



City of Westminster

CityWest Homes Customer Services and Repairs - Service Diagnosis

Confidential

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
1. INTRODUCTION	6
2. THE BRIEF	6
3. OUR METHODOLOGY	7
4. THE CURRENT STATE OF PLAY.....	7
5. EVENTS LEADING TO CURRENT STATE OF PLAY.....	28
Appendix 1 – Recommendations	33
Appendix 2 – Persons Interviewed and Meetings Attended	38
Appendix 3 – Mystery Shopping	40

KEY

Throughout the document we use the following terms:

AWT	Average Call Wait Times
CEX	Chief Executive
CSA	Customer Service Advisor
CWC	CityWest Connect – the CWH subsidiary that handles customer contact
CWH	CityWest Homes
FCR	First Contact Resolution rate in CWC Contact Centre
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
Relet 2017	The name given to the project to relet all the technical term contracts
Unappointed	A repair job issued without an appointment being made.
WCC	Westminster City Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Having planned and started to implement significant change over the period 2015 to 2017, CityWest Homes (CWH) then faced serious performance problems in two business units: their new customer contact centre and the delivery of their new repairs contract by Morgan Sindall. Poor service triggered increased telephone calls. The new customer contact centre could not cope with the volume of calls, leading to a high incidence of abandoned calls and high call wait times. This in turn led to increased numbers of complaints and Members' enquiries. A damaging spiral of poor performance persisted.

In the face of these events, Westminster City Council increased the level of their clienting interactions with CWH and commissioned this report, the purpose of which is three-fold: to provide insight on the current position; to provide insight on existing and planned remedial works and to make further recommendations with regard to remediation where relevant; and to provide insight on how the issues arose.

The first key factor leading to the problems was the decision to run multiple change projects concurrently. Aligning the go-live of the new contact centre and the new repairs contract created unmanageably high risks. Our view is that the decision reflects a shortfall in the performance of the Executive Team at CWH in accessing and using housing management expertise in their decision-making. This shortfall in uploading expertise from the business was exacerbated by the lack of significant housing expertise in the Executive Team itself. In our view, the shortfall lies with CWH: the business cases for the transformation were comprehensive but misguided in ways that were difficult for the client to recognise.

CWH have in place comprehensive methodologies for programme and project management and for risk management. These methodologies were populated with data and actively used, but did not foresee or prevent the problems that arose. It is apparent from the documents we have seen that two separate change projects (the new customer contact centre and the new repairs contracts) ran completely separately, each reporting its progress but never, in the documents we have seen, considering the risks arising from the overlap with other change projects.

To exemplify the level of risk being incurred, if all the changes planned had worked through, then the story of a repair in summer 2017 would have been: a customer calling to a **new** contact centre; containing **redeployed** staff; in **new** premises; using **new** business processes; using **new** software; over **new** IT architecture; to call out a **new** repairs contractor; working to a **new** contract; reporting in to a **restructured** client function.

At go-live in summer and autumn 2017, a range of issues manifested. Since then, CWH have invested significant time and effort in securing service improvements. In approximately a two-week period, we have taken as thorough a look as has been possible at the current operations. It is clear to us that significant improvements have been made, as evidenced by improved performance metrics. However, there is much work still to be done. Moving forward, there needs to be as much focus on *how* things are done as there is on *what* things are done. Our report contains 78

recommendations. The majority of these are ‘tweaks’ or relatively minor additions to work already planned. A table of all the recommendations can be found below this executive summary.

The most important recommendation is that CWH are at a point where they need briefly to take stock and produce a new forward plan. That forward plan needs to:

- Provide assurance that CWH recognise and have taken ownership of the root causes of these change and performance issues;
- Sets out a new forward plan that applies that learning;
- Provide transparency on the costs of the programme up to this point and revised cost/saving forecasts.

Preparing the new forward plan provides CWH with the opportunity to demonstrate that they can create appropriate channels of communication and influence by which housing expertise within the business at mid-level and front-line can achieve appropriate influence on the forward plan. The new forward plan will enable CWH to set out their reaction to this report in a practical, business focused way and to provide the client with the assurance it rightly seeks.

The top 10 most important recommendations are:

1. Within four weeks, CWH should produce a new forward plan including:
 - Lessons learned;
 - Revised forward plan which incorporates lessons learned;
 - Insight on additional costs incurred and forecast and revised savings forecasts.
2. Close heed should be taken to ensuring that the voice of middle management and front-line staff can be found in senior management reports, in order to ensure that housing expertise within the business is being given the opportunity to influence operational matters.
3. Consider reorganising CWC and Repairs to report in to one Director, possibly a Chief Operating Officer.
4. Focus on resolving all outstanding IT issues.
5. Consider how the significant strengths of M&E operations can be achieved across the wider Repairs Team.
6. Introduce a competency-based framework for the training and assessment of CSA staff.
7. Consider co-locating more Morgan Sindall staff with CWC.
8. Implement systematic learning from complaints and monitor the quality of the analysis and outcomes.
9. Strengthen Core Group management of partnering contracts.
10. Develop effective strategies to deal with main causes of repairs and complaints, e.g. leaks, mould and damp.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Westminster City Council (WCC) seek assurance on two aspects of CityWest Homes' (CWH) service delivery: the management of customer contact and the delivery of repairs services. WCC wish to be assured that following serious performance problems services are improving, that the improvements are sustainable and that lessons have been learned where appropriate.
- 1.2. In this report we consider the current situation first and latterly how the circumstances arose.
- 1.3. In preparing the report, we have had open access to CWH staff and data from the Chief Executive (CEX) to the front-line. CWH have responded with transparency to our presence in their business and we thank them for their support.

2. THE BRIEF

- 2.1. There have been two significant changes to the CWH service over the past year. Firstly, the restructuring of service delivery from 11 local offices to four area offices and the creation of a central customer contact centre. Secondly, a re-procurement of your term partnering contracts and the mobilisation of those contracts including the delivery of day-to-day repairs.
- 2.2. We have been briefed that a range of issues have arisen:
 - Contractor performance not adequate;
 - Leading to increased calls to the customer contact centre;
 - Performance in call handling not adequate;
 - All the above acting together to generate a large number of Member enquiries and customer complaints;
 - Remedial action has been taken by CWH and some reduction from the highest levels of poor performance has been achieved;
- 2.3. However, given the course of events outlined above, WCC is seeking insight on past events and the way forward:
 - Are the performance expectations clear?
 - How are the performance problems being managed out by CWH?
 - What are the key issues underlying the poor performance?
 - What was the sequence of events in CWH's handling of relevant matters?
 - How have CWH reacted as the situation has worsened?
 - Have remedial measures been timely, proportionate and effective?
 - Moving forward, are there recommendations to bring performance back to where it needs to be?
 - Looking across the piece, are structures, capacity and capability correct and sufficiently strong?

- Acknowledging that additional resources have been required and provided to deal with the position, is the approach operating within an agreed cost envelope and delivering good value for the level of cost being incurred?

3. OUR METHODOLOGY

- 3.1. Our approach is based on our well-developed understanding of the ALMO client role and the ALMO role, both at WCC/CWH and more widely. We have:
- Met WCC to gain a detailed understanding of the client's concerns;
 - Analysed CWH performance data;
 - Analysed the records of remedial action that CWH have provided;
 - Carried out enquiries to validate performance data, such as mystery shopping of responsiveness to customer contact by telephone and email covering a range of subjects;
 - Observed operations on the ground and met staff at frontline and supervisory levels as appropriate;
 - Met senior staff within CWH to understand their perspectives on the issues and enable us to form a view on how the problems originated and then worsened, and on the remediation and improvement work undertaken and planned;
 - The people we have interviewed and meetings we have attended are set out at Appendix 1.

Caveats

- 3.2. This report has been prepared over a short period of time but nevertheless covers a lot of ground. A significant number of issues exist that we needed to consider. The volume of issues to consider within the short timescale mean that we have had limited time to triangulate our findings. We have nonetheless achieved appropriate confidence in the accuracy of our findings. Given the number of operational issues we have encountered, our findings focus chiefly on operational matters. There are more measures in place than are captured here. This report focuses on the key subjects of concern, and identifies the most pressing areas in need of improvement. Further work is required to better understand the financial implications of the problems, the remediation of the problems, and revised costs/savings compared to the figures quoted in the business case for the changes.

4. THE CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

Scope of Investigation

- 4.1. The focus of this investigation has been to determine how the Contact Centre (CWC) and Repairs service were functioning, six months on from the creation of CWC and the letting of the new term contracts. We discuss in section 5 below the journey to the current point. In this section, we consider the current snapshot and future prospects.

Approach taken

- 4.2. We have needed to look across a wide range of issues in a short period of time. In order to cover a lot of ground succinctly we have adopted the following structure:

Subject of Concern	The key lines of our enquiry: • Clarified by bullet point examples
Root Causes	Practical issues that led to the outcomes that are the subject of concern
Current Remedial Measures	Actions already in place or planned to mitigate the situation and improve
CT Findings	Our views on what we found
CT Recommendations	Actions to enhance current activity or propose new measures to secure further service or cost improvements

Summary of key operational issues

- 4.3. The key themes emerging from our review can be summarised as follows (we have made specific recommendations to cover these issues in the body of the report):

Joint working

- 4.4. The remedial measures now in place are largely reflective of successful team and joint working. This needs to be fostered further in order to achieve remaining improvement goals. This is true between WCC and CWH, and within CWH between senior, middle and frontline staff, across teams in different directorates and in partnership working with contractors.

