



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, **16 November 2015 at 7.30 pm.**

John Lynch
Head of Democratic Services

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Despatched : 6 November 2015

Membership 2014/15

Councillor Michael O'Sullivan (Chair)
Councillor Dave Poyser (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Raphael Andrews
Councillor Alex Diner
Councillor Aysegul Erdogan
Councillor Una O'Halloran
Councillor Mouna Hamitouche MBE
Councillor Flora Williamson
Rose Marie MacDonald (PFI Managed Tenants)
Jim Rooke (Directly Managed Tenants)

Substitute Members

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

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.	Scrutiny Items	Page
1.	Service Review Group: Learning from and Responding to Complaints	7 - 16
2.	Update on PFI Performance: Report and Presentation from Partners for Improvement in Islington	17 - 26
3.	Capital Programming: Witness Evidence	27 - 30
4.	Update on the Housing Bill	

C. Urgent Non Exempt Matters

Any non- 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.

D. Exclusion of Public and Press

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 Public and Press during discussion thereof.

E. Exempt Reports (if any)

The next meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee will be on 26 January 2016

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London Borough of Islington

Housing Scrutiny Committee - 8 October 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee held at Committee Room 5, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 8 October 2015 at 7.30 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** O'Sullivan (Chair), Poyser (Vice-Chair), Andrews, Diner, Erdogan, O'Halloran, and Williamson.

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

Councillor Michael O'Sullivan in the Chair

114 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item A1)**

None.

115 **DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item A2)**

None.

116 **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Item A3)**

None.

117 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item A4)**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

118 **CHAIR'S REPORT (Item A5)**

The Chair provided an update on changes to national housing policy announced at the Conservative Party Conference. It was also noted that the majority of housing associations had voted to voluntarily accept the Government's Right to Buy proposals.

The Chair commented that the annual 1% reduction in social housing rents over the next four years would have a significant impact on Council resources. In this context, the Chair emphasised the importance of the Housing Scrutiny Committee in finding efficiencies and proposing savings.

119 **ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item A6)**

No changes were proposed to the order of business.

120 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item A7)**

The Chair outlined the procedure for public questions and the filming and recording of meetings.

A resident from the Islington Park Street community addressed the Committee, voicing his concerns with the actions of One Housing Group. It was advised that One Housing Group would be invited to attend a future meeting; however it was suggested that the legal dispute with the Islington Park Street community would be concluded by the time the organisation addressed the Committee. The Committee sympathised with the resident and expressed their support for the community.

121 **CAPITAL PROGRAMMING: WITNESS EVIDENCE (Item B1)**

Aiden Stapleton, Consultation and Asset Manager, Andrew Hunter, Programme Manager, and Damian Dempsey, Group Leader – Quantity Surveyors, presented the following witness evidence to the Committee:

122 **ASSET MANAGEMENT, PLANNING AND PRIORITISATION (Item B1A)**

The following main points were noted during the discussion:

- The Council's limited financial resources required the careful management, planning and prioritisation of capital works. Proposed investments in housing stock had to be balanced against the need to achieve value for money.
- Officers explained the Council's capital works planning and prioritisation processes. A stock condition survey was undertaken in 2010 which informed the Housing Revenue Account 30 Year Business Plan. This in turn informed the Housing Asset Management Strategy, from which the seven-year cyclical investment programmes and annual programmes were then derived.
- All properties were included in the seven year cyclical investment programme; however works were only carried out when necessary. Maintenance works would be deferred or substituted by a repair if possible. In response to a query, it was advised that when works were deferred they were typically carried out no later than at ten or eleven year intervals.
- The seven year cycle began from the date of completion of the previous project. It was explained that mechanical and electrical components had a longer lifespan and therefore were not included in the cyclical programme. Mechanical and electrical works were carried out as and when required, subject to technical officer recommendations.
- A member of the Committee queried why some homes had not received upgrades to kitchens and bathrooms at dates previously advised by Homes for Islington. In response, it was advised that kitchen and bathroom criteria changed when the management of housing stock was brought back in-house and these works would be carried out on an estate-by-estate basis.
- It was advised that the cyclical programme was planned over seven years to match the Council's stock size and funding. It was noted that other housing providers operated to differing timescales. The Committee suggested that to achieve savings the cycle could be extended, although a detailed evaluation of the impacts of this would be required.
- It was queried if the quality and quantity of works was tailored to the available budget, or if the annual budget was tailored to the required works. In response it was explained that works were planned up to three years in advance and as a result officers could both contribute to the annual budget setting process whilst also having regard to savings requirements. The Committee noted that due to increased financial pressures the service was prioritising maintenance over improvement works, with the Council seeking to maintain properties to the 'Decent Homes' standard.
- It was advised that vulnerable disabled and elderly people did not receive priority for capital works as these were carried out on an estate-by-estate basis; however officers did carry out home visits to assess if accessibility adaptations were required, such as walk-in showers and lower level cupboards.
- The Committee noted that emergency repairs were not carried out as part of the capital works programme and these were managed by the High Value Repairs Team. However, officers liaised with the High Value Repairs Team if emergency works were required to a property which would otherwise receive capital works in the near future.

Housing Scrutiny Committee - 8 October 2015

- Officers commented that the life span for domestic and communal boilers was greater than 20 years and each boiler was serviced annually. There was no cyclical improvement programme for boilers, with each repaired or replaced as and when required, however the Council did assess all boilers in a block when carrying out replacement works.
- The Committee queried if some capital works were able to be carried out in-house. It was noted that the in-house repairs team was capable of carrying out certain works, however at present all works were carried out through the capital works contracts. It was suggested that the possibility of in-house capital works could be considered further when the contracts were re-tendered in future.
- Dr Brian Potter, Chairman of the Islington Leaseholders Association, reported problems with communal heating and queried if the Council would permit leaseholders to supply and maintain their own boilers. It was advised that the Council had a Communal Heating Policy and the Executive Member was best placed to answer any questions on policy.

123

EVIDENCE FROM RESIDENTS (Item B1B)

The following main points were noted during the discussion:

- Officers presented the Residents' Improvement Taskforce report on Major Works Consultation. This was a significant piece of work carried out in 2013/14 which reviewed the communication between the Council and its contractors and residents. It was explained that an action plan was formulated in response to the report and this had been reviewed twice each year.
- The Committee noted the major works consultation process and other methods of communication, including the monthly update on capital works sent to all members of the Council.
- Officers presented the results of the Major Works Telephone Survey carried out in September 2015. Such surveys were previously carried out by an external provider, however were now carried out in house and surveyed residents at the start of works, during works, and after works were completed. The Committee noted the levels of satisfaction and consultation engagement set out in the report.
- The Committee suggested that areas with no active TRO were more difficult to engage with and queried what more could be done to encourage attendance at consultation meetings. Officers advised that all residents received a postal invitation to consultation meetings and these were generally held at venues close to estates for resident convenience, however recognised the difficulties in encouraging engagement.
- Dr Brian Potter, Chairman of the Islington Leaseholders Association, commented that the indicative cost letters sent to leaseholders were too broad, and without the schedule of rates leaseholders could not calculate if the capital works to their properties achieved value for money. Dr Potter considered that the Council should publish the schedules of rates on its website; however officers advised that the Council was restricted from doing so due to confidentiality clauses in its major works contracts. The Committee noted that this was the subject of an ongoing dispute.
- Officers advised that the schedules of rates were commercially sensitive to contractors as the firms tendered for works across London on a regular basis and disclosing their rates would prohibit competitive tender exercises. It was noted that all tenderers submitted their bids against a National Schedule of Rates, indicating which items would cost more or less than the national rate. It was advised that leaseholders were able to view the schedule of rates in relation to the capital works which affected them if they visited the council offices. Surveyors appointed by leaseholders were also entitled to view the schedules of rates.

- The Committee considered the difficulties posed by confidentiality clauses and queried if these could be dispensed with for future contracts. It was noted that representatives of the capital works contractors would attend a future meeting and their views on this could be sought.

