

Thanet District Council

Tenant and Leaseholder Services Performance report Q1 2021

July 2021/V1/Sally O'Sullivan

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

Introduction

Monitoring period: Quarter 1 2021

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1.1 Summary

This report provides an overview of the performance of the Tenant and Leaseholder Services (TLS) during quarter 1.

The team is more established and settled in their roles. Key officers have arrived to fill key vacancies in the asset management team, meaning planned improvements for this area are starting to take shape.

There has been a lot of behind the scenes work to prepare the project management for our service improvement plan and pockets of activity throughout the team is starting to happen so we can achieve our plan in the next 12- 18 months.

2. Housing Performance Report: Asset Management

2.1 Gas servicing and heating repairs (Gas Call)

Performance Indicator	Apr 2021 %	May 2021 %	June 2021 %	Q4	Q1
Total number of appointments made by Phone or letter that were kept	98	98	98	99.30%	98%
Volume of repairs completed within timescale	98	98	98	98%	98%
Total planned installations completed in accordance with programme	100	100	100	100%	100%

Gas calls statistics shows steady service delivery this quarter, which has not fluctuated from last quarter

This is reflective of the service we experience for day to day repairs and the planned install programme. The Gas Call service is let down by their gas safety programming, which although has maintained 100% compliance, would not have done so if the TLS Landlord Compliance team had not carried out a lot of the work and responsibility that should contractually lie with Gas Call. (see Landlord Compliance report for more information)

Gas Call restructured in quarter 4 due to performance issues, through which we initially saw some improvement in their communication and programme management. Early in quarter 1 they experienced some movement in their structure as key officers left and were replaced, this coincided with the gas programme falling behind and dip in performance on void properties. Gas Call has now improved and their performance is back on track. We expect to see further improvement from Gas Call through Quarter 2 when their Resident Liaison Officer co-locates at our Margate offices. We expect to see improved communication and collaboration once this change has taken place.

2.2 Day-to-day responsive repairs (Mears)

Performance Indicator	Apr 2021	May 2021	June 2021	Q4	Q1
Customer Satisfaction	73	80	89	79	80.67
Emergency jobs completed on time	99.39	99.63	99.38	98	99.47
Urgent Jobs Completed on Time	88.14	92.38	96.08	98	92.2
All jobs completed on time	95.20	95.39	96.23	98	95.6
Average days to complete non-urgent works	25.44	28.09	34.78	16	29.42
Appointments made and kept	95.52	96.19	92.21	97.73	94.64
Work completed in one visit	75.52	87.26	85.16	82.03	82.65

During quarter 1, we have experienced a steady increase in Mears' performance. This has been due to Mears being able to recruit to their team, increasing resource and thus service delivery has improved. There is still some way to go as we have identified that Mears need to improve their performance where follow up works are required and in communicating with our customers.

The statistics reflect this, especially where appointments are made and kept; which has declined over quarter 1 and performance 3% lower than in quarter 4. This is supported anecdotally by our customers who tell us that Mears will book appointments and then not turn up.

Mears are aware of where their performance needs to improve and have moved key staff around their structure to make this happen, with further changes expected in quarter 2.

Environmental issues have also impacted the service Mears provide as a national shortage of materials have meant many repairs are delayed. This can be seen in the average days to complete non-urgent works PI, which has increased to 29 days in Quarter 1 and is 19 days over the 10 day target.

The TLS responsive repairs team have also experienced some movement in the team during quarter 1, as 2 x key officers left the service, taking with them a wealth of knowledge and experience; And our new Senior Repairs Surveyor started.

With our new Senior Repairs Surveyor in place, we are improving the way we manage our partnering contractors. We are also looking at improving the efficiency of our TLS officers by:

- Improving the way we use Northgate
- Improving procedures

2.3 Day to day repairs - Post Inspections

Performance Indicator	Apr 2021	May 2021	June 2021	Q4	Q1
% post inspections carried out	6.56	6.99	18.05	8.14%	10.30%

During May, 2 key officers left our service, meaning we had reduced resources to carry out post inspections. We recruited an agency worker to provide support for the team and moved resources from a different area to assist with administration. This has enabled a greater amount of post inspections to be carried out in June and thus have achieved the 10% target of post inspections over all for Q1.

Post inspections are supporting some customer feedback on poor quality repairs and incomplete work due to shortage of materials or certain trades e.g, plastering, glazing and fencing. Mears have committed to address this gap in quarter 2 and as such these trades will be targeted for inspection.

