

Thanet District Council

Tenant and Leaseholder Services Performance report Quarter 4 2021

April 2021/V1/Sally O'Sullivan

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of several overlapping, flowing blue waves in various shades of blue, creating a sense of movement and depth.

Introduction

Monitoring period: Quarter 4 2021 (1 January 2021 to 31 March 2021)

Author: Sally O'Sullivan

1.1 Summary

This report provides the OSP with the performance from quarter 4 2021 for the Tenant and Leaseholder Service (TLS).

Six months since transition and the team have settled into their new roles. During this time we have seen very little movement within our establishment; with only 3 staff moving on and 2 internal transfers. We are awaiting 4 new starters to fill key positions.

It has been unfortunate that all vacant roles are key roles within our Asset Management Team. This has put enormous pressure on our Asset Manager as she has led the Planned Works Team and Day to Day Repairs Team. This has meant that there has not been as much focus on managing our day to day contracts as we would have liked, especially at a time when lockdown measures are being lifted and we are feeling the impact from a backlog of repairs.

The team has undergone extensive training over the last 6 months a mixture of delivery from external bodies and internal sessions. We are at a stage where teams are fully trained and operating in a business as usual state. Evidence of this can be seen clearly in the statistics provided by the Income Team, as you can see the fluctuations in performance as the team comes to grips with a new way of working. (section 3.3).

The highlight of this quarter has been the development of our draft Service Improvement Plan, for which we had input from staff and customers. This is a highly ambitious plan but as we have already seen improved collaboration between colleagues, teams, internal and external partners leading to improvement in our service delivery; we are confident that this will carry us forward to achieve our plan and increase performance and our customers' satisfaction.

During this quarter we have sought further meaningful statistics that tell the story for the entire team. This is something we keep under review to make sure the data we are gathering provides meaningful insights into our performance.

2. Housing Performance Report: Asset Management

2.1 Gas servicing and heating repairs (Gas Call)

Short Name	Jan 2021	Feb 2021	Mar 2021
Total number of appointments made by Phone or letter that were kept	100%	100%	98%
Volume of repairs completed within timescale	98%	98%	98%
Total planned installations completed in accordance with programme	100%	100%	100%

Gas Call continues to perform highly according to their statistics, more time is needed to scrutinise the stats we receive as we have been experiencing issues with their performance.

Since transition, Gas Call has not provided customer satisfaction data and they put this down to the pandemic. Transactional surveys have been devised by our Resident Involvement Team; in partnership with our contractors and Gas Call will start to use this in April 2021.

Gas Call has been taken to task over the performance issues, this has led to a restructure of their contract managers and employment of a further voids operative. Following this, we have seen a vast improvement in performance across all workstreams (gas programme, void works, day to day)

Their planned works team has continued to perform well and we have passed over the 21/22 programme.

2.2 Day-to-day responsive repairs (Mears)

Performance Indicator	Jan 2021	Feb 2021	Mar 2021	Q4
Customer Satisfaction	90	74	73	79
Emergency jobs completed on time	95.74	98.06	100	98
Urgent Jobs Completed on Time	-	96.13	98.88	98
All jobs completed on time	96.02	98.52	98.96	98
Average days to complete non-urgent works	15.31	16.11	16.29	16
Appointments made and kept	97.93	98.01	97.26	97.73
Work completed in one visit	78.83	86.30	83.03	82.03

Repairs are our highest cause of customer complaints, although Mears statistics do not necessarily tell the same story. The PI that stands out to us is the number of jobs completed on time, reported by Mears as 98%, but we are aware of a backlog of jobs in certain trades and cancellation of jobs due to staff shortages, sickness and furlough. The stats are showing good performance because we were granting extensions of time for these reasons; a practice that ceased in April.

Mears have acknowledged the poor service they have been providing. They have told us they will employ further staff where gaps have been identified and provide further training for their call centre staff.

We have seen improvements in their call centre already as the average holding time for customers has reduced from 6 mins to 30 seconds.