124 **EVIDENCE FROM WARD COUNCILLORS (Item B1C)**

Damian Dempsey responded to the evidence submitted by Councillor Klute:

- The Committee noted that a competitive tender exercise was carried out in 2010 when the current capital works contracts were procured. This was advertised openly through the OJEU in accordance with legislation and residents were involved in the tender evaluation process.
- The costs of works were set out in the contract and could not be altered aside from an annual inflationary increase.
- The leaseholder consultation process was explained. The Council was required to consult with leaseholders under Section 20 of the Leaseholder and Tenant Act 1985. After notice of works was served, leaseholders had 30 days to make representations to the Council. It was advised that the Council responded to all comments received.
- Officers advised that any members wishing to submit further witness evidence should liaise with Democratic Services in advance of the next meeting.

125 **KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR DATA (Item B1D)**

The Committee considered the information relating to resident feedback and the use of local labour and businesses. It was noted that representatives of the capital works contractors would be attending the next meeting and a detailed discussion could be had at this time.

It was commented that it would be useful to benchmark performance data against previous performance. It was also queried if the data could be compared against data from a range of organisations, such as other local authorities, housing associations, and private providers.

126 **BUILDING INFLATION DATA (Item B1E)**

The following main points were noted during the discussion:

- The inflationary increases built into the capital works contracts were significantly lower than market inflation.
- The Committee queried why building inflation had increased so significantly. It was advised that a detailed analysis would be reported to the next meeting.
- Following a query, officers advised that they did not expect building inflation to significantly decrease in the near future. Although reductions in public sector spending could result in a decrease in demand, the inflation rate was subject to wider economic factors.
- The Committee commented on the difference between the costs specified in the Council's contracts and the current market rate. Members expressed some concern that the cost to the Council of carrying out capital works would significantly increase when the current contractual arrangements ended.
- The Committee queried if the Council's capital works contractors were still able to make a profit on the contractual arrangements agreed in 2010. Although officers did not have a detailed knowledge of the contractors' finances, it was suggested that the profit margins of the contractors would have been eroded.

127 **WITNESS EVIDENCE PLAN AND SID (Item B1F)**

It was requested that a representative of the UCATT trade union be invited to attend the next meeting of the Committee to comment on the use of local labour.

The Committee thanked officers for their attendance.

RESOLVED:

That the witness evidence be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm

CHAIR

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Report of: **The Service Review Group**

Meeting of	Date	Agenda Item	Ward(s)
Housing Scrutiny	16 November 2015	B1	All

SUBJECT: Service Review Group – Learning from and responding to complaints

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 Learning from and responding to complaints was identified by residents as a key area for review at the first Service Review Group (SRG) meeting 18 March 2015. This report sets out the background to the review and the recommendations of the first review undertaken by this group.
- 1.2 The review was resident-led and facilitated by the Resident Engagement Team.
- 1.3 This review looked at the way that Housing Services learn from and respond to complaints. The review aimed to improve the way that services deal with complaints and identify areas of good practice.
- 1.4 Recommending changes to the response timescales set out in the existing corporate and housing complaints procedures was not included in the scope of the review.

2. Recommendation

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

3. Recommendations of the Service Review Group – set out in detail at Appendix 1.

- 3.1 Ensure the experience of residents who use the complaints process is positive by adopting a more personal and empathetic approach to complaints handling.
- 3.2 Produce a specific Complaints Customer Care Standard.
- 3.3 Implement the Complaints Customer Care standard by:
 - Publicising the complaints process and performance and learning more widely
 - Making the complaints pages on the council's website more accessible
 - Getting Housing Needs, Housing Operations and Housing Repairs Divisions to adopt similar learning from complaints processes.

- 3.4 Monitor staff performance against a set Complaints Customer Care standard.
- 3.5 Continuously improve and develop complaints procedures through benchmarking and an annual check of a sample of responses by the SRG.

4. Background

- 4.1 The members of the Service Review Group who participated in this review were:
- Annabel Goulding, Nicola Eyidah, Dean Donaghey, Luigi Indri, Violet Oruwari- McCabe and Helen Ladele
 - Jim Rooke – Observer and representative of Housing Scrutiny Committee
- 4.2 The SRG first met with officers on 13 May 2015, scoped out the review and identified the activities that would be undertaken by members of the SRG and officers. Appendix 2 sets out the detailed programme of activities. At the first meeting, the following timetable was agreed:

Agreed task	Task completed
Scope the review	13.5.15
Gather the evidence	May to September 2015
Evaluate the evidence	23.7.15
Agree recommendations	8.9.15
Present recommendations to panel of officers	22.9.15
Report to Housing Scrutiny	16.11.15

4.3 Evidence gathering

- 4.3.1 A desktop review was carried of the following documents:
- Relevant policies and procedures
 - Samples of letters and communication
 - Corporate Complaints Report (2015)
 - Housing Needs and Strategy learning report (2014 – 15)
 - Housing Operations quarterly report (Oct to Dec 2014 and Jan to March 2015)
 - Property Services report
 - Complaints compensation report (2014 – 15)
- 4.3.2 Detailed comments on the divisional performance reports are set out in Appendix 4.
- 4.3.3 To test the desktop research, members of the SRG:
- Met with residents and staff to assess compliance with current procedures and find out their views about how complaints were handled.
 - Assessed the quality of written responses at stage 1 and 2.
 - Carried out mystery shops.
 - Reviewed the quality of the training available to staff.

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 this good practice, as follows:
- The Corporate Complaints report and Housing Operations report both analyse performance;

- The number of complaints to Housing Needs and Strategy and Housings Operations are both reducing;
- The number of upheld complaints are reducing;
- All three divisions report learning to senior managers;
- Learning in the main, is being implemented;
- Compensation is being paid, where appropriate;
- Training on complaints handling is being offered to some staff;
- The Council has a Customer Care Standard;
- Officers were found to be courteous during telephone calls;
- There were some good examples of written responses that dealt with issues in an empathetic and polite manner, with appropriate apologies.

5.2 Detailed findings are set out at Appendix 3.

6. Implications

6.1 Financial Implications

Matt West, Head of Repairs and Maintenance, has advised that the Property Services no longer pays for missed appointments. In the past it had paid £20.00 for missed appointments but this was removed in agreement with the Repairs Integration Board in August 2014 and HMT in December 2014 as the service cannot bear the burden of additional payments to cover missed appointments.

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 housing complaints handling process for residents. 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 in respect of handling and learning from complaints, not all staff are following existing complaints procedures and a more customer focused approach is needed.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Detailed recommendations

Appendix 2 – Programme of activities carried out by the SRG

Appendix 3 – Findings from focus group, mystery shopping and review of responses

Appendix 4 – Findings from performance reports

Background papers:

None.

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Appendix 1

Detailed recommendations

1.1 Ensure the experience of residents who use the complaints process is positive by adopting a more personal and empathetic approach to complaints handling

- a. Listen and be polite at all times.
- b. Arrange face to face interviews, where possible, when the resident requests this.
- c. Acknowledgements via mail or email should be sincere and empathetic.
- d. Letters should be written in a professional tone, sound sincere and be personal and empathetic.
- e. Acknowledgement and interim responses should start with the phrase "Sorry to hear about your complaint. We will do our best to resolve it"
- f. Apologise when the occasion demands, in an open manner, free from "ifs or buts".
- g. Be clear when asking residents for information to support their complaint.
- h. Help residents to "translate" their complaint by breaking it down in manageable portions; this will help those where English is not first language, where there are literacy issues or lack of IT skills.
- i. Consider introducing a payment of £10.00 for all missed appointments.