Effective management of partnering contracts

- 4.5. CWH too often exhibits a traditional 'carrot and stick' approach to managing contractors. Work is needed to understand, adopt and enact a more partnership-focused approach. The suite of KPIs to be developed will help both sides focus on what is important, and encourage the right partnership behaviours. Consideration should be given to further work, such as facilitation, to build competent partnership working with the new contractors.

Building CWC skills

- 4.6. The training, supervision and monitoring of CSAs is central to preventing many complaints and causes of dissatisfaction. Hence CWH must prioritise investment in their training and development. We have recommended the implementation of a three-tier competency framework.

Modernising the Repairs Team

- 4.7. It will be important moving forward to enhance the way in which the technical teams are managed, in order to foster cross-team working and collaboration, and to develop robust plans to manage the repairs issues arising from the stock.

Handling complaints

- 4.8. Particularly given the circumstances of a new service model and new technical contracts, it is vital that learning from complaints is systematically gathered, analysed and applied.

Communications

- 4.9. Communications have a significant role to play in conveying, embedding and reiterating key messages about the new service model. Consideration should also be given to how better upwards communication can be fostered.

Volume of projects

- 4.10. In preparing this report, we have only been able to consider the change projects that directly feed in to our scope. The aspects of the programme we have looked at have been characterised by too many projects being programmed in parallel. It will be important to review the entire portfolio of projects and the quantum of business as usual. This should be a key lesson from this report.

Financials

- 4.11. In the short preparation period of this report we have only seen the costings that CWH were forecasting. We have not seen revised estimates for interim activities, proposed tapering costs or revised long-term forecasts of costs or savings. We are not unduly critical on this point. CWH have been ‘all hands to the pumps’ dealing with service problems. It is clear that significant additional cost has been incurred in the short-term. With performance improving now is an appropriate point for CWH to redraft their cost and savings forecasts as part of a new forward plan.
- 4.12. We do note that in the existing forecasts it appears as though savings not caused by or contingent upon the change programme have been included in the overall savings attributed to the change programme. It may also be the case that cumulative year-on-year savings have been counted.

Are performance expectations clear?

- 4.13. The answer to this question is somewhat mixed. At the highest levels, the CEX is quite clear on what WCC expect from CWH. However, further down the organisation there is less clarity. There will be value in CWH publishing to all staff a succinct statement of the performance requirements.

1. Recommendation: CWH to publish to all staff a statement of the KPIs.

Have remedial measures been timely, proportionate and effective?

- 4.14. The diagnosis of problems has been timely. The solutions applied have in general been reasonable. However, they have not necessarily been proportionate. For example, on the repairs contract the contracts were signed very late, handovers of repairs jobs and voids were far greater in number than indicated in the tender documents, no voids specification was in place at contract start yet all the responsibility for the poor performance was laid at the contractor’s door.
- 4.15. As to whether the changes have been effective, that depends on what you measure. CWH initially put lots more people at the end of telephones but the service offered by those people was ineffective. So, call handling performance improved more than customer service and outcomes.
- 4.16. It is important to note that CWH are entering a new phase of activity wherein they are on top of the worst problems and need now to form a new forward plan which:
- Takes learning from the project/programme issues described in section 5 of this report;
 - Takes learning from the performance issues;
 - Takes account of the remedial measures taken;
 - Enables re-planning and reforecasting.

Looking across the piece, are structures, capacity and capability correct and sufficiently strong?

- 4.17. We have made a number of observations and recommendations on these matters. In terms of structures, it will always be the case that more than one structure could successfully deliver required outcomes. The most significant structural change we are recommending is creating the post of Chief Operating Officer. This will strongly signal that repairs and customer contact are engaged in a joint exercise to deliver excellent outcomes rather than being two separate entities each blaming the other for poor customer outcomes.
- 4.18. In terms of capacity, CWH are currently expending significant resource on servicing customer dissatisfaction. Lean resource levels to deliver a stable new service model are not yet known, but are likely to be lower than current levels. Pre-transformation CWH delivered good services in old-fashioned ways, expensively. Given that they will emerge from these problems carrying too much resource, there exists the risk that the service settles into a new groove of delivering good services in a new model, expensively. The weight and role of the pre-existing corporate culture in this potential outcome should not be underestimated.
- 4.19. In terms of capability, there are a number of strong and capable staff across the organisation. Our prevailing concern on this issue is the extent to which the voice of experience and housing expertise has been marginalised within the business. In the transformation papers the talk of the pre-existing model is all about the weakness of that model. We then see transformation plans which are insufficiently shaped/mitigated by housing expertise. There is a risk that a position arises where the voice of experience ("We tried something similar before and it didn't work because...") is perceived by senior management as being negative and becomes ignored. The key for us in this issue is that time and effort needs to be invested in creating a listening culture where expertise at frontline and middle management is valued and channelled positively and productively in pursuit of the new model. The development of the new forward plan represents exactly this opportunity.

Top 10 Operational recommendations

- 4.20. The 10 most important operational recommendations, for impact and management of risk are:
- (a) Consider reorganising CWC and Repairs to report in to one Director, possibly a Chief Operating Officer;
 - (b) Consider how the significant strengths of M&E operations can be achieved across the wider Repairs Team;
 - (c) Focus on resolving all outstanding IT issues;
 - (d) Introduce a competency-based framework for the training and assessment of CSA staff;
 - (e) Consider co-locating more Morgan Sindall staff with CWC;
 - (f) Implement systematic learning from complaints and monitor the quality of the analysis and outcomes;
 - (g) Strengthen Core Group management of partnering contracts;
 - (h) Carry out further analysis of call levels and repair requests and resource accordingly;

- (i) Develop effective strategies to deal with main causes of repairs and complaints, e.g. leaks, mould and damp;
- (j) Review all transformation, projects and action plans and re-schedule according to the real capacity for change.

Detailed findings

Subject of Concern	Poor management of the transition to the new term contractor: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Management of the demobilisation of existing contractor not adequate ▪ Planning and management of mobilisation of new contractor not adequate
Root cause(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Insufficient lead in time and planning to enable the incoming contractor to gear up ▪ Incorrect repairs and voids data stated in tender documents, leading to far greater repairs volumes (tender stated 29K works orders per year, CWH typically carries out in excess of 45K) ▪ Delays in contractor resourcing the contract in light of incorrect data (26-30 operatives required based on the tender) ▪ Delays in agreeing voids specification (approx. three weeks after contract live date) ▪ Eight voids promised at the start of the contract, 45 handed over ▪ Failure to manage the exit process of Wates and engage contingency plans to prevent a backlog of repairs and voids – approx. 1500 jobs ▪ Poor monitoring of Wates workload and their declining performance in carrying out works
Current remedial measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Measures to clear the backlog of repairs and voids are adequate and will achieve the outcome, just outside of the required deadline ▪ A clear void specification is now in place and is working ▪ The main contractor has now employed 53 operatives on the contract ▪ The operatives' skillsets are matched to the repairs being raised
CT Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The remedial measures are adequate for the current situation. ▪ It is our view that there was insufficient planning for the departure of Wates, once the decision had been made to award the contract to Morgan Sindall ▪ Key managers who had the skills and experience to manage this process left the business at a crucial stage

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We have not been furnished with a coherent, detailed project plan that outlines all of the steps required to manage the transition from one contractor to another, hence it appears that new, incoming staff did not have a clear plan to work to ▪ This process is very complex and requires strong project management and oversight, at the highest levels. There is no clear evidence that this was in place ▪ We cannot find any explanation for the understating of annual repairs volumes cited in the tender documents. This has played a significant role in the initial weeks of the contract
CT Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The lessons learned from this experience should be documented and used to inform the current planning for future projects. 3. Lessons learned to include a creating a checklist of change related risks against which all current projects should be reviewed to ensure the same mistakes will not happen again.
Areas of positive practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Remedial work to resolve the backlog of voids and repairs has been successful

Subject of Concern	<p>Unresolved IT and integration issues:</p> <p>Inability to close down jobs and facilitate financial reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inability of CSAs to carry out basic functions, such as re-booking appointments ▪ Unable to produce performance information ▪ Unappointed repairs being logged ▪ Technical difficulties in the telephony system resulting in downtime ▪ The setup of the IVR (Interactive Voice Recognition) is overly complex and not user-friendly
Root cause(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of clarity and changes in fulfilment of CRM requirement ▪ Lack of reliable performance data available ▪ Approx. 200 jobs per day being raised, 100 of which were unappointed (job issued with an appointment being made), of which approx. 30 are specialist, leaving 60-70 without explanation ▪ The telephony is an inefficient system and has been known to crash frequently ▪ The IVR system is needlessly complicated and illogical in its numbering sequences. For example, the first option is to press 9 for Repairs, instead of pressing 1. Further, it asks if the caller is a tenant or leaseholder, which is irrelevant as the call goes to the same team regardless. The use of music is a wasted opportunity to communicate some key messages, and it is irritatingly intermittent.

