



**Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny  
Committee**  
4 February 2020

**Report from the Strategic Director  
Community and Wellbeing**

**Brent Housing Management - Performance Report**

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Non-key
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b>	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	None
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
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**1. Purpose of the report**

- 1.1. This report provides an overview of Brent Housing Management's (BHM's) operational performance. It focuses on this financial year (2019/20) and provides data for the period since the service came in-house (October 2016) for comparison. There has been considerable progress, although several areas require further improvement. The report also identifies actions that are designed to further transform resident experience, e.g. embedding the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.
- 1.2. BHM is structured around two areas - property and people. The Property service is responsible for repairs, planned works and compliance. The Housing and Neighbourhood Service focuses on the people side and is responsible for the customer contact centre, as well as collecting rent and managing tenancies and leaseholds.
- 1.3. Our overriding ambition is to improve the experience that our residents have. Great performance relies on the property and people service areas working effectively together – the customer contact centre (people) will take a call about a repair but it is the property service that manages the repairs contractor. Further

performance improvements will also be made by people and property services working with other parts of our housing service and with the wider council. For example, we want to fill voids more quickly, which relies on the Housing and Neighbourhood Service notifying that a tenancy is ending, the Property service getting refurbishment works done and the Housing Needs team letting the property.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. Members of the Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee are asked to note and comment on the information in this report.

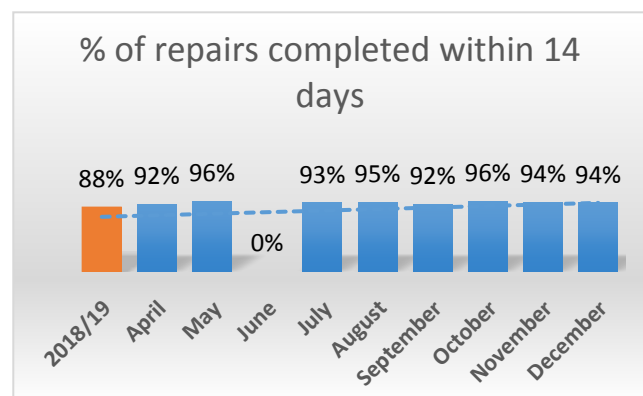
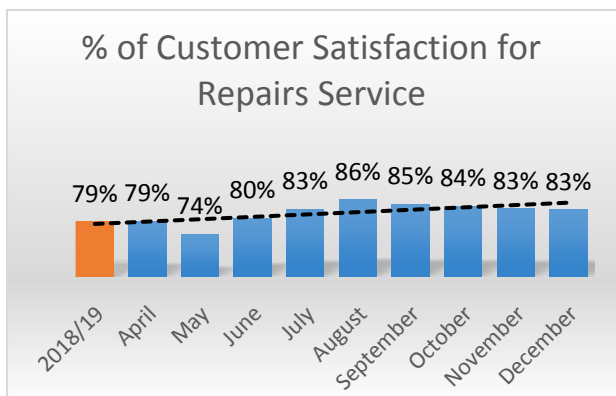
## **3. Summary**

- 3.1. The report details all areas of BHM performance and is structured by priority around the services that residents tell us make the most difference to them, rather than by how the council manages the service:
- *Responsive repairs* – we carry out nearly 30,000 repairs a year – an average of nearly 3 per property. The service has been a key focus for improvement
  - *Tenancy Management and estate caretaking* - significant changes include bringing the estate cleaning service back in house, preparing to move back to patch based working in response to resident feedback and the introduction of a Tenancy Sustainment Panel to reduce evictions
  - *Housing Contact Centre* - council and BHM technology changes have negatively impacted on performance so our focus is on improvement. Indications in December's data are positive.
  - *Leasehold and home ownership – service charge* collection is performing well and leaseholders now have a say in planned works, but concerns remain about the capacity and ability of the service to respond effectively, particularly to complex queries.
  - *Keeping residents safe* – this is a priority and the services perform well. For example, all property works actions resulting from fire risk assessment (FRA) are complete, with only tenant related actions outstanding
  - *Planned works* – our approach to planned works has improved, with the majority of programmes delivering to time and budget. The Low Rise Fire works programme has been unacceptably delayed and an action plan is in place which will be subject to contract review in 6 months.
  - *Customer experience and engagement* – all teams have worked hard to improve responsiveness and, importantly, to recognise and take responsibility for mistakes that have been made. The number of complaints and Member Enquiries is forecast to reduce this again year as it did in 2018/19, and response times are good and improving.

## **4. Repairs**

- 4.1. The Council contracts Wates to deliver all responsive repairs to BHM tenants, approximately 30,000 per year. The table below shows a significant improvement in both service performance and customer satisfaction. Relevant parts of BHM have worked closely together, and with Wates, to increase accountability of the service through weekly joint meetings that use performance and complaints data to agree priorities and improvements. The current focus is on emergencies, appointments and diagnoses, as detailed in 4.2-4.4 below.

Landlord Management	BHP	BHP	BHP/BHM (Oct 17)	BHM	BHM
KPI	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20 April - Dec
Customer satisfaction with routine repairs	No data	72%	71%	79%	83%
Repairs completions within 14 days	82%	77%	79%	76%	94%



### *Emergencies*

- 4.2. A very high percentage of repairs were being coded as requiring emergency or out of hours appointments, which put a huge strain on the service. Analysis was done which included listening to customer calls and getting feedback from Waters operatives undertaking the work. As a result, the percentage of repairs being coded as emergencies (requiring a 4 hour fix) reduced from 29% to the current 11%, in line with benchmark comparators. This improvement has had a positive impact on the service, particularly in freeing up appointments.

### *Appointments*

- 4.3. Improvements in the way that emergencies are managed (see para 4.2 above) enabled Waters to release an additional 150 appointment slots per week. In addition, Waters committed to doing all routine repairs within 14 days, instead of the previous 28 day commitment. Residents are now asked to identify a slot within the next 2-4 days for routine repairs. The service now delivers 100% of emergency repairs on time, and 80% (up from 41%) of routine repairs within 2-4 days (note not all residents want the repair done within 4 days). As the table in 4.1 shows, 94% of routine repairs were completed in 14 days in 2019/20, compared to 76% the previous year.

### *Diagnosis*

- 4.4. The diagnosis of the works required for a repair is critical and getting it wrong causes frustration for residents and staff from Brent and Waters. Success relies on contact centre staff requesting the right job and tradesperson from the system, based on their interpretation of what a customer is telling them. Data on diagnosis has been monitored at weekly meetings between Brent and Waters since April 2019 and feedback is being used to improve performance on an ongoing basis.

The management of complex repairs, requiring several different tradespeople are required, is a current area for improvement.

#### *Customer satisfaction*

- 4.5. Data suggests that this approach is working. All customers who have had a repair completed are sent a text message survey by BMG Research asking if they were happy with the repair. If they are not satisfied, an officer from Brent calls them to get feedback and progress any outstanding issues. Negative feedback is jointly reviewed by BHM and Wates at joint weekly meetings. Equal focus is put on attitudes and behaviours as well as processes in terms of performance improvement.
- 4.6. The team is aiming to deliver customer satisfaction of 85% (from 82%) consistently during 2020/2021. A joint improvement plan, designed to take us to the next level, is already in place. As well as focusing on the management of complex repairs (see 4.4 above), the plan increases focus on ensuring that Wates' supply chain allows access to the right people and supplies to deliver what we need and improving our own internal communications across teams.

### **5. Managing tenancies and estates**

- 5.1. BHM manages approximately 8,000 tenancies including New Accommodation for Independent living on behalf of Adult Social Care. This section focuses on the three areas of Housing and Neighbourhood Services' work that are fundamental to resident satisfaction – all things tenancy management (such as support for vulnerable residents, anti-social behaviour etc); management of how estates look and feel; and, the collection of rent. These areas are detailed in 5.3-11 below.
- 5.2. Across all of the areas below, we are changing the way we work in response to feedback from residents and members. When the first elements of CRM were introduced in July 2018, we introduced 'patchless' working. However, feedback from residents, partners and the team quickly identified concerns, including officers not being able to see a case through to conclusion and found it harder to build up local knowledge and connections. This has left residents feeling dissatisfied with the service. Whilst it is important to try new ways of working, it is equally important to respond to feedback. We will be reverting to a patch-based model from April 2020, so individual areas have a dedicated housing officer. We believe this will also help elected members manage casework and ensure a consistent and direct point of contact.

