

Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee

Agenda

Monday, 13 May 2024 6.30 p.m.
Council Chamber - Town Hall, Whitechapel

Members:

Chair: Councillor Abdul Mannan

Vice Chair: Councillor Shafi Ahmed

Councillor Musthak Ahmed, Councillor Saif Uddin Khaled, Councillor Marc Francis,
Councillor Asma Islam, Councillor James King and Councillor Kabir Ahmed

Co-opted Members:

Mahbub Anam ((Tenant representative)) and Susanna Kow ((Leaseholder representative))

Deputies:

[The quorum for this body is 3 voting Members]

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<http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk>



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Please note: Whilst the meeting is open to the public, the public seating in the meeting room for observers will be extremely limited due to the Covid 19 pandemic restrictions. You must contact the Democratic Services Officer to reserve a place, this will be allocated on a first come first served basis. No one will be admitted unless they have registered in advance.

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A Guide to Overview and Scrutiny

The Local Government Act 2000 established the overview and scrutiny function for every council, with the key roles of:

- Scrutinising decisions before or after they are made or implemented
- Proposing new policies and commenting on draft policies, and
- Ensuring customer satisfaction and value for money.

The aim is to make the decision-making process more transparent, accountable and inclusive, and improve services for people by being responsive to their needs.

In Tower Hamlets, the function is exercised by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC). The OSC considers issues from across the council and partnership remit. The Committee has 3 Sub-Committees which focus on health, housing and grants.

Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee

The Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee will undertake overview and scrutiny, pertaining to housing matters. This will include:

- (a) Reviewing and/or scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of the Council's housing functions;
- (b) Advising the Mayor, DCLG Commissioners or Cabinet of key issues/questions arising in relation to housing reports due to be considered by the Mayor, DCLG Commissioners or Cabinet;
- (c) Making reports and/or recommendations to the full Council and/or the Mayor, DCLG Commissioners or Cabinet in connection with the discharge of housing functions;
- (d) Delivering (c) by organising an annual work programme, drawing on the knowledge and priorities of the council, registered providers and other stakeholders, that will identify relevant topics or issues that can be properly scrutinised;
- (e) Holding service providers to account, where recent performance fails to meet the recognised standard, by looking at relevant evidence and make recommendations for service improvements;
- (f) Considering housing matters affecting the area or its inhabitants, including where these matters have been brought to the attention of the sub-committee by tenant and resident associations, or members of the general public.
- (g) The Sub-Committee will report annually to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on its work.

Public Engagement

Meetings of the sub committee are open to the public to attend, and a timetable for meeting dates and deadlines can be found on the council's website.

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee

Monday, 13 May 2024

6.30 p.m.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (PAGES 7 - 8)

Members are reminded to consider the categories of interest in the Code of Conduct for Members to determine whether they have an interest in any agenda item and any action they should take. For further details, please see the attached note from the Monitoring Officer.

Members are reminded to declare the nature of the interest and the agenda item it relates to. Please note that ultimately it's the Members' responsibility to declare any interests and to update their register of interest form as required by the Code.

If in doubt as to the nature of your interest, you are advised to seek advice prior to the meeting by contacting the Monitoring Officer or Democratic Services

Further Advice contact: Linda Walker, Interim Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer,
Tel: 0207 364 4348

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING(S) (PAGES 9 - 16)

To confirm as a correct record of the proceedings the unrestricted minutes of the meeting held on 29 February 2024.

3. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

TO FOLLOW

4. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1 Resident Feedback on Tower Hamlets Community Housing Performance

4.2 Social Landlords performance report quarter 3 2023/24 (Pages 17 - 38)

4.3 The Customer Journey for Housing Needs (Pages 39 - 58)

4 .4 Scrutiny Challenge Session Report and Recommendations Review (Pages 59 - 76)

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting of the Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee

Monday, 24 June 2024 at 6.30 p.m. to be held in Council Chamber - Town Hall, Whitechapel



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Agenda Item 1

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AT MEETINGS– NOTE FROM THE MONITORING OFFICER

This note is for guidance only. For further details please consult the Code of Conduct for Members at Part C, Section 31 of the Council's Constitution

(i) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI)

You have a DPI in any item of business on the agenda where it relates to the categories listed in **Appendix A** to this guidance. Please note that a DPI includes: (i) Your own relevant interests; (ii) Those of your spouse or civil partner; (iii) A person with whom the Member is living as husband/wife/civil partners. Other individuals, e.g. Children, siblings and flatmates do not need to be considered. Failure to disclose or register a DPI (within 28 days) is a criminal offence.

Members with a DPI, (unless granted a dispensation) must not seek to improperly influence the decision, must declare the nature of the interest and leave the meeting room (including the public gallery) during the consideration and decision on the item – unless exercising their right to address the Committee.

DPI Dispensations and Sensitive Interests. In certain circumstances, Members may make a request to the Monitoring Officer for a dispensation or for an interest to be treated as sensitive.

(ii) Non - DPI Interests that the Council has decided should be registered – (Non - DPIs)

You will have 'Non DPI Interest' in any item on the agenda, where it relates to (i) the offer of gifts or hospitality, (with an estimated value of at least £25) (ii) Council Appointments or nominations to bodies (iii) Membership of any body exercising a function of a public nature, a charitable purpose or aimed at influencing public opinion.

Members must declare the nature of the interest, but may stay in the meeting room and participate in the consideration of the matter and vote on it **unless:**

- A reasonable person would think that your interest is so significant that it would be likely to impair your judgement of the public interest. **If so, you must withdraw and take no part in the consideration or discussion of the matter.**

(iii) Declarations of Interests not included in the Register of Members' Interest.

Occasions may arise where a matter under consideration would, or would be likely to, **affect the wellbeing of you, your family, or close associate(s) more than it would anyone else living in the local area** but which is not required to be included in the Register of Members' Interests. In such matters, Members must consider the information set out in paragraph (ii) above regarding Non DPI - interests and apply the test, set out in this paragraph.

Guidance on Predetermination and Bias

Member's attention is drawn to the guidance on predetermination and bias, particularly the need to consider the merits of the case with an open mind, as set out in the Planning and Licensing Codes of Conduct, (Part C, Section 34 and 35 of the Constitution). For further advice on the possibility of bias or predetermination, you are advised to seek advice prior to the meeting.

Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act, 1992 - Declarations which restrict Members in Council Tax arrears, for at least a two months from voting

In such circumstances the member may not vote on any reports and motions with respect to the matter.

Further Advice contact: Janet Fasan, Acting Monitoring Officer, Tel: 0207 364 4800.

APPENDIX A: Definition of a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

(Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012, Reg 2 and Schedule)

Subject	Prescribed description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vacation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the relevant authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by the Member in carrying out duties as a member, or towards the election expenses of the Member. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract which is made between the relevant person (or a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest) and the relevant authority— (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the relevant authority.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the relevant authority for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to the Member's knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the relevant authority; and (b) the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest.
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where— (a) that body (to the Member's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the relevant authority; and (b) either— (i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE HOUSING & REGENERATION SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.32 P.M. ON THURSDAY, 29 FEBRUARY 2024

COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL, WHITECHAPEL

Members Present:

Councillor Abdul Mannan - (Chair)

Councillor Shafi Ahmed

Councillor Musthak Ahmed

Councillor Marc Francis

Councillor Asma Islam

Councillor Bodrul Choudhury

Co-opted Members Present:

Mahbub Anam - (Tenant representative)

Susanna Kow - (Leaseholder representative)

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Kabir Ahmed - (Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding)

Officers Present:

Paul Patterson – (Interim Corporate Director Housing And Regeneration)

Gulam Hussain – (Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer)

Justina Bridgeman – (Democratic Services Officer (Committee))

Michael Killeen - (Director, Asset Management)

Darren Cruise - (Head of Asset & Compliance)

Invited Guests:

Andrea Baker - (Chair of Tower Hamlets Housing Forum (THHF))

- Jackie King - (Assistant Director of Neighbourhoods, Swan Housing)
- Ian Haworth - (Director of Communities & Home Ownership, Swan Housing)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests, however, Councillor Shafi Ahmed declared he is a Tower Hamlets Homes Leaseholder.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING(S)

The minutes of the Sub Committee meeting held on 14 December 2023 were approved as a correct record of proceedings.

Amendment

Susanna Kow, Leasehold representative requested the minutes reflect her apologies given for 14 December meeting.

Chairs Update

- The Chair informed sub-committee members that a response by the Chief Executive had been received to state that no additional resources can be provided for increasing Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-committee meetings, although the subject will be reviewed twice yearly. The key issues will continue to be discussed, in particular the acquisition of Tower Hamlets Homes (THH) and the Registered Providers (RP) performance. A HRSSC RP Performance Review will take place on 26 March 2024 and members were urged to attend.

Councillor Marc Francis and Councillor Asma Islam voiced disappointment with the decision not to increase meetings and lack of feedback and performance data in regards to the Housing Options service, insourcing of Tower Hamlets Homes and PR performance. The Chair will request an update on Housing Options.

- Sub-committee members and attendees were reminded not to make political statements, to focus on scrutinising issues and not interrupt other speakers. All statements must go through the Chair.

RESOLVED that;

1. The Chair will request an update on the Housing Options service.

3. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Paul Burgess, Strategy and Policy Officer, updated sub-committee members on the following;

- THH Major Works Programme – 27 April 2023 meeting. A comprehensive report on THH Major Works Programme (with details on response times and general performance) to be included in the HRSSC work programme for 19th October meeting. This item will be brought back in the first meeting of the municipal year in June.
- Estates ASB Report — 27 April 2023 meeting. Details still pending.
- THH In-House Arrangements Review – 19 October 2023 meeting: A resident engagement strategy is still in development. This item will be added to the HRSSC work programme for the municipal year once details are complete.
- Housing Emergency Taskforce - 14 December meeting. A briefing note was circulated to members on 15 February 2024. All follow up questions from sub-committee members will be provided by the service in due course.

Andrea Baker, Chair of Tower Hamlets Housing Forum (THHF), informed members that the legal completion for the Tower Hamlets Community Housing (THCH) and Poplar Harca merger has been delayed until July or August. The Regulator and lenders are unable to disclose further details at this time due to ongoing discussions between the Regulator and lenders. Members discussed bringing the item back, as residents have expressed concerns. Afazul Hoque, Head of Corporate Strategy & Communities, stated that the work programme is at full capacity, however the Chair stated that it will be considered for the next meeting if there is sufficient availability.

RESOLVED that;

1. The Chair will consider resuming the THCH and Poplar Harca discussion to the next meeting if there is sufficient availability.

4. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1 Housing and Climate Emergency

Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding, introduced the report and Paul Patterson, Corporate Director of Housing & Regeneration, Michael Killeen, Director of Asset Management, and Darren Cruise, Head of Asset & Compliance, presented details on how the council will retrofit housing to meet climate net zero targets.

Councillor Kabir Ahmed discussed how the council's capital investment programme will ensure effective building safety and compliance, as the borough has a high number of estate buildings requiring substantial fire safety improvements due to the age and height of some buildings, particularly ones over 18 metres. Over the next five years the 'Fabric First' approach will be utilised in retro fitting properties, to ensure energy efficiency and remediation of outdated communal heating systems and damp and mould issues.

The sub-committee were informed that around £85 million will be invested incrementally with £23 million for the next financial year, £28 million for 2025 to 2026 and £34 million for 2026 to 2027. Funding opportunities are also being considered for capital investment as well as heating controls and heat network to reduce carbon emissions. Borough residents will also be advised on ways to improve energy consumption within the home.

Paul Patterson noted that THH major works programme focused on energy efficiency improvements, using the fabric first approach. Further collaboration with the Greater London Authority (GLA) and London Councils regarding fire safety, compliance and damp and mould remediations and the climate programme will continue. The all-encompassing housing strategy is in line with HRA's financial business plan.

Further to questions from the sub-committee, Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Paul Patterson and Gulam Hussain, Head of Regulatory Assurance;

- Clarified that the Risk Team are currently identifying properties for damp, mould and energy efficiency improvements within existing heating systems using a risk assessment matrix. Once assessments have concluded, further delivery programs will be implemented in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- Explained that a holistic approach will be taken with reducing carbon emissions and further opportunities will be sourced for additional funds. There are plans to demonstrate evidence of carbon reduction with surveys on heating systems, as well as remediation works on windows and roofs, which can be measured and submitted to the 'Better Homes' programme.
- Confirmed that adhering to the regulations is a priority, although reaching the net zero target by 2045 is a council aspiration, since other boroughs cannot achieve those objectives.
- Explained the long-term plans for replacing heat networks and energy efficiency by adhering to the Publicly Available Specification (PAS) 2035 for retrofitting. There are opportunities for heat zoning in designated areas, to provide low carbon emission options, as the borough has several data centres.
- Observed that some of the replacement heating systems are complex and engaging with residents on how to use them is crucial so they are

aware of how they can reduce energy consumption. The installations must be user friendly.

- Clarified that contracts for the capital investment programme are currently up for renewal. A series of surveys are ongoing to analyse the integrity of the buildings prior to sourcing products and contractors required for specialist works.

RESOLVED that;

1. Details on further delivery programs and costings to be brought back to the sub-committee once assessments have concluded.
2. The report be noted.

4.2 Swan Housing Presentation

Ian Haworth, Director of Communities and Home Ownership, and Jackie King, Assistant Director of Neighbourhoods at Swan Housing gave an update on Polydamas Close, after a series of events led to the gas being cut off without notice due to safety concerns. The sub-committee were informed that Swan Housing will shortly merge with Sanctuary Housing. Members were informed that remediation work on heating and communal areas were completed in April 2023, although cladding issues are still being addressed.

Following the incident, a 360 report was conducted, and a series of measures are now in place; primarily having staff on site, the availability of emergency temporary accommodation, frontline housing teams and technical experts on hand. Customer engagement took place and residents requested that one person lead the project in an emergencies going forward, which is now standard practice. Checks on similar gas installations in other properties were conducted to ensure the incident was not repeated, and that planned operations are more focused on customer satisfaction.

Further to questions from the sub-committee, Jackie King & Ian Haworth;

- Confirmed that lessons have been learnt from the incident and have been implemented on other schemes. A focus to allow residents to remain in their homes as much as possible has now been adopted. It was acknowledged that residents require more communication.
- Clarified that Swan Housing has approximately 12,000 properties including leaseholds with Tower Hamlets, their second largest local authority. Full details on exact leasehold property figures will be submitted for review. Sanctuary have around 110,000 properties in both England and Scotland and is the third largest provider in the country. All Swan staff will stay once the merger is complete to give continuity of service.

