

Annex 2

Tenant and Leaseholder Services Performance Report

1. Introduction:

The following report highlights the key issues in relation to Tenant and Leaseholder Services (TLS) performance against Key Performance Indicators since transition of the service from East Kent Housing (EKH) in October 2020 and should be read together with annex 1.

2. Capital Programme

Capital programme spend at transition was at 13.5%, this is significantly lower at 6 months into the financial year than we would expect.

We have identified some reasons for the poor performance of the capital programme:

- **Unpaid invoices**
Since the 1st October we have processed 129 Planned and Cyclical Maintenance Invoices totalling £1,748,359.36.

These have been a mixture of outstanding live invoices and valuations that were not processed by EKH. Some of these invoices and valuations were dating back to 20/01/2020.

We still have an estimated £120,223.09 remaining invoices to process.

- **Miscoding of work**
Works have been miscoded on invoices that have been paid, meaning that works that should have been charged to the capital budget, have been incorrectly charged to the revenue budget. An issue that was reported to EKH in July 2020 but not resolved.

We continue to work through these issues and expect to establish an accurate budgetary position by the end of January 2021.

A benefit of this exercise has been to improve relationships with our contractors with positive interaction and resolution of their outstanding payment issues.

- **Programme vs progress**
It is evident that EKH project management systems were not effective in progressing programmes within the projected timetable.

To improve progress, we have arranged the team structure so that our surveyors are each wholly responsible for a number of projects, with administrative support. We see this as yielding the following benefits:

- Improved relationships with stakeholders
- Empowerment to make decisions on projects
- Reduce delays in waiting for other officers to carry out their tasks
- In depth knowledge of projects within their remit
- Ability to resolve or escalate issues or blockages quicker

Although we are working hard to improve our position on our capital programme, our projected year-end position is likely to be significantly under budget. We are working with colleagues in the finance team to establish an accurate forecast for the year end position taking into account miscoded work, outstanding invoices and potential progress for the remainder of the financial year. At this stage we anticipate that the out-turn will be around 60% of the currently approved programme for 2020/21.

3. Decent Homes

At this present time, we are unable to report, with accuracy, how many of our homes meet the decent homes standard. The EKH report for Q2 stated 99.72% of our properties meet the decent homes standard.

The reasons for the delay in reporting are as follows:

- All four councils use the Strategic Asset Management system (SAM) and the data has not been separated. The data can be pulled from the system, but further data processing is required to separate each council. We have not completed this exercise as yet, and we need to work closely with the other councils to ensure we do not corrupt their data in the system.
- SAM has not been updated with component replacements, programmed work or EPC's, therefore the report would be inaccurate and not reflect the true picture.

Our data officer is working to update SAM and we will carry out an exercise that ensures we can report accurately against the requirements of the Decent Homes Standard.

4. Day to Day Repairs

KPI data received by Mears and Gas Call remains constantly within target

Since Lockdown in March 2020, only Mears have reported on customer satisfaction. This is due to Covid-19 restricting residents from handling an operatives PDA. To continue to report this PI, Mears have sent customers text messages once a repair has been completed and this has seen a sharp decrease in customer satisfaction, 98% in Q1 to 75% reported for November.

We have also seen a decrease in the response rate to text message surveys, as only 3.8% customers that had a repair completed in November gave their feedback.

This is not considered to be a representative sample and it is probable that customers are more likely to respond if they have had a poor experience.

We are addressing this with our contractors and urging them to find different ways to collect satisfaction data, as well as to report on complaints received.

The team is planning to carry out an exercise to validate the contractors data, something that was not previously done by EKH. This will include performing our own satisfaction surveys. Improving our data about repairs will form part of our improvement plan. When we have developed the improvement plan we will give this activity a timeline

We have identified that EKH did not have adequate contract management processes in place; and in some areas, contractors had ceased to work to contract terms, including specifying their own work without scrutiny.

We have vastly improved our position in this area by:

- Appointing a single contract manager for each contract.
- Introducing monthly operational and quarterly strategic meetings.
- Setting standing agendas for meetings; meetings are minuted and actions followed up.
- Ensuring payments are made on time.
- Establishing clear lines of communication.

