



City of Westminster

Housing, Finance and
Customer Services
Committee Policy and
Scrutiny Committee

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Portfolio: Housing and Customer Services

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Priorities for 2018/19

- To hold CityWest Homes to account for improvements in performance, particularly on repairs and customer services.
- Continue the digitisation of the Council's customer services and modernise the council's website to make our services easy to access
- Ensure fire safety programmes are implemented to the Council's housing stock

CityWest Homes (CWH)

Performance

1.1 A new comprehensive set of performance indicators and targets has informally been agreed with CWH for 2018/19, (Appendix 1). The new indicators include performance of the customer contact centre as well as key measures of housing service delivery. Satisfaction with CWH' services dipped in the final quarter of 2017/18 and work is ongoing to improve both speed and quality of service delivery.

1.2 The new frontline operating model, comprising contact centre and specialist teams, has been in place for nearly 11 months. Following the launch of the new customer service centre in June, call waiting times were longer than acceptable, however performance is now improving and is delivering a consistent good service to residents.

Total for period	March	April	May
Call volume	20909	19819	19322
Average wait time (minutes)	00:00:54	01:15	01:02
% Calls abandoned (calls under 60 secs)	2.5%	3.9%	3.4%

1.3 This information is available as a weekly progress update on CWH's website.

1.4 In order to maintain this service CWH has:

- Implemented a robust contact forecast and staff resourcing plan over a 90, 60 and 30 day time period.
- Invested in a dedicated team to manage email queries.
- Introduced a new performance management model for its contact centre staff.
- Enhanced the systems used to report and manage repairs.

1.5 The transformation currently taking place in CWH is not just about establishing new call centres, the intention is to change the way that CWH services the needs of its residents, breaking down internal barriers at CWH and between CWH and the council and delivering a more proactive service.

1.6 The new specialist teams are also adding value, with increased joint action plan between CWH specialist Anti-Social Behaviour team, the police and relevant WCC teams

1.7 In December 2017 CWH launched a phased roll-out of online services through a secure self-service portal. To date over 400 tenants and lessees have registered for on-line services and can access the following services:

- Contact CWH through a secure digital channel

- View rent and service charges
- View repairs history (from registration date)
- View and update contact details
- View tenancy details
- Raise ASB complaint
- Report feedback on the service
- Order swipe card & set up DD
- Report a repair

2 Repairs performance

2.1 Since the commencement of new repairs and maintenance contracts in 2017 and associated drop in performance during the initial start of the new contract, CWH has worked hard to recover and to make performance improvements with its new partnering contractors.

2.2 Performance has since improved significantly with contractors responding well to the level of performance we expect. The repairs team have continued to make improvements as evidenced by the improving KPIs, Customer satisfaction with the repairs service improved from 68% in January to 80% for both April and May 2018, and satisfaction with the quality of repairs measured 81% in April 2018 and 80% in May. The initial backlog of repairs has been cleared; the quality of repairs orders is significantly better following the implementation of the repairs diagnostic tool and morning or afternoon appointments offered at the point of ordering with customers receiving a text message to confirm the appointment. The service has started to reduce the number of follow-up repairs calls to the contact centre.

2.3 Currently postal surveys are issued on completion of repairs jobs, or an e-mail survey where we have an e-mail address. If the household has already been surveyed in the same month for another repair, then we will not issue a survey. A new satisfaction survey service including telephone and e-mail is due to be procured in 2018-19; this was trialled last year and saw much greater returns over a more varied demographic of residents. There is still some way to go to reach the agreed target and the feedback provided from customer surveys is helping to inform improvement plans.

3 CWH Structure

3.1 Westminster are proactively looking at the CWH management structure with the aim of assuring the Council, residents and stakeholders that services delivered by City West are being provided to the highest and most consistent standards, that governance and risk arrangements are robust, and that services are being delivered in the most efficient way within available resources, whilst ensuring services are fully compliant with health and safety regulations.

3.2 The key focus is to restore CWH's reputation and ensure excellent service delivery there are four main areas we are currently focusing on

- CWH management structure
- Governance arrangements
- Client arrangements between Westminster and CWH
- Financial operations of the ALMO.

4 Resident communications

4.1 CWH hosts news, opportunities and service updates on cwh.org.uk on a regular basis and promote all content through Twitter, where the follower base continues to increase and engagement remains consistent. This information is also promoted monthly to 10,000+ residents through City Voice CWH's online newsletter.

4.2 Since launching 'City Voice' in November the engagement rate has increased with each edition published. This has helped drive audiences to the new website and also shows recipients are interested in the information sent. The newsletter is sent to tenants and lessees for whom CWH holds email addresses, the number of which is consistently increasing as CWH encourages more residents to sign up to its self-service portal and improves resident data. Those who wish to receive it can sign up on CWH's website.