- Explained the faulty lift issue was caused by criminal damage and the repair delay was due to the parts not being manufactured in this country. New parts were sourced from abroad, but were later stolen, which further exacerbated the delay. Sanctuary have a larger purchasing ability and compliance team than Swan and are currently dealing with all lift repairs. The lift in Milo House has been restored to working order.
- Clarified that Sanctuary will achieve continuity in service by utilising their Regional Directors to ensure service delivery and staff currently within Swan Housing who have local expertise.

After the presentation, Sub-committee members requested Ian Haworth and Jackie King to return with updates within six months.

RESOLVED that;

1. Details on Swan Housing leasehold property figures to be brought back to the sub-committee for review.
2. Swan / Sanctuary to update the Sub-committee within six months.
3. The presentation be noted.

4.3 Social Housing Regulation Act 2023

Councillor Kabir Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding presented details of the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 and the councils response. A Briefing paper was circulated to Members prior to the meeting. Details of the key aspects of the Act, associated regulatory changes and a series of improvement projects including health and safety measures, external scrutiny and resident engagement were noted.

Paul Patterson informed members that consultants have been appointed to ensure that the council is adequately prepared with an implementation plan for the new regulations and upcoming inspections, scheduled to commence on 01 April 2024. This work initially began with the insourcing of Tower Hamlets Homes.

Further to questions from the sub-committee, Paul Patterson, Gulam Hussain and Darren Cruise;

- Clarified that there will be opportunities for residents who are not already engaged in existing forums such as Tenant & Resident Associations (TRA's) to participate, further maximising the diversity of tenant views. Consideration will be given to include TRA members, as it was acknowledged that those members also come from diverse backgrounds and wish to participate in the engagement process,

- Confirmed that My THH system is under major renovation to ensure a smoother process with repairs appointment bookings for residents. This process will take a few months as contract integration is necessary.
- Explained that gas contractors who provide boilers will also identify any damp and mould within properties and contact the Risk Team to fully investigate for remediation which will include energy efficiency. If residents require decanting for extensive projects, arrangements will be made, as a budget is available.
- Confirmed that contract performance will be at the forefront and accountability will be incorporated in the contracts to ensure works are completed to a high standard. Financial penalties are also included within contracts.
- Noted that there are various reasons why leasehold service charges increase, such as higher cost of energy prices and inflation. A detailed breakdown of leasehold service charges from estate landlords will be submitted for review.

RESOLVED that;

1. Regular updates on the implementation plan to be circulated to the sub-committee for review outside of the meeting.
2. A detailed breakdown on leasehold service charges from estate landlords to be presented to the sub-committee for review outside of the meeting.
3. The presentation be noted.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Paul Burgess, Strategy and Policy Officer, reminded members that A HRSSC RP Performance Review will be held on 26 March 2024 and members were informed of the invitations and urged to attend. The Chair also emphasized attendance.

Councillor Marc Francis requested details of the terms of reference for the Service Improvement Group on Homelessness, which is a task and finishing group and outcome information.


RESOLVED that;

1. The terms of reference for the Service Improvement Group on Homelessness and the outcome of the task and finishing group to be circulated to sub-committee members by the Director of Housing for consideration.

The meeting ended at 8.37 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Abdul Mannan

Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee

<p>Non-Executive Report of the:</p> <p>Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee</p> <p>13th May 2024</p>	 <p>TOWER HAMLETS</p>
<p>Report of. Paul Patterson Interim Corporate Director Housing and Regeneration</p>	<p>Classification: Unrestricted</p>
<p>Social Housing Landlords Performance Report – Quarter 3 2023</p>	

Originating Officer(s)	Mubin Choudhury – Performance Improvement Analyst (Strategy, Policy and Improvement)
Wards affected	All wards

Executive Summary

Social Landlords in the borough produce quarterly performance data for key customer facing performance indicators subsequently, tenants and residents can be assured they are delivering effective and customer focused services. The performance report attached at **Appendix 1** provides performance data for quarter three of the Social Landlords with homes in the borough. The KPIs are now in line with the Housing Regulators' Tenant Satisfaction Measures, this was done to ensure the RPs can report on the measures effectively whilst ensuring there is synergy between the borough's requests and those of the Housing Regulator.

Recommendations:

The Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee is recommended to:

To review and note progress in the performance outturns achieved by individual Social Landlords and the overall performance trend.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 The Committee Chair has requested Registered Provider (RP) Social Landlord performance twice a year during quarter two and end of year period of quarter four. This is to oversee trends specific to frontline delivery of social housing services such as repair response times and complaint handing to name a few. moreover, this allows the scrutiny group to discuss other salient matters during the sessions which otherwise would be time constrained.

2. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 Members review of Social Landlord performance to remain exclusively with the Cabinet Member for Housing.

3. **DETAILS OF THE REPORT**

- 3.1 Through the Tower Hamlets Housing Forum (THHF), the Council works with key RPs who manage social rented stock in the borough. Performance information is presented to the Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing along with the Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee for information purposes.
- 3.2 The agreed Performance Management Framework is a set of key performance indicators (KPI's). Quarterly performance information is presented to the Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing and the Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee. Good performance from RPs supports the Council in ensuring the borough is one where residents are proud to live.
- 3.3 Each RP has their own governance arrangements for the scrutiny of performance. Targets are set and scrutinised by their respective RP Boards.
- 3.4 Performance for the third quarter is listed in **Appendix 1**. The ability and commitment to supply borough-specific statistics is shared by all members of the Tower Hamlets Housing Forum and majority stock holding RPs. In addition, three landlords solely operate and manage housing stock in Tower Hamlets.
- 3.5 The KPIs currently compiled and authorised by THHF (Tower Hamlets Housing Forum) are shown in the table below and are aligned to metrics with housing providers are required to report to the Housing Regulator on an annual basis. THHF members unanimously decided as of April 2023, the group will adopt the following indicators in place of the preceding 17 KPIs. Additionally Housing Forum members consented to supply borough specific data and guarantee that stock owned in a different location was excluded from the LBTH statistical returns.

<u>Indicator</u>	<u>Format captured</u>
Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard	%
Non-emergency repairs completed within target timescale	%
Emergency repairs completed within target timescale	%
Homes that have had necessary Gas safety checks	%
Homes that have had necessary fire risk assessments	%
Homes that have had necessary asbestos management surveys	%

Homes that have had all necessary water checks	%
Homes that have had necessary lift checks	%
Number of complaints received	Number
Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales	Number
Anti-social Behaviour cases	Number
Average Re-let time in days (standard Re-lets)	Days
Average Re-let time in days (major works Re-lets)	Days
Number of units vacant but unavailable for letting at period end	Number

- 3.6** RPs work to enhance every facet of the provision of services. Numerous factors influence performance, not all of which are under the RP's control. For instance, repair timeframes are negatively impacted by contractor capacity and the sparsity of specific parts.
- 3.7** While the sector is gradually adjusting to the TSM reporting procedures, forum members are undergoing an experimental phase of data collection in advance of their first annual submission to the Housing Regulator (published in the autumn of 2024).
- 3.8** Tower Hamlets Homes have now come in-house and have now been listed in this report as 'Tower Hamlets Council'.

Please see below quarter 3 observations for the committee's oversight.

4. Quarter 3 items for observation

Decent Homes and Repairs

4.1 Decent home standards.

Peabody Housing Association were unable to provide complete details for decent-homes and safety checks pertaining to Tower Hamlets stock specifically and have given company-wide details in its place. This is marked with an asterisk in the appendix where this is the case.

All homes managed by One Housing Riverside, Spitalfields, Poplar HARCA, Gateway and Providence Row meet the decent homes standard, making a total of five RPs with a non-decency rate of 0%. This is an improvement from last quarter where only Poplar HARCA, providence Row and Spitalfields met the standard, 3 in total. There has been an improvement seen in Eastend Homes, Swan and Clarion's non-decency numbers in comparison to previous quarter. There has been a slight increase in non-decency numbers for Notting Hill Genesis going from 0.1% non-decent in quarter 2 to 0.26% in quarter 3. To give context to the 14.13% non-decency rate given by Tower Hamlets

Council, in 2012 the level of non-decency across Tower Hamlets housing stock was 66%. Following on from the Grenfell fire, the funding from the capital programme has gone in large part to ensuring fire safety conditions are being met. Whilst they are still aiming to carry out some works each year that will tackle non decency, the bulk of the current programme is focused on building and fire safety as well as essential renewal of M&E equipment i.e. new boilers, lifts etc. This means that at current funding levels non decency will inevitably increase over the next few years.

4.2 Number of complaints received.

London & Quadrant received the fewest complaints per 100 properties, followed by Notting Hill Genesis and Clarion who all achieved under 1 complaint per 100 properties. The number of complaints per 100 properties was similar for all RPs. The only outlier to receive more than 4 complaints per 100 properties was Swan Housing with 6.83 complaints. Swan have outlined that the high figure was due to 29 complaints related to one block where the lift was out of service.

4.3 Emergency and non-emergency repairs.

In quarter 3, Peabody Housing had the lowest percentage of emergency repairs completed within the allotted period (44.6%), followed by One Housing (77.93%), Tower Hamlets Council (75.6%), and Gateway Housing (82.05%). All other RPs (8) achieved over 90%, with 6 of the 8 achieving over 98.8%.

Four RPs achieved over 92% repairs on time. All other RPs completed over 75% of non-emergency repairs within the target timeframe in quarter 3, however, failed to get over 90% of non-emergency repairs complete on time. A contributing factor mentioned by Tower Hamlets Council could be some severe weather conditions that were experienced in the borough during this period.

Relets/ Voids and vacant units.

4.4 Standard Relets time/s.

London and Quadrant had the highest figure with 287 days for average relet time with Clarion also achieving a lengthy time for 1179 days for standard relets for quarter 3. London & Quadrant and Clarion also had similar figures in quarter 1 and quarter 2.

4.5 Major works

L&Q had the highest figure (316 days). All other RPs were under 126 days.

4.6 Vacant units

Tower Hamlets Council has the highest number of vacant units (111) in quarter 3, but also has the largest stock in the borough. Tower Hamlets reported that the figure reported here includes blocks being decanted, undergoing major works or block strengthening works as well as properties being used as temporary respite accommodation. One Housing has the second highest number of vacant units (58). 7 RPs have fewer than 10 vacant units in the borough.

Safety Checks.

4.7 Water Checks

L&Q did not submit any data for quarter 3. The landlord commented saying conducting the checks was challenging and they were not required by law to provide the information to the council. According to RPs in general, it can be challenging to enter properties frequently enough to carry out inspections as tenants may repeatedly decline admission or fail to remain home for scheduled site visits. Ten of the 12 RPs recorded 100% of homes have had all water checks, with Peabody with 99.8% and Tower Hamlets Council at 71.03%. In the commentary, Tower Hamlets mentioned that Performance here is reported against our policy of re-inspecting on a 3-yearly frequency. The current re-assessment programme runs until November 2024. The TSM checks are supplemented by other monthly and annual water safety checks.

4.8 Lift checks.

Five of the 12 RPs reported that 100% of lifts have had all necessary safety checks in quarter 3. 4 other RPs achieved over 94%. One Housing (89.7%), Gateway (89.19%) and Tower Hamlets Council (67.14) were the only exception to this. Within the commentary Tower Hamlets Council explained they carry out their own monthly inspections of all their lifts. The TSM relates to LOLER regulations with inspections carried out on LBTH's behalf by insurance inspection contractors, and until recently not monitored. Resources have now been identified to track and monitor the LOLER inspections. The figure reported here is as of 30th September 2023 as the LOLER regulations stipulate each lift should receive 2 inspections a year.

4.9 Fire Safety Risk Assessments

Nine RPs succeeded in reaching the goal of 100%, while Clarion, Gateway and Peabody achieved over 99.4%. Tower Hamlets Council achieved 93.6% but mentioned that 18 blocks had been inspected but they had not received the finalised reports at the time of reporting.

4.10 Gas checks

Six RPs reached the target of 100% compliance, while six others reached over 99% compliance. Only One Housing achieved below this (98.4%)

4.11 ASB cases

All RPs had fewer than 2 ASB cases per 100 properties. Tower Hamlets Council and Poplar HARCA had the most with 1.94 cases per 100. Eastend Homes (0.09) and Spitalfields (0.12) had the fewest.

5. Areas of progression

5.1 Decent homes

One Housing Riverside achieved a decent- homes rate of 100% This is an improvement from last quarter where 0.5% of their stock was still non-decent.

5.2 Emergency repairs

Notting Hill Genesis went from 96% of emergency repairs completed on time in quarter 2 to 100% in quarter 3. Eastend Homes went from 96% to 98.95%.

5.3 Non-emergency repairs

Poplar HARCA went from 98% to 99.25% of non-emergency repairs completed within the target timeframe.

5.4 Safety checks

Swan Housing went from 99% in quarter 2 to 100% in quarter 3 for both gas and water checks completed. Clarion went from 98% in asbestos checks to 100% and 99% in water checks to 100% in quarter 3.

Gateway also improved their figures for asbestos checks going from 99% compliance in quarter 2 to 100% compliance in quarter 3. One Housing went from 99% compliance in quarter 2 to 100% compliance in quarter 3 for fire safety checks.

5.5 Re-let times for standard re-lets and major works.

For major work re-let's, Tower Hamlets Community Housing were able to reduce the average number of days it takes to re-let a property by 20 days, going from an average on 53 days in quarter 2 to an average of 33 days in quarter 3.

For standard re-lets Gateway managed to reduce the average number of days by 5, going from 74 days in quarter 2 to 69 days in quarter 3.

Overall, there has been a decrease in the average waiting time for standard re-lets and major work re-lets across all RPs. From 67 days to 60 days for standard re-lets and from 97 days to 80 days for major work re-lets.

6. General updates

6.1 The Tenant Satisfaction Measures requires all RPs of social housing to collect and report annually on their performance on a core set of defined measures to provide tenants with greater transparency about their landlord's performance. The data provided by the RPs must meet the methodology set by the regulator and be one submission for all stock rather than be broken down by borough. Currently RPs are in the process of collating the measures for their first submission to the regulator who will thereon publish the results in Autumn 2024. The THHF partners will submit data as shown in the above indicator table (3.5) for the interim to the council and scrutiny board.

6.2 As the current Asset Management subgroup Chair leaves her position at One Housing, the subgroup will be seeking to appoint a new chair to lead the group for the forthcoming year.

7 Equalities implications

7.1 There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report. The measuring tools used to capture feedback such as texts survey's phone calls

are carried out to all residents irrespective of their age, gender, status, social, economic, and ethnic background.