5. Disrepair Claims

Six disrepair claims were carried over from EKH on transition.

- 4 carried over were being actively worked on
- 2 were notified post transition by complainant solicitors

Performance on Disrepair claims has been historically poor, with the earliest live claim dating back to 4/12/2018. This has been put down to poor communication between departments and lack of responsibility being taken to progress claims.

How we are improving this:

- 1 nominated officer is responsible for disrepair claims.
- Bi-monthly meetings with the legal department to ensure actions are being taken.
- Shared disrepair tracker for monitoring actions established.
- Improving how we extract data from the system to enable operational staff to provide documents to legal in good time.

6. Void re-let times

The KPI is showing the average void relet time is out of target, the reasons identified are:

- Presence of Asbestos Insulating Board (AIB) in major voids

In November 2020, 67% of major voids had AIB present. The practice transferred from EKH was to remove AIB when a property is void.

As this work is notifiable to the HSE, we need to allow a 14 day notice before work can proceed, the KPI for our contractor to complete major void work is 15 days.

- Under performance of Asbestos removal contractor
The contractor that removes asbestos has been causing delay to void works. We have now applied a contract management framework to this contractor, their performance is under review until January to see if further action is required.

7. Income Collection

At transition, the KPI for arrears was 7.12% and we have seen a downward trend in performance with November's KPI's at 8.05%. A dip in performance during this initial period was anticipated as the new team was appointed, inducted to the council and trained and new processes developed. It is anticipated that the actions taken on transition will now yield greater long term success in arrears collection.

How we are improving this:

- New systems of work:
On transition into TDC, 50% staff TUPEd from EKH and 50% were newly recruited; our Income Manager has introduced new systems of working, that are proven in improving income recovery. The team's output has suffered during October and November while new ways of working are trained and bedded in, we expect to see a continual improvement in performance due to officers working faster in the new ways; and we expect to see the improvement sustained for the long term.

A barrier to being able to measure officers' output is the quality of data we are able to pull from our housing management system, Northgate. We do not currently have the ability to drill down into data for an officers patch, which will reveal where extra training is required or a demographic trend that needs a different approach. No solution has presented itself yet and we are investigating different ways by which we can do this.

- Enrolling on the DWP portal for Universal Credit (UC):
By January we will be enrolled onto the DWP portal, meaning we will receive UC faster. By carrying out this action, we expect a significant increase in performance for January. We need to be wary of a false increase in arrears collection due to back dated payments, which will even out in February.
- Changing our relationship with the legal team:
When relying on the legal team to serve our legal notices, our service level agreement with the department meant there were delays between a request for a notice to be served and the action being taken. Experience has shown

that this not only allows arrears to continue to increase on these accounts; but it is harder to enforce our actions with the tenant.

The team have been trained and given delegated authority to serve their own notices, significantly speeding up this process.

We are monitoring the impact this will have on accounts in high arrears over the coming months.

- Ensuring payments are posted on the system at the right time:
Since transition, there has been a delay in posting the monthly benefits payments onto the system. We are working with our Finance Team to ensure they are posted correctly and this will assist in showing the actual position of arrears at the time of reporting, therefore our statistics will be more accurate.

8. Complaints

The process for investigating and responding to complaints about TLS is now the same as all other complaints received by the council, excepting that escalation after stage 2 is to the Housing Ombudsman rather than to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Since transition, TDC has responded to 100% of complaints about the tenant and leaseholder service within target.

Currently, our Customer Transactions Team coordinates all complaints in TLS, which has proven successful. But, we want to improve the way we manage our complaints to make sure we are:

- Compliant with Regulatory Standards, Housing White Paper and the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.
- Improve how we monitor complaints, ensuring consistency in response and response within target
- Assign responsibility for a complaint appropriately
- Establish the appropriate relationship with our contractors in regards to complaints
- Ensure actions in a complaint response are followed through to completion
- Reporting accurately
- We learn from our complaints and use this to improve our service delivery

To achieve this we ran a complaints workshop with frontline staff, the centralised team that coordinates complaints and a tenant representative. The workshop was successful, we shared a lot of ideas and learnt a lot from our tenant representative. Further work is required to develop processes to support our complaints handling using the outcomes from the workshop. This will happen in the new year.