Customer satisfaction remains low, which can be put down to the issues identified above. Other reasons for the low results could be:

- The method of collection is by text, where as previously the operative requested feedback immediately using their PDA.
- Of the 330 text messages sent in March, 62 customers gave feedback, only 18%. This could indicate that customers are more likely to respond to a survey if they have had a poor experience.

Our Resident Involvement team have been working with Mears to develop a new customer satisfaction survey that gives feedback on the entire experience rather than focussing on the works delivered by the operative in the home. To ensure a representative sample of customers has the opportunity to give feedback, our team will run a validation survey on 10%-20% of the customers that have had a repair in that month.

2.3 Day to day repairs - Post Inspections

Performance Indicator	Jan 2021	Feb 2021	Mar 2021
% post inspections carried out **New for Feb report		9.35%	6.93%

Covid 19 ceased all post inspections for the period of lockdown. Officers began post inspections in a planned way in Feb and we expect to see an increase in the number completed over the next couple of months as customers and officers gain confidence in the nation's recovery from the pandemic and the roll out of vaccinations.

Target has not been set but it is likely to be around 10% of jobs.

In February and March, Zero post inspections failed, indicating that Mears are performing on quality.

As the number of inspections picks up, we will be looking to focus post inspections on areas where we are experiencing complaints. Ie in a certain area or with a certain trade.

2.4 Capital Programme

Performance Indicator	Jan 2021	Feb 2021	Mar 2021
Percentage of capital programme spent (NB revised budget from 01 Oct)	29.44%	33.01%	37.42%
Percentage of properties that meet decent homes standard			92.78%

Capital programme

Total capital works spend for 2020/21 is £4,437,246.58, this is only 37.42% of the total capital budget but in-line with our forecast spend given at Quarter 3. The reasons for the failure to utilise the full budget are as follows:

- At transition EKH had spent only 19.34%
- We had to resolve many legacy issues to determine our position
- Knock on effects of covid in gaining access and having operatives available to carry out the work. (for example, the windows and doors programme ceased during the 3rd lockdown as our windows and doors contractor could not find accommodation in the area)
- Staff shortages

From June, the Asset Management will be fully staffed and the capital programme for 2021/22 will be reprofiled. Many large projects were in the planning phase in 2020/21, that we expect to progress rapidly through 2021/22 - for example, lift refurbishments, improvements to our tower blocks and planned works to Royal Crescent.

Invicta House fire safety works are close to completion and structural surveys of the tower blocks, to inform the specification for external wall insulation replacement are underway. The lift refurbishment programme has also started on site.

Decent homes

We have 222 decent homes failures reported at the end of March 2021, which represents 7.2% of our stock. Our biggest failures are our tower block bathrooms. There had been a reluctance to carry out these replacements by EKH due to the presence of asbestos insulation board (AIB), which needs to be removed before the bathroom can be replaced. Due to the nature of these works and the length of time tenants would be without bathroom facilities, the tenants would need to be decanted while the work was carried out. The other area where our decent homes are failing is in electrical works. This is linked to the work our compliance team is carrying out to identify electrical compliance for all.

2.5 Aids and Adaptations

Performance Indicator	Jan 2021	Feb 2021	Mar 2021
Adaptations completed Minor **New for Feb report ***		3	16
Adaptations completed Major **New for Feb report ***		6	5

Since transition, the Aids and Adaptations (A&A) surveyor has completed 48 Majors and 62 Minors.

Our £400,000 budget was underspent by £179,000. Covid 19 has had a significant impact upon A&A's Budget due to clientele being the most vulnerable in Thanet.

Our A&A surveyor has given a more personalised service than previously experienced, some of the highlights as follows:

- 0 complaints received during 20/21
- 2 refusals due to property constraints in 20/21
- Excellent feedback from clients.
- Mears A+A team exceptionally empathetic, personable & capable.

Our draft A&A policy sets the following targets for timescales:

- 3 months for minors
- 1 year for majors

We will record the waiting time of customers, from going on the waiting list to completion of work so we can monitor performance against this target.

3. Housing Performance Report: Housing Operations

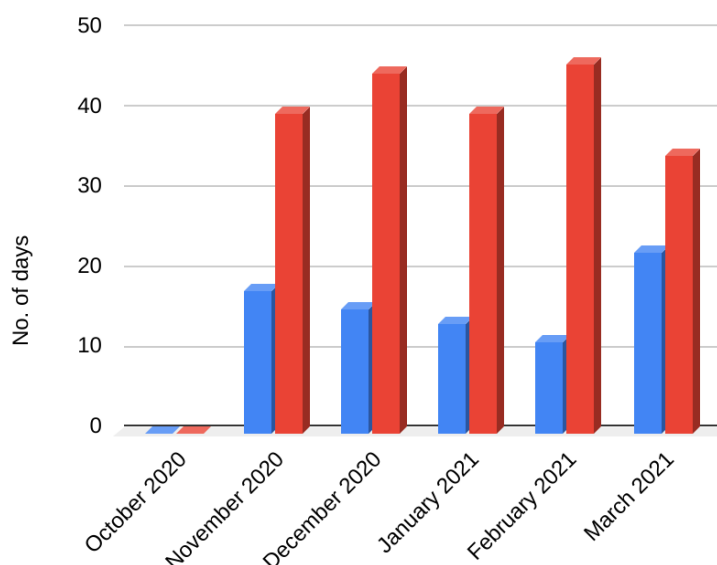
3.1 Voids and re-lets

Performance Indicator	Jan 2021	Feb 2021	Mar 2021	Q4
Average days to re-let all properties excluding major works	13.67	11.29	22.5	15.82
Average days to re-let all properties including major works	40	46	34.75	40.25

Overall this quarter, we have performed well for minor works voids against the 16.5 day target. We have not performed well for major voids against the 22.75 day turn around since transition and quarter 4 follows the trend. The chart below shows this, with a decrease in performance on minor voids during March 21

Voids and relets

- Average days to re-let all properties excluding major works
- Average days to re-let all properties including major works



The poor performance is linked to the following:

- Increased volume of voids due to influx of new properties and buy backs from the Housing Strategy team, from average 2 voids per week since October 2020 to 4 voids per week in March 2021. This has an impact as we have prioritised transferring current tenants in overcrowded conditions and thus a knock on effect on our officers' resources and that of our contractors.

- The condition that we have received our voids back has been poor, with extensive repairs required and/or asbestos removal. Potentially due to low investment due to failing capital programme whilst under EKH management.
- Poor communication between multiple stakeholders

A review of our void process was carried out and the following improvements were identified as quick wins are being actioned:

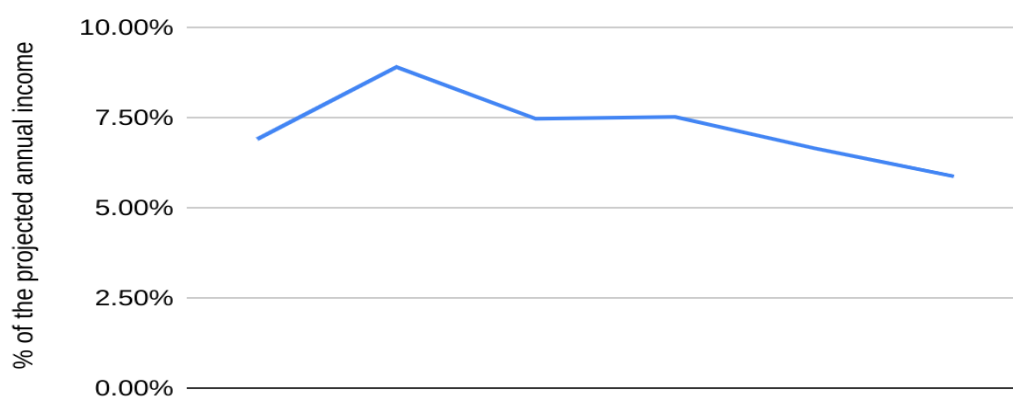
- Improved communication between contractors
- Identification of asbestos earlier in the process or pre void if possible
- Single tracking tool used across all teams

3.3 Income Management

Performance Indicator	Jan 2021	Feb 2021	Mar 2021
Current tenant arrears as a % of the projected annual rental income	7.54%	6.67%	5.89%
Garage arrears as a % of the projected annual rental income	0.10%	0.01%	0.04%
% of rent arrears due to Universal Credit	?	?	11.18%
Former tenant arrears	£527,905	£537,907	£544,953

Our arrears data shows a positive trend, although we have not achieved our target of 5%, the team have made great progress towards this.

Current tenant arrears



On transition, current arrears were at 6.8% of the total debit, 1% worse than in the previous year at the same time. This figure continued to grow as the team undertook training during quarter 3, peaking at 1.5% higher than for the same period in the previous year.

At year end, the team achieved 5.89%. This is a 1% improvement since October 2020 and 0.54% improvement the same time the previous year.

Analysing these figures in cash terms, highlights the progress:

- Total income rent is around £13m per annum.
- At its highest, our arrears totalled £1m
- Current arrears: £800,000
- Arrears for Universal Credit (UC) claimants: £630,000 (approx 85% of our debt)

The UC debt is high due to previous mismanagement of these claims by EKH. Our improved reporting capability means we can pick this up and prioritise cases appropriately, offering the right support to a tenant to enable them to pay their rent and maintain their tenancy.

Our greatest achievement is that the team has increased income at a time when it is predicted income will be impacted by the pandemic; and without the threat of eviction.

During this time the team have made 134 referrals to the Welfare Benefits Team, who assist tenants in maximising their income and have allocated £60,000 worth of DHP to help our most vulnerable tenants.

4. Housing Performance Report: Customer Service

4.1 Complaints

Performance Indicator	Jan 2021	Feb 2021	Mar 2021	Q4
The total number of all complaints received	5	4	6	15
Percentage of all complaints closed on time	100%	100%	100%	100%
No stage 1 complaints	5	3	6	14
No stage 2 complaints	0	1	0	1
No complaints upheld	5	2	4	11

There is a trend for repair related complaints issues, which fits with the difficulties Mears have experienced during lockdown. Le less staff available in their call centre means higher waiting times, less operatives on the ground means longer time for a repair to be complete. Mears have acknowledged this and we are working in partnership to improve their service to our customers.

Our performance for complaints has maintained 100% responses on time during quarter 4. In February, we introduced a new complaints procedure. This has improved communications internally and with our contracting partners; and given us a better understanding of our customers issues. The result for our customers is that they feel they are listened to and they receive a well rounded, consistent response.

Our new procedure is compliant with the Ombudsman's Code of Guidance

4.2 Call Stats

Performance Indicator	Jan 2020	Feb 2021	Mar 2021	EKH stats Mar 2020
The total number of calls received **new for Feb**		913	1121	No data
Average waiting time for a call to be answered **new for Feb**		0:30	0:34	6.57
Call answer rate		93.2%	93.5%	No data
% calls abandoned **new for Feb**		6.9%	6.51%	8.12%
Average time spent on a call **new for Feb**		6:55	6:42	9.17

We wanted to show the performance of our customer transactions team and therefore started to report on inbound call statistics in February 2021. Due to the short amount of time we have been reporting this data, we do not have the opportunity to identify trends or themes in performance.

These stats do tell us two things:

- Increase in calls by 200 in March has not meant a decrease in the teams performance. They are able to reassign resources to cover peaks in service demand.
- Compared to EKH performance at the same time last year, customers are receiving a far superior service. Call waiting time has decreased by over 6 mins and the proportion of calls answered has increased by 1.6 percentage points.

Following feedback from our customers regarding the ease at which you can speak to the right person, we carried out some mystery shopping on our IVR. We received some great feedback and recommendations, which we are putting into action.

4.3 Disrepair

Performance Indicator	Jan 2021	Feb 2021	Mar 2021
Number of disrepair claims with legal	5	5	5

Since transition we have received 11 disrepair claims:

- 6 legacy claims carried over from EKH
- 5 new claims since transition
- 3 claims received in quarter 4
- Currently 5 live claims
- 73% of claims relate to damp and mould.
- Total paid out for compensation and external legal costs 2020/21 is £74,000

Improved relationships between TLS and legal have facilitated faster resolution of claims and all live claims are progressing satisfactorily.