were also reflected in the feedback received through the Kwest survey, which asked residents to suggest service improvements. The service was aware of the problems identified and recognised that improvements were required. Whilst officers acknowledged that performance had not been satisfactory in all cases, constructive feedback was welcomed and a plan had been developed to improve the service.
- 2.6 Officers advised that a number of service improvements were underway. It was thought that service satisfaction and efficiency could be significantly improved by focusing on the number of repairs completed first time – the 'first time fix rate'. Evidence received from residents, officers and representatives of other repairs services indicated that fixing repairs first time was one of the biggest drivers of service satisfaction. This was not only convenient to residents, but was cost effective to the service by reducing the time spent on any one repair. During the review the council's first time fix rate was around 84%, and officers confirmed the intention that, if a repair is particularly complex and cannot be completed on the first visit, then it should certainly be completed on the second visit. It was suggested that this was not happening frequently enough in Islington's service.
- 2.7 A number of work streams were progressing in order to improve the first time fix rate. One significant aspect was multi-skilling operatives. It was noted that many of the staff inherited through TUPE arrangements were specialists in a particular trades, whereas a service prioritising completing repairs first time would have a greater number of operatives sufficiently skilled in multiple trades to complete all aspects of a repair. Operational staff were being encouraged to learn multiple trades and the Committee considered that this would be essential to having an organisational culture centred on providing a first time fix. It was also thought that the first time fix

rate would be supported through implementation of the new ICT and diagnostic system, detailed later in this report.

- 2.8 The Committee considered that another key aspect of improving the first time fix rate would be reducing the time spent by operatives travelling to collect parts. The service's stores are maintained by an external contractor that provides a bespoke service to the council and officers advised that they were planning to review the stock held on vehicles to minimise parts collection. It was noted that some repairs services had a parts delivery service and the Committee suggested that this be explored further. Evidence received indicated that a "ring and bring" service had been implemented by the London Borough of Camden's repairs service with some success.
- 2.9 **The Committee recommended that the service prioritise increasing the number of "first time fixes" in order to improve efficiency and tenant satisfaction. To achieve this it is suggested that officers further investigate the feasibility of a "ring and bring" service, to enable parts to be delivered to a repair without the operative leaving the property, and continue to invest in the multi-skilling of staff. The council should aspire for all operatives to be skilled in multiple trades as part of a "first time fix culture".**
- 2.10 Other aspects of the service's performance are not directly linked to the first time fix rate, for example communication and certain internal processes, such as diagnostics and allocation. These are detailed later in this report.

The utility of surveying metrics

- 2.11 The Committee noted the headline satisfaction statistics obtained from Kwest and decided to investigate surveying methods and satisfaction levels further, as the feedback councillors received on repairs suggested that satisfaction may not be as high as reported.
- 2.12 Kwest is a housing research organisation commissioned by several housing providers, including local authorities, to independently and objectively evaluate satisfaction with services. The organisation has a long-standing relationship with the council and has surveyed Islington's repairs satisfaction since 2008. The organisation's surveying methods provide clients with daily feedback on their services; the data collected on the council's repairs service was automatically transferred to a spreadsheet which updated each night; data was available to Islington Council the following day, which allowed any complaints or other comments to be investigated as required.
- 2.13 The council's contract with the organisation was renewed in December 2015, at which point the council simplified its survey questions. It was also agreed that the organisation would increase its sample size to 15% of repairs completed. Surveys were carried out via telephone, with the interviewer filling in a response form online. If a resident was unhappy with the service received then a verbatim record of their comments was made. Interviews were carried out throughout the day and early evening Monday to Thursday, morning and afternoon on Friday, and also at the weekend. Multiple attempts were made to call residents and call-backs could be arranged for more convenient times.
- 2.14 Reported satisfaction levels had increased since the survey questions were revised in December 2015. This is because the council had asked Kwest to survey satisfaction with the repair received

'on this occasion' as opposed to *'overall satisfaction with the way Islington Council deals with repairs and maintenance'*, which tended to yield lower results as residents included wider factors in their response. Data for the first part of the 2015/16 year indicated an *'overall satisfaction'* rating of around 70%, whereas service satisfaction *'on this occasion'* was higher at around 88% of respondents either very or fairly satisfied from December 2015 to the end of February 2016. Kwest emphasised that due to the change in interview questions it was not possible to provide a direct comparison to historic satisfaction data. It was commented that, in general, organisations received a lower satisfaction score when they asked about overall satisfaction as opposed to satisfaction with a specific task.