Current remedial measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An IT integration plan is in place. However, there is no common understanding outside the IT team as to the planned rate of progress and when key issues will be resolved ▪ There is a weekly meeting between the relevant IT departments to discuss integration issues ▪ Calls and repairs logged can now be tracked by user, so human error can be addressed directly ▪ An IT strategy is in place which outlines IT developments across the business ▪ A review of the IVR system has been planned for March, although this is in CWC's plan, and not IT's.
CT Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Current remedial measures are promising but not adequate to ensure complete confidence in service improvements being delivered in an acceptable timeframe with no further loss of performance and customer satisfaction ▪ The IT integration plan appears to be comprehensive and addresses most of the issues raised in the course of this review. It was noted, however, that the unappointed jobs issue is not included. ▪ There are a number of tasks which are indicated as being out of target for resolution ▪ There is a great deal of IT activity across all of CWH at present, and it is difficult to fully grasp how it all fits together and to be assured that the main issues affecting the business management needs and customer satisfaction are being prioritised ▪ Morgan Sindall are preparing to change their main software/scheduler, and this clearly poses a risk to the partnership. This does not appear to have been discussed at any Core Groups, and there is no indication of a separate project plan to manage this process and its implications ▪ There does not appear to be any plans to replace the telephony system, although it is clear that upgrades do take place ▪ There are some weaknesses in how other parts of the business client their needs with IT ▪ It is our view that the remedial measures need more direct input from senior managers to overcome delays and obstacles
CT Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. The situation merits a more detailed consideration of the technical issues by external expertise 5. There must be an urgent discussion held with the relevant IT team heads and senior CWH officials to gauge progress with IT issues, and re-prioritise as necessary to minimise current and forthcoming problems

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. The way in which department and project leads interact and engage with IT needs a more mature clienteling approach. 7. Problems such as the inability of CSAs and reception staff to re/book appointments must be addressed urgently, as this is a key source of frustration for customers 8. Each of the Core Groups must receive a report from the two IT departments (in person and written) with clear plans to address outstanding issues. 9. The plan to change Morgan Sindall's main software needs specific planning and risk/project management for both partners. 10. The telephony setup should be changed ASAP to auto-distribute calls to CSAs 11. The IVR system should have some immediate changes made to reduce the irritations it causes. 12. The ET needs to reassure itself that the IT priorities are correct, and that new initiatives may need to be placed on hold in order to divert IT resources to the most needed problem areas
Areas of positive practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is a comprehensive plan and regular meetings in place between the IT teams ▪ A large number of integration issues have been resolved ▪ Joint working between CWH and Morgan Sindall has reduced the number of unappointed repairs to an average of 26 per day

Subject of Concern	CWC service weaknesses and complaint management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Long average call wait times (AWT) ▪ Low first contact resolution rates (FCR) ▪ High numbers of complaints ▪ Call back process overwhelmed
Root cause(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Underestimate of likely demand leading to far greater level of incoming calls than planned or resourced for at the launch of CWC ▪ The call levels at that time were exacerbated by the Grenfell disaster ▪ Untrained and inexperienced staff put on the telephones to redress low staffing and to deal with call volumes, resulting in poor call handling, and poor quality works descriptions ▪ Call back processes implemented to reduce call waiting time have impacted FCR, quality of service, and caused upset to customers and more work for staff (double handling) ▪ Call back process managed through a series of inboxes, which were observed to contain a total of 1587 active emails when reviewed

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wates winding down, causing customer dissatisfaction, adding to CWC call rates ▪ Lack of an effective chase up process with new contractor for the initial months of the contract ▪ Calls have not been setup to auto-distribute evenly to CSAs ▪ Recommendations inbox (witnessed as containing 480 emails) is wrongly placed within the Admin team, instead of Property Services ▪ Jobs have been logged without appointments, although some are due to human error and specialist trades, others still need explaining ▪ Call levels are still high, at approx. 5000+ per week, and approx. 1700 emails per week. ▪ The complaints team is overwhelmed by the number of complaints and the role of chasing officers is tiring. Reporting on complaints is manual and requires automation.
Current remedial measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New and emergency calls currently outsourced to Agilisys ▪ Locator Plus has been implemented and training has taken place for CSAs ▪ The Resolution & Insight team has been disbanded and the CSAs returned to the Repairs team ▪ Processes have been re-worked and staff have been re-trained, leading to increased FCR from 39% in December 17 to over 50% in Jan 18, and reduction of AWT from over 10 minutes in October 17 to approx. 2 minutes in Jan 18. ▪ The % of calls answered in 30 seconds has increased to 62% in Jan 18, against a target of 70%. ▪ Temporary staff are now being replaced with permanent and a 2-week induction programme is now in place ▪ Plans are in place for Induction to be extended to include shadowing of other departments ▪ A competency based assessment and scenario group exercise has been devised for new applicants ▪ Regular meetings between Repairs, CWC and IT to iron out issues are taking place ▪ Challenging target for AHT set (for existing repairs calls currently 13-14 mins, against target of 7-8 mins). This is for talk time plus admin time after. CSAs are coached on their scores. ▪ Staff are about to be trained on new and emergency repairs, in preparation for bringing these calls back in house ▪ MS schedulers co-located with CWC

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Floorwalkers introduced to assist CSAs ▪ Inbound call capacity increased from 121 to unlimited calls at any one time ▪ All CSAs now able to call MS planners for same day enquiries ▪ SLA in place with Morgan Sindall to respond to non-same day queries within 2 days (direct to customers) ▪ Daily scheduler error log now being examined by Contact Centre Managers ▪ Guidance on ‘What is Good’ devised and distributed to CSAs, outlining performance levels expected of them, and lead to greater achievement of FCR, AWT, 70/30 and AHT scores. ▪ It is planned to introduce an incentives scheme for CSAs based on the achievement of the targets ▪ There is a CWC action plan, which includes an objective to automate complaints processes
CT Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Current remedial measures are very promising but require further measures to ensure sufficient service improvements in an acceptable timeframe ▪ Trained staff using Locater Plus is improving works descriptions ▪ Lack of cohesion at a senior level to promptly address issues, regardless of cause, and work together to resolve ▪ The complaints team is almost entirely reactive, and unable to take a more proactive role in preventing complaints, due to workload ▪ In the face of high volumes of complaints and enquiries insufficient learning is being taken from complaints and enquiries and there is insufficient application of lessons learned to improve services ▪ The current complaints processes require a lot of chasing of officers, many of whom are not doing their full day job due to the workload of complaints ▪ The service offered to callers at reception in area offices will cause dissatisfaction given that the service is worse than that offered over the telephone. The customer offer is to send an email to the relevant team and to await a response. ▪ Two incidents have been witnessed at reception which demonstrate a need for conflict training and how to de-escalate a situation. ▪ After the disbanding of the R&I team there exists in other teams some confusion about the structure of service delivery. ▪ There are differing views between CWH and MS on the subject of jobs being logged without appointments.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The current CWC training plan (as provided to CT) is insufficient in scope and content ▪ The measures used to assess CWC such as Average Call Handling Time (AHT), First Contact Resolution (FCR) and other metrics do not attempt to measure the quality of the interaction ▪ There are no Service Level Agreements between teams e.g. between Repairs (who client Morgan Sindall) and CWC who provide call-handling on behalf of Repairs ▪ The CWC action plan needs enhancement and the contents shared with IT
CT Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. A review of Locator Plus during April to include front line staff feedback, as well as KPI and financial information to determine its impact on performance. 14. The Resolution processes need to be urgently reviewed to ensure that the customer experience is optimised at all stages, ensuring that customers are visited where this is most likely to resolve the issue 15. Implement a straightforward competency framework for CSA's with three identified levels of competency across the range of issues they deal with 16. CSAs' training and induction programme and contents to be urgently reviewed to fall in line with competency framework and to ensure sufficient scope and depth, and to include time spent with operatives. The partner contractors to be involved in the training of CSAs. Competencies and training to cover disrepair, warranties and guarantees and conflict training. The depth of the training to reflect that this cohort of staff is the core of CWH's customer service offer 17. The 'What is Good' practice and assessment process should be expanded to provide ongoing competency measurements of CSAs. It could also be adopted and adapted for other teams. 18. Further analysis of emerging data is required to fully scope the CWC service for the future, in terms of performance and resources required 19. Review the scope of service available to callers to Area offices. Ensure the service available is at least as good as is available online or over the telephone, whichever is better. 20. Ensure staff dealing with customers face-to-face are competent in handling challenging interactions. 21. Consider increasing the number of Morgan Sindall staff co-located in 155 Westbourne Terrace, to assist in quicker resolution of queries, complaints and to build the required working relationships to develop the partnership

	<p>22. CWH and MS need urgently to reach a shared position on the subject of repairs without appointment.</p> <p>23. CWH should plot a timeline to dealing with all repairs calls and identify the milestones on the journey that will demonstrate that capacity and capability are being attained that can support the workload. If milestones are not achieved it will be necessary to develop an alternative long-term plan for the handling of the calls.</p> <p>24. The current CWC training plan (as provided to CT) is insufficient in scope and content, and needs to be strengthened by aligning it to the competency framework.</p> <p>25. Introduce a performance metric for CWC that captures the quality of the interaction from the customer perspective such as satisfaction with call handling, perhaps using texting after a call</p> <p>26. Put in place SLAs between the CWC and each of its internal clients to improve the clarity of the relationships and support appropriate clienteling of the internal relationships</p> <p>27. The process of capturing analysing and implementing learning from complaints is in need of improvement. The positon needs to be reached that operational teams are given the opportunity to learn from complaints.</p> <p>28. Develop transparent paired and/or matched objectives between CWC and internal clients, starting with Repairs to foster co-working to solve problems.</p> <p>29. CWH should continue to engage a high level of professional mystery shopping to reality test services, until consistently good results are achieved</p> <p>30. Develop a format for the detailed analysis of specimen complaints. From first service request to complaint resolution, learning taken and implementation plan for the application of learning.</p> <p>31. Require the presentation of three end-to-end reports to each Executive Team meeting, by a Director, to ensure appropriate visibility to senior managers of the customer experience and of management practice.</p> <p>32. If possible, plans to automate the complaints process should be expedited</p>
Areas of positive practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The new training and induction seems to be having a positive effect on the quality of call handling ▪ The call centre managers have a great deal of experience from which CWC can gain and achieve further service improvements ▪ The FCR figures have ▪ The AHT figures are improving, as are call waiting times

