

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee: Housing Management and Almshouses Sub-Committee	Dated: 30/06/25
Subject: Estate Services Update	Public report: For Information
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none">delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Providing Excellent Services
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
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Summary

Housing's Estate Services team is responsible for cleaning, caretaking and gardening on the City Corporation's social housing estates. The team complete regular inspections of communal areas to monitor cleaning standards, identify hazards and conduct compliance checks on components such a fire doors.

This report summarises how the team operates and updates Members on the inspections and standards regime currently in use across the Corporation's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) estates.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The Estate Services Team is responsible for cleaning, caretaking and gardening activity across the City Corporation's housing estates. The team is led by an Estate Services Manager, who reports to the Head of Housing Management. There are five Estate Supervisors, who manage local teams of Porter/Cleaners and Gardeners (a total of 34 across all sites).
2. All cleaning and gardening activity is carried out by in-house staff, except for some specialist work (such as window cleaning and tree surgery) which are contracted out.
3. This report explains how estate standards are monitored to ensure that communal areas are cared for effectively by the Estate Services Team.

Current Position

Estate Inspections

4. We carry out approximately 70 inspections per month across our estates. These inspections include:
 - **Building safety inspections** which cover the internal areas of our blocks and relate to safety systems and estate standards.
 - **Quarterly grounds safety and standards inspections** which cover our external areas
 - **Playground checks** which are carried out monthly when a quarterly grounds inspection hasn't been carried out.
5. The inspections work by breaking down each element of a block (e.g. lifts, lobbies, stairwells) or an external area (paved areas, green areas, playgrounds, car parks) into sections which are then checked and graded individually against an objective standard. Each element is graded from A (Excellent) to E (Unacceptable). Full details of the grading system can be found in our Estate Standards (**Appendix 1**), which are available on our website or upon request.
6. Each grade goes up by single point increment, starting at zero for an E grade up to four points for an A grade, and these points are accumulated at the end of the inspection to provide an overall percentage score for the block or external area in question.

7. This percentage provides a basis for the standards part of the inspection. The expectation is to achieve 75% or higher, with any score below this being considered unacceptable. Where remedial action is needed, this is progressed by the relevant Estate Supervisor with their team, or by referring actions to colleagues within the Housing team (e.g. Property Services). Further information on recent performance is shown below.
8. Each inspection results in a report, which includes photographs taken during the inspection and details of any actions raised. An example report is shown at **Appendix 2**.
9. Actions or issues identified during inspections are raised and referred to the appropriate teams or individuals by the Estate Supervisors. These can be referenced again in the inspections if required, and deadlines monitored centrally.

Estate Inspection Software

10. We use software called *iAuditor* to carry out our inspections. In addition to providing the template for the inspection, it also provides helpful functions such as the ability to raise actions with pictures that can be sent to other teams. Actions can also be tracked and notifications received when they are due, overdue or complete.
11. *SweepUp* is the system we are adopting to allow our estate teams to schedule their daily tasks. This system provides a breakdown of their daily task lists which they can complete as they go, updating progress on mobile devices. It also enables Estate Supervisors to assign and update tasks and includes a messaging service to communicate and report on issues among the team. *SweepUp* has a reporting function which, once fully implemented, will provide detailed performance information about estate cleaning activity.

Staff Resources

12. Estate management is a resource-intensive function, and the inspections regime requires significant time and effort on the part of the Estate Supervisors to fulfil the scheduled checks.
13. Recent regulatory and legislative changes have also brought additional expectations around compliance and building safety issues, which require regular checks.
14. A review of staff resources has been undertaken, and officers are considering options for additional posts within the team which will focus on inspections and regularly scheduled compliance checks. This proposal is subject to funding and the required approvals, and Members will be updated in due course.

Performance

15. A summary of performance (as of 31 March 2025) is shown below.

Measure	Performance	Notes
Monthly internal block Inspections Completed in target	100%	
Quarterly grounds inspections completed in target	100%	Figure for Q4 2024/5; Q3 performance 94%
Quarterly Fire Door Checks Completed	100%	
Property Information Box Checks Completed	96%	
Grounds inspections meeting minimum standard	67%	2024/5 average 80%
Internal inspections meeting minimum standard	90%	2024/5 average 81%
Average grounds inspection score	78%	Average across the year was 78%
Average internal block inspection score	81%	2024/5 average 79.4%

16. Members may wish to note that the above performance measures form part of the regular Housing Performance Dashboard which is submitted to this Sub-Committee. The Performance Dashboard will provide a regular and more detailed picture of performance against the above measures.

17. Performance in some areas fluctuated over the course of 2024/25 and closer attention is being paid to ensuring that standards are maintained consistently between inspections. The implementation of *SweepUp* will enable closer monitoring of task completion at local level, meaning that remedial action can be taken much more quickly if required. This should drive an improvement in scores and the proportion of inspections meeting the minimum standard.

Communication with Residents

18. It is accepted that communication with residents on inspection outcomes must improve. Inspection results were regularly posted in notice boards on estates; however, this has not been consistent in recent months due to resource constraints. Officers are now considering how best to publish results and intend to make better use of the corporate website to disseminate information on inspection outcomes.

19. Additionally, we are planning to carry out a resident engagement exercise to seek people's views on the information they would like to see on estate standards and inspection results, to ensure that it is informative and relevant to them, and in a useful format.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications – none.

Financial implications – none.

Resource implications – none.

Legal implications – none.

Risk implications – none.

Equalities implications – none.

Climate implications – none.

Security implications – none.

Conclusion

20. The Estate Services team is responsible for cleaning, caretaking and gardening across the City Corporation's housing estates, with a team of over 30 in-house staff dispersed across the various sites.

21. A programme of inspections is in place to monitor compliance with service standards and other obligations related to safety in communal areas, the inspections being carried out using specialist software. Additionally, a new software system has been procured which will enable better monitoring of routine cleaning and caretaking tasks.

22. Team resources are being reviewed to ensure that workloads are manageable and that we are in the best place to deliver against the commitments we have made to residents.

23. Communication on service performance requires improvement, and we intend to engage with residents to inform changes to reporting on performance, as well as inspection results and outcomes.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Estate Standards
- Appendix 2 – Example Estate Inspection Report

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