2.4 Capital Programme

Performance Indicator	Apr 2021	May 2021	June 2021
Percentage of capital programme spent (NB revised budget from 01 Oct)	-	0.52	6.59

The 6.59% spend on the capital programme at the end of quarter 1 does not reflect the progress that has been made.

At the end of the financial year, we have received credits into the budget which gives the illusion that we have spent less than we have; and capital works are progressing programme vs progress as we would expect

We reprofiled our budgets in quarter 1 to more accurately reflect what we expect to spend in this financial year and we have approximately £200,000 worth of invoices awaiting payment across 2 x programmes of works.

The highlight of our capital programme during June was the completion of 3 x passenger lift replacement, in our tower blocks and the completion of our tower block surveys. These surveys will inform our programmes of work on our tower block which includes the replacement of the external wall system.

Decent Homes

Performance Indicator	Apr 2021	May 2021	June 2021	Q4	Q1
Percentage of properties that meet decent homes standard	92.77	93.88	93.97	92.78%	93.97%

At the end of quarter 1, we had 222 decent homes failure which has reduced to 188 or 6.03% of our housing stock. This has been due to the progress of our kitchens and bathrooms programme and data cleansing.

Further interrogation into the decent homes failures found 6 were showing as due to damp and mould. On inspection of these properties 4 of the properties did not have an issue and 2 x required further investigation.

We also identified 19 decent homes failures with a category 1 hazard. These failures have been turned into an action plan which the team are working through to improve.

Improvements to take place during quarter 2:

- Start a programme to visit all decent homes failures to verify as a failure and take action where required.
- Train our officers in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.

This is the risk-based evaluation tool, used to identify the decent homes standard; meaning we will be better equipped to identify and protect against potential risks and hazards to health and safety in our homes.

2.5 Aids and Adaptations

Performance Indicator	Apr 2021	May 2021	June 2021
Adaptations completed Minor	1	6	7
Adaptations completed Major	2	6	4

The estimated value of works currently presented so far this year is approximately £200,000.

Mears have completed approx £80,000, with £80,000 of works currently in progress. This is predicted to rise to £100,000 by the end of August.

The national shortages of timber and cement have hampered external concrete works and there is currently a backlog which we are managing on a needs basis where possible.

Mears are currently recruiting specialist adaptations operatives as they are currently under resourced to achieve a full budget spend by end of year.

Our largest current project for this year is a ground floor extension which has an estimate of £50,000.

3. Housing Performance Report: Housing Operations

3.1 Voids and re-lets

Performance Indicator	Apr 2021	May 2021	June 2021	Q4	Q1
Average days to re-let all properties excluding major works	5.38	12	12.27	15.82	9.88
Average days to re-let all properties including major works	66.5	65.33	65.33	40.25	65.72

The performance trend for void relet time continues to decline in quarter 1 for major voids.

We continue to suffer with the volume of voids that require major works with 40 live voids in May and 45 live voids in June. This is around double what we would usually expect and what our staffing resources give allowances for.

Our major void works include issues such as; asbestos, bedbugs, fleas and extensive works required due to damage or misuse of the property by the tenant (for example, works due to the tenant was £10,000 across 4 x void properties in June.). The average value of our major works voids is £8,148 during quarter 1

We see the following reasons for poor voids performance in quarter 1:

- Increased number of voids because of movement in the stock due to new builds
- Many properties are coming back to us in very poor condition, requiring major works to bring them back up to a lettable standard.
- Reduced efficiency within the team to manage the volume of work due to the large amount of voids
- Sickness in the Mears voids team
- Delays with allocations

There was an element of heating delay to our voids service from Gas Call in quarter 1 aligned with their staffing issues. This has now been addressed and they are performing well on voids.

What we are doing to improve turn around time

- Mears have brought in a subcontractor to speed up turn around time
- Assigned further admin support to the Maintenance Inspector dealing with voids
- Allocations delays have been resolved with the Housing Options Manager.

3.3 Income Management

Performance Indicator	Apr 2021	May 2021	June 2021	Q4	Q1
Current tenant arrears as a % of the projected annual rental income	6.35%	6.13%	6.01%	5.89%	6.01
Garage arrears as a % of the projected annual rental income	0.01%	0.03%	0.09%	0.04%	0.09
% of rent arrears due to Universal Credit	10.72%	10.75%	10.53%	11.18%	10.53
Former tenant arrears	£432,121	£432,708	£443,543	£546,654	£443,543

The figures show a positive trend through the quarter as the team works toward their 5% target for the end of this financial year.

We expect an increase in arrears next month due to the letting of 54 new properties that are not in payment but this will reduce once the new payments come in.