4.3 For tenants who do not have internet access a supplementary magazine is sent three times a year. This is also available in the Area Service Centres and online to ensure no resident is excluded from service information, updates and opportunities.

Fire safety

5 Fire risk assessments

5.1 In 2017 fire management consultants were commissioned to undertake 21 in-depth Level 4 Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) in buildings over 10 storeys with enclosed communal areas. The process required for the Level 4 assessment is more extensive than the standard FRA usually completed.

5.2 The first of these more detailed FRAs have been received and the outcomes will be communicated to residents in those blocks, in the form of a 'fire improvement plan'. In future, City West Homes (CWH) will communicate to residents the findings from any new FRAs undertaken on a block-by-block basis, and any corrective actions required. The intention is to build trust with residents in the management of these issues and their confidence in the safety of their homes.

5.3 In support of this, a communications campaign is in place.

6 Fire Doors

6.1 A programme to inspect all common area fire doors is in hand, in addition to inspections of a minimum sample of 10% of front doors. This programme covers 261 buildings, over 6 storeys and is due to complete by July 2018. CWH's independent fire door assessor has completed inspections on approximately a third of those in the programme, along with a small number of additional blocks where major works are due on-site in the next 12 months. CWH has so far received reports on 48 of the buildings surveyed.

6.2 Doors and frames across the housing stock were installed to the relevant standard at the time of installation and the expectation is that many blocks will require some remedial works to either the communal doors or flat entrance doors. CWH are currently matching the recommendations from the reports with the major works 5 year strategy to determine appropriate timelines for delivery, and which of the Term Partnering contractors are best placed to undertake the works.

7 Sprinklers

7.1 Following the Policy and Scrutiny committee on 15 January 2018, a cross party task group met on 27 March 2018 to be set up to examine all options for the

retrofit of sprinklers to tower blocks. A further meeting is due to take place in July 2018.

8 Street Properties

8.1 As part of the review of fire safety, the installation of emergency lighting, and communal smoke detection systems in street properties of three storeys and above has been brought forward. The programme was previously scheduled to take over 3 years to complete but will now be completed this financial year (2018/19).

8.2 In preparation for this, specialist mechanical and electrical services contractor Oakray have been commissioned to survey approximately 360 street properties and identify which properties should be fitted with this system. Allowing time for Section 20 consultation, work should start on site from April 2018, and the programme should be completed before Christmas 2018. Properties with the highest risk profile will be completed as a priority.

9 Little Venice towers

9.1 The outer cladding panels were safely removed from all six Little Venice towers earlier in the year. As a result, the evacuation strategy returned to 'Stay Put' in January 2018 and the fire warden patrols have now ceased.

9.2 A decision to select Alucobond A2 panel was made to ensure compliance with current building regulations. This product is defined as low combustibility. A1 is the highest rating for materials – this is classed as 'non-combustible'. A2 is the highest rating for a composite material and is classed as 'limited combustibility' (hence meeting current building regulations). The reason why it is not classed as A1 is because of the binding agent that keeps it all together (of which there is very little). While "A1" options were considered at the time these alternative solutions were discounted for a number of reasons including, the need to replace the existing structural fixings/brackets (This would have also resulted in very loud noise levels throughout the block whilst this work was undertaken. The time taken to fully design the replacement system and for lead in periods for bespoke made systems and the lead in periods, including new planning consent in some

instances planning, the lack of existing supplier and contractor relationships for these products.

- 9.3 Following the Government's announcement to review all cladding materials on 17 May 2018, it was agreed that the re-cladding of the six towers be put on hold. This was because of the risk that work could be abortive if the Government's consultation concluded that the proposed "Alucobond A2" panels were not deemed 'non-combustible. Nevertheless, limited work associated with the re-cladding is continuing, including a full-scale test of the proposed system in mid-July, whilst also re-considering alternative cladding options.
- 9.4 Residents continue to receive regular updates on these fire safety works via letter. Residents also remain supported and reassured by on-site staff and weekly drop-in sessions.

10 Fire Safety Communications

- 10.1 General fire safety updates and copies of the latest communications sent to residents are available on the CWH website.
- 10.2 In addition, CityWest Homes has developed a resident's fire safety communications campaign, which is scheduled for launch in early autumn.
- 10.3 The development of a resident's engagement strategy on "building safety" is also in the early stages of development and CityWest Homes have sought report from the resident council in development of this strategy.

