



Barbican Estate Office Review

Interim Summary Report – Appraisal of current services

Altair has been commissioned to undertake an **independent review** of the **efficiency, cost effectiveness and value for money** of services delivered by the Barbican Estate Office to residents of the estate.

This **interim report** sets out our **key findings for the first stage of the project**, which is to undertake **detailed appraisal of the current services**.

Details of the activities undertaken are set out in the table to the right.

Oversight of the project is being carried out by the Project Board which consists of the Chair of Residential Consultation Committee, the Interim Head of the BEO and the Assistant Director of Housing and Barbican alongside the project lead from Altair.

Prior to considering the detailed findings set out in this report, it is worth setting out some key points on the **purpose** of this report and how it should be used. **Key points include:**

- The main purpose of this report is to develop and **ensure a single baseline understanding of the context for the further development of how the BEO should operate** to ensure the services it delivers are good quality and demonstrate value for money for those residents who pay for the services through their service charge account. It provides the foundation on which the next stages of work will be completed and provides a single reference point for all stakeholders.
- The findings set out in this stage of the project also provide an **external validation** of the key issues that should be addressed. Many of the areas cited in this report will already be known to the BEO and resident leaseholders, but there is value in having those areas externally validated and set-out in preparation of prioritisation in Stage 2.

Activity	Purpose	Additional information
Discussions with staff	To provide insight and specificity into the functions and ways of working at the BEO.	Discussions completed with 35 staff members covering all functions and roles within the BEO and those delivering services to the BEO.
Discussions with residents and BRC members	To gain the view of residents on the services provided by the BEO.	121 discussions with more than 45 residents including House Chairs, Residents Consultation Committee (RCC) members and the Chair and Deputy Chair of BRC. More than 30 written correspondence from residents.
Survey	To gather views from as many staff and residents as possible.	Staff Survey issued to 80 staff with 8 responses Resident Survey issued c1400 residents with 175 responses.

Below is a summary of the key themes identified during this review.

Customers

- Roles within the BEO structure require the influence, control and oversight to discharge their responsibilities effectively and ensure a customer first culture.
- In addition, there needs to be a greater emphasis on seeing things from a customer perspective and improved accountability for the customer experience.
- There needs to be greater accountability by budget holders to leaseholders to demonstrate the efficiency and value for money of the services they provide on an ongoing basis.

Processes

- Processes need to be fully documented to ensure they are understood and consistent in approach.
- Roles require further clarity of what activity sits in which role to avoid duplication.
- Budgeting and cost control requires improvement
- Policy and processes need to be reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose and need meet the needs of the Barbican residents.
- Informal channels for reporting issues such as repairs need to be removed to ensure there is improved visibility of the issue and reduce the number of roles involved in reporting and dealing with issues.

Organisational Design

- There needs to be improved oversight and control of all services across the Barbican Estate.
- Roles need to be based on the demands of the service and value to residents.
- Resource planning requires improvement to reduce the spend on overtime and agency staff.
- Performance management needs to be robust and consistent across all roles and linked to key performance indicators of services delivered across the Barbican as well as upholding the values and behaviours expected.
- Improved focus on staff support and wellbeing, including regular 121's and team meetings being held.
- Improved training for staff, particularly around people issues and performance management.

Below is a summary of the key themes identified during this review.

People and Culture

- There needs to be improved collaborative working between residents, BEO and City of London to improve trust and confidence of residents in their landlord and staff and contractors who deliver services to the Barbican Estate.
- Improved communications between the BEO and residents, in particular written communications need to be plain English and written from the audience rather than the writers perspective.
- Increased focus on improving staff morale, including ensuring regular 121's and team meetings are carried out.
- Progress with key actions promised by the City of London needs to be quicker to improve the confidence of both BEO staff and residents.
- Contractor/project management requires improvement

Technology and Systems

- Staff need to have the required access to all systems and be trained on their effective use.
- Improved use of technology to improve efficiency and effectiveness of services.
- There needs to be a clear plan to use technology to improve future efficiencies and quality of services including the roll-out of a resident portal.

Performance and Data

- Data and information requires greater insight and narrative.
- Budgeting and cost control requires improvement.
- A detailed framework for regular and consistent financial and performance reporting needs to be implemented including trend information.
- Budget holders are accountable for reporting on and communicating to residents on both the financial and overall performance of the services they deliver to the Barbican Estate, including any contractors who deliver services on their behalf.

Other observations

During the review we had 121 discussions with 35 members of staff and 45 residents. We would thank to both staff and residents for their time and input into this review. During our discussions we observed the following;

- Both staff and residents were keen to engage with and input into the review.
- Staff and residents were very open and honest during discussions and very happy to answer questions and provide examples and additional information where requested.
- In particular, staff were very helpful and responsive to our requests for data and information.
- Both staff and residents put forward positive and constructive suggestions for areas they felt could be improved.

Whilst the nature of the report necessarily focuses on those areas that were identified as being areas for improvement, it is important to acknowledge the positive aspects that were found during the review.

- Staff and residents have a real sense of pride in the Barbican.
- There is a desire by both staff and residents to work more **collaboratively together**.
- Residents recognised and acknowledged the value they place on staff within the Barbican Estate Office, in particular the sense of safety and security they get from having familiar staff on site, naming car park attendants and lobby porters particularly.
- Staff are committed to improving services and put forward constructive suggestions for doing this
- Resident engineers are very knowledgeable about the estate infrastructure, which is complex in nature.
- There was evidence of regular communication between staff and residents.