1.2 Produce a Complaints Customer Care Standard and consider including:

- a. Housing Needs, Housing Operations and Property Services divisions to implement section 9 of the Housing complaints procedure fully.
- b. On receipt of a complaint (via letter or email) staff should telephone the resident to confirm details of the complaint within the timescales set out in the complaints process.
- c. Offer face to face meetings to the resident to discuss the nature of the complaint.
- d. Log and respond to emails within timescales set out in the Customer Care Standard.
- e. Acknowledging complaints confirming the detail of the complaint within the timescales set out in the complaints process.
- f. Provide examples of good and bad responses for training purposes.
- g. Contact the resident on day 10 of the 21 day response cycle to confirm that complaint is being investigated.
- h. Provide a full response within 21 days as set out in the complaints process.
- i. If complaint cannot be responded to within 21 days then the resident should be advised when they can expect a response.
- j. If the complaint cuts across more than one area of the council; one officer to be a single point of contact for the resident.
- k. Avoiding using abbreviations and jargon.
- l. Request for information/copies of documents should be clearly set out using bullet points and plain English.
- m. If more than one issue is raised; each issue should be dealt with in turn.
- n. If the resident has a known carer/advocate then complaint responses should be sent to them if the council has appropriate consent from the resident.
- o. Check internal information systems to see if residents have specific needs (e.g. English as a second language, literacy, and mental health issues) and ensure response is tailored to the individual need.

1.3 Implement the Complaints Customer Care standard by:

- **Publicising the complaints process:**

- a. Tell residents that it does not cost them to make a complaint.
- b. Provide standard definition of a complaint and examples of what is/is not a complaint on the website, estate noticeboards, electronic noticeboards and Your Home magazine.
- c. Publicise the numbers of complaints and learning that has been achieved from resolved complaints on the website and in Your Home magazine.
- d. Publicise the difference between a repair service request and a complaint.

- **Making the complaints pages on the Council's website more accessible:**
 - a. Publicise the existing generic email address managed by the Directors Support Unit for the Housing Needs, Property Services and Housing Operations divisions.
 - b. Include a postal address and telephone number for the three divisions.
 - c. Increase the space on the online complaint form.
 - d. Consider updating web page with seasonal information advertising preventative measures, e.g. Top 10 tips for looking after your home.
 - e. Develop a template to enable a carer/advocate to complain on behalf of a resident.

- **Housing Needs, Housing Operations and Housing Repairs Divisions to adopt similar learning from complaints processes**
 - a. All three divisional reports to include trends and learning in their reports
 - b. Consider having named officers from the three divisions who will have responsibility for monitoring that learning outcomes have been implemented.
 - c. Officers from three divisions to regularly update Customer Relation Management database.

1.4 Monitor staff performance against set Complaints Customer Care standards

- a. All staff who deal with complaints to undergo the complaints customer care training.
- b. Introduce periodic refresher courses.
- c. Use the staff performance management system and ways of working to monitor performance against a set Complaints Customer Care standard.
- d. Managers should sample check complaints responses.

1.5 Continuously improve and develop complaints procedures through benchmarking and an annual check of a sample of responses by the SRG.

- a. Benchmark among other providers to identify good practice.
- b. Carry out a peer review of a % of complaints with other departments and other councils.
- c. A sample of complaints should be reviewed annually by members of the Service Review Group.
- d. Consider using a specialist officer(s) or team(s) to deal with all complaints.

Appendix 2 – Programme of Activities

	Activity	Type of activity
1	Mystery shopping of ease of making a complaint	Mystery shopping
2	Service Review Group to interview residents who have been through the complaints process	Focus group
3	Meet with officers who deal with complaints to discuss the process	Meeting
4	Consideration of complaints information, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Circulation of complaints procedure - Summary of number of complaints, escalation rates and subject of complaints 	Information sent our via email
5	Look at examples of where Housing Services have learnt from complaints	Information sent our via email
6	Assessment of quality of complaints	Information sent out via email
7	Consideration of compensation – how much does the housing service pay in compensation and how much does it cost to resolve complaints?	Information sent out via email
8	Review some long standing complaints cases for good practice– e.g. was the complainant was kept up to date whilst the complaint was resolved?	Information sent out via email
9	Clarification of Property Services and Housing Needs and Strategy reports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are they circulated to? • Who monitors whether learning has been implemented? • Housing Needs report – why does report state no learning in cases which were upheld/partially upheld? • 	Information sent out via email
10	Provide examples of learning that have been applied, e.g. a policy has been amended or repair carried out etc.	Information sent out via email
11	Provide guidelines for compensation	Information sent out via email
12	Feedback on number of not complete cases in the compensation report	Information sent out via email
13	What training do staff receive to respond to complaints? – copy of training package	Information sent out via email
14	Complaints website – sending the link out to the area on the website where residents can make a complaint and explaining the process	Information sent out via email

Appendix 3 – Detailed findings

Mystery shopping findings

SRG members carried out three mystery shops and presented two scenarios to officers. These scenarios and the outcomes of the shops are set out below:

Case 1 – (telephone query) I made a complaint and I am not happy with the findings, how can I escalate the complaint?

- Response 1 response was very positive, officer explained process, was patient, well informed and understanding.
- Response 2 – initial response negative – officer not helpful in helping to clarify issues but after 20 minutes of explaining the officer was helpful.

Case 2 – (Email query) I'm a new tenant and I wish to complain about the housing office. I don't want to come to the office though. Is there anyone who can come to see me?

- Response by email – 3 courteous responses but question of home visit not answered.

Focus Group Findings

The key issues identified by five residents during two Focus Group meetings were:

- Lack of updates
- Lack of empathy
- Lack of face to face contact
- Process does not take into account residents who may struggle with writing (e.g. English as a second language, lack of literacy/IT skills and mental health issues)
- Require one officer per division who is an expert and trained to deal with a complaint. Could use scripts to assist
- Humanise process – dialogue and letters to be more personal
- Officers to update complainant via phone call/ letter around day 10 of 21 day response time to reassure that complaint is being investigated
- Web pages difficult to access. Make it easier by including generic email addresses for all sections, postal address, telephone number and increase space in on-line complaints form. use template allowing for an advocate to speak on behalf of the complainant
- Stop using abbreviations
- Apologise
- Request for information/documents to support a complaint need to be in plain English and set out in bullet points to make it easier for all parties to understand what is required
- If complainant has a known carer send complaint responses to carer if we have appropriate consent from complainant
- Provide a standard definition of a complaint and examples of what is a complaint and what is a service request on the website
- There should be a single point of contact for all housing complainants
- Officers should help residents “translate” complaint and break it down in manageable portions; this will help those where English is not first language, where there are literacy issues and lack of IT skills
- Publicise resolved complaints through “You said/we did” on the website and Your Home magazine
- Carry out a peer review of a % of complaints with other councils/ sections
- An independent resident should be used to carry out evaluation of the responses to complaints and to confirm whether the problem has been fixed.

- Tell residents that it does not cost them to make a complaint

Findings from the Staff Meeting

The key issues identified were:

- Reports are used to monitor how issues are raised and rectified
- Recognition that needs clearer communication with customers and keeping them informed
- Provide information seasonally to enable residents to take preventative measures, e.g. Top 10 tips for looking after your home
- Receiving and giving feedback to contractors is important

Findings of Stage 1 written complaints

SRG Members looked at seven Stage 1 written complaints and responses and found the following:

- Lack of updates
- Lack of acknowledgments
- No apology
- One complaint response was well written. This could be used as an example of best practice
- Some responses were off-hand
- Lack of empathy
- All responses were standard responses but some lacked empathy, You can say no but say it in a sympathetic/empathetic manner
- If more than one issue, each issue should be dealt with in turn
- Officers to receive training on best practice and appropriate responses
- The standard structure for how to respond to a complaint is good, e.g. apologising, then setting out what the issues are, then responding to each issue in turn. However, the quality of the individual officers' response within this framework seems to vary significantly. Sometimes it is very good, other times less so

Findings of Stage 2 written complaints

SRG Members looked at three Stage 2 complaints and made the following observations:

- Have apologies become tokenistic?
- Responses should have more empathy
- Acknowledgement should be sincere
- The automatic acknowledgement to emails should be standardised and have an empathetic tone

Findings of Upheld Complaints

- SRG members looked to see if learning had been applied by looking at a sample of complaints which were upheld and found that in the main learning was implemented.