Housing Services

11 Homeless Reduction Act

- 11.1 In 2017, Parliament passed the Homelessness Reduction Act and this formally came into force April 3 2018. This changes how local authorities assists people or households who are or may become homeless and enables a person or household to access local authority services for up to 56 days irrespective of their priority.
- 11.2 The council has welcomed these changes, and has been working to put new arrangements in place ready for when the law came into force.
- 11.3 From 3 April 2018, any person or household who requests assistance if they are homeless or are at risk of being homeless will receive support under the new rules. This means that:

- Service users can apply for help up to 56 days before they think they might become homeless (previously this was generally less than one month)
- We will then work with people to develop a personal housing plan which will set out what steps will help prevent them from losing their home, or help them find another home
- We will keep circumstances under review, however if people do not work with us we can decide that we cannot help them further
- People will have the right to request a review of how we have tried to help them

11.4 As was anticipated early indications are that numbers of households approaching the Council in housing need have continued at previous levels. In practice, the changes following the introduction of the Act described above lead to more households making a formal homeless application as we must now formally treat all households who approach in housing need as an applicant. As was anticipated, this has increased the number of formal single homeless applications, under the previous system the support available to single people who did not have specific vulnerabilities (e.g. mental or physical health problems.) Reflecting this change, there has been a total of 187 applications in the first month.

11.5 Conversely, the new 56 day duty also reduces the number of formal homeless acceptances in the first months as a decision will not generally be taken until towards the end of the 56 day period (unless homelessness has been prevented.) As a result there were 10 acceptances in April.

11.6 The levels of Temporary Accommodation as a measure of numbers of homeless households where accommodation has been provided has continued at previous levels.

12 Prevention

12.1 The Prevention team have been brought together to provide a focus on the prevention homelessness in the first place. The team is now comprised of 4 elements that work in partnership with other areas of the council:

- Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer
- Supported Accommodation and Rough Sleeping
- Housing Options Service
- Service Transformation

- 12.2 The Trailblazer is one element of the Council's transformed homelessness prevention offer. The Trailblazer targets homelessness prevention at an early stage, supporting households through wide ranging interventions at a point when issues are less complex and costly. The aim is to prevent homelessness longer term and reduce the need for households to approach the council at a point of housing crisis.
- 12.3 The Trailblazer project comprises three work streams: Front line service; research; building community resilience and a sustainable model. The Trailblazer front line compliments the prevention activity conducted by the Council, RMG, Shelter and Passage under the Housing Options contract and the research underpins the Council's wider prevention strategy.
- 12.4 The Housing Options Service has undergone the first stages of a transformation towards being a person focused service and adopting a proactive focus on keeping people in their homes or if this is unaffordable or unsustainable, linking people into alternative housing solutions. We now have specialised teams for singles, families and prevention in the community.
- 12.5 Finally, all the areas of the specialised supported housing pathways are currently being reviewed with a focus on implementing multi-disciplinary teams to support vulnerable individuals and better outcomes. Specific pathways, such as the mental health pathway, will be re-procured throughout the next 2 years.

13 Temporary Accommodation

- 13.1 The provision of Temporary Accommodation (TA) that is suitable for homeless households in terms of size, cost and location is a statutory requirement for local authorities. Properties are generally leased by the Council from the private sector, either directly or through contractors, particularly RP's. Homeless households are then placed in those properties and are charged a rent set by a central government formula which has remained unchanged since 2011. TA now comprises over 2500 units of accommodation (having been c. 1600 in 2011) for homeless households provided through over 30 contractors.
- 13.2 The greatest demand is for 2 bed properties, followed by 3 bed, half of TA is located within Westminster, the remainder located over 25 London boroughs (although principally in East London) with c. 80 properties outside of London.

14 Discharge of Housing Duty into the Private sector

- 14.1 The Council supports households generally at risk of homelessness to move voluntarily into the private rented sector to prevent homelessness. Properties are secured through the West-Lets private sector scheme managed through the Housing Options Service contract. Over 300 such private sector prevention placements have been completed since January 2017.
- 14.2 Following approval of the new homelessness policy framework in January 2017, the Council has been in a position to deliver initiatives to secure additional properties for use as discharge of duty. In these cases, an accepted homeless household (living in TA) has an in-depth assessment that identifies how an offer of a specific private rented sector property is suitable in terms of location, affordability and size.
- 14.3 Over 80 such moves have been completed, all properties are 2 and 3 bedroom family size units, inspected and viewed before letting and are let at or close to Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels, guaranteed for at least 2 years and thus are affordable. Follow-up visits by officers are completed and should any tenancy breakdown through no fault of the tenant within 2 years then the Council will rehouse the household.
- 14.4 A key initiative to deliver affordable family sized private sector properties has included the Council's £15m investment in Real Lettings comprising Resonance (a Fund Management Company specialising in social impact investments) and St Mungo's (a homelessness charity). This investment is producing good quality, suitable and affordable properties across London. Following this St Mungo's provide post resettlement support to ensure families settle into their new homes.

