

REPORT TO:	London Borough of Tower Hamlets Housing Scrutiny Committee	AGENDA ITEM: 7
AUTHOR:	Catherine Kyne, Regional Director (North London) Lisa Buckingham, Head of Housing (East London)	MEETING DATE: 9 April 2019
TITLE:	Clarion Housing performance in Tower Hamlets	
PURPOSE / SUMMARY:	To provide the scrutiny committee with an overview of our performance and our plans for the future.	

1.0	Background																																			
1.1	Since the merger between Circle Housing and Affinity Sutton in November 2016, a range of interventions have been made to improve the poor performance in the area and to mitigate the impact of years of under investment.																																			
1.2	Our key focus has been on improving core services, relationships with our partners and residents and investing in the community. In the year after merger we knocked on around 2,000 doors in the local areas to speak with residents about their concerns. We've also had regular meetings with the elected representatives for the area, Mayor and Cabinet Member. This report outlines where we are with performance currently, what improvements we still need to make and some of the wider work we're doing in the borough which is not reflected within the performance reports.																																			
2.0	Overview of THFF Benchmarking performance																																			
2.1	Clarion is a member of the Tower Hamlets Housing Forum and as such, provides information on performance on a quarterly basis. This shows variation in performance between landlords. The performance for 2018/19 is shown in the table at 2.3 of this report. We have also included the 2016-17 performance, which began prior to the merger.																																			
2.2	It is important to note that the methodology used by each provider to calculate performance may vary slightly. For example, how satisfaction surveys are completed will vary across many factors including regularity, whether these are completed internally or externally and the questions asked.																																			
2.3	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2016-17</th> <th>Q1</th> <th>Q2</th> <th>Q3</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>% of repairs completed in target</td> <td>86.57</td> <td>91.92</td> <td>90.5</td> <td>93.18</td> </tr> <tr> <td>% respondents satisfied with last completed repair</td> <td>67</td> <td>79.37</td> <td>83</td> <td>81.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>% of appointments kept as a % of appointments made</td> <td>89.79</td> <td>89.73</td> <td>92.43</td> <td>97.47</td> </tr> <tr> <td>% properties with a valid gas safety certificate</td> <td>99.99</td> <td>100</td> <td>99.86</td> <td>99.94</td> </tr> <tr> <td>% complaints responded to in target</td> <td>43</td> <td>69</td> <td>78</td> <td>69.1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>% Members' Enquiries answered</td> <td>53.59</td> <td>30.49</td> <td>45.8</td> <td>48.1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2016-17	Q1	Q2	Q3	% of repairs completed in target	86.57	91.92	90.5	93.18	% respondents satisfied with last completed repair	67	79.37	83	81.9	% of appointments kept as a % of appointments made	89.79	89.73	92.43	97.47	% properties with a valid gas safety certificate	99.99	100	99.86	99.94	% complaints responded to in target	43	69	78	69.1	% Members' Enquiries answered	53.59	30.49	45.8	48.1
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	Average relet time (days)	NR	33	35.2	37.1
	% General Needs Income collected	NR		97.6	98
	% of tall buildings (over 18m) owned by RPs that have an up to date FRA in place	NR	81.25	62.5	100
2.4	The rest of this report will focus on these areas of performance, plus a section on the wider work we're doing to improve the services we provide.				
3.0	Repairs performance				
3.1	Repairs performance has been a significant issue for several years having deteriorated under the former Circle organisation. The figures in this report only relate to reactive repairs performance.				
3.2	Mitie took over the contract and improved the performance based on that previously delivered by Kier. However, performance was still not as good as within the rest of the Clarion Housing Group and in June 2018 we took the decision to bring the service in-house. This is in line with the model we have in place across for 90,000 properties outside of North London. The Clarion Response contract was mobilised quickly and they took over the service on 12 November 2018. We are still in the mobilisation phase and expect to stabilise the service by July 2019.				
3.3	<i>Repairs completed within target:</i> This is measured by determining the percentage of orders for Emergency Works (other than Communal Repairs) that were completed within 24 hours and Routine Works that were completed within 28 days. We have interim targets in place while we mobilise the new service. Our interim target is to complete 90% of emergency orders within 24 hours and 85% of routine orders within 28 days. From 1 June 2019 the service will move to contractual target with the targets for emergencies increasing to 98% and routine repairs increasing to 95%.				
3.4	<i>Resident satisfied with last completed repair:</i> We complete a monthly customer satisfaction survey through an external organisation, The Leadership Factor. They survey residents who have had a repair completed within the period. We have seen a slight dip in Q3, which was expected as we mobilised our new service and inherited 600 jobs from the previous service provider. Our interim target for customer satisfaction is 80%. The most recent survey (January 2019 repair completions) shows satisfaction at 79.9%. As we stabilise the service and introduce new ways of working, which include offering an appointment at the first point of contact; sending a text message to confirm the appointment immediately after the repair is logged; sending a further text message the day before the appointment to remind the tenant we will be attending and lastly calling the tenant when we are en-route to their property to confirm an estimate time of arrival; we expect to see the level of satisfaction improve and reach our contractual target of 85% or higher.				
3.5	<i>Appointments made and kept:</i> This is measured by identifying the total number of appointments for Responsive Repairs (for works other than				