8 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:

- Best Value Implications,
- Environmental (including air quality),
- Risk Management,
- Crime Reduction,
- Safeguarding.

8.2 There are no direct Best Value implications arising from these reports, although if performance is further improved for performance indicators 1, 2 and 3 which relate to repairs, this may lead to improvements in working practices that will in turn improve efficiency and potentially reduce costs for Social Landlords.

8.3 Another indirect Best Value Implication is a landlord's ability to ensure its general needs income target (rent collection) is achieved.

8.4 The percentage of properties with a valid gas safety certificate directly relates to health and safety risks to residents. It is important that statutory compliance of 100% is achieved, and that landlord performance in this area shows continued improvements.

8.5 The percentage of tall buildings (over 18m) owned RPs that have an up-to-date Fire Risk Assessments (FRA) in place also has a direct health and safety impact. It is a statutory requirement to ensure an FRA has been completed and is up to date.

8.6 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the report or recommendations.

9. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

9.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report which provides an update to the Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee on the performance of various providers of social housing (Social Landlords) that operate within the borough, including the Council's own housing stock.

10 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

10.1 This report is recommending that the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee review the performance of individual Social Landlords during quarter 3 of 2022-2023.

10.2 Regeneration agency Homes England and the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) focus their regulatory activity on governance, financial viability, and financial value for money as the basis for robust economic regulation. The objectives of the social housing regulator are set out in the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008.

10.3 The regulatory framework for social housing in England from the 1st of April 2005 is made up of: Regulatory requirements (i.e., what Social Landlords need to comply with); Codes of practice; and Regulatory guidance. There are nine (9) categories of regulatory requirements, and these are:

1. Regulatory standards – Economic (i.e., Governance and Financial Viability Standard; Value for Money Standard; and Rent Standard)
2. Regulatory standards – Consumer (i.e., Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard; Home Standard; Tenancy Standard; and Neighbourhood and Community Standard)
3. Registration requirements
4. De-registration requirements
5. Information submission requirements
6. The accounting direction for social housing in England from April 2012
7. Disposal Proceeds Fund requirements.
8. Requirement to obtain regulator's consent to disposals.
9. Requirement to obtain regulator's consent to changes to constitutions.

10.4 In addition to RSH regulation, there is a Performance Management Framework ('PMF') agreed with the Council which also reviews the performance of the Social Landlords in key customer facing areas. These are monitored cumulatively every three months against 8 key areas that are important to residents. This has a direct bearing on the Council's priority to ensure that Social Landlords are delivering effective services to their residents who are also, at the same time, residents in the local authority area. This provides re-assurance for the Council that the main Social Landlords in the Borough are delivering effective services to their residents.

10.5 The Council has no power to act against any Social Landlord (other than THH which it monitors already) but one of its Community Plan aspirations is for Tower Hamlets to be a place where people live in a quality affordable housing with a commitment to ensuring that more and better-quality homes are provided for the community. Social landlords (including local authorities) are regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing. The Regulator sets the standards which providers of social housing must meet. The regulatory framework includes regulatory requirements; codes of practice in relation to certain standards and regulatory guidance in relation to the requirements and how they will be regulated. The Regulator has enforcement powers in relation

to consumer and economic standards; can carry out surveys and inspections of properties and can require a provider to prepare a performance improvement plan if certain conditions are not met or will not be met if no action is taken. The Regulator can also issue enforcement notices if a standard has been breached. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 has also introduced new provisions to strengthen the respective roles of the Regulator and the Housing Ombudsman and improve the relationship between these bodies to ensure a more joined up approach to regulation and the handling of complaints.

- 10.6** The review of the Social Landlords performance though not a legal requirement fits in with the above Community Plan objective and the regulatory standards as stated above. The standards require Social Landlords to co-operate with relevant partners to help promote social, environmental, and economic wellbeing in the area where they own properties.
- 10.7** The review of housing matters affecting the area or the inhabitants in the borough fall within remit of the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee and are accordingly authorised by the Council's Constitution.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- None

Appendices

- Quarter 3 2023/4 Register Provider Performance Detail

Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)

List of "Background Papers" used in the preparation of this report.

- None
- **Officer contact details for documents:** Mubin Choudhury – Performance Improvement Analyst (Strategy, Policy and Improvement)

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HRSSC 13TH May Q3 data 2023/24 Registered Provider Performance detail

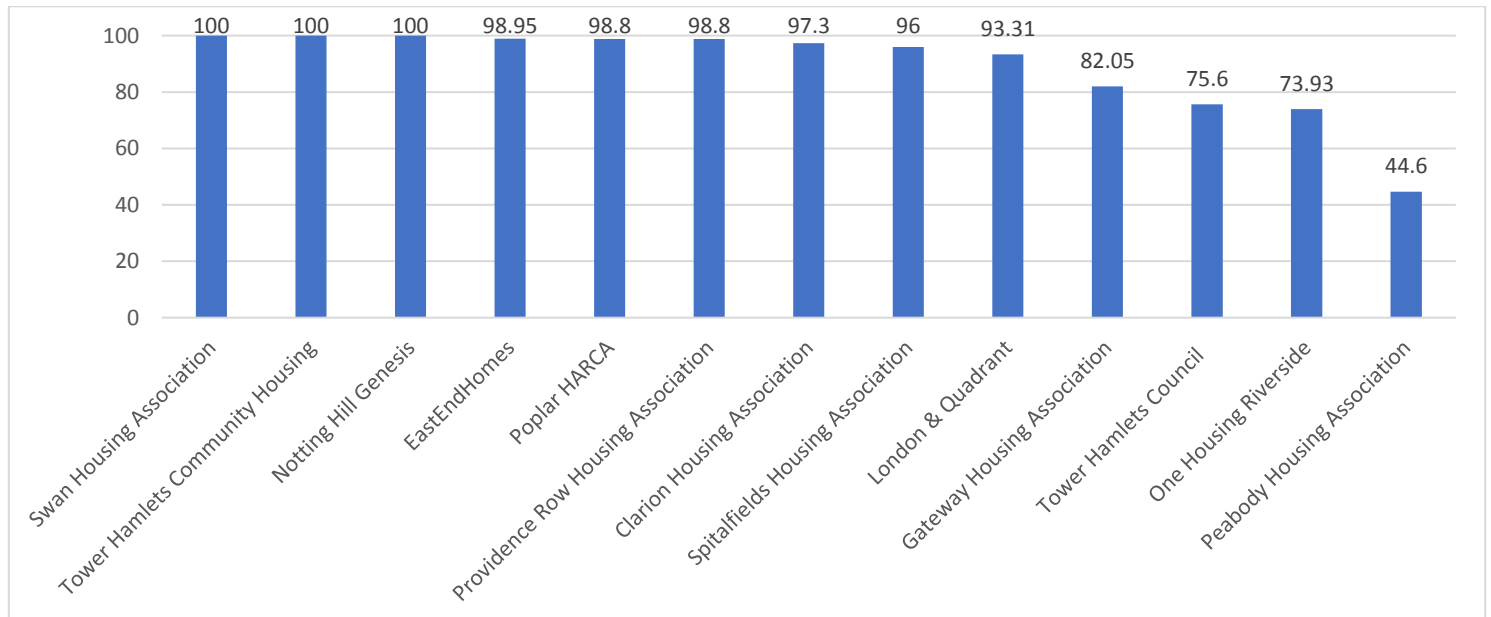
Stock and Repairs

1. % of homes that do not meet the decent-homes standard

Registered Provider	% of homes
One Housing Riverside	0.00
Spitalfields Housing Association	0.00
Poplar HARCA	0.00
Gateway Housing Association	0.00
Providence Row Housing Association	0.00
Peabody Housing Association	*0.05
Clarion Housing Association	0.17
London & Quadrant	0.20
Notting Hill Genesis	0.26
Swan Housing Association	0.30
Tower Hamlets Community Housing	2.00
EastEnd Homes	4.44
Tower Hamlets Council	14.13

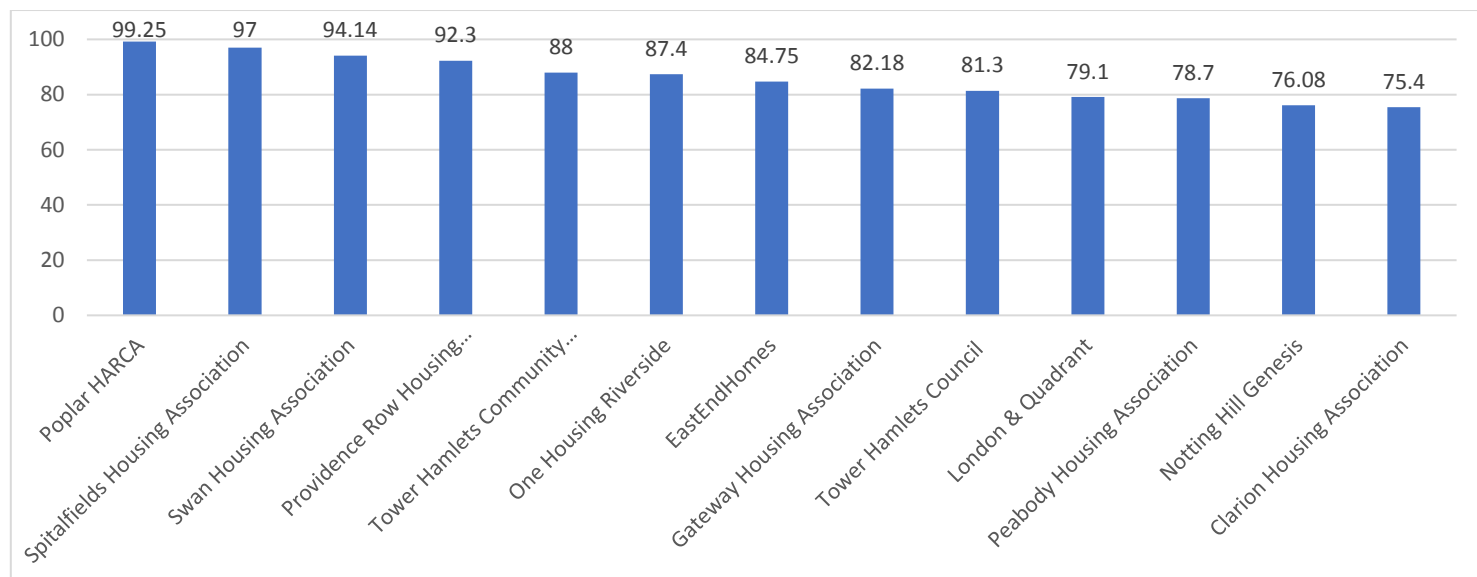
*Company wide data, not specific to Tower Hamlets

1. % of emergency repairs completed within target timescale



2. % of non-emergency repairs completed within target timescale

Targets per organisation will differ according to their own response target time frames. Furthermore, predominantly majority of the repairs completed are **making safe** thereon, following up with additional repair works as required.



Stock and Repairs: Additional comments.

Registered Provider
Notting Hill Genesis
Decent Homes: 5 homes in Tower Hamlets are non-decent. I do not have the figures to submit the repairs information yet. I will submit this separately when received.
Providence Row Housing Association
Q3 total LBTH stock: One of our supported services was decommissioned and decanted at the end of Quarter 2. Our current stock figure for supported units has been adjusted to account for this. There is no change to our general needs stock figure.
Peabody Housing Association.
The data provided was the number of emergency repairs that were completed to our own work order target dates. This often reflects how long follow-up works took to complete, rather than if we attended and made safe within 4 hours, which we do in the majority of cases.
Swan Housing Association
Monthly performance meetings remain in place to review all repairs data

Tower Hamlets Council

Decent Homes:

In 2012 the level of non-decency across Tower Hamlets housing stock was 66% which provides useful context for the current figure of 14%. Since 2017 the focus of our capital programme has been on fire safety as you may expect following the Grenfell Tower fire. This has meant prioritising safety works to homes at the expense of non-fire related works such as new kitchens, bathrooms, windows etc all of which influence the decency calculation.

We are currently reviewing our capital programme for the next 5 years and whilst we are still aiming to carry out some works each year that will tackle non decency, the bulk of our programme is focused on building and fire safety as well as essential renewal of M&E equipment i.e. new boilers, lifts etc. This means that at current funding levels non decency will inevitably increase over the next few years.

Repairs in target:

We generally report mid- 90% performance on emergencies repairs and mid to high-80% for non-emergency repairs; this allows for small extensions of time agreed with the contractor. The TSM requires performance to be calculated from when the tenant reports the repair to when it is completed compared to the published target(s) regardless of extenuating circumstances. Performance in Q3 has been impacted by some severe weather conditions and a number of block boiler outages.

Safety Checks

3. % of homes that have had all necessary gas safety checks

The vast majority if not all properties will be **100% compliant** however, not **100% certified**. Predominantly due to lack of property access. Thereon, the RP commences legal enforcement proceedings thus consequently causing delays in the entire process.

Registered Provider	% of homes
London & Quadrant	100
Swan Housing Association	100
Spitalfields Housing Association	100
EastEnd Homes	100
Gateway Housing Association	100
Notting Hill Genesis	100
Poplar HARCA	99.92
Tower Hamlets Community Housing	99.9
Tower Hamlets Council	99.77
Clarion Housing Association	99.77
Providence Row Housing Association	99.6
Peabody Housing Association	*99.2
One Housing Riverside	98.4

*Company wide data, not specific to Tower Hamlets

4. % of homes that have had all necessary fire risk assessments

Registered Provider	% of homes
Spitalfields Housing Association	100
Poplar HARCA	100
Tower Hamlets Community Housing	100
EastEnd Homes	100
Providence Row Housing Association	100
London & Quadrant	100
Swan Housing Association	100
Notting Hill Genesis	100
One Housing Riverside	100
Clarion Housing Association	99.64
Gateway Housing Association	99.53
Peabody Housing Association	*99.4
Tower Hamlets Council	93.6

*Company wide data, not specific to Tower Hamlets

5. % of homes in buildings that have had all necessary asbestos management surveys or re-inspections

Registered Provider	% of homes
Providence Row Housing Association	100
Clarion Housing Association	100
Swan Housing Association	100
EastEnd Homes	100
Poplar HARCA	100
Gateway Housing Association	100
Spitalfields Housing Association	100
Notting Hill Genesis	100
Tower Hamlets Community Housing	100
One Housing Riverside	100
Peabody Housing Association	*99.8
Tower Hamlets Council	98.28

*Company wide data, not specific to Tower Hamlets

6. % of homes that have had all necessary water checks (legionella)

Registered Provider	% of homes
Providence Row Housing Association	100
Clarion Housing Association	100
Swan Housing Association	100
EastEndHomes	100
Poplar HARCA	100
Gateway Housing Association	100
Spitalfields Housing Association	100
Notting Hill Genesis	100
Tower Hamlets Community Housing	100
One Housing Riverside	100
Peabody Housing Association	*99.8
Tower Hamlets Council	71.03

*Company wide data, not specific to Tower Hamlets

7. % of homes in buildings where the communal passenger lifts have had all the necessary safety checks

Registered Provider	% of homes
Providence Row Housing Association	100
Tower Hamlets Community Housing	100
Spitalfields Housing Association	100
Notting Hill Genesis	100
Clarion Housing Association	100
Peabody Housing Association	98.7
EastEndHomes	*98.67
Swan Housing Association	96.53
Poplar HARCA	94.29
One Housing Riverside	89.7
Gateway Housing Association	89.19
Tower Hamlets Council	67.14

*Company wide data, not specific to Tower Hamlets

Safety checks: Additional comments

Registered Provider
Clarion Housing Association
Figures for the end of December 23 reporting.
EastEndHomes
The six-monthly lift insurance inspection at one block was two weeks overdue at the end of quarter three. However, the monthly contractor servicing/ repair visits were all up to date.
London & Quadrant
Asbestos, water, and lift safety checks are difficult to collate, we don't have any legal obligation to provide this information.