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The complaints team is well organised and demonstrate an excellent level of customer focus ▪ The new competency based selection process is an improvement on recruitment practice ▪ A high-profile complaints process has been introduced to improve responses
Subject of Concern	Repairs Service Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High levels of customer complaints ▪ Poor performance of responsive repairs contractor ▪ Poor performance of Repairs team in managing mobilisation ▪ No performance information to reliably manage the service
Root cause(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Insufficient understanding of the contract terms by CWH staff ▪ Insufficient maturity of clienteling skills within Repairs team to manage the contract successfully from mobilisation ▪ Staff within CWC and Repairs have adopted a silo mentality and been blaming each other rather than working together to fully resolve issues ▪ Lack of a clear SLA between Repairs and CWC specifying requirements and delivery methods/standards ▪ Repairs teams are swamped with complaints and Members enquiries, and seem unable to get ahead of them by learning and implementing lessons ▪ High levels of Emergencies, circa 40% ▪ Historic lack of comprehensive response to leaks, damp and mould ▪ Strong perception that Surveyors and other Repairs team members will not return calls ▪ Incorrect diagnosis of problems by surveyors ▪ Slow responses to recommendations from Morgan Sindall for follow on works ▪ History of poor compliance, leaving customers and the organisation at significant risk ▪ Repairs are being placed with the wrong contractor, due to setup of Locator Plus and human error ▪ The team needs support for dealing with high profile repairs issues which do not have immediate or simple solutions.
Current remedial measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is to be a training workshop on the contract terms for Repairs staff

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Access in the event of leaks has recently been reviewed for cross departmental collaboration ▪ Leak detection team being established ▪ Damp and mould being well resourced to resolve ▪ Mapping exercises are being undertaken to address the job raising errors
CT Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The remedial measures are not adequate to ensure robust management of the Repairs & Void contractor. ▪ Original authors of the tender, specification and terms have left the organisation, so there is no continuity ▪ Loss of expertise that had previously successfully procured and mobilised large technical contracts ▪ Lack of cohesion at a senior level to promptly address issues, regardless of cause, and work together to resolve. ▪ Lack of strong leadership in Repairs with partnership experience, to oversee demobilisation, mobilisation and delivery ▪ The process by which Morgan Sindall notifies CWH of follow on works/Recommendations is wastefully bureaucratic ▪ The review found that key areas of compliance had been transformed through the micro-managing of the M&E contractors and CWH M&E officers.
CT Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 33. Address the lack of cohesion at a senior level through an external assessment and development of appropriate coaching, training and team-building. 34. The leadership within Repairs must be strengthened through appropriate training, mentoring and coaching, or further skills brought in. The service needs pro-active and robust leadership applied to its internal team dynamics and its relationships with other CWH teams and external partners. 35. Consider the potential of a Chief Operating Officer role to provide a clear one-team context to improve the outcomes jointly achieved by the CWC and repairs teams 36. Review and simplify the process by which Morgan Sindall notifies CWH of follow on works/Recommendations 37. The service standards outlining surveyor responses to works should be reviewed, communicated and measured/monitored 38. The Repairs team should take a lead role in resolving the job logging errors as this compromises budgets and warranties etc. 39. CWC and Repairs staff objectives to be linked and measured to encourage co-working to solve problems.
Areas of positive practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ M&E improvements in compliance have been well managed and delivered reliable results

Subject of Concern	<p>Partnership with Term Contractors – Core Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contractors required more assistance to mobilise and deliver ▪ Greater partnership approach required from the outset to resolve current issues and develop the service together
Root Cause(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Core Group(s) failing to get to grips with mobilisation of and performance of term contracts. ▪ The pricing mechanism used in the Repairs & Voids contract (Price Per Repair) is unhelpful and works counter to the desired behaviours CWH would want from its main contractor and operatives. ▪ KPIs not yet defined and agreed for reporting purposes on all contracts ▪ There is not yet a full partnership look and feel to the contract management, it feels rather more like 'stick and carrot', which detracts from the purpose of such contracts. ▪ The Electrical Contractor has been working with CWH since 2007. They are concerned that issues they are still raising have not been addressed, in terms of H&S, access issues and quoting for jobs that other contractors are then awarded
Current remedial measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For Repairs and Voids, there is an extensive operational meeting in place ▪ There is a KPI workshop planned to agree definitions and collection methodology ▪ There are terms of reference agreed for the Core Groups ▪ CWH is launching a Strategic Alliance on 1st March to bring together all term contractors in adding social value and to explore further joint working ▪ It is proposed that a Partnership Advisor be engaged to assess the partnerships and mediate any issues as needed.
CT Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The remedial measures are not adequate to ensure the development of the partnerships through strong Core Groups and management processes ▪ Insufficient seniority in chairing of Core Group(s), at least until the contracts are successfully embedded ▪ Insufficient status of Core Group(s) within the CWH transformation agenda. The meetings lack the visible full backing of ET to address issues with strength and urgency. ▪ The Core Group structure is in place and is constituted in line with the term contracts. However, the agenda is beleaguered with multiple operational issues, and this needs to be more

	appropriately administered and managed to allow the Core Group to perform its proper function.
CT Recommendations	<p>40. The importance of the Core Group(s) must be emphasised by appointing senior chairs, and encouraging a joint presentation of CWH & provider Contract Managers to the Group. This is to facilitate the right client and partnership behaviours, and to drive getting things done that are outstanding.</p> <p>41. Develop terms of reference for the Core Group Chair role with explicit reference to the types of partnership engagement that are required.</p> <p>42. Put succession planning in place which identifies the milestones at which a senior Core Group chair will step aside (performance outcomes achieved not time-served and the support that will be provided to the incoming chair).</p> <p>43. Hold a briefing on conducting Core Groups to ensure consistency of standards and behaviours.</p> <p>44. Develop a process to ensure that relevant common issues (such as H&S) are handled consistently across all Core Groups.</p> <p>45. The training workshop on the contract terms, for Repairs staff must include the Partnership Manager of Morgan Sindall.</p> <p>46. The Strategic Alliance launch should also be used to foster input from external partners e.g. to explore common issues from contractors' perspectives of CWH as a client</p> <p>47. The KPI workshop to be chaired by a senior manager to focus and steer the discussion toward resolution and urgent implementation and to manage disputes</p> <p>48. The Core Group agendas should fully reflect the partnership working desired as set out in the contracts.</p> <p>49. CWH should ensure that the Core Groups discuss and minute fully any concerns raised which pose risks to the effective delivery of the contract.</p> <p>50. CWH should specifically ask all term contractors for their concerns as a standalone exercise in the first instance, in order to give Core Groups an initial overview of issues from the contractor's perspective, to act as an important contributor to discussion on how to improve outcomes working in partnership.</p> <p>51. We would endorse a partnership 'audit' by an appropriate advisor and use this to supplement action plans and training and the development needs of staff.</p> <p>52. The Core Group for Repairs & Voids must have an urgent discussion about the current pricing method and agree plans to move from this to a mechanism which is better suited to the success of the partnership. It is recommended that Price Per Property (PPP) is fully explored as the most likely mechanism to fulfil the required aims.</p>

	<p>53. A great deal has been achieved in the M&E department to ensure compliance and service improvement. The Repairs & Voids function has ground to cover to achieve the same quality of outcomes. Consideration should be given to how the strong performance in M&E can be played in to the work of the Repairs & Voids function including potentially a change in management structure.</p>
Areas of positive practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well serviced Core Group structure is in place across all term contracts ▪ Launch of Strategic Alliance is an early start to realising additional value from the term contractors

Subject of Concern	<p>Health & Safety and safeguarding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High numbers of assaults on operatives ▪ High number of safeguarding concerns being raised by contractors ▪ A significant number of H&S compliance issues being notified by contractors
Root Cause(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is a lack of clarity about the process for investigating allegations of assaults and abuse towards partner's operatives ▪ There does not appear to be a system of temporarily flagging a customer as potentially posing a risk or restricting services to them, whilst investigations are carried out ▪ Contractors have reported to Core Group and operational meetings that they have had no formal feedback on incidents and investigations ▪ There appears to be some discrepancy in understanding lines of responsibility in reporting incidents to Assure ▪ There appears to be no formal links between the H&S discussions in Core Groups and the CWH H&S Committee meetings – required to ensure no risks go unreported or un-managed ▪ There appears to be a culture of non-attendance at H&S committee meetings, especially at late notice, resulting in cancellation. This poses a risk. ▪ There appears to be no formal process for contractors to report safeguarding concerns, and for appropriate feedback to relevant teams on action taken ▪ Partner contractors' H&S personnel do not appear to be engaged with those of CWH
Current remedial measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There are regular H&S Committee meetings diarised with an extensive list of attendees ▪ The Core Group agendas include H&S