Appendix 4 - Findings from performance reports

Members of the SRG looked at the reports listed below and made the following comments:

- Corporate Complaints Report (2015)
 - Shows the trends
 - Report indicates poor performance re: housing repairs on communication/ poor quality of work and length of time it takes for repair to be completed. These are all areas which service review members have expressed views on
- Housing Needs & Strategy learning report (2014 – 15)
 - Layout of report made it easy to read but there was no summary or focus on trends
 - Learning was not noted in all cases that were upheld or partially upheld
 - Not clear that an analysis of trends occurs in these reports
- Housing Operations quarterly report (Oct to Dec 2014 and Jan to March 2015)
 - Demonstrated trends and learning and was the preferred reporting format by the group
- Property Services report
 - Repairs reports were thorough in their investigation, but did not demonstrate trends and target dates or named officers responsible for dealing with any follow up actions in the action plans
 - A lot of officers dealing with one repair and complaint
 - A lot of follow up visits by different trades and members of the SRG asked if they were all necessary
 - No indication that recommendations in the action plan were monitored
 - £10.00 should be paid for missed appointments; even if a tenant doesn't ask for this compensation
 - If repair operative is running late a courtesy phone call to be made explaining the delay
 - Not clear that an analysis of trends occurs in these reports
- Complaints compensation report (2014 – 15)
 - SRG members looked the compensation report and noted that compensation payments were paid as a remedy but the complaints management system was not updated on a regular basis
- Other general issues raised were:
 - Who monitors that learning outcomes identified in the reports have been implemented?
 - There is no consistent reporting format across the three divisions
 - SRG members looked at to see if learning had been applied by looking at a sample of complaints that were upheld and found that in the main learning was implemented
 - SRG members looked at the availability of staff training and commented that they were happy with the training on offer, but that more training needs to be carried out on soft skills such as being empathetic, polite and interested in the complainant

**Title: Partners for Improvement in Islington
Performance Update – November 2015
Report from: Sharon Pearce, Managing Director**

1. Background

1.1 Partners manages approximately 6,500 street properties on behalf of Islington Council, through two long term contracts (PFI1 and PFI2), which were set up under the Private Finance Initiative. Major refurbishment to bring the properties up to a Decent Homes standard was completed in the first five years of the projects, and Partners now has ongoing responsibility for managing and maintaining the properties to a contractual standard. This report presents a summary of Partners current service delivery and performance.

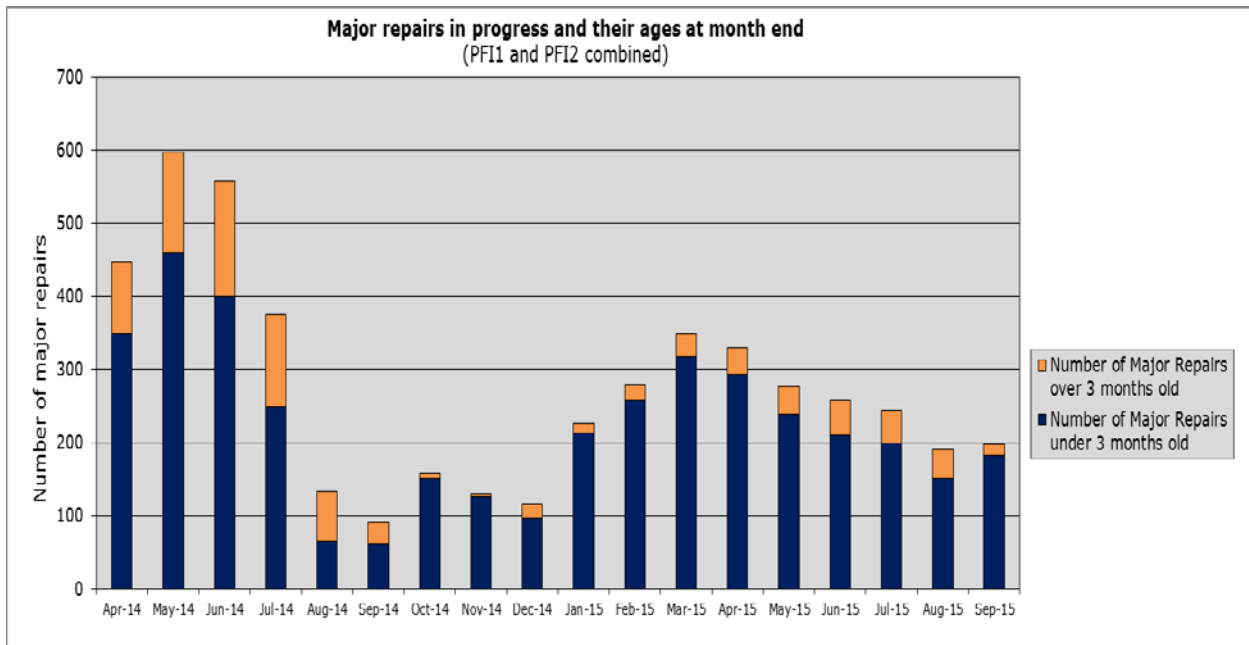
2. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

2.1 Partners is monitored by the Council on a regular basis against a range of KPIs on each contract. Appendix A details performance as at September 2015. The KPIs demonstrate that current performance is good, being above target in all areas, and showing continuing improvement on KPI performance in 2014.

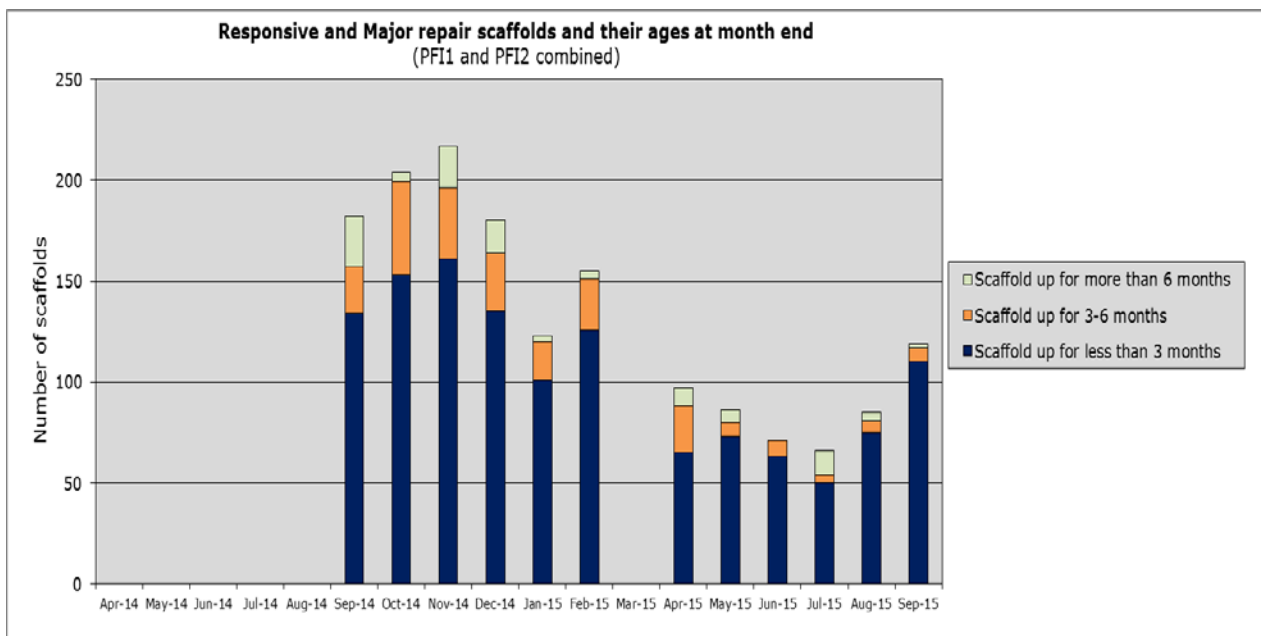
3. Responsive and Major Repairs

3.1 Our KPIs show that we consistently delivered a good responsive repairs service last year. We exceeded our target of completing 95% of repairs within timescale, and have improved on this in 2015, achieving close to 100% so far this year. Satisfaction with responsive repairs carried out is also high, averaging 90% in 2014, and exceeding that on PFI2 so far in 2015.