Providence Row Housing Association

% of homes the with necessary gas safety checks: the figure continues to reflect that one unit was outside of timescale at the end of Quarter 3. It relates to the ongoing issue with access to the flat which were detailed in the Quarter 2 submission

Swan Housing Association

All lift safety checks are programmed in

Tower Hamlets Community Housing

Gas:

1 x LGSR outstanding

Tower Hamlets Council

Gas:

Adequate evidence of compliance had not been received for two communal boilers when this result was calculated.

FRAs:

18 blocks had been inspected but we had not received the finalised reports at the time of reporting. In addition, we await FRA reports for 3 new blocks.

Water:

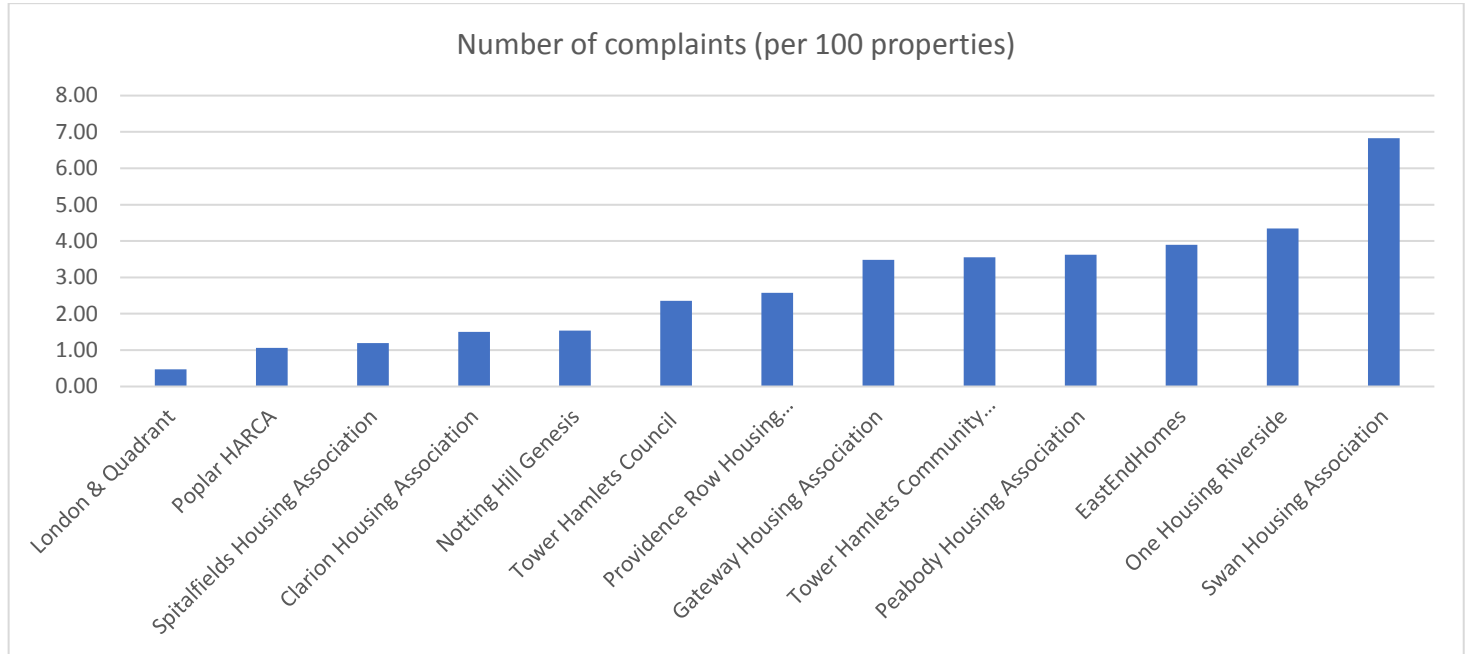
There is no statutory frequency for these checks just good practice. Performance here is reported against our policy of re-inspecting on a 3-yearly frequency. The current re-assessment programme runs until November 2024. The TSM checks are supplemented by other monthly and annual water safety checks.

Lifts:

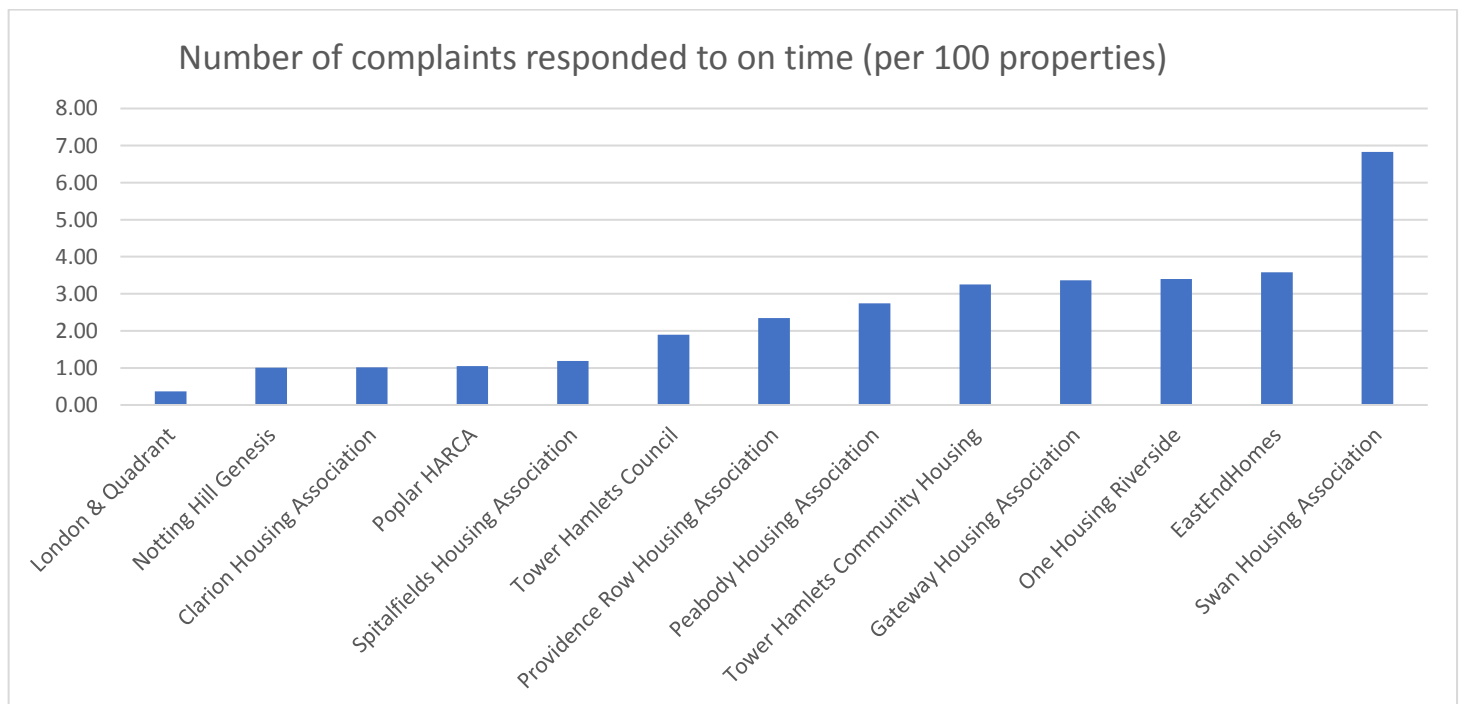
We carry out our own monthly inspections of all our lifts. The TSM relates to LOLER regulations with inspections carried out on LBTH's behalf by insurance inspection contractors, until recently not monitored. Resources have now been identified to track and monitor the LOLER inspections. The figure reported here is as at 30 September 2023 as the LOLER regulations stipulate each lift should receive 2 inspections a year.

Complaints and Anti-social behaviour

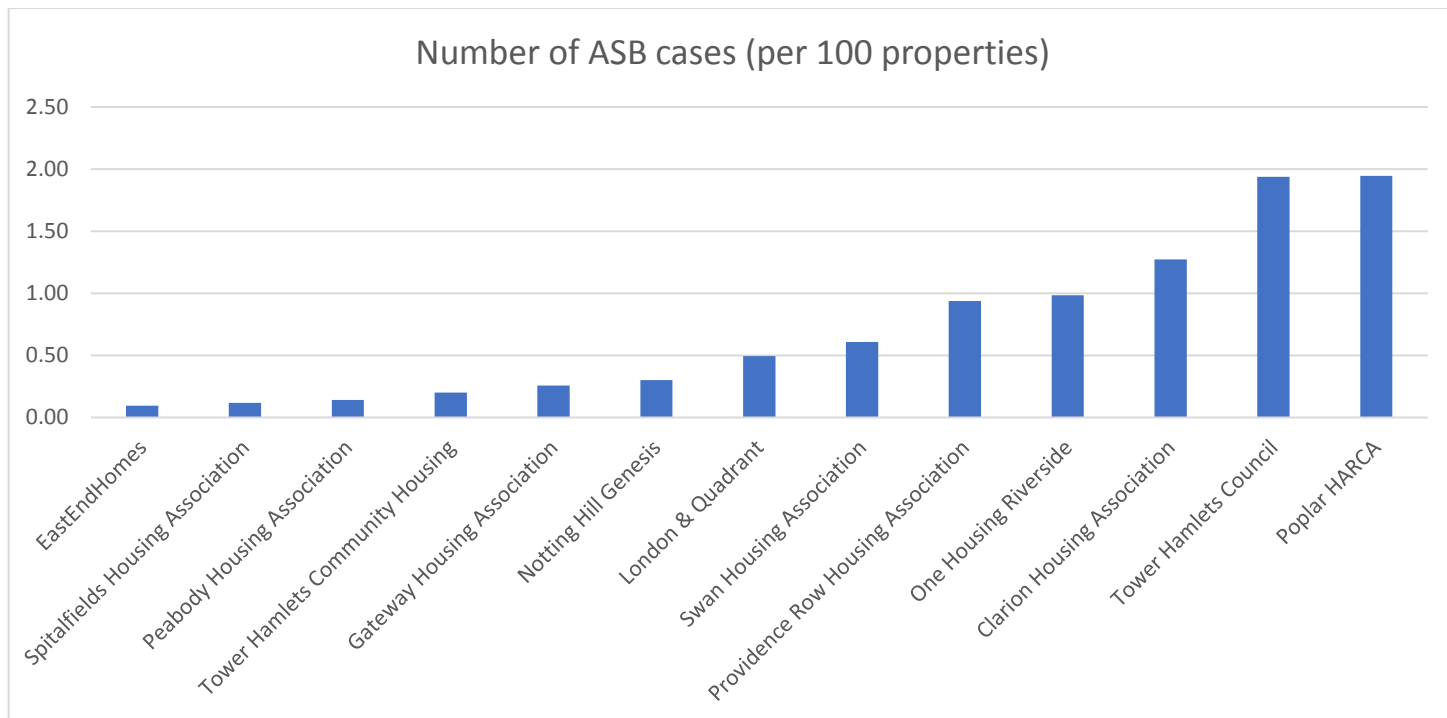
8. Number of complaints received (per 100 units of stock)



9. Number of Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales (per 100 units of stock)



10. Number of anti-social behaviour cases (per 100 units of stock)



Complaints and Anti-social behaviour: Additional comments

A greater number of reports frequently do not indicate deficient performance or inaction on the part of the RP. On the contrary, increased reporting could indicate residents' confidence in alerting the RP and proactively seeking a solution to alleviate the situation for the longer term.

Registered Provider
Notting Hill Genesis
Number of complaints include stage 1 and stage 2 complaints
Providence Row Housing Association
Number of complaints responded to on time: number of complaints responded to within Code timescales: 10 out of 11 Stage 1 complaints received from LBTH residents within Quarter 3 were responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales (91%). This is an improvement in relation the previous quarter (which had 3 responded outside of timescale) and we are continuing to work with our departments to improve performance further.
Number of ASB cases: PRHA specialises in supported accommodation for individuals with varied and potentially complex support needs, including former rough sleepers. 3 of the 4 cases raised in the quarter related to internal neighbour disputes and associated reports of ASB within our supported services, with the remaining case relating to ASB within one of our general needs properties.

One Housing riverside
The focus on completing all overdue LGSRs continues, with all the backlog now in the legal process. Quarter 4 services are being monitored to ensure compliance remains above 98% whilst we see the backlog through the injunction process.
Swan Housing Association
29 complaints related to one block where the lift was out of service
Tower Hamlets Community Housing
92% complaints responded on time
Tower Hamlets Council
The figures reported here relate to Stage 1 complaints only; the equivalent figures for Stage 2 are 22 & 0.