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is an H&S reporting tool 'Assure' in use
CT Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The current remedial measures are not adequate to ensure improvement and mitigate the H&S risks stated ▪ The H&S of operatives is not supported by a coherent framework of processes ▪ The lack of a coherent framework exposes staff and residents to increased risks ▪ There is a lack of priority given to the management of resident and operative H&S in the delivery works in and around residents' homes
CT Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 54. A process for reporting incidents involving customers should be agreed with partner contractors and implemented. It should also be formally adopted at the Core Groups 55. The process should mirror the same stringent requirements as that which relates to CWH's own staff 56. The process should include consideration of temporarily flagging customers and/or restricting services to them, pending an investigation and outcomes 57. Within the process we recommend that senior housing managers should take the lead in ensuring such incidents are investigated thoroughly, in a manner approved by H&S Advisors 58. The process needs to fit within the broader approach to H&S exemplified in other CWH H&S policies. 59. Develop a description of the reporting relationship between The Core Groups and the CWH H&S Committee 60. The process should describe how H&S will be routinely reported via the Core Group structure, the triggers for exceptional reporting and the actions (such as H&S staff presenting a case review to a Core Group) when exceptions are triggered. 61. The roles requiring competence in the use of Assure should be identified, training needs identified and fulfilled and competence assured. 62. Identify and articulate how the Executive Team will monitor the frequency, attendance at and business of the H&S Committee in order to achieve assurance that H&S matters are being given appropriate priority and quality of consideration by all relevant officers. 63. Put in place a process by which partner contractors can report safeguarding and vulnerability issues, with appropriate feedback and monitoring mechanisms 64. Hold a joint-meeting of CWH and partner contractor H&S personnel to strengthen the management of issues in this area

Areas of positive practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assure is in use as a tool for reporting and managing H&S issues • There is a huge amount of H&S activity currently ongoing, not least due to fire issues being prioritised
Area of Concern	<p>Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not adequate communication causing misinformation to customers ▪ Complaints and enquiries arising due to poor communication ▪ Poor internal knowledge of other teams and relevant progress
Key Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Key managers do not understand how to harness communications as a tool to communicate with customers and stakeholders, and combat perceptions ▪ Staff are responding to individual issues when it is clear a whole block or estate needs to be communicated with, including local Councillors – this is causing duplication ▪ There is insufficient positive messaging from CWH to demonstrate appropriate achievements in service delivery and improvement ▪ There is a lack of consistency in communication methods and styles ▪ There has been an increase in complaints and queries raised on social media, and the responses need to be streamlined and expedited. ▪ Positive service improvements are not being communicated between teams, such as the methodology for clearing the backlog works – leading to CSAs giving wrong information to customers
Current remedial measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is an internal Communications Plan outlining many changes during 2018 ▪ A communication strategy is currently being devised ▪ The CEO is personally undertaking more discussions with staff to aid communication
CT Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The remedial measures require further discussion with project and department leads to ensure communication needs are met ▪ Managers interviewed did not see communication as a tactical means to achieve objectives, rather as a service to assist with flyers etc. ▪ The scale of messaging required across CWC and Repairs alone is extensive, and there is no evidence that this had been scoped ▪ Given the political activity at the current time, we did not see an up-and-running Communication Plan, tailored to the circumstances, to better manage the current challenges

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There exists the challenge to make the CWC the cultural heart of CWH's service offer. Aggregating up individual service requests to realise the need for block or estate comms is an example of the type of task that will indicate that the challenge is being met.
CT Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 65. The communication and CWC/Repairs managers need to examine the business and devise a plan for all internal and external messaging (e.g. how do we communicate the state of blocks/repairs?) – a communications needs assessment is required 66. The IVR system should be explored for messaging instead of on-hold music 67. Key staff should be trained in relevant communications competencies 68. There should be a far more rigid template for communications, including corporate fonts and standards, and a swift approval process. This is due on December 2018, but consideration should be given to expediting this 69. The social media incoming complaints should be formally recognised in the complaints process and policy, and the communications team given every assistance to ensure CWH responds appropriately and effectively
Areas of positive practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communications team offers a wide range of skills ▪ A good, business as usual, internal communications plan is in place with links to targets and business achievements

Area of Concern	<p>Planning and transformation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conflicting timelines and project objectives ▪ Inconsistent project templates and standards ▪ Inability to read across plans to gauge interdependencies ▪ No complete picture of all plans across the business
Key Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Timeline analysis shows a great number of projects coinciding with competing deadlines ▪ The sheer number and scale of change projects is vast, and calls into question the realistic ability of the organisation to manage this level of change, given it is engaged in rectifying events from the last year ▪ It is not clear what review has now taken place of the transformation and other plans, in light of the CWC and Repairs experience, to provide confidence that recurrence is not pending ▪ The project to introduce Self Appointed Repairs is still continuing, despite the main contractor not having the IT capability to engage with it

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Generally, there is insufficient project management discipline outside of the Transformation Team
Current remedial measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is a suite of Transformation plans with clearly identified Project Sponsors ▪ The Management Board meets regularly to oversee project progress
CT Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We could find no evidence of adequate warnings to ET and the Board of overlapping projects ▪ We could not find any evidence of all plans being collated and reviewed to ensure that the same mistakes are not being made, and that resource planning is still realistic, given the current circumstances ▪ Though the programme and project management methodology is comprehensive and well used the usage of it is not of good quality and the outcomes are demonstrably unsatisfactory
CT Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 70. All project plans across CWH should be collated and reviewed, resulting in a report to ET giving them sight of the scale of activity, and the reality of its achievability. 71. ET should review its priorities and assurances to its Board and WCC based on this review 72. The format and type of plans throughout CWH should be standardised 73. Project management skills and expertise disciplines are required at lower levels in the organisation, with appropriate training and templates to aid action planning
Areas of positive practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prince II methodology has been used in the Transformation Team, enabling some effective project management

Mystery Shopping

- 4.21. CT carried out mystery shopping in order to provide triangulation of our perceptions of services and performance data, and to inform our insight on the customer experience.
- 4.22. Our detailed findings can be found at Appendix 2. Our key findings are as follows:
- Looking in aggregate over the telephone calls - process, commitment to service, levels of knowledge all lacking;
 - Website ok but very basic;
 - Across 20 mystery shopping calls, the average time taken simply to reach a human voice was 4.5 minutes;
 - The telephone system is one of the most frustrating we have come across in the sector due to the factors dealt with below;
 - The various joins between online and telephony are not as tight as they need to be; several points on this are raised in Appendix 2;

- Cannot see how tenants and leaseholders can view personal accounts and repairs history;
- Cannot see how the website is being promoted through telephone calls and automated call recordings;
- Some unintended ‘dead ends’ in processes, e.g. cannot provide general advice over the telephone about RTB without a specific property address;
- The telephone system options are over-complicated and highly confusing;
- The music played whilst waiting for an advisor cuts out every few seconds;
- Average call answer times are poor – partly because of the number of options. Almost two minutes can be lost if a customer misses an option as the caller is channelled straight back to the initial auto answer options.
- The impression that is created is that the customer is speaking to the staff who deal with specific issues – this does not appear to be the case except for ASB and leaseholder enquiries;
- Some CSAs (non-specialist) cannot answer basic enquiries – perhaps too many are new?
- Overall, staff are unhelpful and unfriendly – they were heavily put out by the caller not providing a name and address;
- Translation and interpreting is shockingly poor given the borough’s likely customer profile;
- All calls with the word ‘complaint’ are quickly passed to the Complaints Resolution Team;
- There is no attempt to finalise enquiries with ‘can I help you with anything else’ – the feeling I got was that they want to get rid of callers as quickly as they can.

5. EVENTS LEADING TO CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

The position of the Council

- 5.1. WCC is the sole shareholder in CWH. The Council is represented by elected Members of the Board of CWH. The Council engages with and monitors CWH via the Council’s clienting team. One of the strengths of the ALMO model is that the ALMO focusses solely on the housing service. The expectations of the Council are indicated in the Management Agreement and in the Council’s approval of the ALMO’s service delivery plans. The service is monitored by performance against an agreed list of objectives and key performance indicators.
- 5.2. For a number of years, the approach taken by the Council to the client relationship has reflected the ALMO’s success in delivering on required performance outcomes. In terms of operational performance, this has historically been strong, and this was recognised by the award of 3 Stars twice in Audit Commission inspections and strong year-on-year performance against KPIs.
- 5.3. As CWH performance has worsened in recent months, WCC have ratcheted up their engagement. This report, commissioned by WCC in its role as the shareholder and ALMO client, is evidence of the recognition by the client of the serious nature of the issues and

outcomes occurring within CWH, and of the commitment of the client to ensuring that performance returns to expected levels.

Summary of key issues

- 5.4. Transformation on this scale (£7m of cost) is an undertaking that requires leadership, direction, management and supervision from the Chief Executive and Executive Directors. This is formally recognised by CWH in the Chief Executive's role as Senior Responsible Project Owner for the transformation programme, a role defined with CWH's project management methodology. Due to the scale of the changes, in preparing this timeline, we have focused on documents to the Executive Team and Board. Viewed across the service, a number of themes emerge. We comment on these below.