3.2 During 2014 Partners faced some challenges in the delivery of the major repairs service, which culminated in a backlog of repairs and an increased volume of complaints from our residents. In response, we made significant changes to our service delivery, and implemented new processes and controls. By December 2014 the backlog of work had been cleared as demonstrated in the graph below, and the number of jobs over 3 months old is currently less than 20 (the majority of which are delayed by external factors such as planning requirements).



3.3 The backlog of major repairs in 2014 also meant that issues were experienced with scaffolding being up for longer than anticipated in some cases. Better processes for managing major repairs, combined with improvements in our management of scaffolding have resulted in a significant reduction in the number of scaffolds up for longer than 3 months, as shown in the graph below.



3.4 In order to ensure that the quality of repairs we deliver is maintained at a high level, we have recently appointed an independent surveying company, JRP, to carry out inspections of our repairs work. On a monthly basis, JRP inspect 5% of completed responsive repairs and 100% of completed major repairs. The results for July and August 2015 are set out below, demonstrating a high level of “passes”.

	No. of inspections	Pass	Fail	Incomplete
Responsive repairs - July 2015	124	119 (96%)	2 (1.6%)	3 (2.4%)
Responsive repairs – Aug 2015	118	111 (94.1%)	1 (0.8%)	6 (5.1%)
Major repairs - July 2015	83	80 (96.4%)	3 (3.6%)	0 (0%)
Major repairs – Aug 2015	76	75 (98.7%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.3%)

3.5 Our delivery and monitoring of responsive repairs and major repairs continues to improve, although we continue to look at ways to improve our service delivery, and in particular, our communication with residents.

4. Cyclical Works

4.1 Partners cyclical team will be carrying out works to over 400 properties in the current phase of the programme, which runs to 2016. All properties will receive full external and communal area decorations; in addition, we will undertake any necessary major works identified as we survey the properties. These may include works to roofs, chimneys, parapets, and gutters, windows, rendering and pointing.

4.2 Our programme is as far as possible geographic, and the main areas we will be working in over in the forthcoming year will be Highbury East, Mildmay, Canonbury, Finsbury Park and Tollington. We will also be working on a small number of properties outside of these areas, where we have identified a specific need for more immediate works to be carried out. During the works we will be seeking out proactive ways to engage with our residents and ensure that the works are delivered with minimal disruption.

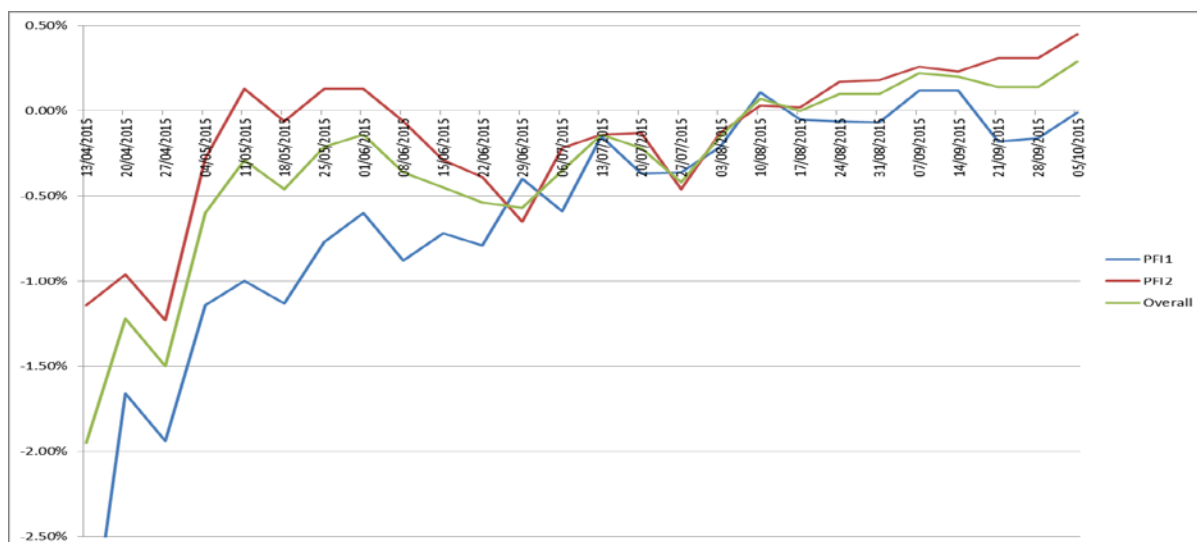
4.3 We have spent considerable time reviewing the processes for managing and specifying the programme, taking into account feedback from last year’s programme.

Our initial inspections indicate that the quality of the work being delivered currently is good, and the issues identified by Partners’ and the Council’s surveyors earlier this year have been addressed.

5. Housing and Leasehold Services

5.1 Our KPIs show that we consistently deliver a good housing management service. We have exceeded and improved on targets in the delivery of tenancy changes, tenancy audits and void relet times so far this year.

5.2 Rent collection has been maintained at between 99-100% throughout the last year, despite increasing pressure on our residents as a result of benefit changes. We also measure our performance against the Council’s directly managed properties and have improved from being behind the Council’s performance to being slightly ahead in recent months, as shown below (0% on the graph would be equal to Council performance).



5.3 Partners engages with residents and continuously seeks feedback. We use all feedback to help us to improve our services. We were therefore disappointed with the results of the recent resident satisfaction survey undertaken by the Council, and in particular with the poor satisfaction reported by our leaseholders. Our analysis of the survey indicates that there are two main areas of concern raised by our

leaseholders – delivery / communication of major repairs, and delivery of core leasehold services such as S20s and bills for works undertaken.

5.4 We hope that the changes that we have already made to our service, such as improvements in our major repairs service as demonstrated above, will begin to have a positive effect on leaseholder satisfaction. In addition, at the beginning of 2015 we reviewed our delivery of core leasehold services and these are now provided through Hyde's central Home Ownership Team. The new team have spent considerable time in reviewing leasehold processes such as the processes for issuing bills, ensuring that they are best practice and systematic. Although the introduction of the new team initially lead to some disruption of services, it is recognised that the additional expertise and consistent processes that the team bring will benefit Partners leaseholders, and it is again hoped that this will be recognised in future leaseholder feedback.

5.4 To ensure that the changes we are making to leasehold services are the right ones, and so that we can continue to improve our services, we have appointed an independent company, ORS, to measure leaseholder satisfaction on a regular basis. We also continue to seek feedback through other mechanisms such as regular reviews of complaints, Partners Open Forum, focus forums, mystery shopping, and our residents scrutiny panel. All feedback will be used to look at ways to continually improve our services.

6. Complaints

6.1 From December 14 Partners introduced a new central complaints team to handle all complaints and service alerts from across Partners (rather than complaints being answered by individual services). This was introduced to ensure consistency of responses and action for all our services, and to ensure that recurring themes are identified and addressed.

6.2 We have already seen evidence of the positive effect of these changes, as well as the effect of improvements made with the delivery of our services. The volume of Stage 1 complaints received has reduced by around 25% over the last 6 months as shown below, and there has also been a drop in upheld Stage 2 (CE Stage) complaints. These were running at 10 between April-Sept 14 and for the same period this year, we are at 2.