- 2.15 It was thought that the specific questions asked of respondents could be a factor in the discrepancy between the surveyed levels of satisfaction and that reported directly to councillors. Another factor may be due to differences in the sample of residents asked to respond to the survey. Kwest only surveyed residents once their repair had been resolved, whereas casework was more likely to relate to incomplete repairs. The survey also excluded those who had received multiple repairs to their property in order to link each interview to a single repair and Kwest did not survey those already interviewed in the last three months in order to avoid survey fatigue; the reasoning for these restrictions is clear, however one consequence of this could be that particularly complex cases are excluded from the survey, yet these are the cases which are more likely to generate councillor casework.
- 2.16 Although the differences between surveyed levels of satisfaction and that reported to councillors was recognised, Kwest did anecdotally note that Islington tended to have a good level of satisfaction and Islington residents were generally happy to provide feedback, which was not true in all areas. Whilst it is welcomed that the survey data indicates that many residents are satisfied with the repairs to their property, it is important to view this data within the context of the survey's limits.

How works are reported, planned, prioritised, responded to, and communicated to residents

- 2.17 The Committee considered internal processes and the improvements in progress to the council's systems. The majority of repairs were reported via telephone to Housing Direct, however an online repairs reporting system had been implemented during 2015/16. Housing Direct staff worked to a diagnostic script in order to identify the repair required and jobs were then manually allocated to tradespeople. Jobs were prioritised in accordance with urgency and tradespeople could be required to complete six or seven jobs in one day, detailed on their PDA. It was suggested that these processes did not always result in a smooth service for residents; one resident reported that his repair was delayed as it was "lost" in the manual allocation system. It was also noted that appointments were made without knowing the availability of the resources needed to carry out the repair, which sometimes resulted in repairs being rescheduled, causing inconvenience to tenants.
- 2.18 Officers stressed that internal processes would be improved considerably following the implementation of a new ICT system in Autumn 2016. The new system was to feature an improved diagnostic script developed with trade staff, this was to ensure that operatives had all of the information they needed to carry out the repair and increased accuracy would also assist with prioritisation. The new system would ensure that appointments are made at a time when the required resources are available and automatically allocate repairs to trade staff based on their

skill set, this would improve the number of appointments being kept, remove the need to manually allocate jobs, and ensure that the right staff attend the repair with the right resources. Trade staff would be issued with one job at a time through the use of mobile technology to ensure complete focus on each repair, and staff would be able order materials and book follow-up appointments as required with tenants while in their home.

- 2.19 One issue highlighted by residents was that the service was not able to remotely track operatives. It was confirmed that remote tracking would be available through the new system, and this would enable the service to provide estimates for when staff would attend each property. This was thought to be a considerable service improvement. Whilst the Committee was encouraged by the various improvements due to be implemented through the new system, members were keen for the implementation of the system to be kept under review to ensure that the intended improvements are actually realised. Members were keen for the new technology to be used to its full capacity and suggested that handheld technology could be used to provide checklists for operatives when completing repairs.
- 2.20 **The Committee welcomes the improvements expected through service's new ICT system, to be implemented in Autumn 2016. The system is intended to lead to a number of service improvements including improved diagnostic processes, automated repair allocations to staff, greater use of handheld technology, the ability to track operative progress remotely and improved communication with residents via the use of text messaging. It is hoped that the implementation of the system will lead to a corresponding increases in efficiency and satisfaction, and it is suggested that performance be reviewed after the new system has bedded-in to ensure that the improvements have been achieved. The Committee is keen to see the new technology fully utilised and supporting all aspects of the service, and in particular suggests that electronic checklists or scripts be introduced as an aide-memoire for operatives to check that all aspects of a repair are completed in line with service standards.**
- 2.21 Some residents highlighted communications issues, particularly around missed appointments, and the Committee identified this as an area for improvement. One resident advised of a missed appointment due to the operative being called to an emergency repair. The resident accepted that this was sometimes necessary, however was not informed that her repair would need to be rescheduled and suggested that if the council contacted affected residents to let them know then this would minimise inconvenience and may help to reduce the number of complaints. Residents also requested greater communication surrounding repairs to communal areas. A leaseholder advised of a blocked drain in a communal area which was causing water damage to her property. As this was a communal repair, the leaseholder was not advised when the works were due to be carried out and was unable to inspect if the work had been completed due to restricted access. Improvements to communications were also requested by residents through the Kwest satisfaction survey.
- 2.22 The new ICT system will allow the use of text messaging and residents were particularly keen for this to be utilised, advising when operatives were on route to a property, their estimated time of arrival, and if they were going to be late. Affinity Sutton's repairs service made use of text messaging in this way and to confirm appointments and this was thought to be best practice. The Committee agreed that the use of text messaging was a positive development, however noted that not all residents may want to be contacted in this way and suggested the service should always use the resident's preferred method of communication.