	emergency works or communal repairs) and of those, how many were kept (where the date and time of the attendance matches that of the appointment and time slot booked). During the mobilisation period our interim target is 80%. Our quarter 3 performance was well above this at 97.47%. Again as we stabilise the service we would expect to sustain this level of service. Our contractual target is 95%.
3.6	The new repairs service is performing as we would expect during the early period following a mobilisation. We TUPE'd staff from Mitie and Wates and are currently embedding new ways of working and undertaking a significant amount of training which will improve the service in the medium term.
4.0	Complaints and Members' Enquiries
4.1	At the point of merger we had very high levels of complaints and members' enquiries, largely driven by poor responsive repairs performance and issues with the gas contract.
4.2	Our target is to respond to complaints within an average of 10 working days. This recognises that some complaints are more complicated, particularly with complex repairs cases, which take longer than two weeks to resolve. The figures in the report show the percentage of complaints which are answered within 10 working days. For January and February 2019, we had an average complaint resolution time of 9 working days, which is within our own target. Residents are kept updated throughout the complaint process including what will happen next and the timescales for this happening. An example of queries which might take longer to resolve would include where roofing works – which normally require scaffolding – are needed. We are focusing on improving our complaints resolution time and answering simple queries as quickly as possible.
4.3	Across Tower Hamlets, at the end of February 2019, we had 33 open Stage 1 complaints which is 1 per 175 properties.
4.4	Progress has also been made compared to last year with a 19% reduction in open complaints compared to complaint levels in January and February 2018. We don't have reliable data for January and February in previous years because of the way Circle recorded this information, but we know the volumes have come down significantly.
4.5	With Members' Enquiry performance there was an error in the information provided for Q2 2018-19. The report showed as 4.58% enquiries answered within timescales, whereas this should have been 45.8%. Again our corporate target is to answer this type of enquiry as quickly as possible, but within an average of 10 working days. In January and February 2019 we had an average resolution time of 10 working days.
4.6	One of the issues inherited from Circle was very poor member enquiry responses which did not address the issues raised. This led to lots of frustration from elected representatives and their constituents, and lots of follow-on enquiries were generated. We have focussed on improving the quality of the responses and on answering all of the questions raised fully. This has sometimes led to longer response times, but means a

comprehensive reply is provided. All responses are now also checked by a senior member of staff, at least at Head of Service level, to improve quality.

4.7 Compared to January and February 2018, we have seen a 74% reduction in open member enquiries and a 44% reduction in member enquiries received. This demonstrates a positive direction of travel.

4.8 Our complaints process works in stages. Stage 0 only applies to responsive repairs complaints. Where a repairs complaint is received, this is passed directly to Clarion Response to give them the opportunity to resolve. If they are unable to resolve the issue within 10 working days, then the complaint escalates to Stage 1. All other complaints start the complaints process at Stage 1. If after the Stage 1 resolution has been provided, and the resident remains unhappy, they have the opportunity to escalate this to Stage 2. A Stage 2 request is reviewed by a senior manager, at a Head of Service level or above. They will review the resolution provided at Stage 1 and identify if any adjustments are needed. Following this, if the resident remains unhappy they can escalate their concern to the Ombudsman.

4.9 We've received three maladministration determinations so far from the Ombudsman service for Tower Hamlets this financial year. These relate to previous years because of the timeframe that the Ombudsman is operating within. So far we haven't received any maladministration determinations related to 2018/19 logged cases. There is currently one case from Tower Hamlets under consideration by the Ombudsman that we are aware of. 90% of our cases referred to the Housing Ombudsman are closed without investigation by the body. This is 10% better than the landlord average. The ratio of cases determine as either a service failure of maladministration is 1 to every 1924 properties.