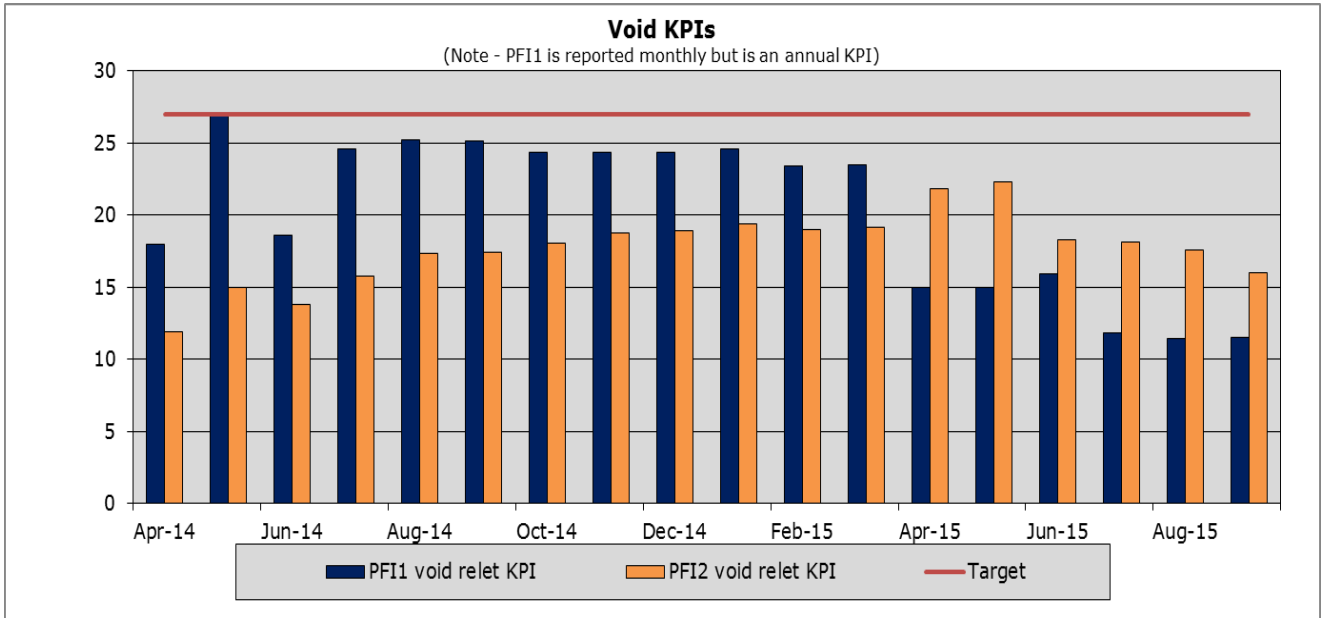
	April	May	June	July	August	Sept
Stage 1 complaints 2015	33	32	39	31	33	34
Stage 1 complaints 2014	41	41	40	49	55	50

6.3 Key themes identified last year through complaints, such as concerns with roofing works and scaffolding, and delays with major works have significantly reduced, indicating that changes made to our services are taking effect. Current themes are concerns with a lack of communication through the major works process, and completion of follow-on works. We continue to work at improving on these issues.

6.4 Our communications team have started to look at the way that Partners communicate with our residents. This review is looking into all of the standard information contained in leaflets and the letters that we send, with a view to making all of our information as helpful as possible, for our residents. We are also undertaking a call handling review, which will consider how we can improve the number of calls which are resolved at the first point of contact by our residents.

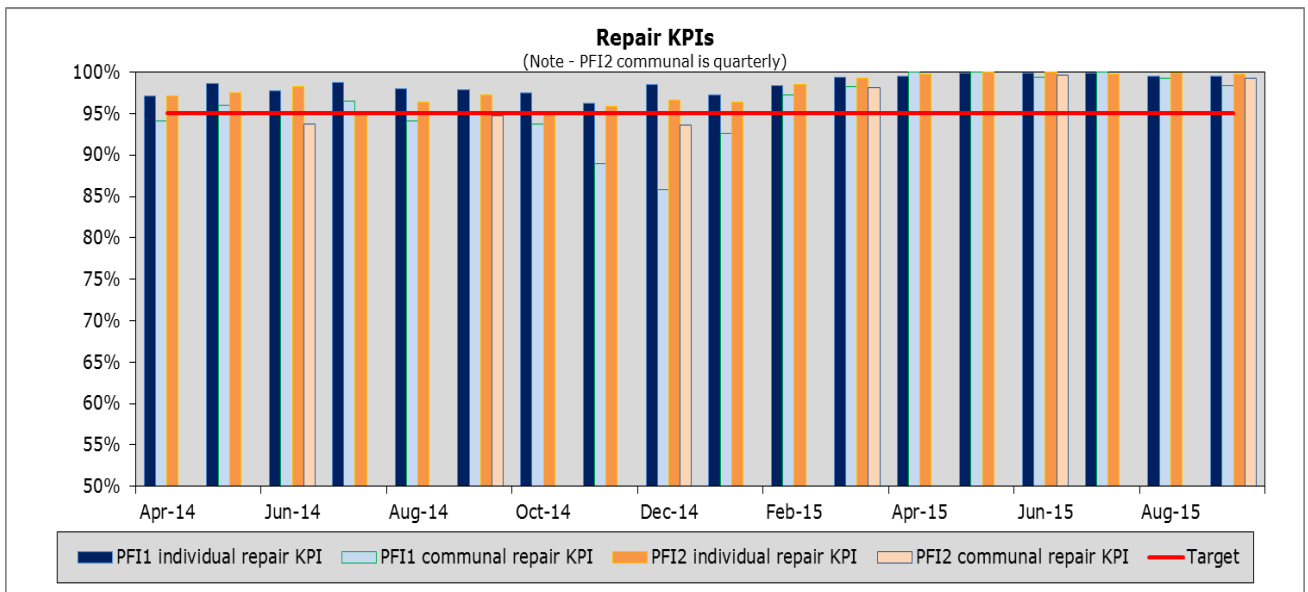
APPENDIX A
PARTNERS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN ISLINGTON
CONTRACTUAL KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

1. VOID RELET TIMES



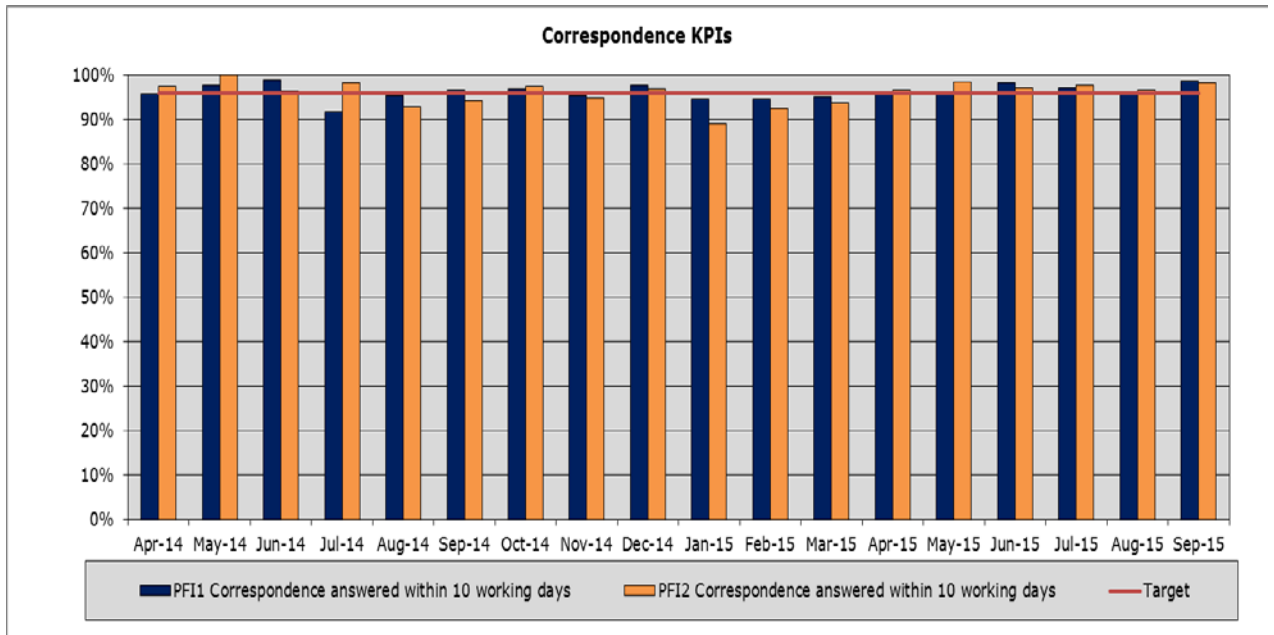
The target for re-letting void properties is 27 days. We are consistently exceeding this target with current turnaround times for PFI1 at 12 days and PFI2 at 17 days.