Programme management

- 5.5. CWH have a comprehensive programme and project management approach. This approach is capable of delivering good outcomes but will not cause good outcomes in and of itself. It can be the case, particularly if readers are not skilled in the technical content of the papers, that some assurance is erroneously taken from the extensive structures, lists and reports. Our view is that this may well have happened within CWH.
- 5.6. We have the strong impression that Business Transformation and Relet 2017 were operated as two completely separate projects. We have read a number of reports covering the period 2015 to the present. In each report we read that was dated prior to November 2017, if one of these projects was the subject, the other was not mentioned. It is not apparent that the programme management identified the risks of the two projects both mobilising at the same time. Nor is it apparent that the CEX and Executive Team colleagues did enough to ensure appropriate co-ordination across projects and engagement amongst colleagues on the Executive Team.

Overlapping risks and risk management

- 5.7. Leading on from the issue of projects being unduly separate, is the issue of overlapping risks. Whilst there is in place a comprehensive approach to risk management, the success of the approach hinges on the most important risks being identified, correctly described and appropriately mitigated.
- 5.8. Many of the project-by-project risks we have seen represent a moderate undertaking of risk management. However, there are significant omissions. There are virtually no overlapping risks or mitigations identified. By 'overlapping', we mean those risks that arise because timelines in projects are shortened and because the relationships of projects to one another are not considered. By way of example, looking across the change projects, if all the change had gone according to plan, reporting a repair would have involved:
- Calling to a new contact centre;
 - Containing redeployed staff;
 - In new premises;
 - Using new business processes;
 - Using new software;

- Over new IT architecture;
 - To call out a new repairs contractor;
 - Working to a new contract;
 - Reporting into a restructured client function.
- 5.9. Risks were reported, but the vast majority were project-specific. The omission of overlapping risks is a significant omission. Latterly one risk of 'pace of change' is put forward, which in part acknowledges the overlapping risks. The amount of change in a short period of time created a risk profile whereby one problem would beget another. That is exactly what happened.
- 5.10. Moreover, the detail of the timeline is not clear to us, despite having reviewed a number of documents. For example, it is not clear when the decision was taken to bring the Pinnacle contracts back in-house. What is clear is that the view was taken that another significant change could be added to the already crowded timetable.
- 5.11. The CRM issue is an example of how risks materialise when change is stacked very closely together. Early documents refer to a different approach to that in place at the point of go-live. Coping with these sort of changes is inevitably problematic when project timescales are foreshortened.
- Housing expertise***
- 5.12. Our view is that there is evidence of insufficient housing management expertise being brought to bear at senior levels as the programme was conceived and approved. Seasoned housing professionals will have been through the re-letting of repairs contracts and the restructuring of housing operations and will know that it is either/or: you do one and then another, but not both at the same time. Each undertaking is complex and prone to delay. Attempting both at the same time can appear attractive as change is achieved quickly and in theory only one upheaval occurs. Though a case can be made, on paper, for the approach taken, it is our view that the seeds of the current problems lie in the detail of the initial plans. These are issues into which the senior team at CWH could have drilled down. It would have been a trickier proposition for the client to spot these risks as they considered the business cases for the change. The events that have followed provide evidence to support our view.
- 5.13. Altair have included a graphic in their TOM report which highlights the contact centre and the repairs contracts relet happening in close proximity. Hence the Executive Team had the opportunity to identify and mitigate the risks. Whilst we have seen a number of risks being reported, we have not seen evidence that the overlap risks were identified.
- 5.14. In addition to the issue of housing management expertise at senior levels are issues about retaining and listening to housing expertise within the business. There is significant housing expertise present with CWH as a business. By way of example, successive repairs contracts had been successfully procured, let and mobilised over many years. In a period of significant change, we might have expected the ex Head of Service Transformation's value to the business to be recognised. Instead the business lost his expertise in the run-up to the mobilisation of the repairs contracts.

5.15. Speaking more generally, it is not apparent to us that the housing expertise in the business was allowed appropriate influence on the change programme. The approach taken to the change programme was to run multiple change projects concurrently. Looking in from outside at the skill sets of the Executive Team, one sees considerable private sector experience but limited housing expertise. It seems reasonable to expect that the strengths brought by the Executive Team are in **how** to deliver change, with a premium on the importance of learning **what** to change from housing expertise within the business. Yet the documents we have seen and the outcomes that have occurred point to a shortfall in the uploading of housing expertise into the strategic approach to change management. Reconnecting with and making good use of mid-level and frontline housing expertise is an important issue moving forward.

The business before the change

5.16. The CWH business as it was before the transformation started is repeatedly described in the same terms within the paperwork we have seen. The pre-existing business is described negatively as a way to make the case for change. There is no positive narrative in the documents we have seen. This is despite the business having a long track record of successful service delivery. We wonder whether this is a further aspect in which strategic managers within the business adopted a view of the pre-existing business as deficient, which made them listen less to those who had worked in the business for a number of years than prudence would have suggested.

The Target Operating Model

5.17. The TOM lacks a clear big picture. It is not explicit what type of landlord CWH wants to be, what type of influence it wants to have, or what part it wants to play in the lives of its residents. It is not clear that the scope of the service has been articulated at strategic levels. If this does not happen, the risk is that it is articulated piecemeal in process reviews.

5.18. The CWC contact centre model perpetuates the role of 'mid-office' specialists. It is this approach that has repeatedly across the wider sector relegated front-line call centre staff to call handlers rather than service providers.

5.19. We recognise that some of this critique is essentially one view of the structure of a service model, compared to a differing view of how to achieve similar ends. Our point in raising these issues is that the perceived shortfalls within the model may be a further example where the lack of housing expertise at senior levels may have impacted the quality of the outcome.

Over-optimism

5.20. Our view is that, in the face of serious performance problems, regaining the confidence of stakeholders relies, in part, on those running the business demonstrating a realistic understanding of what has happened. Our view, based on the papers we have seen, is that the view conveyed is overly-optimistic, and lacks reflection on the causes of the problems and relies on lists of causes, most of which were entirely predictable and/or avoidable. The concern here is that the organisation may repeat mistakes already made if the appropriate learning is not taken.

Recommendations arising from events leading to the current state of play

5.21. Accordingly, we make the following recommendations:

74. CWH review the programme risk register, add key risks arising from overlapping project timelines, and set out mitigations which seek to mitigate the risks from the current starting position;
75. Consideration is given to bringing housing expertise into the Executive Team;
76. Consideration is given to how to signal the end of the separate nature of the Relet 17 and business transformation projects - an option is the creation of the role of Chief Operating Officer (with housing management expertise);
77. Close heed is taken to ensuring that the voice of middle management and front-line staff can be found in senior management reports, in order to ensure that housing expertise within the business is being given the opportunity to influence operational matters;
78. Within four weeks, CWH produce a new forward plan including:
 - Lessons learned;
 - Revised forward plan which incorporates lessons learned;
 - Insight on additional costs incurred and forecast and revised savings forecasts.

Appendix 1 – Recommendations

List of all recommendations

Our recommendations are as follows. For ease of reference, these are set out according to our findings at section 4 of this report.

1. CWH should publish to all staff a statement of the KPIs.
2. The lessons learned from this experience should be documented and used to inform the current planning for future projects.
3. Lessons learned to include a creating a checklist of change related risks against which all current projects should be reviewed to ensure the same mistakes will not happen again.
4. The situation merits a more detailed consideration of the technical issues by external expertise.
5. There must be an urgent discussion held with the relevant IT team heads and senior CWH officials to gauge progress with IT issues, and re-prioritise as necessary to minimise current and forthcoming problems
6. The way in which department and project leads interact and engage with IT needs a more mature clienteling approach.
7. Problems such as the inability of CSAs and reception staff to re/book appointments must be addressed urgently, as this is a key source of frustration for customers.
8. Each of the Core Groups must receive a report from the two IT departments (in person and in writing) with clear plans to address outstanding issues.
9. The plan to change Morgan Sindall's main software needs specific planning and risk/project management from both partners.
10. The telephony set-up should be changed as soon as possible to auto-distribute calls to CSAs.
11. The IVR system should have some immediate changes made to reduce the irritations it causes.
12. The ET needs to reassure itself that the IT priorities are correct, and that new initiatives may need to be placed on hold in order to divert IT resources to the most critical problem areas.
13. A review of Locator Plus during April 2018 to include front-line staff feedback, as well as KPI and financial information to determine its impact on performance.
14. The Resolution processes need to be urgently reviewed to focus on optimising the customer experience at all stages, ensuring that customers are visited where this is most likely to resolve the issue.
15. Implement a straightforward competency framework for CSAs with three identified levels of competency across the range of issues they deal with.
16. CSAs' training and induction programme and contents to be urgently reviewed to fall in line with the competency framework and to ensure sufficient scope and depth, and to include time spent with operatives. The partner contractors to be involved in the training of CSAs. Competencies and training to cover disrepair, warranties and guarantees and

conflict training. The depth of the training to reflect that this cohort of staff represent the core of CWH's customer service offer.