4.10 The breakdown of open complaints and members enquiries by category, at the end of February:

Category	Stage 0	Stage 1	Stage 2	Member Enquiries	Ombudsman
Aftercare		1			
Customer Accounts		1			
Customer Service					
Compliance		1	1		
Gas & Heating	1	4		1	
Planned Investment		3			
Day to Day Repairs	8	19	4	7	
Service Charges		2			
Housing		2		4	
	9	33	5	12	0

4.11 We completed some analysis of our complaints and Member's Enquiry figures. We identified that we had a high proportion of households who had contacted us multiple times with either a complaint or a member enquiry. To investigate the underlying cause, we have completed joint visits involving our housing and repairs team to try and improve the relationship and identify any long-standing, difficult to resolve issues.

5.0	Relet time
5.1	Our relet performance worsened during Q3 to an average of 37.1 days. We expect this to improve in the next quarter as our repairs contractor has significantly improved their performance. Performance of the repairs side of the void team has improved from 23.5 days with Mitie, down to 11 days now with Clarion Response.
6.0	Income collection
6.1	Our income collection performance is good. In addition to collection rent we also provide a range of support for people who are struggling financially to help them stay in their home.
6.2	We have a team of four dedicated Welfare Benefits Advisors which sit in our Customer Accounts Team. They work closely with the Customer Accounts Specialists assisting with benefit claims at application stage, and where backdating of housing benefit is required.
6.3	We also work with Account Three which is a Debt Advice service specifically for residents in Tower Hamlets. They are a third party organisation which works out of our Bow office four times a week. Between April 2018 and February 2019 they've worked with 146 tenants and gained £65k in benefits for our residents in this period. They specialise in supporting our vulnerable residents and also offer advice in multiple languages. We make referrals to the service, and tenants can also self refer. Clarion funds this programme.
6.4	Our housing management team has also improved their relationship with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets' Homelessness Prevention Team. They attended our office earlier this financial year to meet the team, and to explain the services and support they provide. This improved partnership working has prevented several evictions already.
7.0	Fire safety
7.1	We've got a comprehensive approach to fire safety and it was one of our early priorities following the merger to ensure that performance improved in legacy Circle stock. Consequently we re-commissioned all Fire Risk Assessments to ensure they were fit for purpose in late 2016, just before the formal merger, across former Circle stock. Our focus has been on our high-risk buildings, rather than just high-rise buildings. The approach is based on the level of risk for each building and focuses a lifetime approach to fire safety from construction to management. We have a high level of internal expertise with a dedicated fire safety team. We use third party accredited contractors to complete work with oversight from this team.
7.2.	<i>Fire Risk Assessments:</i> All of our Fire Risk Assessments are in place for the stock in Tower Hamlets, and we have a comprehensive programme for reassessment on either a one year or three year cycle based upon the risk of the building. We have a 100% compliance rate for FRA completion. This performance is regularly monitored.
7.3	Any remedial actions which arise from our FRA managed in a structured and planned way. We are on target to complete all their housing actions which

	are mainly problems with residents sorting items in communal areas.
7.4	<i>Buildings above 18m:</i> We have a programme of completing repairs or upgrades to our stock in Tower Hamlets and have now completed all fire safety work to buildings 10 storeys or higher. We are due to complete all 29 buildings in Tower Hamlets which are 6 to 9 storeys in the next quarter. Works have included fire stopping and fitting new fire doors or upgrading existing ones. Residents were also provided with building specific fire safety information about their block.
7.5	<i>Sheltered and supported schemes:</i> These schemes provide homes for some of our most vulnerable residents. We have five schemes within the borough and we have completed a full assessment of each building in line with the Fire Safety in Specialised Housing guidance. We have completed the works on three of these schemes, and have a contractor on site at the other. The final scheme will have contractors on site by mid June 2019. Works have included fitting a new fire detection system in each flat, which interlinks with the warden call system in the scheme, compartmentation works in loft spaces as well as fitting improved doors.
7.6	<i>Converted street properties:</i> These buildings often date to the Victoria era and were originally built as a single home. These were then sub-divided into individual flats during the last century to provide more homes, often for social rent. We have completed works in 41 converted street properties in Tower Hamlets where we have fitted an Aico interlinked fire detection system made up of smoke detectors and heat detectors.
7.7	<i>Cladding:</i> We only own one block above 18m with a form of combustible cladding comprising of a small quantity of timber cladding on the top façade of the building. We are in the process of removing this.
7.8	Other buildings at the same site are identified as having ACM and some also have a similar material called High Pressure Laminate (HPL). All of these buildings are below 18m. However, we have been checking the buildings to ensure the cladding was installed correctly and have the original builder back on site undertaking remedial repairs. This work is being supervised by a specialist consultant to make sure it's carried out to the appropriate standard. We have a security team providing a fire watch in place as a precaution.
7.9	We have identified fire safety concerns at a block in Bow. We have taken the decision to move residents to new homes on a permanent basis due to the extensive and disruptive nature of the works potentially required. We have worked closely with the LFB and with the Council and other key stakeholders during this period. As a precautionary measure, we installed a fire alarm to support the evacuation of the building in the event of a fire. In addition, we have a permanent waking watch to support residents in the event of a fire. All of these mitigation actions have been agreed in full consultation with the fire service. We have kept residents fully updated throughout this process and have create tailored decant packages for each household to support them with this move. We have also made sure that local Councillors have been kept updated. At the time of reporting of the 49 units we have moved 4