The Welfare Benefits Team have been carrying out financial checks and giving assistance to all new tenants. This has been highly successful in getting benefits into payment earlier and giving our tenants the right support early on in their tenancy, potentially preventing arrears from occurring which can be a very stressful experience.

The garage arrears have increased due to staff absence but the figure is within target. The operational team is working to get more garages rented, providing further income on garages.

During quarter 2 the team will look at accounts that need to be written off, reducing our overall arrears figure (which includes FTA's)

The challenges the team are experiencing are as follows:

- Legal information

The team need to start legal action on legacy cases that were stalled due to Covid and need access to the courts system where notes on cases are held. They are working closely with our legal team to resolve this issue.

- Systems

Processing via Northgate is still very manual. Now that the system has been upgraded there will be the opportunity to work with the Digital Team to find efficiencies in the system and in our processes.

- Direct debits

We can currently only offer 2 dates per month to run direct debits on. By offering customers the ability to have a direct debit on any day of the month, we can increase our income collection by 20%. We are working with the Digital and Finance Teams to find the best solution for this.

4. Housing Performance Report: Customer Service

4.1 Complaints

Performance Indicator	Apr 2021	May 2021	June 2021	Q4	Q1
The total number of all complaints received	12	14	16	33	42
Percentage of all complaints closed on time	91%	86%	87.5%	100%	88.16%
No stage 1 complaints	11	10	9	29	30
No stage 2 complaints	1	4	7	3	12
No complaints upheld	8	7	6	21	21

The volume of complaints has increased in Quarter 2, with more complaints going to stage 2. Zero complaints have been reviewed by the Housing Ombudsman during this quarter.

63% of stage 1 complaints are repairs related which correlates with the poor service we have been receiving from Mears. Stage 1 repairs complaints rarely go to stage 2 as Mears complaints department is highly effective.

Complaints at stage 2 are housing management and neighbourhood related and tend to be due to long standing issues which we have recommended are resolved via the formal complaints process.

We are disappointed that our ability to close complaints within the deadline has reduced by 11.84% in quarter 2 from maintaining 100% in quarter 1. Much of this has been due to receiving complaints late from the corporate team, meaning we have less time to investigate and provide a response.

4.2 Call Stats

Performance Indicator	April 2021	May 2021	June 2021	Q4	Q1
The total number of calls received	917	690	992	2034	2599
Average waiting time for a call to be answered	0:29	1:16	2.45	0.32	1.3
Call answer rate	93.5%	89.6%	70%	94.30%	84.37%
% calls abandoned	6.1%	10.4%	30.1%	12.92%	16.42%
Average time spent on a call	6.02	2:55	4.41	6:45	4.32

43% increase in volume of calls in June compared to May. This had an impact on our call answer rate which reduced to 70% although we still answered more calls in June (691) compared to May (618)

For context, July - we achieved 82.8% call answer rate from 835 calls so it looks like Jun was an exceptional month for call volumes.

In May we moved to a new telephony system; which may have impacted the reporting. Going forward, we expect reporting to be consistent and more accurate

The team have undertaken training to enable them to resolve queries at first point of contact, this will have an impact on the average call handling time as we see the time increase. This will need to be carefully monitored to ensure that longer call handling times does not affect the waiting times and dropped call rates

This team has also been 1 x officer down through quarter 1. A new officer started toward the end of June and is now fully trained. This will also have impacted the team's ability to answer calls.

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 have been put into action.

4.3 Disrepair

Performance Indicator	April 2021	May 2021	June 2021
Number of disrepair claims with legal	6	9	11

We received 5 new cases during quarter 1, 7 of which are damp and mould related. Shortage of officers in the legal team has delayed proceedings on a number of cases requiring challenging conversations with a number of litigating solicitors regarding joint expert surveys, decant requests, negotiation of required repairs, fees & damages etc, whilst abiding to the specialist legal requirements of the 'housing disrepair protocol'.

Cases are now being covered by other members of the legal team and assistance from a specialist consulting solicitor to help catch up, so combined progress is now being made. The Senior Repairs Surveyor is the TLS liaison for Legal and in regular contact providing updates on those cases which have repairs solution agreements.

5. Housing Performance Report: Resident Involvement

Whilst this quantitative data is useful to identify and monitor resident engagement and opportunity over the period of a year. It does not reflect how we listen to their views and act upon them. This quality data is reflected in the supporting commentary.