#### *Tenancy management*

- 5.3. Since April 2019, BHM has resolved 6,291 tenancy management issues. Whilst the majority were raised by tenants, the team is taking an increasingly proactive approach in identifying issues at an early stage and working with partners – whether in the council or outside – to intervene early. For example, we want to become the first Local Authority to achieve the Domestic Abuse Housing Accreditation for Homelessness and Housing Management. We are providing extra training for Housing Officers and Surveyors to help them spot the signs of Domestic Abuse and feel confident about how to raise concerns.
- 5.4. Helping people to sustain their tenancies is at the heart of what we do. To reflect this, we replaced the Eviction Panel with a Tenancy Sustainment Panel, which seeks input from colleagues across the council in order to help resolve specific issues. Ongoing work with the Council's Children and Young People service is focused on helping care leavers to sustain their tenancies. In addition, the leadership team across Community Well-Being have instigated a Complex Case

Panel, which can be used to bring different agencies together to improve support for a tenant, even when there is no risk of eviction.

- 5.5. The table below shows a significant reduction in the number of evictions – from 19 in 2018/19 to 10 between April and September in 2019/20. It also shows a reduction of number of tenancies lost because of rent arrears. We are particularly aware of the increased risks of arrears for tenants on Universal Credit (UC) and make use of the Alternative Payment Arrangement (APA) mechanism. An APA pays the Housing Benefit element of UC directly to the landlord rather than to the tenant. APAs are recommended for people who are in arrears and at risk of homelessness to prevent further arrears accumulating. Tenants who consider themselves vulnerable can request for this arrangement from day one.

Landlord Management	BHP	BHP	BHP/BHM (Oct 17)	BHM	BHM
KPI	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20 April - Dec
Total number of Evictions carried out	25	41	38	19	10
Total number of Evictions for rent arrears	14	29	17	11	6

- 5.6. Tackling anti-social behaviour remains a priority for our tenants and we work closely with colleagues in Community safety to deliver an increasingly joined up approach to investment in infrastructure such as CCTV and door entry systems on estates. Of the 10 evictions carried out to Dec 2019, 4 were as a result of anti-social behaviour.
- 5.7. We fund estate improvement works and the return to neighbourhood-based staff will help ensure we understand from residents and local Cllrs what work is required. For example, the car park Victoria Mansions attracted anti-social behaviour and residents had lost all confidence in the Council's ability to deliver improvements through BHP. Consultation was held with residents as a number of requests were in conflict, i.e. more space for children to play and more car parking space. We provided residents with options that met these differing demands in order to take the scheme forward. This is the blueprint for how we will approach improvements in the future – working with residents and Cllrs to come up with priorities and an action plan with the dedicated housing officer for that patch tracking delivery.

#### *Estate services*

- 5.8. Following the Cabinet decision last April to bring our estate cleaning service in-house, colleagues from Wettons joined Brent in September 2019. We are ambitious for the service – not least because we want to improve the very low (approx. 20%) satisfaction with the service as it was. The service came back on a 'lift and shift' basis, with a focus on some targeted improvements, including the way we respond to issues around deep cleaning, which was specifically raised as a concern. New equipment has been purchased and a full programme of deep cleaning has started, with resident views being sought about the cleaning standards. We have seen a reduction in cleaning complaints, which is positive, albeit we started from a low base.

- 5.9. A full service reconfiguration is imminent, though, due to come into force in April 2020 with a new set of performance indicators. Residents have been at the heart of specifying the new service, including through workshops. A clear priority from this consultation was that cleaning specifications must be bespoke to blocks and tackle issues related to that particular neighbourhood rather than being standard across all areas – this links to the move back to patch based working (see 5.2 above).
- 5.10. The evolution of the service has also created opportunities to address our carbon footprint and a fleet of electric vans will shortly come into use.
- 5.11. Parking on BHM land continues to create a challenge for us. We have commissioned work to analyse all parking facilities on Council estates as we need to consider options for how to manage and enforce residents' parking so that colleagues can take enforcement action against people parking illegally. We anticipate making progress in terms of likely options within this financial year.

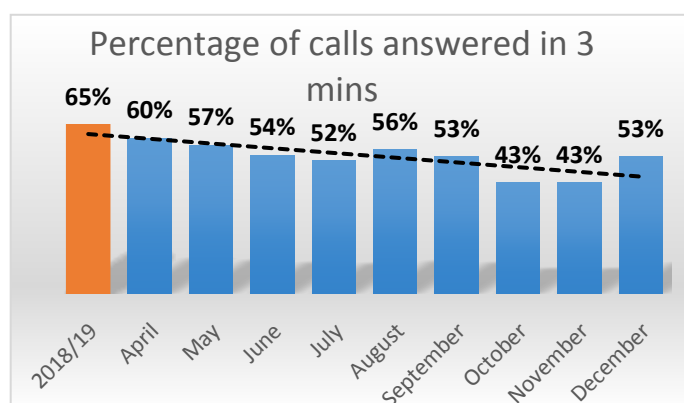
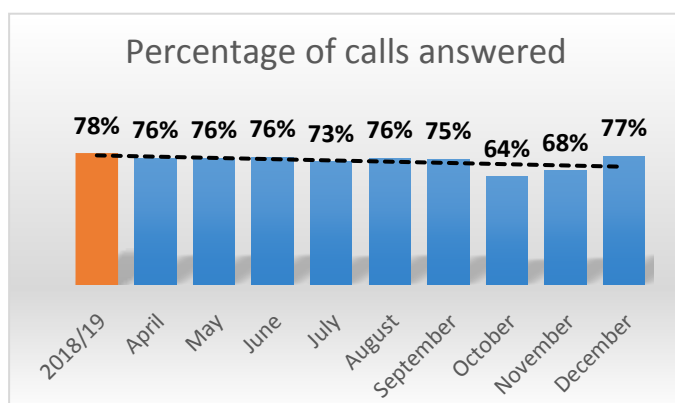
#### *Rent collection*

- 5.12. Rent collected goes into the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), which is the budget used for maintenance and management of all council homes. Income from rent collection for last year was £51 million. In 2018/19, the rent collection performance was 98.6%, performance for this year to date is 98.8% showing performance has improved slightly but needs to increase further to meet the performance target of 99.5%. Using analysis of historic trends, the service is confident that this target will be reached in Quarter 4. We recognise the substantial risk to tenants on Universal Credit and para 5.5 above explains how we are working with them to protect them from increased arrears

## **6. Housing Contact Centre**

- 6.1. The Housing Contact Centre is the front door for all housing related enquiries for all tenants and leaseholders, as well as Housing Needs enquiries. The table below shows a decline in performance KPIs since we brought the service in-house and throughout the year with a more significant drop in October and November 2019. December 2019 has shown a significant improvement, as a result of resolution of some systems issues and increased management focus.

Landlord Management	BHP	BHP	BHP/BHM (Oct 17)	BHM	BHM
KPI	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20 April - Dec
Percentage of Housing Management calls answered in the contact centre	88%	86%	71%	78%	73%



- 6.2. These KPI's remain important but should be considered in context. The service has changed significantly over the last two years. In 2015/16, the contact centre was dealing only with repairs calls and some frontline calls for information. In 2019 it manages all front line calls for all BHM services and since July 2019 it also deals with Housing Needs calls. In addition, the centre now makes outbound calls to residents (1,182 so far) and the complexity of these calls is increasing and taking longer, for example because a resident needs a greater level of support because of mental illness. The team is reviewing the appropriateness of KPI's as a result. The table below shows the numbers of calls and the increase in demand:

2019/2020	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Brent Housing Management</b>	6665	6598	6479	7561	6510	7118	8796	7078	7795
<b>Housing Needs</b>				2249	2050	2265	2265	2087	2089