	households to alternative accommodation, 6 have offers and we are working with the remaining 39 to secure accommodation that meets their needs.
9.0	Approach to ASB management
9.1	At the beginning of the financial year, Clarion created a new Tenancy Specialist service. This specialist team is responsible for carrying out investigations for all high risk ASB, social housing fraud and other complex tenancy management cases. The North London team currently comprises of 6 Tenancy Specialists, with two officers specifically managing cases across Tower Hamlets. This team is likely to grow and we expect to appoint two additional Tenancy Specialists during Q2 of 2019/20.
9.2	There have been 262 reported cases of ASB (YTD) across Clarion's stock in Bow (at the end of January 2019 there were 58 live high risk ASB cases across our Tower Hamlets stock). The team has a collaborative working relationship with the local Safer Neighbourhood Team and youth service providers and we take a partnership approach to dealing with these issues. Where criminal activity is involved, we expect the Police to lead but we will provide assistance wherever possible. For example, last year we helped the Police to secure a Dispersal Zone to prevent a potential gang dispute and we spoke with local residents to reassure them about the increase Police activity in the area. We have consistently taken proactive legal action against residents that have demonstrated threatening behaviour towards residents or staff. In the most serious of cases our Tenancy Specialists apply for injunctions on a without notice basis, often without legal representation. This approach not only enables our staff to provide legal protection for our residents within days of a serious incident, but also enables our enforcement team to achieve greater value for money in delivering safer communities, whilst supporting the police's action.
9.3	Our Tenancy Specialists work collaboratively with the Police and other statutory agencies in delivering reasonable and proportionate interventions. Currently, the Tenancy Specialists are following up on arrests made during Operation Continuum by pursuing two possession claims using the Absolute Ground for possession. A further possession claim using the Absolute Ground for possession is also being progressed following a serious stabbing incident near Roman Road during 2018. The Tenancy Specialist team has also worked collaboratively with our internal fire safety teams, the police and a leading supplier of fire safety and security products (Gerda) to pilot a new fire access key to our developments located within ASB hotspots. This was in response to customer feedback that unauthorised individuals were gaining access using LFB 'drop-keys', which are easily and cheaply purchased online. Within the first week of launching the pilot, our Tenancy Specialist team was able to prevent drug dealers from gaining access into one of our blocks which also led to the recovery of approximately £1000 worth of cannabis. This had been hidden in the suspended ceiling in the communal area.
9.4	Clarion Futures (our community investment team) and representatives from our Tenancy Specialist service are also at the centre of developing a new partnership amongst G15 RPs designed to address serious youth violence across London (Serious Youth Violence Housing Network). This project,