Re-Let's and Vacant Units

11. Average re-let time (in days) for standard re-lets and major works.

Registered Provider	Standard Re-lets	Major works Re-lets
London & Quadrant	287	316
Clarion Housing Association	179	
Gateway Housing Association	69.03	75
Notting Hill Genesis	45	4
Spitalfields Housing Association	40	40
One Housing Riverside	40	69
Peabody Housing Association	39	82
Tower Hamlets Council	38.75	56.15
Swan Housing Association	26.5	37
EastEndHomes	25.2	73.5
Providence Row Housing Association	0	126
Poplar HARCA	0	52
Tower Hamlets Community Housing	0	33

12. Number of units vacant but unavailable for letting at period end (per 100 units of stock)


Registered Provider	Vacant Units	Tower Hamlets stock
Tower Hamlets Council	111	11608
One Housing Riverside	58	5084
Clarion Housing Association	21	5734
Poplar HARCA	19	10389
EastEndHomes	14	3185
Peabody Housing Association	6	4227
Tower Hamlets Community Housing	4	1999
Notting Hill Genesis	4	2984
Gateway Housing Association	3	2726
London & Quadrant	3	4048
Spitalfields Housing Association	3	840
Providence Row Housing Association	2	427
Swan Housing Association	0	2137

Re-Let's and Vacant Units: Additional comments.

Registered Provider
Clarion Housing Association
We have been unable to provide data on average major-works re-let times (in days) in the Q3 submission. This is because we did not have the reporting capability in order to provide this data. We have escalated this request to our Business Intelligence team who have identified a solution that will enable us to distinguish between major works and standard re-let times. As this reporting requirement is contingent on further development, we anticipate providing this requested dataset from Q1 (2024/25).
EastEnd Homes
The voids unavailable for letting include three properties damaged by fire
London & Quadrant
Re-Let's and Vacant Units information for General Needs only.
Notting Hill Genesis
Calculation of average re-let times include available days only.
One Housing Riverside
There have been 13 General Needs sign ups during Qtr 3, 1 Major void and 12 Minor voids. The average relet time is higher than we would have liked, we experienced some delays in a change of contractor in the health and safety aspect of the void works. This has now been resolved.
Poplar HARCA
We are measuring overall relet time only

<p>Providence Row Housing Association</p> <p>Standard re-lets: Average re-let time in days for standard relets there were no standard re-lets of general needs properties in the quarter.</p> <p>Major works re-lets: Average re-let time in days for major works relets there was one re-let of a general needs property within the quarter. The flat was being illegally sub-let, and legal action was required to regain possession of the property before void works could begin. It also required major works to be undertaken to restore the property. Total void period was 126 days.</p> <p>Number of vacant units: Number of units vacant but unavailable for letting at period end: at the end of the current quarter there was one general needs units undergoing major void works and unavailable to let. We have however included a second void that had been made ready to let but was being used for decant purposes and was therefore also unavailable for re-letting at that time.</p>
<p>Swan Housing Association</p> <p>Regular weekly void meetings are in place to review and improve performance</p>
<p>Tower Hamlets Community Housing</p> <p>No minor works voids in reporting period. 29 days turnaround year to date Major works year to date turnaround is 34 days.</p> <p>Performance has experienced notable enhancement under the guidance of strategic management of new leadership, marked by precise targets. Fostering a revitalised emphasis on interdepartmental collaboration with repairs & neighbourhoods, and voids training for all new colleagues. A structured framework has been implemented, including daily void meetings to promptly identify and address any issues that may delay void turnaround times. Monthly performance scorecard meetings hold space to meticulously examine delays, address recurring themes, and ensure accountability among managers and colleagues via performance management protocols. Furthermore, transparent expectations have been outlined through contract meetings with our void contractor Axis.</p>
<p>Tower Hamlets Council</p> <p>Re-Let's: Staff resource issues within the Voids Team, and new build properties being prioritised for viewings and letting have resulted in an increase in re-let times in Q3. An interim Voids Team Leader has now been appointed.</p> <p>Vacant units: The figure reported here includes blocks being decanted, undergoing major works or block strengthening works as well as properties being used as temporary respite accommodation.</p>

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<p>Non-Executive Report of the:</p> <p>Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee</p> <p>13th May 2024</p>	 <p>TOWER HAMLETS</p>
<p>Report of: Karen Swift, Director for Housing</p>	<p>Classification: Unrestricted</p>
<p>Review of the customer journey for housing needs</p>	

<p>Originating Officer(s)</p>	<p>Paul Burgess, Corporate Strategy and Communities</p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>All wards</p>

Summary

This cover report accompanies the presentation on the development of the customer journey for housing needs.

Recommendations:

The Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee is recommended to:

1. Review the presentation topic to help inform the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee discussion.

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Housing Options – Customer Journey

Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny
Sub-committee

13th May 2024



The best possible customer journey



- Vulnerable residents seeking our help with housing, including emergency housing need to be treated with dignity and respect.
- Our physical space needs to be welcoming, accessible and enable confidentiality.
- Resident should be given enough time to tell us about their situation.
- Our explanation of how we can help needs to be timely, empathic, easy to understand and the options clearly set out.
- To achieve this we need to remove barriers that stop staff delivering a quality service; ICT improvements, improved physical working environment, training.
- A Customer Charter should set out our standards. The charter should be done in consultation with users, interest groups, stakeholders, Members and staff; an opportunity to set new standards.



Homelessness – Statutory Duties



- The **Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017** places a statutory duty on the Council to prevent homelessness (the Prevention Duty) and to give relief to those already homeless (the Relief Duty)
- The Council has a statutory duty to take **reasonable steps to prevent and relieve homelessness**; Duty can be discharged through offer of a suitable home in the private rented sector (PRS)
- **S.188 interim accommodation duty** – temporary accommodation duty to homeless families and vulnerable adults (‘priority need’ groups) with recourse
- **S.193 full housing duty** – owed to unintentionally homeless households with priority need. Duty can be discharged through offer of a suitable home in the private rented sector (PRS)



The Housing Register – Statutory Duties



- The **Housing Act 1996** requires local authorities to have an allocation scheme. Within this they must give reasonable preference (i.e., give certain groups an advantage over other groups that have a lesser or no housing need), in their allocations policies to people with **high levels of assessed housing need**.

Band 1A

- Emergencies
- Medical/Disability need for ground floor or wheelchair accessible property (includes homeless applicants)
- Priority decants
- Under-occupiers

Band 1B

- Priority Medical
- Priority social
- Decants
- Priority target groups

- **Band 2 – Group A:** Overcrowded Households and Homeless Households with at least 3 years' residence
- **Band 2 - Group B:** Overcrowded Households, Homeless Households and Medical needs with less than 3 years' residence.
-
- **Band 3:** Households with no defined Housing Need – “adequately housed” – over 8000 households in this band

See:

- [Allocations Scheme document - Homeseekers \(thhs.org.uk\)](http://thhs.org.uk)



Housing Options – who does what?

Homelessness and rough sleeping

- Lead Professionals (front of house team)
- HOST Complex (vulnerable singles)
- Housing Advice (private tenants)
- Homelessness Intervention Prevention Project (HIPP) (social tenants in rent arrears)
- Complex Assessment Team and Reviews
- Street Population and Rough Sleeping Commissioner
- Hostel Access

Temporary Accommodation and Procurement

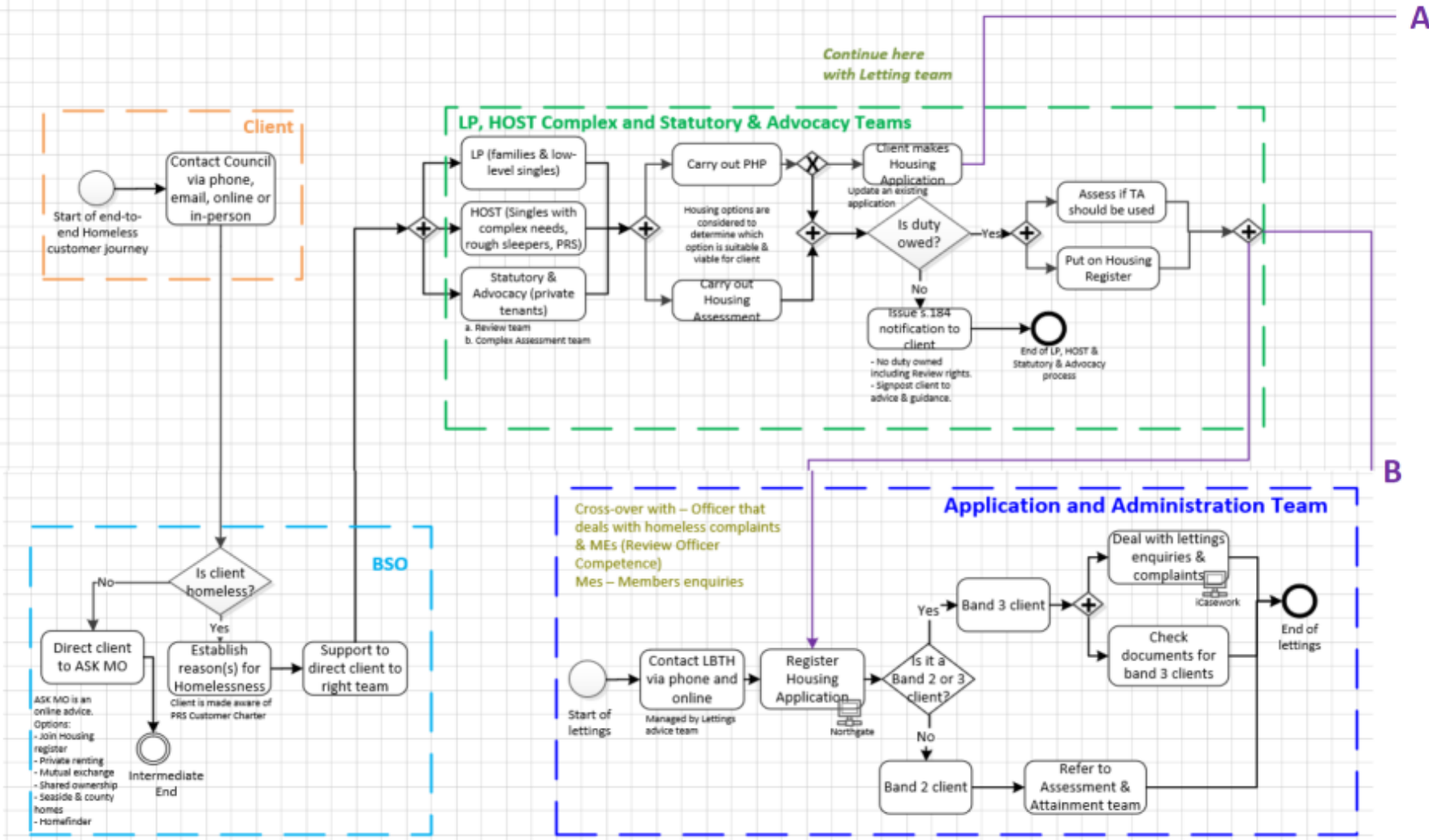
- Emergency Bookings and Allocations Team
- Housing Management
- Tenancy Sustainment
- Current and Former Rent Arrears team
- Accommodation procurement (TA and PRS)
- Beam (specialist employment service)

