

Report of the Service Level Agreement Working Party to the Residents Consultation Committee for its meeting on 3rd February 2025

This working party met at 18.00 on 16th January 2025. Those present included Andrew Tong, Jim Durcan, Dan Sanders, Helen Davinson and Luke Barton.

Apologies were received from: Jane Smith, Juliet McNamara, Tony Swanson

The Chair welcomed all those present.

1. KPIs – the KPI report was discussed in detail

Complaints: The Working Party (WP) was pleased to note the substantial improvement in the timeliness of the BEO's responsiveness to Complaints. From a situation in the previous two quarters when only 50% of complaints were responded to within 10 days the response rate in the last quarter reached 90%. The WP noted that the target for responsiveness was 100%.

Of the 10 complaints received 2 related to Communications, 2 to Contractors, 2 to Finance, 1 to Leak/Water Penetration, 1 to Lifts, 1 to Staff Conduct and 1 to Highwalks/Communal Areas. One complaint was withdrawn.

Timeliness of Repairs: the metrics on the timeliness of repairs show a significant improvement. On urgent repairs which should be completed within 24 hours, the last three quarters have shown an improvement from 80% to 89% to 95%. The target is 95%. Similarly, with less urgent repairs, the response rate has risen from 86% to 94% to 95% thereby achieving the target of 95%. There is still no data available on the percentage of repairs that fail inspection

Lifts: The target for lift availability is 99% for each of the three categories – staircase, corridor and tower blocks. This availability target was not met for any of the three categories. The WP recognised the improvement in communication about lift outages but was concerned about the deteriorating performance. It was explained that the unavailability of parts – due to obsolescence – was a problem and that the BEO was bringing forward a paper on a lift replacement/refurbishment strategy.

The survey of mechanical and electrical condition of the 80 lifts on the estate is still in progress. It may be necessary to engage in replacement rather refurbishment to avoid continuing the issues of obsolescence. Wherever possible lift replacement / refurbishment will be spread over two or more years for individual blocks to avoid spikes in service charges. The February 2025 RCC will consider a proposal on the lifts in the towers. A paper on all the other lifts including those on the podium will come to the April RCC meeting.

Heating: Data on responsiveness to requests for heating repairs and heating adjustments in the last quarter was not available at the time of the meeting. The WP emphasised the need to distinguish between adjustments and repairs. A problem in Brandon Mews when a

switch had become stuck in the 'on' position had been resolved. The Interim Head of Property Services is expected to brief the House group next week.

Cleaning: In our previous report the WP noted that cleaning standards, as measured by House Officer inspections, had slipped to 76% meeting the standard of good to outstanding compared to the target of 90%. The WP was pleased to note some improvement in that 83% of inspections had been rated as good or outstanding in the last quarter. Officers reported that they were continuing to focus attention on supervision and training to raise standards across the board.

Window cleaning: following the decision last time to change the reporting system, the WP noted the new data on window cleaning standards. Four issues had been reported, investigated and dealt with.

Home Improvement Applications: the number of home improvement applicants is quite stable averaging 11 per quarter. Officers reported that applications have been delayed awaiting Building Safety Regulator Acceptance letters.

Barbican Bulletin: the circulation of the Barbican Bulletin continues to tick slowly upwards and has now reached 2163 subscribers.

Repairs: As agreed at our last meeting all the repairs data has been rounded to the nearest pound. The request that officers should look at producing information standardised by the number of flats in each block and by orders had not been acted upon. The WP was assured that this would be done shortly. The WP was informed that, across the estate as a whole, spending on repairs is roughly on track against budget although this may vary on a house by house basis. Costs of lift repairs have risen because of an increasing volume of faults but ILEX is checking that each item of spend is justified and appropriate. The spend on dealing with asbestos has been slowed. It is anticipated that most of the asbestos problems will be resolved when flat doors and attached cupboards are replaced. The new contractor, Elkins, will take responsibility for water penetration on balconies from April

2. Changing the Ombudsman in the Barbican Complaints Procedure

At the last RCC meeting it was agreed that the paper on changing the Ombudsman in the Barbican should be referred to the SLAWP to review and report back.

The Chair suggested that the WP should begin by identifying the appropriate criteria to be used in choosing between the Property Ombudsman (PO) and the Housing Ombudsman (HO) and then use those criteria to evaluate the alternative options. Questions may include whether the HO's public sector origin makes it more impartial, where the PO is a form of private sector industry self regulation possibly more focused on landlords' interests and whether the Barbican's use of the HO, despite being an historical quirk, has unusual advantages. It was clear that the original paper saw the cost of the Ombudsman service as an important criteria.

Dan Sanders (DS) explained that the role of the Ombudsman was the final stage of the Complaints Handling process but that this did not preclude any leaseholder from using alternative avenues consistent with the landlord tenant relationship. He acknowledged that the PO did not have any statutory backing but believed that did not diminish its value

as the statutory powers of the HO relate to social housing. DS believed that the PO was more suited to the needs of a residential estate like the Barbican because it was more akin to privately managed estates.

Andrew Tong stressed the need to understand which organisation was best set up to deal with the kinds of issues that we face. It seems that the HO is more public, more impartial. The PO is private and, possibly, more focused on landlord's interests.

Jim Durcan (JD) queried the legal framework relating to the PO. The PO has some statutory powers in relation to consumer disputes with estate agents and letting agents. He drew attention to the description offered in the summary of the paper presented to the RCC in November.

The summary stated that

'The Property Ombudsman is an independent Ombudsman Service aimed at resolving disputes between consumers and property agents.'

DS confirmed that the BEO was not a property agent. JD suggested that consumers were very different to Leaseholders. DS disputed this saying that because leaseholders paid for services they were consumers.

In response to a query as to whether the choice of ombudsman was specified in the lease DS stated it was not specified in the Lauderdale lease and he didn't think it was specified in any other lease. It was agreed to check further.

It was agreed that the SLAWP would meet again in February to discuss this matter further.

The meeting finished at 19.25.