2. RESPONSIVE REPAIRS RESPONSE TIMES



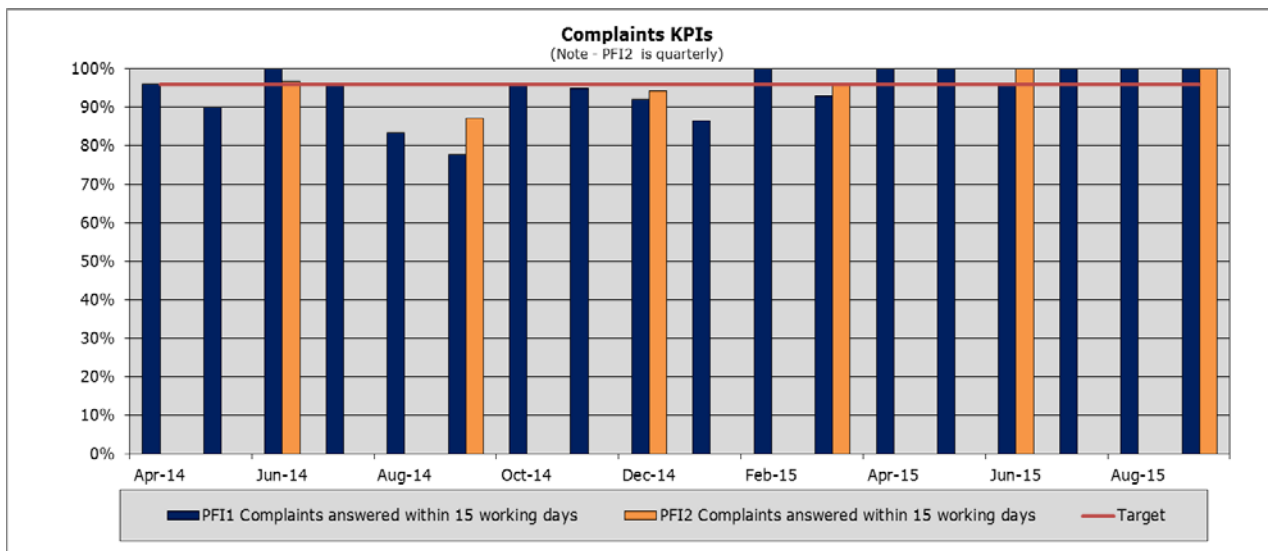
The target for responding to responsive repair requests is 95% of jobs completed within the target time for the repair. Since Feb 15 we have exceeded this target in all areas, frequently achieving close to 100%.

3. CORRESPONDENCE RESPONSE TIMES



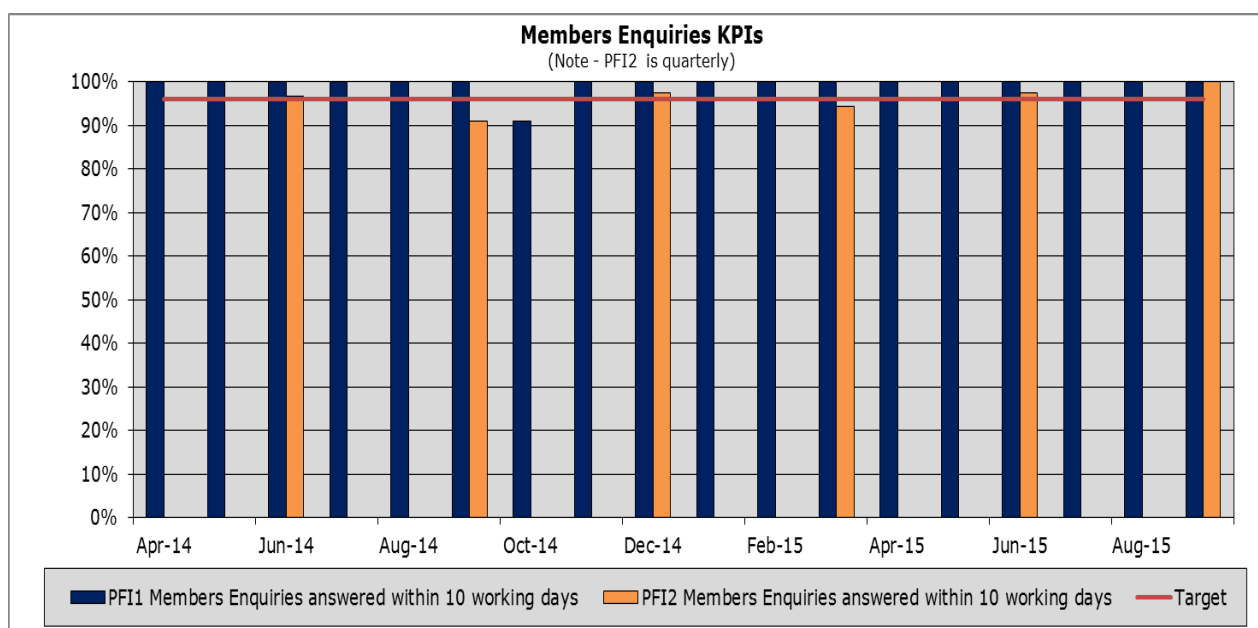
The target for responding to correspondence is 95% of correspondence replied to within 10 working days of receipt. Since April 15 we have continuously exceeded this target.

4. COMPLAINTS RESPONSE TIMES



The target for responding to complaints is 95% of complaints replied to within 15 working days of receipt. Since April 15 we have continuously exceeded this target.

5. MEMBERS ENQUIRIES RESPONSE TIMES



The target for responding to members enquiries is 95% of enquiries replied to within 10 working days of receipt. Since April 15 we have continuously exceeded this target.

6. RESIDENT SATISFACTION WITH REPAIRS (annual KPI)

Annual KPI	Annual KPI Target	PF11 14/15	PF11 April 15 - Sept 15	PF12 14/15	PF12 April 14 - Sept 15
Resident satisfaction with repairs	75.00%	90.5%	89.3%	91.2%	97.7%

The target for resident satisfaction with repairs is 75%. We have continuously significantly exceeded this target, achieving around 90% or above.

7. RENT COLLECTION (annual KPI)

Annual KPI	Annual KPI Target	PF11 14/15	PF11 April 15 - Sept 15	PF12 14/15	PF12 April 14 - Sept 15
Percentage of gross annual rent collected	97.00%	100.00%	99.7%	99.1%	100.2%

The target for collection of rent as a % of gross rent charged is 97%. We continuously exceed this target, collecting between 99% and 100% each year.

8. COMPLIANCE WITH NUISANCE AND HARASSMENT REQUIREMENTS (annual KPI)

Annual KPI	Annual KPI Target	PF1 14/15	PF1 April 15 - Sept 15	PF12 14/15	PF12 April 14 - Sept 15
Compliance with nuisance and harassment requirements	100.00%	100.00%	92.3%	98.6%	100.0%

The target for compliance with nuisance and harassment requirements is 100%. We are currently short of this target on one contract, having declared 1 case where we do not feel we fully complied with process.

9. COMPLIANCE WITH TENANCY CHANGES REQUIREMENTS (annual KPI)

Annual KPI	Annual KPI Target	PF1 14/15	PF1 April 15 - Sept 15	PF12 14/15	PF12 April 14 - Sept 15
Compliance with tenancy changes	95.00%	100.00%	100.0%	96.6%	97.6%

The target for compliance with tenancy changes requirements is 95% compliance with Council policies (eg. timescales for dealing with mutual exchanges and successions). We have continuously exceeded this target.