17. The 'What is Good' practice and assessment process should be expanded to provide ongoing competency measurements of CSAs. It could also be adopted and adapted for other teams.
18. Further analysis of emerging data is required to fully scope the CWC service for the future, in terms of performance and resources required.
19. Review the scope of service available to callers to Area offices. Ensure the service available is at least as good as is available online or over the telephone, whichever is better.
20. Ensure staff dealing with customers face-to-face are competent in handling challenging interactions.
21. Consider increasing the number of Morgan Sindall staff co-located at 155 Westbourne Terrace, to assist in quicker resolution of queries, complaints and to build the required working relationships to develop the partnership.
22. CWH and MS need urgently to reach a shared position on the subject of repairs without appointment.
23. CWH should plot a timeline to dealing with all repairs calls and identify the milestones on the journey that will demonstrate that capacity and capability are being attained that can support the workload. If milestones are not achieved it will be necessary to develop an alternative long-term plan for the handling of the calls.
24. The current CWC training plan (as provided to CT) is insufficient in scope and content, and needs to be strengthened by aligning it to the competency framework.
25. Introduce a performance metric for CWC that captures the quality of the interaction from the customer perspective such as satisfaction with call handling, perhaps using texting after a call.
26. Put in place SLAs between the CWC and each of its internal clients to improve the clarity of the relationships and support appropriate clienteling of the internal relationships.
27. The process of capturing analysing and implementing learning from complaints is in need of improvement. Operational teams need to be given the opportunity to learn from complaints.
28. Develop transparent paired and/or matched objectives between CWC and internal clients, starting with Repairs, to foster co-working to solve problems.
29. CWH should continue to engage a high level of professional mystery shopping to reality test services, until consistently good results are achieved.
30. Develop a format for the detailed analysis of specimen complaints - from first service request to complaint resolution, learning taken and implementation plan for the application of learning.
31. Require the presentation of three end-to-end reports to each Executive Team meeting, by a Director, to ensure appropriate visibility to senior managers of the customer experience and of management practice.
32. If possible, plans to automate the complaints process should be expedited.

33. Address the lack of cohesion at senior level through an external assessment and development of appropriate coaching, training and team-building.
34. The leadership within Repairs must be strengthened through appropriate training, mentoring and coaching, or further skills brought in. The service needs proactive and robust leadership applied to its internal team dynamics and its relationships with other CWH teams and external partners.
35. Consider the potential of a Chief Operating Officer role to provide a clear one-team context to improve the outcomes jointly achieved by the CWC and repairs teams.
36. Review and simplify the process by which Morgan Sindall notifies CWH of follow-on works and recommendations.
37. The service standards outlining surveyor responses to works should be reviewed, communicated and measured/monitored.
38. The Repairs Team should take a lead role in resolving the job logging errors, as this compromises budgets and warranties etc.
39. CWC and Repairs staff objectives to be linked and measured to encourage co-working to solve problems.
40. The importance of the Core Group(s) must be emphasised by appointing senior chairs, and encouraging a joint presentation of CWH and provider Contract Managers to the Group. This is to facilitate the right client and partnership behaviours, and to drive getting things done that are outstanding.
41. Develop terms of reference for the Core Group Chair role with explicit reference to the types of partnership engagement that are required.
42. Put succession planning in place which identifies the milestones at which a senior Core Group chair will step aside (performance outcomes achieved not time-served and the support that will be provided to the incoming chair).
43. Hold a briefing on conducting Core Groups to ensure consistency of standards and behaviours.
44. Develop a process to ensure that relevant common issues (such as H&S) are handled consistently across all Core Groups.
45. The training workshop on the contract terms for Repairs staff must include the Partnership Manager of Morgan Sindall.
46. The Strategic Alliance launch should also be used to foster input from external partners, e.g. to explore common issues from contractors' perspectives of CWH as a client.
47. The KPI workshop should be chaired by a senior manager to focus and steer the discussion toward resolution and urgent implementation and to manage disputes.
48. The Core Group agendas should fully reflect the partnership working desired as set out in the contracts.
49. CWH should ensure that the Core Groups discuss and minute fully any concerns raised which pose risks to the effective delivery of the contract.
50. CWH should specifically ask all term contractors for their concerns as a stand-alone exercise in the first instance, in order to give Core Groups an initial overview of issues

from the contractor's perspective, and to act as an important contributor to discussion on how to improve outcomes working in partnership.

51. We would endorse a partnership 'audit' by an appropriate advisor and use this to supplement action plans and training and the development needs of staff.
52. The Core Group for Repairs & Voids must have an urgent discussion about the current pricing method and agree plans to move from this to a mechanism which is better suited to the success of the partnership. It is recommended that Price Per Property (PPP) is fully explored as the most likely mechanism to fulfil the required aims.
53. A great deal has been achieved in the M&E department to ensure compliance and service improvement. The Repairs & Voids function has ground to cover to achieve the same quality of outcomes. Consideration should be given to how the strong performance in M&E can be played into the work of the Repairs & Voids function, including potentially a change in management structure.
54. A process for reporting incidents involving customers should be agreed with partner contractors and implemented. It should also be formally adopted at the Core Groups.
55. The process should mirror the same stringent requirements as that which relates to CWH's own staff.
56. The process should include consideration of temporarily flagging customers and/or restricting services to them, pending an investigation and outcomes.
57. Within the process, we recommend that senior housing managers should take the lead in ensuring such incidents are investigated thoroughly, in a manner approved by H&S Advisors.
58. The process needs to fit within the broader approach to H&S exemplified in other CWH H&S policies.
59. Develop a description of the reporting relationship between the Core Groups and the CWH H&S Committee.
60. The process should describe how H&S will be routinely reported via the Core Group structure, the triggers for exceptional reporting and the actions (such as H&S staff presenting a case review to a Core Group) when exceptions are triggered.
61. The roles requiring competence in the use of Assure should be identified, training needs identified and fulfilled, and competence assured.
62. Identify and articulate how the Executive Team will monitor the frequency, attendance at and business of the H&S Committee in order to achieve assurance that H&S matters are being given appropriate priority and quality of consideration by all relevant officers.
63. Put in place a process by which partner contractors can report safeguarding and vulnerability issues, with appropriate feedback and monitoring mechanisms.
64. Hold a joint-meeting of CWH and partner contractors' H&S personnel to strengthen the management of issues in this area.
65. The communications and CWC/Repairs managers need to examine the business and devise a plan for all internal and external messaging (e.g. how do we communicate the state of blocks/repairs?) – a communication needs assessment is required.
66. The IVR system should be explored for messaging instead of on-hold music.

67. Key staff should be trained in relevant communication competencies.
68. There should be a far more rigid template for communications, including corporate fonts and standards, and a swift approval process. This is due for implementation in December 2018, but consideration should be given to expediting this.
69. Complaints incoming via social media should be formally recognised in the complaints process and policy, and the Communications Team given every assistance to ensure CWH responds appropriately and effectively.
70. All project plans across CWH should be collated and reviewed, resulting in a report to ET giving them sight of the scale of activity, and the reality of its achievability.
71. ET should review its priorities and assurances to its Board and WCC based on this review.
72. The format and type of plans throughout CWH should be standardised.
73. Project management skills and expertise disciplines are required at lower levels in the organisation, with appropriate training and templates to aid action planning.
74. CWH should review the programme risk register, add key risks arising from overlapping project timelines, and set out mitigations which seek to mitigate the risks from the current starting position.
75. Consideration should be given to bringing housing management expertise into the Executive Team.
76. Consideration should be given to how to signal the end of the separate nature of the Relet 17 and business transformation projects. An option is the creation of the role of Chief Operating Officer (with housing expertise).
77. Close heed should be taken to ensuring that the voice of middle management and front-line staff can be found in senior management reports, in order to ensure that housing expertise within the business is being given the opportunity to influence operational matters.
78. Within four weeks, CWH should produce a new forward plan including:
 - Lessons learned;
 - Revised forward plan which incorporates lessons learned;
 - Insight on additional costs incurred and forecast and revised savings forecasts.

Appendix 2 – Persons Interviewed and Meetings Attended

In order to identify and understand the issues, the following CWH and partner staff were interviewed:

Job Title	Team/Department
Chief Executive	Executive Team
Executive Director of Customer Services	
Executive Director of Strategy & Planning	
Executive Director of Shared Services	
Executive Director of Finance	
Director of Asset Strategy	
Head of Communications	Communications
E-Communications Advisor	
Programme Manager	CWC
Contact Centre Service Manager	
Complaints Team Manager	
Service Centre Manager	
Director of Property Services	Maintenance & Repairs
Head of Property Services	
Head of M&E Engineering	
Contracts Governance Manager	
Commercial & Performance Manager	
Home Improvements Manager	
M&E Business Support Officer	Morgan Sindall
Partnership Manager	
Regional Director	
Head of IT	IT & Transformation
Head of Transformation	
Transformation Manager	
Head of Operations	CWD (Housing)
Income Manager	
Special Projects Manager	

Meetings attended

Attended the following:
Repairs & Voids Core Group
Domestic Heating Core Group
Electrical Core Group
Mechanical Core Group
Locator Plus training workshop
SAR Scoping Workshop
Leadership Team Meeting
Discussion meeting with Resolution team
Spent time on the call centre and with Resolution Officer
Repairs & Voids Operational Meeting

Attended the following:

CWD Managers Meeting

Discussion meeting for access in the event of leaks

Appendix 3 – Mystery Shopping

WEBSITE REVIEW

Online services include: all tested and working ok as far as I could take them

- Paying rent/service charges
- Report ASB
- Report condensation and mould (free home visit offered)
- Report tenancy fraud
- Apply for leaseholder alterations
- Apply for a key fob
- Apply for parking space, shed, garage or allotment
- Make Freedom of Interest Request
- Make a complaint
- Check repair responsibilities for tenants and leaseholders

NOTE – No online repairs reporting form but telephone no and email provided.

Customers can use the online repairs tracker if they have the job number. This is referred to as the Chatbot Facility on the news page – and works only with jobs raised with Morgan Sindall. Chatbot option not offered when I called to ask whether I should call the contractor to find out whether they were still attending to my property.