	which is still in its infancy, will be adopting the public health approach to tackling youth violence.
10.0	Community investment
10.1	Clarion Futures is our dedicated community investment charity. They provide support focused in four key areas: employment support, financial and digital inclusion, communities and young people.
10.2	<i>Employment Support:</i> We are running the Love London Working Programme in the borough which means residents can access a range of support to get into work. This includes advice and guidance, support with CVs, providing training and financial support to travel to interviews. We also provide support when a resident has got into work so they can buy clothes and other essentials. We run this service mainly from The Eastside Youth & Community Centre. We are also working closely in partnership with the Council including WorkPath and the families' service.
10.3	<p>The Communities Team continue to provide a comprehensive programme across the Borough, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roman Road Adventure Playground (recently completely redecorated) with 200 regular users enjoying after-school and holiday activities in a safe, creative environment; • Spotlight continue to provide regular after-school positive activities for young people from the Eastside Centre in Bow as part of the LBTH youth contract; • Purple Moon Children's Theatre programme for younger residents; • Edible Bow project, based in Ranwell West; • Tredegar Community Centre hosts a sewing Club, Women's Arabic classes, Short-mat bowls, Geezers Club, and bingo; • Francis Lee Community Centre is a base for Weight Management classes, Art Group, West Indian Social Club, Sparkles Health club and Just Be Active sessions; • Butley Court sees the regular Bow Bengali Forum; Bow Belles activities, bingo, line dancing, Chair-based exercise and yoga sessions. Undergoing complete refurbishment.
10.4	<p>The Clarion Futures Money Team offers for Clarion residents living in Tower Hamlets include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step Change Debt Charity, offering telephone debt advice; • British Heart Foundation – offering a discount on furniture; • In-house Money Guidance service, which supports residents with a wide range of money issues including: budgeting; challenging bills; telephone and face-to-face energy advice; grants for household goods; preparing for debt advice; obtaining better deals; checking entitlements; a universal phone offer backed up by in-home support for residents in more vulnerable situations – particularly those affected by fuel poverty; proactive calls at key life events to anticipate problems before they escalate e.g. moving to universal credit, moving home, entering work.
10.5	Clarion Futures Digital Team offers an extensive programme of support to residents to help them get online safely and securely and learn to use the

	<p>internet as an everyday tool. Service offers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivering engaging quality digital skills training to groups in local areas through a combination of courses, workshops and accredited training; • Providing bespoke digital skills training on a one to one basis for people in their own homes when they are unable to get out and about; • Developing a network of more than 200 volunteer Digital Champions and providing quality placements to them on digital skills courses, in sheltered schemes, community centres and supporting people into work and self-employment and energy awareness. These skills enable volunteers to provide quality support to peers on a one to one basis; • Digital Grants of up to £5,000 are awarded to community partners who can support residents to get online in their local communities. • Seven volunteer Digital Champions are supporting our work at Eastside Youth and Community Centre • We are hosting MIND at Eastside from 4 February 2019 to 25 March 2019, every Monday; • We will be delivering an Online Safety with Parental Controls Workshop in April at the Bethnal Green Estate; • There is a weekly programme of activities at the Eastside centre including: Digital Skills and Job Club drop-ins.
11.0	Resident involvement
11.1	We have a dedicated Resident Involvement Team that works closely with our frontline teams to involve residents in improving the services we deliver. There is a range of ways to get involved including national, regional and local opportunities.
11.2	<i>Regional Scrutiny Committee:</i> The RSC has three members from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Each of the regional committees focuses on a different area of service to review in detail. At their February meeting our region's committee have selected to focus on the customer journey when contacting Clarion. As part of their review, they will look at performance, policy, spend time with staff and complete surveys of other residents. They'll also benchmark with other HAs. Once they've completed their review, they will submit a final report to the Housing Association Board (which contains resident members).
11.3	<i>Community Panel:</i> Following the merger of Old Ford Housing Association with Clarion Housing Association we have established a Community Panel. Whilst still in its early stages this Panel will focus on improving the community and has been awarded funding of £100k per year for the next two years. The Panel have decided to fund an apprenticeship post, with the aim of recruiting a local person, to support them with this community development work.
11.4	<i>Residents' Associations:</i> We work with 6 Residents' Associations in Tower Hamlets although not all of these are formally recognised. We value these relationships and are looking at ways that we can expand on the number of Residents' Associations in the borough.

11.5	<p><i>Winter Warmer visits:</i> During the colder months we trailed a new way of engaging with our residents. We knew that during the winter months many elderly residents have less contact with others, and sometimes don't have adequate heating, food or support. In December 2018 our team visited 18 residents over the age of 80 in the borough. We checked on their welfare and made referrals to support services we provide including energy advice and our handy person service.</p>
11.6	<p><i>Online engagement:</i> We are trailing ways of involving people outside of more traditional forums. We held a web chat last year where one of our fire safety experts was available to answer questions from residents on a block with combustible cladding. We're also holding another one in March for a block which is experiencing issues with crime and ASB.</p>
11.7	<p><i>Blocks Inspectors:</i> We're improving the way that we deliver estate services. Part of the changes we're making will involve inspectors being recruited in blocks who can give us their views on cleaning standards. Each block will be graded Gold, Silver or Bronze by a manager, and by a resident inspector where one is in place. If there's a discrepancy in the scores, a peer review will take place. Where a bronze score is given, an improvement plan will be triggered.</p>