PI code	Performance Indicator	Q1	Q4→Q1
RI01	Number of resident consultations carried out	4	↓
RI02	Number of resident scrutiny projects carried out	2	↓
RI03	Number of residents who have expressed an interest in getting involved	3	↓
RI04	Number of residents targeted for involvement in resident involvement activities	4089	↓
RI05	Number of residents involved in resident involvement activities	89	↓

RI06	Number of meetings held with resident groups	6	↓
RI07	Number of resident/group enquiries/comments/suggestions collected	21	↓
RI08	Number of information campaigns delivered	2	↓
RI09	Number of training opportunities offered to residents	0	↓
RI10	Number of residents engaged in training opportunities	0	↓
RI11	Number of services changed, implemented or withdrawn during the year as a result of resident involvement (HouseMark)	1	↓
RI12	Number of residents / service users involved in formal / informal consultation groups (including digital) (HouseMark)		↓

Residents who completed our January survey told us:	What we are doing:
<p>The following improvements were amongst their top priorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. communication and engagement 2. having an opportunity to scrutinise services and contractors 3. carrying out estate reviews to identify improvements 4. improvements to repair, maintenance and cleaning 	<p><u>Transactional satisfaction surveys</u> We've been working with residents and operational teams to develop the following transactional surveys ready for implementation. The surveys will enable residents to tell us about the services they have received and inform our TTLG when scrutinising our performance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. TLS complaints procedure 2. Mears repairs service 3. Gas Call repairs and gas servicing 4. Financial Wellbeing service
	<p><u>Online engagement (residents forum)</u> - We consulted a sample of residents to establish if there is an interest in joining/using an online residents form as a form of engagement. Of those who responded 59% said yes. We are currently researching value for money platforms to host the online form which we will trial in partnership with residents over the coming months.</p>
	<p><u>Resident Involvement Expenses and Incentive Policy</u> - We've reviewed the Policy with the TTLG to ensure it is clear and supports and encourages residents to get involved.</p>
	<p><u>Neighbourhood Inspections</u> - We've been working closely with the operations teams to set up a programme of inspections in eight key areas over the summer months. Residents will be invited to join the TLS team on their local inspection. Checking on things like communal, cleaning, grounds maintenance, repairs and to suggest improvements. A central <u>Housing Hub</u> will be set up on the inspection days to enable residents to speak with TLS staff and take part in:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Neighbourhood survey ● Building a better relationship with our customers ● Community litter pick
	<p><u>Dedicated Housing Response Officer for high rise blocks</u> We've been working on a consultation to ask residents of our six high rise blocks if they support an increase in their service charge to have dedicated Housing Response Officers for their blocks. The consultation will run in July and results will be available in August.</p>
	<p><u>Communication</u> The third issue of our quarterly Tenants and Leaseholder Newsletter was sent out to approx. 3500 residents week commencing 26 April. We are currently working on the next issue which will be mailed out to residents in mid August. The third issue of our eight quarterly High-rise block Newsletters was sent out to approx. 540 residents on week commencing 21 June.</p>
	<p><u>Recycling Project</u> - This trial project at Trove Court and Kennedy House has been delayed due to other extensive improvement works on site. In the meantime we are continuing to engage residents as recycling champions to help us develop education materials.</p>

Thanet Tenant and Leaseholder Group (TTLG)

Monthly virtual meetings are continuing with this group of 9 residents.

At their April meeting the TTLG were updated and gave feedback the following items:

- Update on meetings with the Regulator of Social Housing including the compliance report.
- Tackling stigma
- Draft HRA business plan objectives
- Feedback on the recommendations from the resident scrutiny of the telephone system
- Reviewed and amended the groups Terms of Reference, which will be adopted at their AGM in July.
- The group has decided to set up a Sub-group who will monitor and scrutinise our performance and our contractors to recommend how we can improve performance or give assurance.
- Reviewed a code of conduct for residents who take part in our involvement opportunities. Providing a safe environment for residents to engage.
- Newsletters articles
- Local community topics raised by residents included: tackling stigma, contractors impact on residents parking, cleaning and bin stores, maintenance and estate inspections.

Residents also shared community successes, of litter picks, reporting fly tippers, abandoned cars and good experience of services provided by TLS staff and Gas Call.

Mears - Contractor Quarterly Strategic meeting

The Vice Chair of the TTLG attended the contractor meeting. The Vice Chair provided examples of how she felt Mears need to address stigmatising residents i.e. don't assume we dont work and are readily available to accommodate last minute repair appointments. She expressed her support for Mears operatives to attend training to drive down instances of stigmatisation, assumptions and language used in communications.

Gas Call - Contractor Quarterly Strategic meeting

Unfortunately the tenant representative was unable to attend this meeting.