- 2.23 **The Committee heard from residents that communication is key to a positive customer experience. The Committee recognises the work already underway to improve this aspect of the service, however notes that residents should be made aware as soon as possible if the operative is running late, if their appointment has been rescheduled, or if a communal repair has been completed. It is recommended that the service makes use of the resident's preferred communications channel; this may be telephone, text message, email, or for a message to be delivered through estates staff in the case of vulnerable residents.**
- 2.24 The Committee also considered communication between services. It was confirmed that the responsive repairs service had positive working relationships with the capital programming team, the gas team and the estate maintenance team. When repairs occurred frequently due to failing components then referrals were made to the capital works programme. However, some of the residents interviewed were not aware of this referral process and highlighted recurring issues which they felt should be addressed through the capital programme. The Committee agreed that clearer communications around the relationship between responsive repairs and the capital programme would be helpful, particularly in regards to when a repeated repair may be escalated to the capital programme.
- 2.25 **The Committee notes the positive working relationship between responsive repairs and capital programming teams and how defects identified through the responsive repairs service are fed into the capital programme. To reassure residents that such defects will be rectified, it is recommended that clear escalation policies are established and residents are advised when defects are referred to the capital programming team.**

How the service compares to that of other London Boroughs and registered providers

- 2.26 The Committee received evidence on the repair services of Affinity Sutton and the London Borough of Camden to compare the council's service to that of others and identify any areas of best practice. Affinity Sutton is a national housing association with 57,000 homes throughout England and offered an in-house repairs service carried out by two wholly owned service providers. The organisation had two categories of repair; those classified as an 'emergency' were dealt with the same day, and those which were 'non-emergency' were completed within seven days. As the organisation's housing stock was dispersed nationally, operatives worked in regional teams and were based from their own home, with details of repairs sent remotely to their PDAs and tablets.
- 2.27 The London Borough of Camden had an in-house repairs service which completed 60,000 repair orders each year. The service employed 130 trade staff and 14 apprentices. Camden's service was also based around local area teams in order to promote specialist knowledge. The organisation did not have categories of repair based on response times; instead, emergencies were dealt with as soon as possible, and all other repairs were completed at a time to suit the customer.
- 2.28 Affinity Sutton and Camden had sought to improve service efficiency and tenant satisfaction by focusing on similar areas to Islington's repairs service – the first time fix rate and the multi-skilling of operatives. Affinity Sutton had promoted multi-skilling through introducing competency based

salary bands; and had also supported first time fixes by developing its diagnostic processes. As a result all of the required information was captured in the first transaction in 90% of cases. It was noted that Camden only provided operatives with one repair at a time, as Islington would following the implementation of the new ICT system.