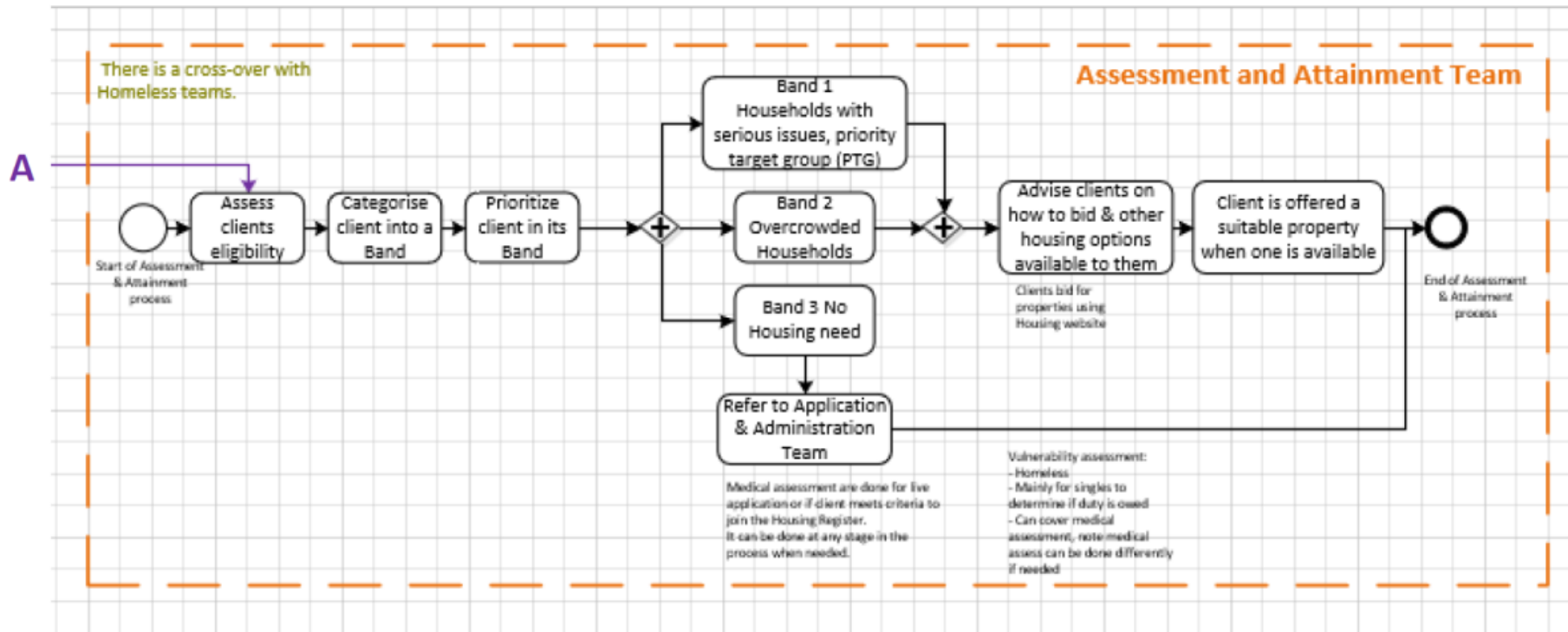
Housing Register and Allocations

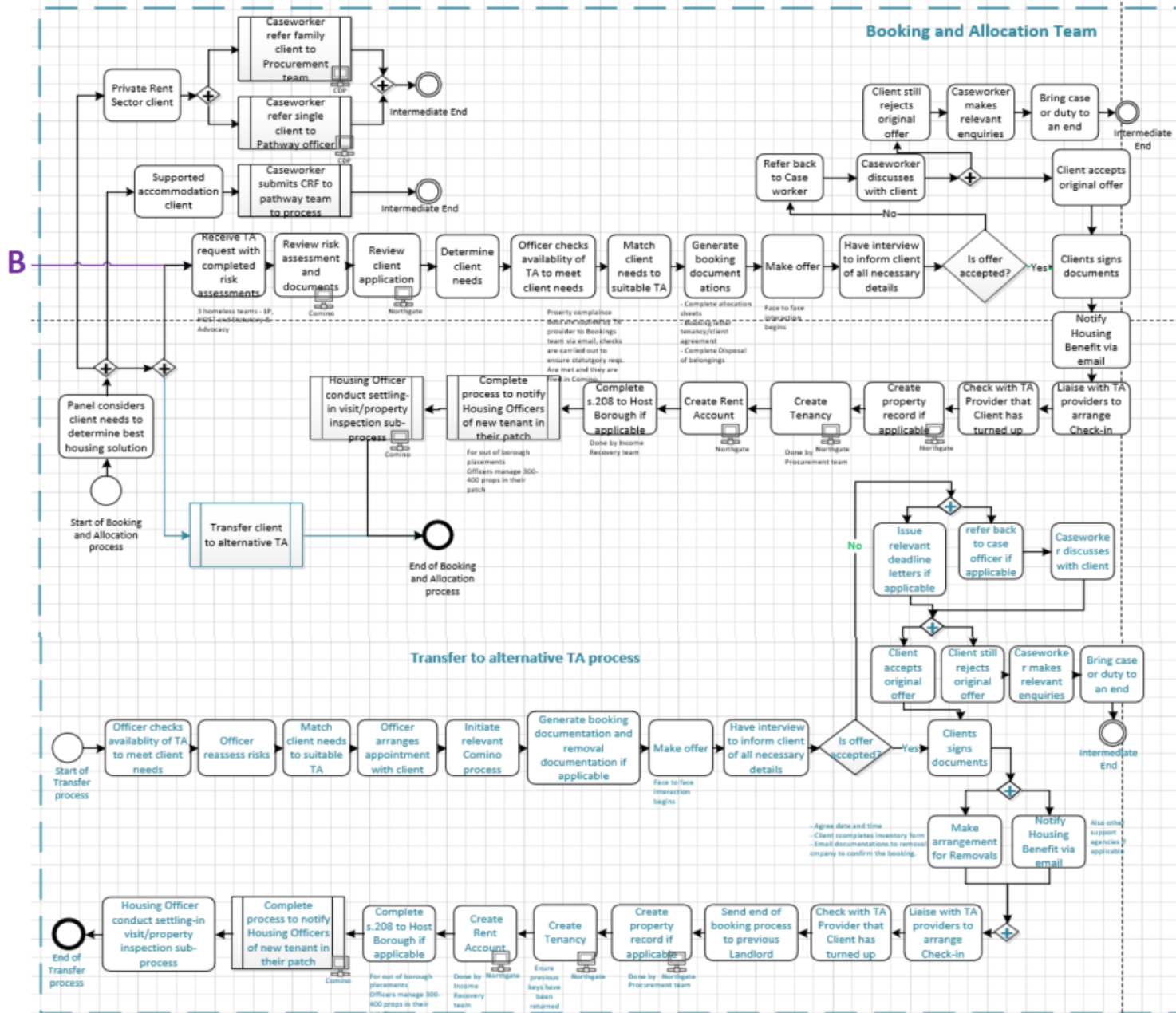
- Applications and Administration
- Advertising and Shortlisting
- Assessment and Attainment Team
- Occupational Therapist Team (housing needs medical assessment)
- Members Enquiries and Complaints
- Business Support (part of Resources Directorate)
- Information Change Management (Part of ICT)



Inter-teams customer process involving Homelessness, Housing Register, Lettings, and Temporary Accommodation processes







Phase 1 - Improving customer journey via channel shift and digitalisation



- System improvements to reduce staff administration time enabling them to focus more on customers' needs; So far over **900 days of officer time per year** has been saved.
- Provided **online customer signatures** reducing the need for clients to come to the Town Hall – nearly 60% of clients are now using this.
- Improved our Residents' Hub IT for clients and staff including queuing system, translation services, more public PCs, and printing and scanning.
- Delivered Housing Online (digital applications) and streamlined the **online housing register application process** for clients, removing separate supplementary forms contributing to a reduction in failure demand.
 - Added an online quick eligibility checker for joining the housing register, offering customers help through other means for those ineligible.
 - Added automated acknowledgement emails for housing register application submissions.
- Achieved the best performance to-date for housing register application processing in March 2024. This means **clients' applications are getting processed faster than ever before**.
- Created and implementing a **backlog clearance plan** for housing register applications to enable timely processing of applications.
- **Improved online document uploads** to enable larger file sizes and more file types, enabling customers to more easily share their documents with us in support of applications.



Further improvements to the customer journey



A £1.3M revenue and capital investment will enable us to deliver much more, such as streamlining workflows, reducing errors, enhancing data quality, and supporting strategic decision making.

The programme aims to deliver this by:

- Reducing systems and removing duplication by moving to a single Housing Options ICT system; collapsing the disparate systems that operate.
 - Aligning with ICT in Tower Hamlets Housing; moving all housing-related data and processes into a single system.
 - Includes redesign and re-implementation of the Allocations module which provides the foundation for housing applications and lettings.
 - Adoption of other Housing modules which address key customer experience and interaction issues, streamline data management and reporting
- **For customers this will mean** - only asking for documents once and automating customer notifications to ensure statutory compliance as well as timely customer communication.
- **For staff this will mean** - reducing the administrative burden by reducing systems and pre-populating data, providing clear and concise workflow assignment and performance information.



Further improvements to the customer journey



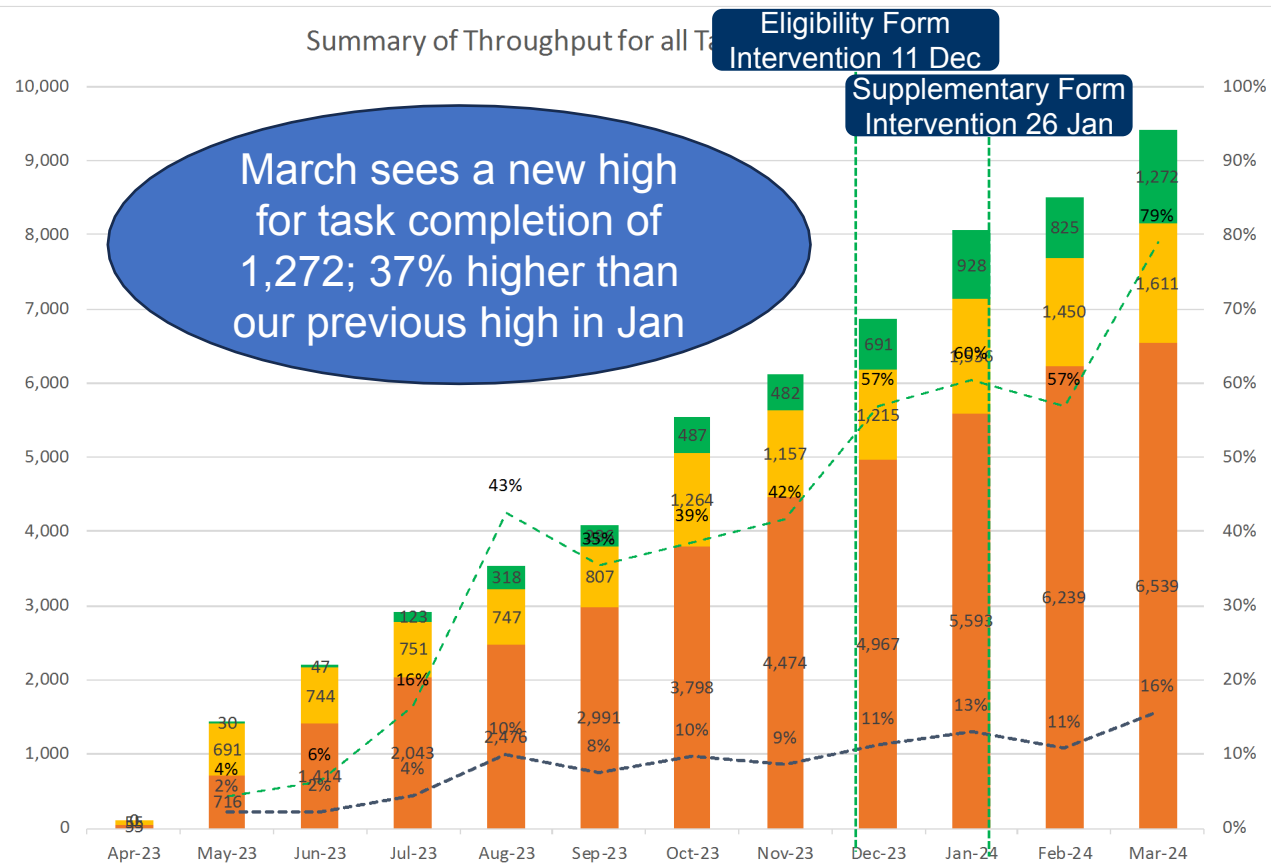
- The resident journey is not just a digital one.
- Face to face remains an option particularly for those in an emergency.
- Reducing the touch points for customers in the Residents Hub is a priority.
- Making sure the 'first advice is the best advice' is the goal; achieved through triage.
- Customers aware of their place in the queue and waiting times via a queuing system.
- Staff training to delivery an empathic service.



Online Housing Register Applications Summary of Processing for all Tasks



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March sees a new high for task completion of 1,272; 37% higher than our previous high in Jan

- This chart shows the trend of progress of our tasks and how many we are processing
- The % of incoming processed must be greater than 100% to reduce the backlog
- March sees a new high of completed tasks to-date at 79% of the incoming volume, at 1,272 completed tasks
- This is 37% higher than our previous high of 928 in Jan 2024

There is a positive trend of increasing throughput, demonstrating that higher volumes of incoming cases are being processed

	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24	Mar-24
Completed	0	30	47	123	318	286	487	482	691	928	825	1,272
Received	55	691	744	751	747	807	1,264	1,157	1,215	1,536	1,450	1,611
Outstanding	55	716	1,414	2,043	2,476	2,991	3,798	4,474	4,967	5,593	6,239	6,539
--- % Processed		2%	2%	4%	10%	8%	10%	9%	11%	13%	11%	16%
- - - % of Incoming Processed		4%	6%	16%	43%	35%	39%	42%	57%	60%	57%	79%

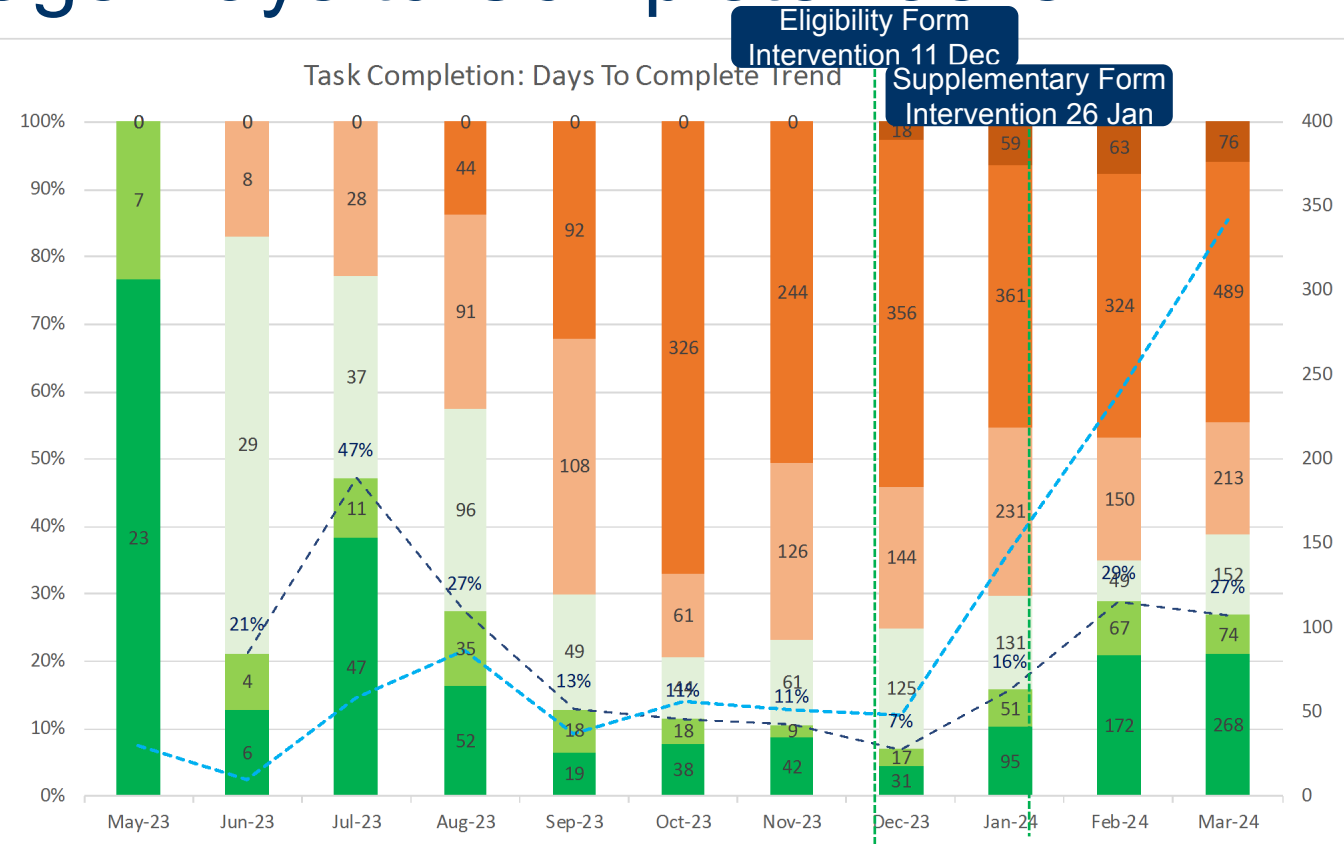


Online Housing Register Applications

Average Days to Complete Tasks



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- This chart shows the trend of the average number of days it is taking us to process and complete tasks since go-live
- It covers only completed tasks
- This can be used to target our resources to improve the trends
- There are the beginnings of a positive shift in reducing the average days to complete with a greater number in January being completed in less days.
- This increased to the highest level to-date at 342 (27%) in March