Customer Services and Digital

15 Contact Centre

- 15.1 Overall performance for both in and out of hours contact centres has been very good.
- 15.2 The contact centre teams were actively engaged to ensure GDPR readiness by the 25th May. A voice message has been recorded on most phone lines to advise

customers of GDPR and where to find information on the website. All contact centre agents were briefed and undertook training on GDPR and we are continuing to work with the managers to monitor and improve how we manage customer data.

15.3 The contact centres supported the design and implementation of the new Report it forms and the My Westminster account and are now actively promoting these to customers.

15.4 The key focus for the coming months is the replacement of the current Lagan CRM system with a Microsoft Dynamics platform. The current system (Lagan) used by the Agilisys call centre will be replaced ahead of the expiry of the Contract (May 2019), utilising our new Microsoft Dynamics platform, this will support the contact centre by providing them with a greater accuracy of data to inform their responses, enabling the customer to receive a more effective service.

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16.1 The Dynamics implementation project is being led by IT and the digital transformation programme. The Customer Contracts Manager is on the project board and will be engaging both contact centres throughout the design, development and implementation phases. Go live is planned for early 2019 but this could change as the project gains momentum.

Appendix 1-

With the roll out of the new contact centre a number of new key performance measures and targets will focus on the

Block 1 Contact Centre	
Annual Measures	2018/19 Target
First Contact Resolution	60%
Call abandonment rate	8%
% of calls answered within 30 seconds	70% of calls answered in 30 seconds
Satisfaction with call handling	To be set on receipt of first set of survey results

performance of the contact centre

In addition new target for repairs are being set, these include -

Block 2 Repairs and Voids Management	
Annual Measures	2018/19 Target
Gas Safety Certificates	100% with each property outside of target explained
Overall Satisfaction with repairs service	90%
Repairs first time fixes	85%
Satisfaction with quality of repair	88%

Void re-let time (key to key)	TBC- subject to a void review being carried out by officers at Westminster and City West Homes
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Customer satisfaction levels with City West and performance targets will be as follows:

Block 3 Customer Services	
Annual Measures	2018/19 Target
Tenant Satisfaction with services provided by landlord.	86%
Tenant Dissatisfaction with services provided by the landlord	9%
Lessee Satisfaction with services provided by landlord	65%
Lessee Dissatisfaction with services provided by the landlord	21%
Complaints satisfaction with case handling	80%
% Complaints in target time	97%

Major works performance and tenant and leaseholder satisfaction levels

Block 4 Asset Management	
Annual Measures	2018/19 Target
Key schemes over £250K to start on site within three months of the target	75% of agreed programme
Tenant satisfaction with major works	88% increased to 17/18 out turn
Tenant satisfaction with major works consultation	65% 17/18 out turn
Lessee satisfaction with major works	64%
Lessee satisfaction with major works consultation	66%

Resident's satisfaction with neighbourhood and handling of anti -social behaviour cases

Block 5 Improving the Quality of Life in Safe and Secure neighbourhoods	
Annual Measures	2018/19 Target
Resident satisfaction with neighbourhood as a place to live	88%

Resident satisfaction with ASB case handling	83%
Fire risk Assessments	85% in target and no FRA >1 month overdue

Income collection

Block 6 Income Collection	
Annual Measures	2018/19 Target
Rent collected as a proportion of rent owed on HRA dwellings. (old BV66a definition)	98.93%
Lessee service charge collection	98%

Resident engagement

Block 7 Resident Engagement	
Annual Measures	2018/19 Target
Satisfaction with opportunities to participate	Tenant 74%, Lessee 56%
Satisfaction with keeping residents informed	Tenant 81%, Lessee 64%

Block 8 Audit

Annual Measures	2018/19 Target
Achieve high standard of Internal Audit report outcomes	60% Satisfactory, 40% Substantial assurance reports

Block 9 Incentives		
Annual Measures	2018/19 Target	Incentive Pot
Collection of former tenant arrears	£150,000	£5,000 for achieving target plus 50% of income collected in excess of target
Service charge collection	97.5%*	
Recovery of illegally/unlawfully occupied properties	no minimum requirement	£3,000 from the HRA in reward for saving against homelessness costs for each property recovered
Collection of aged lessee debt	£1.5M	Any sums collected above the target will be paid in to the incentive pot.