- 2.29 Both Affinity Sutton and Camden had also sought to make improvements by empowering operatives to take decisions at the front line. Staff were responsible for deciding how a repair was to be carried out, for example whether to fix or replace a component. The evidence received suggested that this increased accountability, increased the speed of repairs, and resulted in efficiency savings through decreased levels of supervision.
- 2.30 One Islington resident interviewed noted that repairs staff sometimes would not complete additional repairs while at a property, suggesting that each repair had to be logged individually with Housing Direct. The Committee considered that completing additional repairs while at a property should be supported as far as possible, as it is the most customer friendly approach and also the most efficient in the majority of cases. It is hoped that providing operatives with a greater responsibility for decision-making will give them the confidence to carry out additional repairs when required.
- 2.31 **Following the best practice of other in-house repairs services, the Committee recommends that operatives be empowered and supported to take decisions at the front-line in order to increase the speed of repairs, drive efficiencies and improve accountability. Operatives should be supported in identifying and completing any additional repairs required while at the property, as part of the “first time fix culture”.**
- 2.32 It was found that other repair services also placed a great importance on the quality of performance data. The London Borough of Camden used ‘Clickview’, software which allowed satisfaction and performance to be analysed daily on a team, trade and operative basis. Similarly, Affinity Sutton staff were personally responsible for the satisfaction associated with each individual repair and operatives had access to performance and benchmarking statistics and could evaluate their performance against others. The Committee recognised the value of quality data and suggested that something similar should be investigated for use by Islington’s repairs service. The Committee also suggested that operatives could play a crucial role in collecting property asset data by taking photographs on their handheld devices. This could identify the particular arrangement of fixtures and fittings in properties to contribute towards the effective management of future repairs and capital improvements, and also assist with complaint resolution.
- 2.33 The Committee recommended that **the service should seek to improve the quality of its data through investment in detailed performance reporting software and the use of photography. The Committee would support the implementation of software such as Clickview, which enables repairs satisfaction and other metrics to be analysed in depth. The use of such technology would assist in the identification of areas for further improvement. Operatives could assist the service in further developing its asset data by taking photographs of the repair and other fixtures and fittings while at the property. Analysis of the most frequently requested repairs could contribute to effective asset management.**

- 2.34 Members commented that the repairs services of both Islington and Camden faced many of the same challenges in terms of asset management, procurement and logistics. Officers confirmed that cross-borough discussions on best practice do take place and the Committee was keen to encourage further collaborative working. **The Committee notes the similarities between the in-house repairs services of Islington and Camden and recommends that the scope for joint working opportunities be explored in order to generate efficiencies and share best practice.**

Designing the service to customer focused outcomes

- 2.35 One objective of the review was to confirm that the service is designed to deliver customer focused outcomes. Although the evidence received confirmed that there were some known performance issues, there was no suggestion that the service was not designed with customer service in mind. One reason for bringing the service back in-house was to enable the council to exert greater control over the service for its tenants. The planned service improvements, such as the implementation of the new ICT system, were intended to increase the overall performance of the service. The service had accepted constructive criticism and had planned service improvements in response to the most frequent resident feedback; officers were able to demonstrate how each improvement would address a recurring feedback theme. The commissioning of satisfaction surveys, monitoring of performance and appointment of the repairs reference group further indicated that the service was focused on resident outcomes. There was also a focus on providing a good service to residents with additional needs; staff had recently received training on mental health issues to help them engage with vulnerable residents.
- 2.36 One service improvement already implemented is the online repairs reporting system. This was well received by the residents interviewed, however some improvements were suggested. The interface required residents to click on pictures which represented different types of repair, however residents commented that these did not always accurately represent each repair and there was a concern that this could potentially lead to misdiagnosis. It was also suggested that greater scope for written information would help to better identify repairs.
- 2.37 **The Committee welcomes the recent implementation of online repairs reporting and is keen to see this develop in usage and effectiveness. It is recommended that detailed resident feedback on this is sought in order to improve the customer experience.**
- 2.38 The Committee also considered that the Housing Direct team had received CCA Accreditation Version 6, an independent call centre customer service accreditation assessed against international service standards. Officers suggested that this was particularly positive given that the team had undergone a significant period of change since the service was brought back in-house; relocating to the Brewery Road site and experiencing an increase in calls as the service now handled calls previously managed by the contractor. Housing Direct performance indicators indicated that the average speed in which calls were answered was 26 seconds in 2015/16, with 94.55% of all calls answered.

Other areas for improvement

- 2.39 Through the evidence received the Committee identified other possible service improvements. The residents interviewed commented that estates staff were very knowledgeable of their local

area and felt they should play a role in the repairs service. The Committee agreed that close partnership arrangements between estates staff and the repairs service should be fostered, and that estates staff could contribute to the identification of repairs, particularly communal repairs, and support the work of Resident Liaison Officers.

2.40 The Committee recognises that estate services co-ordinators and caretakers have a wealth of knowledge about their area and suggests that their relationship with the repairs service be developed further, as these staff may be able to assist in the diagnosis of communal repairs, assist with communication, and champion resident needs in partnership with Resident Liaison Officers.

2.41 The Committee was pleased that the repairs service had implemented an apprenticeship scheme since coming back in-house and was providing local employment. Officers advised that the service was keen to contribute towards the training of local people and hoped to develop a more diverse workforce through the apprenticeship scheme. Specifically, the service was seeking to attract more female trade staff and had arranged workshop sessions for women and pupils from Elizabeth Garrett Anderson girls' school to encourage a greater number of female applicants. Ten apprenticeship opportunities were being advertised during the review, comprised of three multi-trade apprenticeships focusing on brickwork, painting and decorating, carpentry and joinery and plastering; and seven trade specific apprenticeships including a bricklayer, electrician, joiner/wood machinist, metal worker, painter/decorating, plasterer and a plumber. The particular trades were chosen with consideration of the anticipated future demand for services and succession planning of existing operatives. The apprenticeships will last between two and four years, depending on the specialism, and were expected to be up to NVQ Level 3.

2.42 The Committee queried if the service could seek to generate income by carrying out repairs to schools, colleges and other properties. Whilst this was an aspiration of the service, officers commented that service improvements would need to bed-in before the service began to trade commercially on any significant scale. The Committee hoped that this could be explored at a later date and the income generated be reinvested back into the council's services.

2.43 The repairs service should have a diverse workforce which reflects the residents of the borough. The Committee is encouraged by the service's introduction of an apprenticeship scheme and would like to see this expand over time as the service has the potential to provide quality employment and training to local people. It is hoped that, following the successful implementation of service improvements, the service will be able to seek commercial opportunities in order to generate income and expand the service.

3. Conclusions

3.1 The Committee concluded that resident experiences of the repairs service varied and that further work was required to develop the service, particularly in regard to completing repairs first time and communications. The Committee was satisfied that officers have a plan to achieve service improvements and hope that the changes proposed will lead to a corresponding increase in resident satisfaction.

3.2 In carrying out the review, the Committee met with officers, members of the public and others to gain a balanced view. The Committee would like to thank witnesses that gave evidence in relation to the scrutiny. The Executive is asked to endorse the Committee's recommendations.

SCRUTINY INITIATION DOCUMENT (SID)
Review: Responsive Repairs
Scrutiny Review Committee: Housing Scrutiny Committee
Director leading the review: Simon Kwong, Director of Property Services
Lead Officers: Matt West, Head of Repairs and Maintenance
Overall aim: To consider resident experiences of the Responsive Repairs service.
<p>Objectives of the review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify the different types of responsive repairs carried out • To measure the satisfaction of residents with responsive repairs, and to evaluate the utility of the metrics used • To consider how works are reported, planned, prioritised, responded to, and communicated to residents • To evaluate how the service compares to the services of other London Boroughs and registered providers • To confirm that the services are designed to deliver customer focused outcomes • To identify any areas for improvement
<p>How is the review to be carried out:</p> <p>Scope of the Review</p> <p>The review will focus on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Responsive Repairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The types of repair carried out • Reporting and planning processes, including accessibility for those with disabilities • How responsive repairs are prioritised and methods of triage employed 2. Resident Satisfaction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How resident satisfaction can be measured • Current levels of resident satisfaction • Communication with residents • How resident satisfaction can be improved, if required 3. Other considerations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparisons to other London Boroughs <p>Types of evidence:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Documentary evidence including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contextual report/presentation • Service policies and strategies • Service evaluations and performance indicators