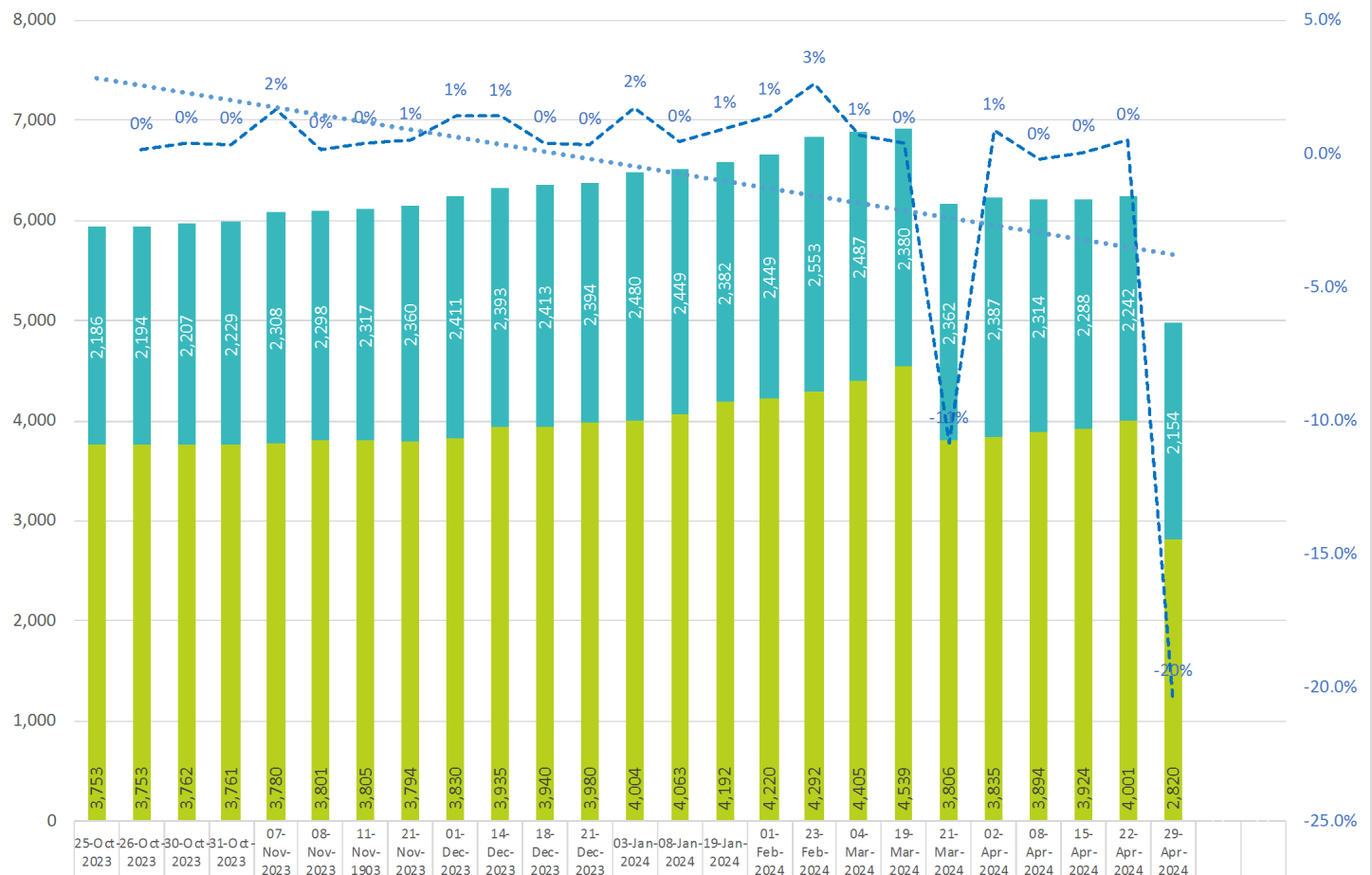
There is a positive recent increase in the trend of % processed in less than 20 days, reaching a new high of 342 (27%) in March



Online Housing Register Applications Overall Summary Backlog Trend



SHR Backlog Summary Trend



- This chart shows a snapshot of the trend of customer applications awaiting our processing
- eService applications are new submissions to join the housing register
- Applications in Allocations are those which we have initially reviewed for eligibility and processed for full assessment

We have commenced our backlog clearance plan with the first 741 applications cancelled in March and a further 1,279 in April

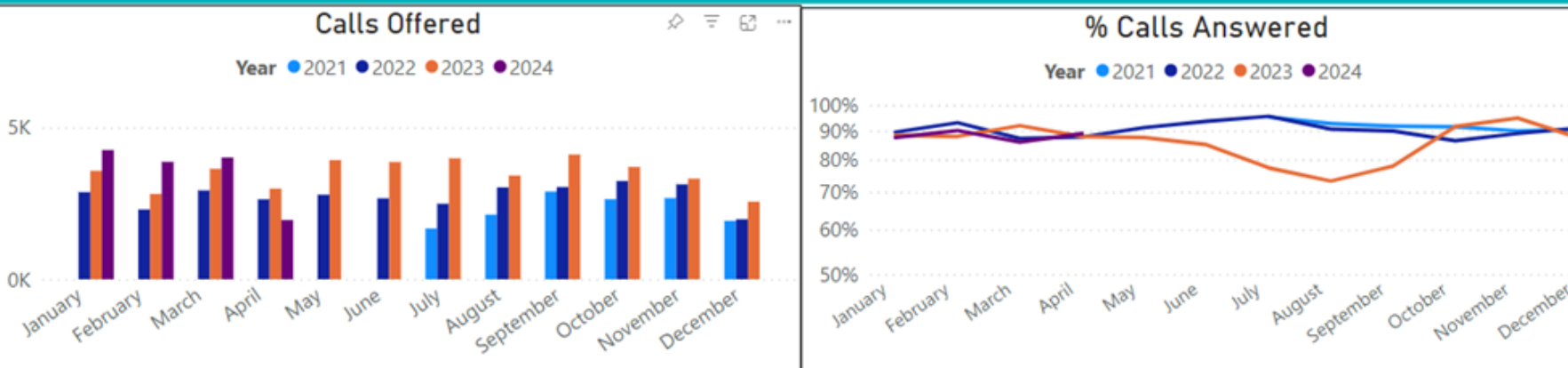
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Telephone service



HOUSING TRENDS



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Service	Homeless					Lettings					Temporary Accommodation					
	Year	Calls offered	Answered	PCA	ASA	AHT	Calls offered	Answered	PCA	ASA	AHT	Calls offered	Answered	PCA	ASA	AHT
2024		3821	3326	87%	00:06:23	00:05:49	8559	7617	89%	00:05:47	00:04:32	1722	1463	85%	00:06:05	00:06:17
April		584	503	86%	00:08:09	00:05:50	1122	1038	93%	00:04:25	00:04:15	248	197	79%	00:08:16	00:06:04
March		978	845	86%	00:06:23	00:05:46	2541	2186	86%	00:06:51	00:04:36	497	421	85%	00:05:48	00:06:32
February		1063	966	91%	00:04:36	00:05:53	2344	2114	90%	00:05:27	00:04:37	465	407	88%	00:04:53	00:06:10
January		1196	1012	85%	00:07:14	00:05:47	2552	2279	89%	00:05:40	00:04:31	512	438	86%	00:06:29	00:06:14
2023		14336	11151	78%	00:10:01	04:35:37	21950	20446	93%	00:02:55	03:17:45	5641	4305	76%	00:08:38	04:27:20

- These charts show an improvement in the numbers of client calls answered this year (11% increase for Homelessness and TA services).
- Average waiting times across the service have been reduced by 8 minutes since September 2023.



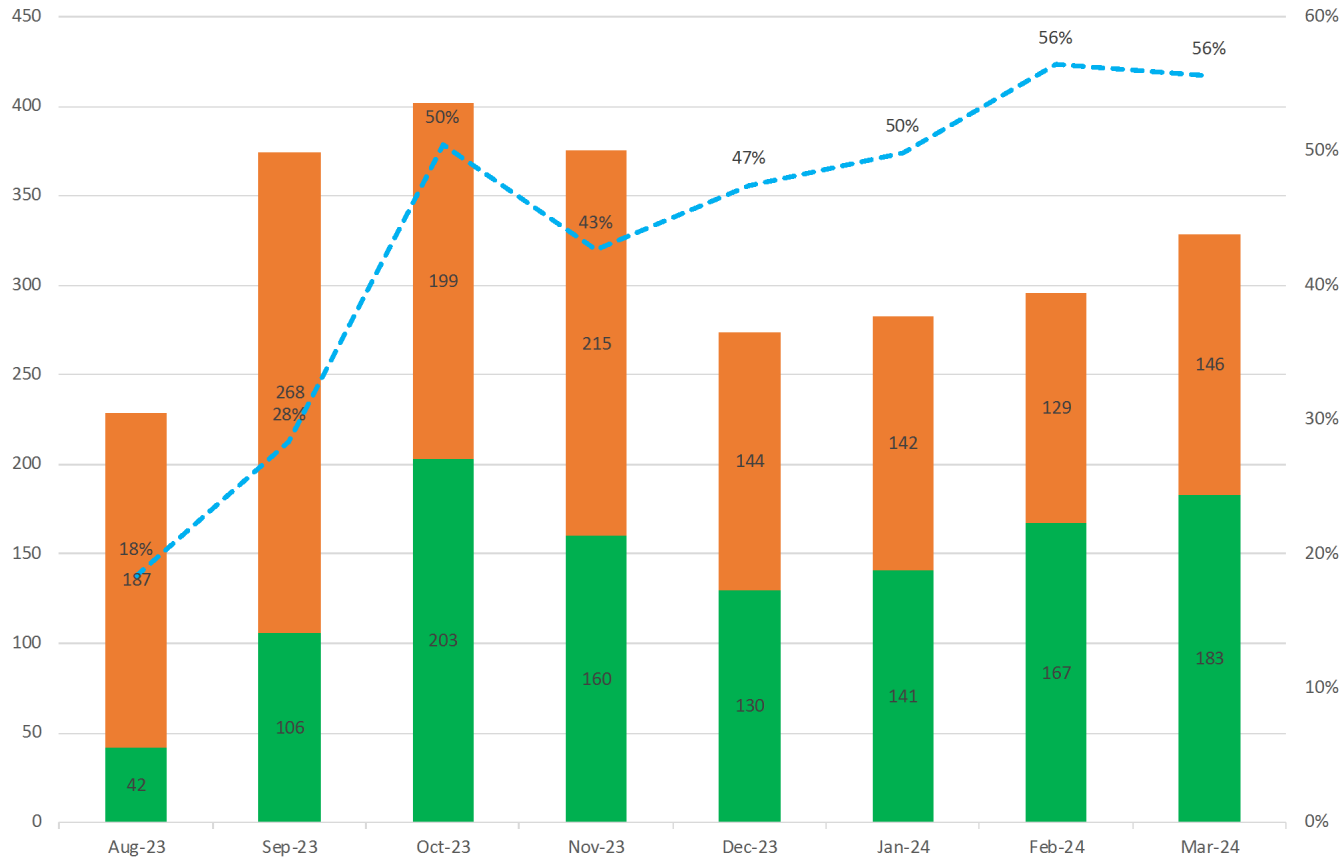
Online Signatures

Electronically Signed TA Documents



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Customer Signatures in Temporary Accommodation



	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24	Mar-24
Face-to-Face	187	268	199	215	144	142	129	146
Remote	42	106	203	160	130	141	167	183
%	18%	28%	50%	43%	47%	50%	56%	56%

- This chart shows the trend of electronically signed temporary accommodation documents
- It highlights the % of documents being signed electronically by customers using Adobe signatures
- This enables customers to sign remotely and not have to travel to our Town Hall with their families
- Signatures include commercial hotel agreements and TA tenancy agreements




Service Improvement Programme 2024



- The customer journey improvements sit within a wider service improvement programme for Housing Options.
- The programme has external support and validation from Martin Esom. Martin chairs the Programme Board.
- The Programme Board has senior representation from across the council. With a role for the Lead member.
- The work to improve Housing Options is a whole council effort.
- The Programme Board has staff and union representation.
- A Delivery Board and workstream leads will deliver the improvements.
- The Customer Service workstream will be led by Leah Sykes, Interim Director of Customer Services.



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<p>Non-Executive Report of the:</p> <p>Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee</p> <p>13 May 2024</p>	 <p>TOWER HAMLETS</p>
<p>Report of: Robin Beattie Divisional Director Strategy, Transformation and Improvement</p>	<p>Classification: Unrestricted</p>
<p>Scrutiny Challenge Session on Housing Provider Performance in the Borough</p>	

Originating Officer(s)	Afazul Hoque – Head of Corporate Strategy Paul Burgess - Strategy and Policy Officer, Corporate
Wards affected	All Wards

Executive Summary

This report sets out the findings and recommendations from the Scrutiny Challenge Session on housing provider performance in the borough. The Report makes five recommendations for agreement by the Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee.

Recommendations:

The Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the attached Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee Scrutiny Challenge Session Report and agree the recommendations;
2. Agree to submit the attached report to the Mayor, Cabinet and Tower Hamlets Housing Forum for executive response to the recommendations;

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 This paper submits the report and recommendations of the Scrutiny Challenge Session on housing provider performance in the borough for consideration by the Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

2.1 To take no action. This is not recommended as the scrutiny review sessions provides recommendations for improving housing provider performance in the borough.

3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT

3.1 This scrutiny challenge session was chaired by Cllr Abdul Mannan (Scrutiny Lead for Housing & Regeneration and Overview and Scrutiny Committee Member). This challenge session was held on Tuesday 26th March 2024.

3.2 The session allowed the Committee to hear from the Regulator of Social Housing, Housing Ombudsman, leading social housing and tenant engagement organisations and RPs themselves.

3.3 The focus was to review RP Performance and the scope set out the following key questions:

- 1) How is the RP performance aligned with the organisation’s strategic priorities;
- 2) What issues Registered Providers face when providing RP performance data particularly at local level;
- 3) How is the data used to drive improvement for residents;
- 4) What impact the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures are having;
- 5) How can Scrutiny best add value.

