

Committee	Date:
Housing Management & Almshouses Sub Committee	2 November 2015
Subject: Housing Update	Public
Report of: Director of Community & Children's Services	For Information

Summary

This six monthly update on Housing Service performance and management information keeps Members up to date with progress against key areas of work. The report covers performance for the first half of the financial year (1 April 2015 to 30 September 2015).

Members may wish to note that:

- Performance on responsive repairs has generally met or exceeded targets, other than for post-inspection of completed repairs;
- Performance on rent collection is just below target but continues to remain high despite the impact of welfare benefit reforms;
- Performance on benefit claims has exceeded targets in all three performance indicators.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. This report is presented to the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee every six months. It provides Members with an overview of Housing Service performance and progress on key issues, plus some additional information of interest.
2. This report covers the period 1 April 2015 to 30 September 2015. It has been organised to give Members information on each of eight areas of work:

- Repairs & Maintenance
- Estate Management
- Resident Engagement
- Revenues
- Allocations
- Affordable Housing
- Benefits
- Complaints

Repairs & Maintenance

3. Performance information on our responsive repairs service is collected and reported quarterly. Indicators are reviewed annually to ensure they produce meaningful data that can be monitored effectively. The service is delivered by our contractor, Wates Living Space.

Performance indicator	Target	Mid-year performance
'Immediate' repairs (complete within 2 hours)	100%	100%
'Emergency' repairs (complete within 24 hours)	95%	98.32%
'Routine' repairs	95%	98.66%
% of jobs for which post-work inspections were carried out	15%	12.69%

4. Unfortunately due to continuing staff shortages the target of 15% for 'post work inspections' was missed during the reporting period. However, the mid-year performance level has increased significantly when compared to the previous report. We have now recruited to the vacant post and expect to see this target achieved by year end.
5. Gas servicing is done by our contractor, Carillion, who work closely with City staff to gain access to properties and carry out the necessary checks. At the end of this reporting period, 99.63% of our properties have up to date CP12 gas safety certificates; only 6 properties remain outstanding. Our target remains 100%.

Estate Management

6. 25 Right to Buy applications were made between 1 April and 30 September 2015. None of these completed during the reporting period. However, two applications received prior to 1 April completed during this time.
7. There were 29 incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour on our estates during the past six months. Most of these were minor issues which would not be classed as anti-social behaviour by the police. We have a new Anti-Social Behaviour policy

which has been approved by the Sub-Committee and we are currently developing a suite of staff procedures to underpin this.

8. The new Neighbourhood Patrol Service, being run as a pilot in partnership with the Community Safety Team, City Police and Parkguard, is proving popular and successful so far. Feedback from residents has been positive and the daily reports have highlighted issues which we have been able to address speedily.

Resident Engagement

9. The 'Remembering Yesterday, Celebrating Today' programme of events has continued across City of London Estates. Highlights include two VE Day commemoration events, held on Middlesex Street Estate and Avondale Square Estate, and a City of London 'Poppy Walk'. The 'Poppy Walk' was designed and organised by staff to pass sites of interest around the City whilst raising funds at the same time for the British Royal Legion. £300 was raised by those taking part.
10. This year's Residents' Celebration Day took place in the Livery Hall, Guildhall on Saturday 17 October 2015. This year's theme was 'Healthy Homes, Happy People'. Attendees enjoyed fantastic entertainment, some excellent speakers and took part in workshops on mindfulness, the 'Neighbour Network' and keeping homes warm. The Chairman and Deputy Chairman of your Sub-Committee presented prizes to winners of the Gardening and Photography Competitions and gave certificates to 'Housing Heroes'. A particular highlight was residents from Avondale Square Estate speaking about their incredible achievements this year in running community activities and events.
11. Residents continue to give so much of their time to support community engagement on their estates. In this period 1015 hours of time was given by individuals earning valuable Time Credits on their estates. Ways in which time was given include consultation through the Housing Users Board, design sessions for the Portsoken Lord Mayor's Float and supporting the City to shape services and organising a wide range of events. These have included gardening, Easter Egg Hunts, Coffee Mornings, Curry and Quiz Nights, Market Days, Summer BBQ's and several 'fun-days' to name a few.
12. Four new estate community groups have been set up during this period and have attended workshops around funding and sustainability to ensure that they have the estate support to continue on their journeys.