2. Witness evidence including

- Presentation from officers
- The views of tenants and leaseholders from the repairs Reference Group
- Presentation from Kwest regarding how impartial data is collected
- Presentation from external Call Centre Customer Excellence Accreditor

3. Visits

- Visit to the Brewery Road Site to see the operation in progress (*optional*)

Additional Information:

Programme

Key output:	To be submitted to Committee on:
1. Scrutiny Initiation Document	13 July 2015
2. Draft Recommendations	26 May 2016
3. Final Report	11 July 2016

Housing Scrutiny Committee – Work Programme: Responsive Repairs

26 January 2016		
Who / What	Purpose	Other key information
Matt West & Paul Lightfoot – Presentation and Report	Introduction to the responsive repairs service and the scrutiny review.	To cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the different types of responsive repairs carried out how works are reported, planned, prioritised, responded to, and communicated to residents

29 February 2016		
Who / What	Purpose	Other key information
Representatives from the Resident Panel.	To hear resident views on the service, including satisfaction, communication, and how satisfaction can be improved.	To cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To measure the satisfaction of residents with responsive repairs, and to evaluate the utility of the metrics used

23 March 2013		
Who / What	Purpose	Other key information
Susan Richmond, KWest	To consider evidence from the council's resident surveying contractor, including current levels of satisfaction, surveying methods and data collection, and potentially comparisons to other housing providers.	To cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To measure the satisfaction of residents with responsive repairs, and to evaluate the utility of the metrics used To confirm that the services are designed to deliver customer focused outcomes
Call Centre Customer Excellence Accreditor – written evidence	To consider matters related to customer service.	

19 April 2016

Who / What	Purpose	Other key information
Kim Wells, Head of Repairs, LB Camden	To compare the service against that of another borough.	To cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To evaluate how the service compares to the services of other London Boroughs and registered providers
Michelle Reynolds, Group Commercial Director, Affinity Sutton	To compare the service against that of a registered provider.	To cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To evaluate how the service compares to the services of other London Boroughs and registered providers
Extract of the new ICT system specification	To receive detailed information on the new repairs management system planned to be implemented in late 2016.	To provide additional detail to the scrutiny review.
Details of repairs apprentice scheme	Further information on how the apprentice scheme works, how many apprentices of each trade the council employs, how apprentices are trained, how long it takes for apprentices to be trained, and so on.	To provide additional detail to the scrutiny review.
Kwest resident satisfaction survey: further information	To provide a sample of anonymised data obtained via Kwest's survey; including suggested service improvements proposed by residents	To cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To measure the satisfaction of residents with responsive repairs, and to evaluate the utility of the metrics used
Housing Direct KPIs	Following information on CCA accreditation at the March meeting, the Committee requested to review the latest KPI statistics for the service.	To cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How works are reported, planned, prioritised, responded to, and communicated to residents

SCRUTINY INITIATION DOCUMENT (SID) – DRAFT
Review: Housing Services for Vulnerable People
Scrutiny Review Committee: Housing Scrutiny Committee
Director leading the review: Maxine Holdsworth, Service Director Housing Needs and Strategy
Lead officers: Paul Byer, Service Development Manager
Overall aim: To review the effectiveness of the housing services the council provides to vulnerable people
Objectives of the review: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To identify and assess the housing options and additional housing services available to vulnerable people• To confirm that the council's housing services are accessible to vulnerable people• To assess how vulnerable people and their particular needs are identified by housing services• To evaluate how the council's housing services communicate and engage with vulnerable people• To benchmark the council's housing services for vulnerable people against those of other housing providers and to identify best practice• To review the extent of joint working with adult social care and others
How is the review to be carried out: <u>Scope of the review</u> The review will focus on: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Vulnerabilities<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An overview of the social care offer to borough residents and how this relates to housing services• Definitions of vulnerability, identification mechanisms, the types of additional support required and how housing services can be best tailored towards vulnerable people• How the needs of vulnerable people can be prioritised within the housing service2. Housing services<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The housing options for vulnerable people and how housing is allocated• The additional services available to vulnerable council tenants, Partners tenants, leaseholders, and others• The effectiveness of additional services such as the assistive decorative scheme, discretionary repairs, the handyperson scheme, the adaptation service and floating support service• How housing services communicate and engage with vulnerable people