Key conclusions



The next few slides provide a **summary of our findings** from this review and the conclusions reached. These can be grouped under **four main headings**: *Roles, Structure and Ways of Working, Culture and Behaviours and Performance and Financial Reporting and Property Management*.

Roles, structure and ways of working

- The organisational structure and roles need to be redefined to ensure they enable staff within the BEO to fully discharge their responsibilities and accountabilities to the residents of the Barbican Estate, who are paying for the services being delivered to them.
- In addition, the Head of BEO role needs to have the required oversight and control to ensure service are running efficiently and effectively, this includes Repairs and the Service Charge Account for residents.
- Roles and the organisational structure within the BEO need to supports the effective and efficient delivery of required services to residents and take into account the roles and services most valued by the residents.
- There needs to be improved clarity in role responsibilities, eliminating any duplication of activity across roles.
- A review of the roles and structure within the BEO needs to take place, in particular ensuring that the number of roles in the structure (including those at a leadership level) are right to meet the agreed service specifications and demands of the service, which on initial analysis show there to be higher staff numbers in some parts of the BEO than is required.
- Alongside ensuring resource levels are appropriate for the demands of the service, resource planning needs to be improved to reduce the reliance on agency workers and staff having to work overtime and the associated costs.
- Training and support for leaders on people issues and performance management needs to be undertaken.
- Informal ways of working and communicating have developed that result in it being difficult to oversee and track all issues raised and whether they have been effectively resolved. It also means staff spend lots of time passing on and chasing issues.
- Policies need to be reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose for the Barbican Residential Estate
- Policies and processes need to be fully documented to inform and guide staff and ensure they are applied in a consistent manner.

Key conclusions cont....



Culture and Behaviours

- Improve collaborative working between residents, BEO and the City of London to improve trust and confidence of residents in their landlord and staff and contractors who deliver services to the Barbican Estate.
- To ensure that staff are clear on their performance objectives, key service indicators and expected delivery approach they should have regular performance reviews. There should also be regular team meetings on general developments.
- Contractors should be held to account for the performance and costs of the services they provide to the Barbican Estate.
- There needs to be an improved focus to deliver against key objectives so staff and residents have confidence that promised changes will happen.
- There needs to improved use of technology to update ways of working across the BEO.
- There are a wide range of strategies across the City of London including net zero targets, there needs to be clearer plans and timescales in place for how these will be delivered into the Barbican Residential Estate. As an example the Barbican Estate is briefly referenced in the City of London wide strategy plan (2019 – 2023, Healthy Homes Vibrant Communities) but there is little indication of how the strategy relates specifically to the Barbican estate and what the future long term strategy is.

Performance and Financial Reporting

- Financial reporting frameworks need to be improved to give further insight into how budgets are set and evidence of how costs are being controlled.
- There need to be a robust performance reporting framework developed and agreed to provide residents with the required assurance that services being delivered are effective and deliver value for money, this should include contractor performance.
- Information supplied to residents needs to be simple to understand, avoid jargon and provide the answers residents are seeking, including on any impact on them or the services charges they pay.
- There is a need for a streamlined approach to performance and financial reporting at a Committee level, which provides each Committee with the required information and assurance but in an agreed, standardised format to reduce the resources required to undertake this activity but enable residents to easily access.

Key conclusions cont....



Property Management

- The previous lack of investment across the estate is contributing to higher repair costs and this is evidenced through the benchmarking that indicates that Service Charges are more heavily weighted towards the annually recurring items rather than non-annually recurring items which includes major works.
- General repairs are one of the larger and more variable elements of service charges costs. Larger scale works need to be identified earlier and competitively tender for as major works, rather than on an ongoing piece meal basis, which has a direct impact on the increasing costs that leaseholders are facing.
- However, we note that the stock condition survey has now been undertaken and a five-year major works and redecoration programme is being developed and will be shared with leaseholders in due course., this should include details on how works will be procured, and project managed.

Next steps

This report provides the **baseline understanding** of the Barbican Estate Office (BEO) and services delivered to Barbican Estate residents which will be used to guide the priorities as part of the next stage of this project. It should be noted that:

- The main purpose of this interim report is to develop and ensure that there is a single baseline understanding of the context for the further development of the BEO.
- The findings set out in this report also provide an external validation of the key issues that should be addressed as part of its development.

In our view and based on the findings of the work to date, the **key priorities** areas of focused required in the next stages of design include:

1. Ensuring the overall organisation model and design provides both the clarity and levels of authority to ensure key accountabilities and responsibilities to residents can be fully discharged and meet the service demands residents expect, value and pay for.
2. Review and document key processes to ensure there is the ability to oversee all levels of activity and that processes are fit for purpose and effectively use available technology to drive efficiency and effectiveness.
3. Advise on approaches to ensure improved performance and financial reporting.
4. Advise on improved budgeting and cost control across all areas of operations to ensure it is fit for purpose.
5. Improve the communication with leaseholders on service charges to ensure it is easier to understand.

To be more specific, below is a summary of the areas which will require focus in the next stages of work:

