

Committee(s)	Dated:
Residents Consultation Committee – For Information Barbican Residential Committee – For Information	07/09/2020 21/09/2020
Subject: Barbican Estate Office Recovery Planning COVID-19	Public
Report of: Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
Report author: Michael Bennett Head of Barbican Estates	

Summary

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress that has been made by the Barbican Estate Office (BEO) in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 and the Government, Public Health England (PHE) and Town Clerk's advice. This report provides an update on the provision of services during the Government lockdown and subsequent recovery planning.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to note, consider and comment on the report.

Main Report

Background

- In March 2020 the Prime Minister gave the British people a very simple instruction – “you must stay at home”. He confirmed “that the critical thing we must do was to stop the disease spreading between households and that is why people will only be allowed to leave their home for the following very limited purposes:
 - shopping for basic necessities, as infrequently as possible
 - one form of exercise a day - for example a run, walk, or cycle - alone or with members of your household;
 - any medical need, to provide care or to help a vulnerable person; and
 - travelling to and from work, but only where this is absolutely necessary and cannot be done from home”.
- Following lockdown in March Officers reviewed staff travel and welfare arrangements and the City of London Corporation organised “Key Worker

Status” letters to allow staff to travel to work in order that they could carry out their key worker duties. The ensuing advice from PHE and the Town Clerk was that those staff that could Work From Home should do so. In May the government updated their guidelines on a general return to work specifically for contractors.

3. At the time of writing this report the advice is still that those who can work from home should continue to do so which includes the BEO teams. There were a number of actions and changes to our services during lockdown and as apt of our subsequent recovery planning which are outlined below for each of our Service Level Agreements with residents:

Customer Care, Supervision & Management

Phase 1 (Lockdown)

4. One Senior Manager from the BEO team and four Cleaning Supervisors (who assisted in other Estate Services duties) on site each day. This remains ongoing.
5. BEO Reception open between 11am – 2pm Monday to Friday (with one team member additionally carrying out Estate Concierge/Car Park Attendant duties from time to time). This remains the current position.
6. Shielded team members (as highlighted in paragraph 18 below) contacted vulnerable and elderly residents on the Estate on a weekly basis to check on their Health and Well Being and to ascertain any specific needs and or requirements.
7. Officers worked and assisted with the setting up of the resident volunteering groups which were established for each residential block on the Estate by resident volunteers.
8. The Communications Officer initially produced two to three bulletins per week to update residents on changes to our services. Our Communications Officer quickly became one of the main contacts for residents.
9. The BEO requested that Leaseholder Alterations be paused for non-essential works (this request was reviewed on a case by case basis for kitchen and bathroom works). Unfortunately a considerable amount of time was spent on this by officers as a number of leaseholders continued with their works despite Officers best efforts to intervene.
10. Weekly virtual meetings commenced in March between the Chairs of the Residents Consultation Committee (RCC), Barbican Association (BA), a representative from the resident volunteering groups and the Head Of Barbican Estate. These meetings provided an update on all communications

and services and an opportunity for issues to be raised and reviewed by Officers.

Phase 2 (returning to normal)

11. Following changes to government advice on contractors returning to work in May an update was provided to leaseholders and residents that Leaseholder Alterations practices would be returning to normal with noisy works protocols. Officers worked with the chairs of the BA and RCC with regards to best practices whilst working on the Barbican Estate and a letter was distributed to the main private contractors regarding protocols from the BA.
12. Our Communications bulletin prioritised key messages to residents to help services return to normal.
13. The House Officer team commenced conducting their block inspections in June with all the blocks being completed and of a “good plus” standard for cleaning. This monitoring/inspection role continued on site in July and August with the help of the Commercial House Officer.
14. The London Fire Brigade carried out ad hoc Fire Safety audits in a number of residential blocks including Speed, Thomas More and Defoe House as well as Cromwell Tower with only minor issues reported.
15. Recruitment to the vacant House Officer post was completed in March 2020 before lockdown. Unfortunately the start date has been delayed to September 2020.
16. Virtual meetings for decision making committees, that is the Barbican Residential Committee were carried out in June which was for decision only and applicable information only reports.
17. As many of the Working Parties as is practically possible will look to resume this Autumn via virtual meetings.

Estate Management Cleaning

Phase 1 (Lockdown)

18. In March staffing levels at 50% (to reduce and help with staff travel and welfare arrangements with three staff members shielding due to underlying health conditions, an average of 4-6 staff sickness absences per week, one team member abroad and two staff transferring to Concierge/Car Park Attendants duties).

19. Daily rubbish collections were reduced to 3 days per week from the normal 5 day service and there was a 50% increase in volume due to the substantial increase of online shopping and the effects of more residents working from home.
20. Touch point cleaning became the priority and the focus was in the residential blocks. There was a pause on car park, podium and weekend cleaning. The “pink card” delivery system for notification to residents of a parcel delivery at the Concierge/Car Park Attendants Office/Lobbies was put on hold.
21. The window cleaning service was put on hold. During the good weather it soon became apparent that as so many residents were making use of the balconies and keeping their balcony doors open social distancing for the contractors became impossible.

Phase 2 (returning to normal)

22. Staffing increased to 100% by May (less staffing arrangements as at phase 1). Staggered hours were introduced to meet staff travel and welfare arrangements which included localised Welfare Facilities that had been set up for all Estate Cleaners.
23. The rubbish collection service was maintained at 3 days per week. There was still a 50% increase in volume and this was exacerbated by the time spent by Estate Cleaners in the breakdown of residents’ cardboard boxes from parcel deliveries.
24. Touch point cleaning remained and the normal residential communal block and podium cleaning were re-introduced. Car Park and weekend cleaning and the “pink card” delivery system remained on hold.
25. In June partial car park cleaning resumed.