Revenues

13. Our team of Income Recovery Officers and Estate Managers continue to work tirelessly to maintain the HRA rent collection rate at the level previously achieved. Historically, there is a slight reduction in performance at this time of year, and this year is no exception, but the mid-year collection rate of 98.3% still remains high despite the increasing impact of welfare benefit reform.
14. By continuing to use a range of communication measures including letters, emails, texts, personal visits etc the estate management team were able to apply

prompt, remedial action whenever arrears accrued on accounts resolving many issues swiftly. Given the ongoing financial climate an achievement of this nature should not be underestimated.

Allocations

15. There are currently 731 people on the Housing Waiting List. The updated Housing Allocations Policy was agreed by the Community & Children's Services Committee on 9 October. A number of changes were included: an extension of the length of time applicants must have a connection to the City of London through employment or residency from 12 to 24 months in line with Government guidance; an extension of the eligibility for ex-service personnel to now include those who do not have a City connection; and moving homeless households from highest priority into a lower priority group.
16. The Housing Needs Team recently completed the Annual Census of all applicants to ensure everyone continues to have a City connection and remains eligible to remain on the Register. The Housing Needs Team is in receipt of approximately 60 applications per month not all of which are eligible for the Housing Register.
17. At 30 September 2015 there were 6 vacant properties. Over the six month period there have been 110 voids. The average time taken to re-let a property was 15 days. The target is 24 days. There are 2 long standing voids which, despite having been advertised 3 times on Choice Based Lettings as well as being advertised via Housing Moves, are still not let. They are both 4th floor, three bedroom flats in Stopher House, SE1, which has no lift. Along with a number of other properties, they have been set aside to offer as homes to families of Syrian refugees as part of the pan-London approach to the crisis.

Affordable Housing

18. Members will be aware that several schemes are being developed in a number of areas. If all of the opportunities are realised there will be in excess of 200 new affordable housing units constructed in the next 2-3 years. Whilst ambitious, a target of 200 new homes by March 2018 is realistic and also fits in with the Mayor of London's Housing Covenant Programme 2015-18.
19. Construction commenced in January 2015 at Avondale Square Estate and we are scheduled to complete 18 new homes in June 2016 (4 one bed, 5 two bed, 5 three bed and 4 four bed) on the site of the former Avondale Community Centre/estate office. This will also include new community facilities for residents and a new estate office. This is scheduled to complete in June 2016.
20. Construction commenced in September 2015 for a new 1 three bed wheelchair-adapted unit and community space at Dron House. This is scheduled to complete in December 2015.

21. Planning applications have been submitted for 3 three bed units and a new community space at Isleden House and for the redevelopment of the Islington Arts Factory, Holloway Estate, to provide 20 additional units.

22. We are also working closely with London Borough of Islington to provide a new, two form entry, primary school and nursery and up to 70 homes on the Richard Cloudesley site, Golden Lane, which has a target completion date of September 2017.

Benefits

23. There are currently 1024 households in the City and on our housing estates claiming benefits. Performance on our indicators is as follows:

Performance indicator	Target	Mid-year performance
Average time taken to process new benefit claims	<26 days	21 days
% New claims decided within 14 days	>90%	97%
Average number of days taken to process notification of changes of circumstance	10 days	8 days

Complaints

24. We received a total of 17 formal complaints during the reporting period. The broad subject areas of the complaints received can be broken down as follows:

	Number received in reporting period
Responsive repairs	5
Parking	1
Service charge/rent	2
Customer Service	5
Estate management	4

25. Of the 17 complaints received, 12 were addressed at Stage 1 within the agreed ten working day deadline. 4 of these complaints were escalated to Stage 2.

26. 1 complaint then went on to be escalated to Stage 3. This related to:

- Dispute regarding valuation of property for Right to Buy and alleging discrimination.

27. No complaints were escalated to the Local Government Ombudsman or Housing Ombudsman.

Appendices

- None

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