Morgan Sindall do plumbing, carpentry, painting/decorations and gas repairs. They have several other contractors who do other repairs and pick up what Morgan Sindall can't deliver.

Repairs

Page says if repair isn't an emergency, 'we will book an appointment for you', However, mystery shopping calls suggest that repairs appointments are made only for Morgan Sindall jobs and not for all contractors.

If the tenant is not at home, the contractors leaves a card. Tenant is asked to contact CityWest within 7 days to rearrange the appointment. Mystery shopping calls suggest that missed appointments after 7 days are raised as a new repair – this might well be inflating the number of repairs jobs raised – nothing on website to encourage people to keep appointments.

Out of office hours emergency repairs

5pm to 8.30am – available for both tenants and leaseholders

Telephone 0800 358 3783 – positive that same number applies for both routine and out of office hours emergencies.

Asbestos

General guide for residents. –

Search button reveals letters sent to tenants about asbestos testing and removals. E.g. letter to 'Lisson Green' residents dated 25/1/18. Heading says 'Asbestos survey – replacement of communal heating and hot water systems' but the asbestos surveys are in the tenant's bedrooms and

communal areas. Letter clarifies that intrusive work is likely to be done but redecs of the whole area will not be done. Letter ends with assurance that asbestos testing is carried out safely. Nothing about tenant not being able to use the bedroom in the meantime, moving things, what happens if asbestos is found – i.e. how long the bedroom is likely to be out of use. For the size of the authority I would expect to find more info about outcomes from specific surveys.

Gas safety

Cadent – national gas utility company is doing major work across Westminster. Cadent offering £30 per day for residents whose supply is affected. CWH offering oil filled electric rads and alternative means of providing hot water. No info about what/who to contact.

Legionella

The only ref is for leaseholders' obligations. Nothing about CWH responsibility.

Fire safety

Residents can request a copy of the FRA via the website.

Local Drop-in sessions

Website provides a list of venues and times for drop in sessions in different areas.

Customer Service Centre staff do not appear to know about these sessions – it took an officer around 8 minutes to find out the day and time when the St John's Wood Estate sessions are held each week.

Customer Service Centre report

Regular reports on the CSC performance.

Last report 21/2/18 says reduction in number of calls from 4849 to 4575 per week. The average wait time has increased from 1 minute 35 seconds to 1 minute 47 seconds. Frankly, I cannot see the purpose of the report.

Handyperson Service

Free to anyone aged 60+ or in receipt of disability allowance.

Qualifying residents can use the service twice in any 12 months, for 0.5 day per service use. First £50 worth of materials are provided free. DIY jobs included except for in-flat works, electrical/gas work and gardening.

Mystery shopper call confirmed with website info, although I could not take this further without an address.

TELEPHONE CALLS

20 calls made between 2 February and 27 February.

Average time to get to a human voice is 4.5 MINUTES INCLUDING LISTENING TO VARIOUS OPTIONS

1. Auto answer kicks in straight away, followed by following options in this order:

- a. First option is to Press 9 for repairs (*why would one start at 9?*)
- b. Press 1 for CW Leaseholder
- c. Press 2 for CW tenant
- d. Press 3 for selling/letting/arranging free valuation (CityWest Residential)
- e. Press 4 if you're not a resident
- f. Press 5 if you want to hire a community hall

2. Non-repairs queries - leaseholders

When leaseholders press 1 at the initial point (i.e. non-repair) the options are:

- a. Press 1 for account and making payment
 - i. 4 further options
 1. Arrears
 2. Auto payment option
 3. HB/Universal Credit
 4. General account enquiries
 - b. Press 3 for ASB
 - c. Press 4 for general enquiries and parking

As a leaseholder, if you press 4 for general enquiries there are further options:

- a. Press 1 for parking
- b. Press 2 for visitor parking
- c. Press 3 for Right To Buy
- d. Press 4 for general enquiries

3. Non-repairs queries - tenants

When tenants press 2 at the initial point (i.e. non-repair) the options are:

- a. Account, payment options
- b. Press 3 for ASB
- c. Press 4 for general enquiries

If you press 4 for general enquiries there are further options:

- e. Press 1 for parking
- f. Press 2 for visitor parking
- g. Press 3 for Right To Buy
- h. Press 4 for general enquiries

THE MOST CONFUSING AND FRUSTRATING PHONE SYSTEM I HAVE COME ACROSS IN THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING SECTOR

WHEN ON HOLD, THE MUSIC IS LIGHT CLASSICAL/EASY LISTENING BUT CUTS OUT EVERY 4-5 SECONDS SO THE CALLER ASSUMES THAT THE CALL HAS BEEN TERMINATED.

WEBSITE/EMAIL OPTIONS NOT OFFERED AS PART OF RECORDED MESSAGES

4. Repairs

- a. If you press 9, further option 1 for tenants, 2 for leaseholders
- b. Whichever number is pressed, the same options apply
 - i. Press 1 for new repair
 - ii. Press 2 for existing repair

5. New repairs

- i. Appointments can be made only for Morgan Sindall jobs.
- ii. Appointments can be made to avoid school runs and have early am/late pm.
(Positive)

iii. For most other contractors – tenants’ details are passed to the contractor who then calls the tenant to make appointment. No target for how quickly appointments are made by the contractor although they must complete work as follows:

1. Routine jobs – 20 days
2. Urgent jobs - between 3 – 7 days
3. Emergency – same day, when pushed I was told within 24 hours (e.g. if I call at 4.30 in the pm)

Got a sense that the system generates repairs priority.

b. Existing repairs – staff can only check if appointment made for Morgan Sindall.

c. Existing repairs – ‘Contractor did not turn up’.

Non-Morgan Sindall jobs for chasing up – different staff said, ‘call the contractor directly’ to ‘if you give me your address and tell me which repair I will call the contractor and get back to you’.

d. On two occasions, I was given Morgan Sindall's number to call 0203 755 2867 when I asked what to do in the event of wanting to change an appointment or if the contractor has not turned up.

Puts into question how contractor performance management works if tenants rebook / deal directly with contractors. I did telephone Morgan Sindall to say that I wanted to understand how repairs works – should I contact them directly. Was told that appointments must be made via CityWest but could call them if there were any issues.

e. Communal repairs –

General enquiry (i.e. no actual address) shows that these appear to be regarded as non-urgent – was told that communal repairs are generally done in 20 days. CityWest does not know if work has or hasn’t been completed unless tenants or leaseholders complain.

f. Asked about compensation if a contractor does not turn up – (I had taken a day off for my uncle).

Was told to put this in writing as officer unsure about whether compensation is paid for contractor non-attendance.

General management

6. Non-repairs queries Right To Buy

- a. Chose Right to Buy and spoke to Frances.
- b. Said that I was calling on behalf of my uncle to find out how RTB works.
- c. She said she could not help without an address as each call has to be logged on the system.
- d. Explained that this is a general enquiry rather than about a specific property. She offered the CityWest website address despite explaining again that this was a general enquiry.

7. Non-repairs queries ASB

If you press 3 for ASB you get to speak with an officer.

Made 3 calls to verify that this is the ASB Team and I got a different answer each time:

1. *Yes, this is the team that deals with ASB.*
2. *No we deal with everything and pass details to the right people.*
3. *Depends on what the issue is – we have to see whether it's ASB. When asked what constitutes ASB I was told 'it means 'Anti-Social Behaviour'.*

When asked, 'Do you deal with noise nuisance?' Answer – NO, CALL NOISE TEAM – 0207 641 2000 CITY COUNCIL

8. Non-repairs queries RENT

Asked if I can pay rent at local offices as I don't have a bank account.

Informed that I can pay at the Post Office.

No effort to offer help/support or further questions.

Asked what's included in my service charges.

Was told that it's probably things like water rates. Asked about who pays for communal cleaning and was told it's probably 'all in there too'. When asked what happens if the cleaning is not done, does my rent go down? Was told well, no of course not. There should be a cleaning schedule at the entrance of my block. If I don't see a cleaner they will send an email to the whole team known as 'compliance team' plus cleaners and their supervisors to show that the tenant has complained.

9. Non-repairs queries enquiry on behalf of people who don't speak English very well

'We always get people to understand us'

'We can put your name on the tenancy details so that you can speak on your uncle's behalf'.

'Can arrange an interpreter in a very serious 'life and death' situation as translators are expensive.'

10. Non-repairs queries enquiry about complaints

3 calls about how to complain

If you email us the Complaints Resolution Team will deal with it.

11. Non-repairs queries enquiry about leaseholder charges

3 calls about how to complain

If you email us the Complaints Resolution Team will deal with it.

One call resulted in Sarah saying that she could not answer any general enquiries about what's included in service charges without an exact address (almost shouting) but confirmed that service charges are fixed for tenants and variable for leaseholders. Could not explain if leaseholders are recharged for things like bulk refuse collection from communal areas.

Another officer in the same team (male) was very patient and explained that leaseholders can pay charges 4 quarters, monthly, and have a longer-term arrangement to pay for major works if the bill is very high (e.g. listed building). Leaseholders generally pay service charges twice a year in advance – April and Oct.

12. Non-repairs queries enquiry about wanting to sell or let out my leaseholder home with CWH

Officer very good at 'selling' the company and how quickly they can sell or find a private tenant at market rents. Went cold when I asked why I should deal with a company that appears on the Mayor's website as a rogue agent. Asked me to send an email for her manager to respond to.