10. COMPLIANCE WITH TENANCY AUDITS REQUIREMENTS (annual KPI)

Annual KPI	Annual KPI Target	PF1 14/15	PF1 April 15 - Sept 15	PF12 14/15	PF12 April 14 - Sept 15
Compliance with tenancy audits	95.00%	100.8%	202.4%	100.5%	172.5%

The target for compliance with tenancy audits requirements is 95% of required checks carried out (the requirement is to carry out a check on 10% of rented properties). We have always achieved 100% compliance, and this year we have accelerated our programme of audits to achieve full compliance for the year already.

Housing Scrutiny Committee 2015/16

Capital Programming – Witness Evidence Plan

Aim: To investigate how contractors are selected; to look at opportunities for using local labour; to explore who determines what works are undertaken.

7 September 2015		
Who / What	Organisation / Purpose	Other key information
Damian Dempsey, Group Leader, Quantity Surveyors – Report / Presentation	Report providing introductory information on several areas set out in the SID.	To include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the different types of work carried out, • how capital works contractors are procured, • the roles of the council acting as a client and a delivery team, • how works are communicated to tenants and leaseholders, • the overall costs of the service.
Guarantee policies and other written evidence	Providing information on the guarantees received on capital works, roofs, windows, cavity wall insulation, etc.	
Key performance indicator data	To provide the Committee with the latest performance indicator data; to discuss the usefulness of this data; and to consider how the performance of the service can be best evaluated.	To include the known levels of local employment used by the capital works contractors, in accordance with SID.

8 October 2015		
Who / What	Organisation / Purpose	Other key information
Tenants and leaseholders	To inform the Committee of their views on capital programming. In particular, how works are planned, prioritised and communicated.	The views of tenants and leaseholders to be received through – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents’ Improvement Taskforce Major Works Consultation (January 2014) and up-to-date action plan. • Results of major works telephone survey (September 2015). • Summaries of ward councillor case work.
Ward councillors		
Andrew Hunter, Programme Manager (Housing Investment) and Aiden Stapleton, Consultation & Asset Manager – Report / Presentation	To advise the Committee on how the Council’s housing assets are managed and how capital works are planned and prioritised.	

Updated key performance indicator data	To provide the Committee with the updated performance indicator data; to discuss the usefulness of this data; and to consider how the performance of the service can be best evaluated.	To include the known levels of local employment used by the capital works contractors, in accordance with SID.
Building inflation data	To provide a general overview of inflation in the building trade, and how this has increased since the capital works contracts were let in 2010.	

16 November 2015

Who / What	Organisation / Purpose	Other key information
John Sweeney	UCATT. To discuss aspects of the review from the UCATT union's perspective.	
Building inflation data	Further detail and analysis of the building inflation data considered at the previous meeting.	

26 January 2016

Who / What	Organisation / Purpose	Other key information
Representatives of the Council's capital works contractors	Mears Projects and Breyer Group. To provide the Committee with the contractor's perspective of the Council's capital programming.	Contractors may be able to compare their experiences of working with other local authorities, the different types of contract they carry out, further information on their use of local labour, and their own planning, prioritisation and communication processes.
Benchmarking information	To make comparisons with the capital works programmes of other local authorities and housing providers.	

Key dates:

Draft recommendations: 26 January 2016

Final report: 29 February 2016

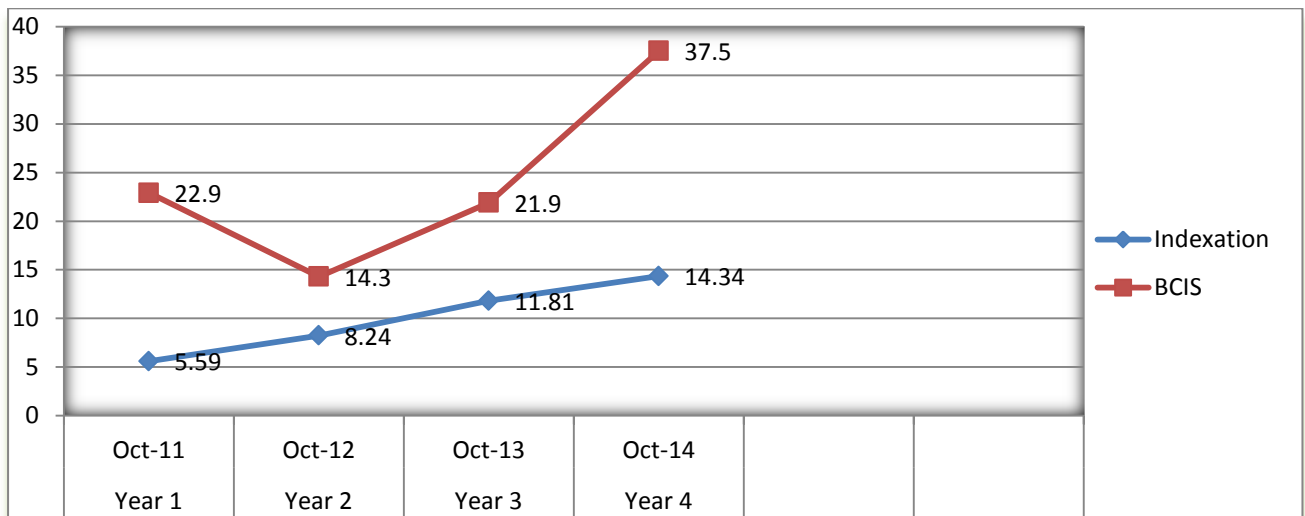
Housing Scrutiny Committee

16 November 2015

Capital Programming Witness Evidence

Building Inflation Data: Further Information

BCIS Cost Updates



Key Changes in Tender Price Inflation 2011

- Tender prices for the first half of 2011 increased as compared to the previous fourth quarter of 2010. The increase was mainly attributed to the increase in preliminaries costs driven by fuel price hike as well as increase in concrete prices.
- Material costs and wages were rising.
- Building costs throughout 2011 rose steadily.

Key Changes in Tender Price Inflation 2012

- The year showed little sign of tender price growth as economic weakness hit output and confidence.
- Forecasts for tender price increases across the UK were flat for 2012.
- The rates of increase in tender prices were subdued; slowing from previous quarter's forecast.
- The UK construction industry continued to feel the effect of global economic slowdown, the key during 2012 was to maintain business against declining output.

Key Changes in Tender Price Inflation 2013

- Major economic growth in Q2 and Q3.
- Prices edged up in the third quarter as a result of emerging increases in output, new orders and renewed optimism.
- Occupier demand as a result strengthened and positive rental growth spread beyond London for prime properties.
- Improved confidence in the economy and the property market , investment demand increased noticeably in Q3 and transaction levels in 2013 were the highest since the market peaked in 2007.
- Development activity in London strengthened and office and residential construction was at a high level reflecting strong occupier demand.

Keys Changes in Tender Price Inflation 2014

- An increase in the construction output.
- The All in TPI increased in 2014, with growth strong regionally as well as in London. Prices were driven by wage increases and the lack of capacity in the market as contractors respond to the increasing workload, tempered slightly by the reduced cost of European imported materials.
- Construction costs continued to rise, the speed of recovery was quick over the second and third quarter of 2014 representing a market shift, largely driven by growth in the residential market, responding to both local needs for new homes and continued overseas investment demand for UK residential.

Current Market Status

The construction market continues to be very busy across the UK particularly in Central London markets and generally in the South-East. Contractors are being project selective, basing decisions on their available resources, the likelihood of success (negotiated / long tender list) the client (if they are known / long term prospects) and the complexity of the work. Overall there is hesitancy to tender for works where they are expected to accept unnecessary risk.

“Construction tender prices are set to rise by 28% over the next five years, according to the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS).”