3. Partnership work
 - Cross-service work between Housing and Adult Social Services
 - Partnership work with other housing providers: i.e. Circle Housing providing sheltered housing
 - Partnership work with TMOs and the voluntary sector
4. The performance, sustainability and value for money of services
 - Comparing and benchmarking our services to those of other boroughs and housing providers
 - The resources available for vulnerable housing and additional services
 - Identifying possible service improvements

Types of evidence

1. Documentary evidence including:
 - Contextual report/presentation
 - Case studies
 - Demographic information on the vulnerable people accessing the council's housing services
 - Relevant service specifications, policies, performance indicators and other documentation
2. Witness evidence including:
 - Officers from across the council's housing services
 - Service providers
 - Service users and representatives of vulnerable tenants, such as the Housing Disability Panel and the Older Person's Champion
 - Islington Carer's Hub
 - Relevant voluntary and community sector organisations
 - Another local authority, either a neighbouring borough or a best practice authority
3. Scrutiny visit as required

Additional information:

A list of additional housing services provided to vulnerable people is appended to this document.

In carrying out the review the committee will consider equalities implications and resident impacts identified by witnesses. The Executive is required to have due regard to these, and any other relevant implications, when responding to the review recommendations.

Programme	
Key output:	To be submitted to Committee on:
1. Scrutiny Initiation Document	11 July 2016
2. Draft Recommendations	28 March 2017
3. Final Report	16 May 2017

Existing support services for vulnerable residents

	Service	Description
1.	Annual programme of visits to vulnerable tenants	Every year, tenancy management staff carry out a programme of visits to a sample of tenants aged 75 or over who have not been visited in the previous two years. Referrals to ASS or other support services are made as a result of these visits, where appropriate Tenants who receive a care package from Adult Social Services are discounted from the programme of visits
2.	Assisted decorations scheme	Tenants over 70 and tenants in receipt of certain disability benefits are entitled to internal decoration of their property every 7 years
3.	Discretionary repairs scheme	Tenants over 70 and tenants in receipt of certain disability benefits are entitled to some extra repairs that would not usually be carried out
4.	Mental health assisted decorations scheme	10 properties per year are decorated under this scheme. This scheme is used to prioritise clients with mental health problems who may be blocking and where a delay in the service user moving into their own property would have a detrimental effect on either the service user or bed management.
5.	Adaptations service	Provision of equipment and minor and major adaptations to help tenants live in their own homes
6.	Islington handyperson scheme	Provision of small repairs and DIY type jobs around the home for older, disabled and vulnerable tenants (and their carers). This service is available to housing association and private tenants as well as council tenants. There is a small charge for this scheme.
7.	Referrals for floating support and other support services e.g. Single Homeless Project/SHINE	Variety of support services available through referral by area housing office to help vulnerable tenants manage their tenancies
8.	Fire home safety visit	Referral to Fire Brigade for home visits to vulnerable tenants who have a higher than average risk from fire
9.	Provision of window opening restrictors	Window restrictors can be fitted to windows above first floor level to reduce risk of falls from heights

10.	Extra support during lift renewal and major works	Property Services Consultation Team inform Tenancy Management Teams in advance of major works to appropriate support can be put in place for vulnerable tenants who may be adversely impacted by works
11.	Assistance for vulnerable applicants when viewing properties	Extra assistance given to vulnerable/disabled applicants when they are viewing a new property

	Protocols	Description
1.	Housing and Adult Social Services Joint Working Protocol	Protocol sets out the service standards that Housing Teams and Adult Social Care Teams should maintain when carrying out joint working to deal with issues that affect mutual service users
2.	Housing and Mental Health Joint Working Protocol	Protocol sets out how Camden and Islington NHS Mental Health Services should work in partnership to promote the welfare of service users who experience mental health issues
3.	Housing and Children's Services Information and Good Practice Guidance	Protocol sets out the arrangements that are in place to deal with issue that arise when Children's Services and Housing Services are required to work together to promote the welfare of children and their families in the borough

Review of areas of enquiry for registered provider sessions at Housing Scrutiny Committee meetings

The Housing Scrutiny Committee has a rolling programme of inviting registered providers with a significant presence as landlords in the borough to present to the Committee on their overall performance. In the past year the committee has received presentations from Barnsbury Housing Association, Hyde Housing and One Housing Group.