Members in attendance:

Councillor Abdul Mannan	Scrutiny challenge session chair and chair of HRSSC
Councillor Marc Francis	HRSSC Member
Councillor Asma Islam	HRSSC Member
Councillor James King	HRSSC Member
Councillor Musthak Ahmed	HRSSC Member
Councillor Saif Uddin	HRSSC Member
Susanna Kow	Co-opted OSC Member
Councillor Kabir Ahmed	Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inclusive Development and Housebuilding

Evidence heard from council officers, witnesses and guests:

Kate Dodsworth	Chief of Regulatory Engagement, Regulator of Social Housing
Angela Holden	Director of Regulatory Engagement, Regulator of Social Housing
Richard Blakeway	Housing Ombudsman
Andrea Baker	Director of Housing, Poplar HARCA, Chair of Tower Hamlets Housing Forum
Helen Wilson	Head of Housing for North London, Clarion Housing

Caritas Charles	Policy & Insight Manager, TPAS - The tenant engagement experts
Alistair McIntosh	Chief Executive, Housing Quality Network (HQN)

3.4 The review sessions resulted in the committee making the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1	Ensure Registered Providers (RPs) are invited to attend more committee meetings by conducting regular spotlight session at every Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee meeting and inviting RPs to attend when their RP is being discussed.
Recommendation 2	Training for Committee Members to assist in analysing the data.
Recommendation 3	Residents to be invited give evidence to Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee to add value to committee meeting.
Recommendation 4	Regularly review the management of council's own housing stock to ensure it is being well managed.
Recommendation 5	Ensure the council maximises its powers to improve the standards and the services housing providers given to residents.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Some of recommendation will require resident involvement and engagement. The report considers the protected characteristics (Equality Act 2010) which can potentially be impacted from the discussions. It will be necessary for any responses to these recommendations to consider the impact on different communities.

5. OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:
- Best Value Implications,
 - Consultations,
 - Environmental (including air quality),
 - Risk Management,
 - Crime Reduction,
 - Safeguarding.
 - Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.
- 5.2 The actions in the attached report are made as part of the Committee's role in helping to secure continuous improvement for the council, as required under its Best Value duty.
- 5.3 The report recommendations will help to manage risk better, such as Members development on performance management. By involving resident in committee discussions will support robust decision making. Regular review on council stock will drive efficient improvement in services, such as homelessness/temporary accommodation costs.

6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 6.1 [Financial implications to be prepared by Directorate Finance Manager and agreed with Corporate Finance]

7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 [Legal implications to be inserted when Financial Implications have been completed].

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE.

Appendices

- Draft Scrutiny Challenge Session Report

Officer contact details for documents:

Paul Burgess - Strategy and Policy Officer, Corporate

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Scrutiny Challenge Session of Housing Provider Performance in Tower Hamlets

Housing Provider Performance in the Borough

01/05/2024

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Chair's Foreword

I am pleased to present this Housing Challenge Report, which provides a comprehensive overview of housing providers' performance data in Tower Hamlets. This report represents a critical milestone in our ongoing efforts to ensure the delivery of high-quality housing services that meet the needs of our residents and contribute to the well-being of our community.

Housing is a fundamental human right, and ensuring access to safe, affordable, and secure housing is a top priority for Tower Hamlets. As such, it is essential that we regularly assess the performance of housing providers to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. This report serves as a valuable tool for assessing the effectiveness of housing services and guiding decision-making to drive positive change.

Through rigorous analysis of performance data across various key indicators, this report offers insights into the performance of housing providers in areas such as maintenance responsiveness, tenant satisfaction, and affordability. By examining trends, benchmarks, and best practices, we can identify areas where providers excel and areas where interventions may be needed to enhance service delivery.

Importantly, this report underscores the importance of collaboration and transparency in improving housing outcomes. By engaging with housing providers, residents, and stakeholders, we have fostered a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing our housing system and work together to develop innovative solutions.

I would like to extend my gratitude to all those who contributed to the development of this report, including housing providers, residents, and members of the scrutiny team. Your dedication, insights, and expertise have been invaluable in shaping this document and advancing our collective efforts to strengthen housing services in Tower Hamlets.

As we move forward, let us remain committed to using the findings of this report to inform policy decisions, drive improvement, and ensure that all residents have access to safe, affordable, and quality housing.



Cllr Abdul Mannan

Chair of Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1	HRSSC and key stakeholders to ensure Registered Providers (RPs) are invited to attend more committee meetings by conducting regular spotlight session at every Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee meeting and inviting RPs to attend when their RP is being discussed.
Recommendation 2	Build in training provision and develop Committee Members with analysing performance data.
Recommendation 3	Invite Residents to give evidence at Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee adding value and making committee meetings more robust.
Recommendation 4	HRSSC to review the management of council's own housing stock and ensure it is being well managed.
Recommendation 5	HRSSC to work with stakeholders and ensure the council maximises it powers to improve the standards and the services housing providers give to residents.

Reason for Enquiry

- 1.1 The Social Housing (Regulation) Act paves the way for important changes, but social tenants will have to wait for these measures to come into force.
- 1.2 The Act received royal assent on 20 July 2023, so it is now law, but many provisions need regulations before they can come into force. These are expected to be published in 2024.
- 1.3 The Act provides a strong legal framework, but the practical changes will depend on how robustly it is implemented.
- 1.4 The purpose of this Scrutiny Challenge Session was to better understand the new role for Regulator of Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman and also how the Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee can best add value in the work it does with Registered Providers (RPs) to drive performance and improvements for residents.

What is the Social Housing (Regulation) Act

- 1.5 The Act lays foundations for changes to how social housing is managed. It includes increased regulation of social landlords and new rules for protecting tenants from serious hazards in their homes.
- 1.6 Many of the provisions in the Act are responses to the tragedies of the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire and death of two-year old Awaab Ishak, who died in 2020 from exposure to serious mould.
- 1.7 The Act allows the Regulator of Social Housing to take action against social landlords before people are at risk and hold landlords to account with regular inspections. It introduces new social housing consumer standards and gives the Secretary of State power to require social landlords to investigate and rectify serious health hazards.
- 1.8 RPs will be expected to meet explicit standards under key areas of service delivery, namely:

CONSUMER STANDARDS – Covering:	ECONOMIC STANDARDS – Covering:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Safety & Quality Standard • The Transparency, Influence & Accountability Standard • Neighbourhood & Community Standard • The Tenancy Standard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent - Applies to all Social Housing providers including local authorities. (The Standards below do not apply to local authorities) • Governance & Financial Viability • Value for Money

- 1.9 Until recently, the Regulator must have had reasonable grounds to suspect that a social landlord’s breach of the consumer standards has caused, or could cause, serious detriment to a tenant before it could use its intervention powers.
- 1.10 The Act removes the ‘serious detriment’ test from the consumer standards for social homes. This allows the Regulator to act before people are at risk.
- 1.11 It gives the Regulator stronger powers, including the power to impose unlimited fines.

Performance improvement plans

- 1.12 The Regulator will be able to give notice to require a social landlord to prepare and implement a performance improvement plan where the landlord is failing to meet regulatory standards.
- 1.13 Performance improvement plans are intended to be used proactively and will enable the Regulator to hold providers to account. Tenants can request copies of improvement plans

Other powers

1.14 The Act includes other enforcement powers. For example, the Regulator can:

- impose unlimited fines
- undertake surveys on properties
- authorise emergency remedial action to remedy failures by a landlord¹

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

1.14 The introduction of a new performance management framework for all RPs called the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) and are a central part of the of the Act that will be used to help demonstrate compliance with the standards outlined above. It sets out the expectation that all social housing providers to submit annual performance data to the RSH.

1.15 The data is based on a suite of 22 performance measures – 10 of which are landlord data and 12 based on tenant satisfaction.

1.16 The council is working with all housing providers in addition to its own stock to deliver on provisions contained within the new Social Housing Regulation Act which will give tenants more rights and opportunities to hold their landlords to account and influence decisions that affect their homes and communities.

1.17 Taking the above into account, in particular, that reporting processes of the statutory annual measures need to bed in, and that RP's have indicated for the first year, six monthly reporting to Scrutiny is possible, RP landlord performance is reported to the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee on a six-monthly basis with tenant satisfaction reported annually.

Methodology

2.1 This scrutiny challenge session was chaired by Cllr Abdul Mannan (Scrutiny Chair for Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee Member). This challenge session was held on Tuesday 26th March 2024.

2.2 The session allowed the Committee to hear from the Regulator of Social Housing, Housing Ombudsman, leading social housing and tenant engagement organisations and RPs themselves.

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/36/enacted>

2.3 The focus was to review RP Performance and the scope set out the following key questions:

- 1) How is the RP performance aligned with the organisation’s strategic priorities;
- 2) What issues Registered Providers face when providing RP performance data particularly at local level;
- 3) How is the data used to drive improvement for residents;
- 4) What impact the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures are having;
- 5) How can Scrutiny best add value.

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Councillor James King	HRSSC Member
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Helen Wilson	Head of Housing for North London, Clarion Housing
Caritas Charles	Policy & Insight Manager, TPAS - The tenant engagement experts
Alistair McIntosh	Chief Executive, Housing Quality Network (HQN)

Key Findings and Recommendations

Recommendation 1

HRSSC and key stakeholders to ensure Registered Providers (RPs) are invited to attend more committee meetings by conducting regular spotlight session at every Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee meeting and inviting RPs to attend when their RP is being discussed.

- 3.1 The committee questioned the RPs at the challenge session. The committee periodically receives performance data reports that appear to indicate that RPs are performing well with most repairs completed within target times. However, Members of the committee and Councillors often received complaints from residents that have been waiting a long time for repairs to be completed. The Members of the committee are concerned that the data does not seem to correspond with the feedback they receive from residents of the borough. In the past the committee has asked if performance data can be discussed more frequently but were informed only six-monthly reporting is possible.
- 3.2 At the end of the challenge session Members reiterated their request that has been raised at sub-committee meetings to bring RPs to every Sub-Committee meeting not only to review performance data but to answer questions that residents have asked Members. The committee recommends that at each HRSSC meeting some RPs are invited to attend so that any discrepancies between the performance data and feedback from residents can be clarified. For example, the committee will soon be listening to residents of Tower Hamlets Community Housing on the quality of service provided so it would be useful for Tower Hamlets Community Housing to appear before the committee in the near future to discuss any concerns residents may raise.

This will be done on a rotating basis until all RPs in the borough have had an opportunity to attend and contribute.

Recommendation 2

Build in training provision and develop Committee Members with analysing performance data.

- 4.1 The committee question the RPs that attended the session about the performance data they receive. Much of the questioning was focused on how the data is gathered to produce the reports as the data does not seem to correspond to the feedback Members receive from residents on the quality of services. Members expressed their concern that the data may not only include housing within Tower Hamlets from RPs with stock in other parts of the country. Members asked the providers if the data is local or regional and the providers acknowledged that due to the size of the organisations and the properties across London and wider some of the data may be more regional but that they were unable to give a definitive response.
- 4.2 At the end of the session Members were asked to summarise the key areas to be developed as a result of the discussion had at this challenge session. At this point Members raised the issue that the sub-committee felt that the reports received are difficult to decipher and interpret as it not always clear if the data is consistently from homes in the borough from the RPs that have region/nationwide housing stock which the committee feels may impact on the validity and accuracy of the data reflections on resident housing issues. The RP performance data is sometimes unclear. Committee Members felt they would like to be provided with training enable them to get more value out of reviewing data so that the committee can collectively better review the performance data that is driving improvements for residents.

Recommendation 3

Invite Residents to give evidence at Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee adding value and making committee meetings more robust.

- 4.1 The committee heard evidence from Caritas Charles, Policy & Insight Manager from TPAS and Alistair McIntosh, Chief Executive from HQN of best practice and they shared their experience of the experience they have in working with decision makers on behalf of residents. The committee recognises that engagement with residents is a critical part of the role of scrutiny committees of ensuring that local decision-makers are being held accountable that the services they provide are delivered efficiently and drive improvement within the borough. To ensure this the committee recommends that residents be regularly invited to Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee meetings to ensure the voices and concerns of the public are heard by policy and decision makers.

Recommendation 4

HRSSC to review the management of council's own housing stock and ensure it is being well managed.

- 5.1 On the 1st of November 2023, the council completed the transfer of Tower Hamlets Homes (THH) to the Council. The aim of bringing THH into the council was to achieve a stronger resident voice, more accountability, and joined-up services that support residentsⁱ
- 5.2 The Council is now responsible for managing and maintaining all council homes.
- 5.3 Members have at previous sub-committee meetings raised the serious concerns they have about the management of the stock and the pressures being faced by the council by an increasing number of people requiring social housing and the number of homeless people in temporary accommodation waiting for Council housing stock to be made available to them.
- 5.4 When Members began their reflection on evidence they heard and summarised the key areas of learning from the meeting the committee recognised that, in addition to continuing to monitor the performance of RPs, the council also need to continue to hold to account the management of its own stock for the maintenance of services and the progress of major works to improve the housing stock.
- 5.5 The committee recommends that THH provides regular updates to HRSSC to provide more scope for meaningful on the delivery of services.

Recommendation 5

HRSSC to work with stakeholders and ensure the council maximises its powers to improve the standards and the services housing providers give to residents.

- 6.1 The committee heard from the Chief of Regulatory Engagement and the Director of from the Regulator of Social Housing as well as the Housing Ombudsman. They question them about the concerns the residents of Tower Hamlets have about the regulator not making useful interventions in the past when serious complaints have been made and ask why tenants should have any confidence that the regulator in the new system. The Regulator responded by saying the Act now allows the Regulator of Social Housing to take action against social landlords before people are at risk and that this change will mean the Regulator can be involved at an earlier stage and from April 2024 RPs will need to meet the new improved consumer standards that are more fit for purpose.
- 6.2 The committee notes that as the powers that are provided by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act principally extend to the Regulator of Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman the powers that the HRSSC has to direct RP to a course of action are limited. When summarising the key points of the meeting Members expressed concern that it remains to be seen if the new powers given to the

Regulators will be applied. The committee is not convinced of this given previous housing issues and the lack of response and therefore it recommends that the council needs to review what powers it has relating to RPs, such as planning permission and consider adding community benefit clauses to better drive improvement in standards.

Conclusion

- 7.1 This scrutiny challenge session provided the HRSSC an opportunity to scrutinise RPs in the borough. It is clear to the Committee (from the evidence heard) that resident in Tower Hamlets still need public bodies, such as this committee to ensure the resident complaints are heard by policy and decision makers.
 - 7.2 The Committee noted that the new powers given by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act are a welcome improvement over the previous ones, but it remains to be seen if they will be implemented in a robust manner.
 - 7.3 The Committee have made the above five recommendations as they feel more need to be done to improve the standard of housing in the borough. The Committee hopes the Mayor, Cabinet and RPs take forward our recommendations and work with HRSSC to ensure we have good housing for all in Tower Hamlets.
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[Open Door Annual Report 2023 \(towerhamletshomes.org.uk\)](https://towerhamletshomes.org.uk)

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