Phase 3 (Normal)

26. In June the window cleaning service returned to normal.
27. In July the rubbish collection service returned to normal. A feasibility study was carried out and the time spent on the 3 day service was almost 50% greater than the 5 day service due to time spent travelling back and forth with fully loaded rubbish trolleys. Initial feedback sought from resident representatives (see appendix 1) where rubbish collections are mentioned, was that there was a preference for a five days a week service.
28. All areas of cleaning returned to normal with the exception of weekend rubbish collections for those residential blocks that have opted for this service.

29. In August shielded staff members were returning to work on a phased basis.

30. The “pink card” delivery system is not expected to be re-introduced at this stage. Officers have been conducting a number of reviews of the system which have so far highlighted the following:

- During and following lockdown there have been an average of 1,000 parcels a day delivered to the 10 Car Park Offices/Tower Lobbies
- Many parcel deliveries trigger a notification to residents
- Concierge/Car Park Attendants have been hand delivering parcels especially to vulnerable/elderly residents
- Concierge/Car Park Attendants carry out a telephone back up notification to residents
- Since lockdown there have been two parcels that have either been not accounted for and or were perishable items

31. Officers are also reviewing time spent on the “pink card” delivery system and other duties and the potential for a reduction in the number of Estate Cleaners (there are a number of unfilled permanent vacancies which have been carried out by temporary staff members) .

Concierge/Car Park Attendants

Phase 1 (Lockdown)

32. In March staffing levels were at 60% of 40 team members (9 staff members shielding and an average of 5 to 6 sickness absences per week).

33. Some car parks were closed for either 12 or 24 hours with updates in the residents bulletin and appropriate signage to stakeholders of the nearest services.

Phase 2 (returning to normal)

34. In April staffing levels increased to 90% with temporary agency staff members (less staffing arrangements as at phase 1). A reviewed of the agency person specification to customer service/reception duties for Concierge roles helped to increase recruitment.

35. In May staffing levels increased to 95/100%. Officers conducted a review of storage facilities for residents’ parcels with new facilities introduced.

Phase 3 (Normal)

36. In June staffing levels increased to almost 100% (with ongoing staffing arrangements as at Phase 2).

37. In August shielded staff members were returning to work on a phased basis. However, due to current annual leave and sickness levels there have been occasions when Car Park Offices have been closed.

Property Maintenance

Phase 1 (Lockdown)

38. The Repairs Contact Centre was set up to Work From Home prior to lockdown.

39. Priority 0/1/2 works inside properties was carried out in conjunction with triage telephone calls by the Repairs Contact Centre. Non-urgent works inside properties were not carried out. Communal repairs were carried out as normal. The On-site Duty Managers/Resident Engineers service was provided as normal.

40. Non-essential services were put on hold until it was safe to do so.

Phase 2 (returning to normal)

41. A review of non-urgent repairs took place in June as lockdown measures eased.

42. Non-essential services were reviewed with Covid-19 compliant risk assessments produced and agreed.

Phase 3 (Normal)

43. Non-urgent repairs commenced in July bringing the repairs service back to normal. A backlog due to the volume and the availability of parts from manufacturers closed during the initial phases of lockdown will mean it will be 2-3 months before the backlog is cleared.

44. Water testing, asbestos surveys, risk assessments have now all returned to a normal service

45. Whilst the service we deliver has returned to near normal, the way in which this service is delivered was different during the main part of lockdown. We are currently reviewing and determining what the new normal looks like.

Major Works

Phase 1 (Lockdown)

46. Disruptive projects and works that required access to flats was put on hold. Communal and Car Park works continued as normal.

Phase 3 (Normal)

47. In July Major Works and programmes returned to normal including, stock condition surveys and the teams are looking to start disruptive work in September (to coincide with children returning to school) which will include the water tank work that will require an interruption to the water supply to flats with new safe working practices in place.

Open Spaces

Phase 1 (Lockdown)

48. In March reduced staffing to two team members of gardening team due to shielding/sickness absences. City Gardens teams working flexibly across the City.

49. In April following Government/PHE guidance there were issues of residents' inappropriate use of the private gardens on the Estate. The City of London Police and senior Officers agreed a protocol for use of the private gardens with appropriate signage (including social distancing, groups, sunbathing, use of play equipment) and updates were provided in the residents' bulletins.

Phase 2 (returning to normal)

50. In May one member of the gardening team was shielding. The Open Spaces Department reviewed staff travel and welfare arrangements ahead of getting back to normal.

Phase 3 (Normal)

51. In May the above measures in paragraph 49 were relaxed following Government and PHE advice (signage was removed and the residents bulletin was updated). The play equipment was opened up in July with appropriate signage and cleaning schedules introduced.

52. In June the gardening team returned to normal (less one part-time member of the team).

RCC Member comments

53. Officers asked via the virtual meetings with the RCC/BA Chairs (highlighted in paragraph 10) for comments on our services during and since lockdown which can be found in Appendix 1. A review of these comments and others from the September Committees will be considered by Officers with appropriate updates to future reports.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – RCC Member comments July 2020

Michael Bennett

Head of Barbican Estates

Department of Community and Children's Services

T: 020 70293923 and E: michael.bennett@cityoflondon.gov.uk