Set out below is a list of areas for enquiry which can be sent to attendees in advance. This is intended to assist registered providers in tailoring their presentation to the particular interests of the Committee. The current list was agreed in July 2015 and the new membership of the Committee may wish to review this list for the coming year.

The Committee is invited to review the below areas of enquiry for the 2016/17 municipal year.

Overarching:

- What's going well for your work in Islington?
- What are your areas of concern? How can you work more closely with Islington Council on those?

Specific

- **Resident satisfaction** – Tell us about your resident satisfaction figures; have they changed over recent times, and how does that compare with similar RPs?
- **Performance** – Tell us about your performance in repairs; rent collection; voids and relets; gas safety; and managing antisocial behaviour. How does it compare with other RPs? Are there areas you need to improve?
- **Voids and relets** – Islington has seen a drop in Housing Association available lets coming through our nominations process compared to the Council's own. What are your thoughts on this and how could we work with you to increase available properties again?
- **Rents** – What is your approach to affordable rents – i.e. up to 80% of market rent? Islington Council policy is to let all properties at target rent, and we are keen to encourage partners to do the same in our borough.
- **Tenancies** – The Council's policy is to provide life time tenancies and we encourage partners to take the same approach. What is your approach generally and do you provide any fixed term tenancies in Islington?

- **Finances and wages** – What annual surplus did your organisation generate in the last financial year? How does this compare to the sector average? Do you have policies on the London Living Wage and the ratio between the highest and lowest paid staff?
- **Maintaining assets and developing homes** – How do you invest in your stock in our borough? Have you sold any properties in Islington, and if so where did that investment go? What are your priorities for investment? Are you planning to build or acquire any new homes at target rent in the borough?
- **Housing and Planning Act and Welfare Reform changes** – What impact will the new legislation and government policies have on your organisation? What are you doing to support tenants affected by welfare reform and how can the Council work more closely with you to support tenants? Have you had any interest in the new Right to Buy?
- **Vulnerable People** – do you provide housing for vulnerable people? Do your vulnerable tenants receive any enhanced services?
[added following a request at the May 2016 meeting]

HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17

26 MAY 2016

1. Membership, Terms of Reference and Dates of Meetings
2. RSL Scrutiny: Hyde Housing
3. Responsive Repairs: Draft Recommendations
4. Scrutiny Topics 2016/17

11 JULY 2016

1. Service Review Group: Review of New Build Communications
2. Responsive Repairs: Final Report
3. Housing Services for Vulnerable People: Scrutiny Initiation Document
4. Review of areas of enquiry for registered provider sessions at Housing Scrutiny meetings
5. Work Programme 2016/17

6 SEPTEMBER 2016

1. Housing Services for Vulnerable People: Witness Evidence
2. Estate Services Management: 12 Month Report Back to Committee
3. Scaffolding and Work Platforms: 12 Month Report Back to Committee
4. Update on Tenant Led Organisations

10 OCTOBER 2016

1. RSL Scrutiny
2. Housing Services for Vulnerable People: Witness Evidence

1 DECEMBER 2016

1. Housing Services for Vulnerable People: Witness Evidence
2. Service Review Group: Conclusions of Forthcoming Review (Topic TBC)
3. Housing and Planning Act Update

10 JANUARY 2017

1. Executive Member Presentation
2. Housing Services for Vulnerable People: Witness Evidence

2 FEBRUARY 2017

1. Housing Services for Vulnerable People: Witness Evidence and Concluding Discussion

28 MARCH 2017

1. RSL Scrutiny
2. Housing Services for Vulnerable People: Draft Recommendations

16 MAY 2017

1. Membership, Terms of Reference and Dates of Meetings
2. Housing Services for Vulnerable People: Final Report
3. Scrutiny Topics 2017/18
4. RSL Scrutiny