- 6.3. The increase in demand for Housing Management calls is one factor in the decline in performance, but another key factor has been the roll out of several systems, including 8x8 (phone system), CRM (electronic case management system) and M3 (a repairs diagnostics tool). These systems are designed to improve performance. For example, CRM is fundamental to joining up the service for complex works, and the resident portal will allow residents to report and diagnose repairs online.
- 6.4. However, there have been a range of implementation issues. Whilst December's performance is evidence of improvement, we are not complacent. Concerns are now dealt with weekly and visibility of issues has been improved. Challenges included:
- Processing times for calls received increasing because of servers hosting the CRM being slow to confirm information input into the system and progress the action onto the next team required. Officers have to wait and cannot move onto the next call until the system loads
  - There is a four-system integration between CRM, M3, Northgate and Impact (Wates in-house system) for repairs. Since the launch date, there were issues with coding between the four integrated systems that were either sharing incorrect or incomplete information. An example of this is the timeslots allocated to specific repairs jobs differing in each system. This had a knock on

effect on the service delivered to residents and Wates ability to plan jobs for operatives to carry out. This has now been resolved

- Whilst the function within the system to send letters is improved, the functionality to streamline debt collections is still being built. This will enable front line officers to take effective rental arrears action, by using predictive analytics and approach tenants before they fall into arrears.

## 7. Leasehold and Home Ownership

- 7.1. The leasehold service charge collection rate is currently higher as of Quarter 3 (90%) when compared to the previous year's mid-point (78%). The relationship between Leasehold service and Property services is essential to ensure a seamless process for Leaseholders when carrying out works.

Landlord Management	BHP	BHP	BHP/BH M (Oct 17)	BHM	BHM	Direction of travel
KPI	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20 April–Dec	
Leasehold Service charge collection rate	107%	119%	110%	103%	90%	□

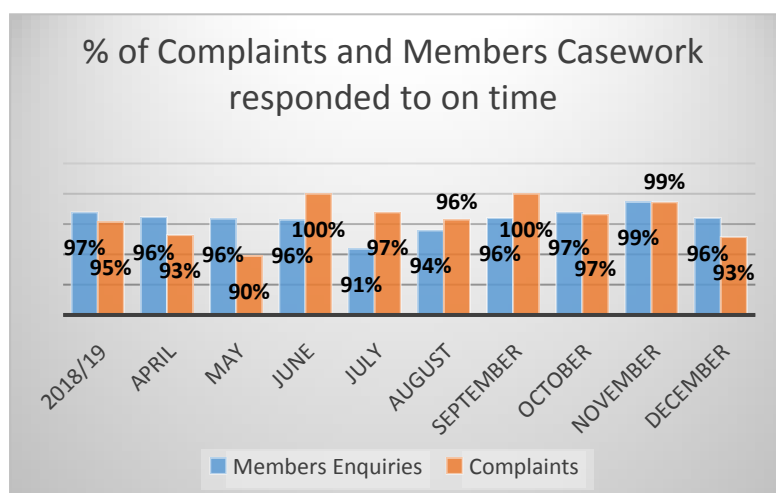
- 7.2. Significant improvements have been made to how Brent responds to leaseholder queries. Following high levels of complaints about the Section 20 process (planned works which are charged to leaseholders), a Section 20+ process was introduced. This new process meant that both leaseholder and tenants were engaged and consulted at the design stage of all works - before works started, during the delivery and during the snagging stage at the completion of works. This process also involves sending out unpriced specification of works to all residents, regardless of tenure and inviting them to comment on the proposed works, and a site walkabout with Brent and Wates.
- 7.3. This is proving to be a success as residents feel they are involved in drawing up and finalising the works to their properties. The Section 20 notice is prepared after the consultation. Some leaseholders are waiving the 30-day Section 20 notice period, as they have agreed the works, know the cost and want the works to commence, therefore reducing the time taken for the 30-day period and responding to observations.
- 7.4. Ward Councillors are now notified about works in their wards before the Section 20 notices are sent out, so they are aware and know who to contact before leaseholders go to them with the notice and complain to them. In the past Councillors only became aware of these projects when leaseholders went to complain about the cost of the works. This is having a positive impact on communications with ward Councillors.
- 7.5. Whilst stats for service charge collection rates are good and there have been improvement in handling works, there are issues with the Leasehold services capacity and ability to respond to queries and more complex cases where legal advice is required. The service is now exploring options to benchmark vacancies to attract applicants with the right experience and knowledge and build capacity within the service.



## 8. Customer experience and engagement

8.1. Ensuring BHM is focused on the needs of our residents and improving their experience of the service, is critically important. As this section shows, this focus seems to have had a positive impact both on the number of complaints and members enquiries, and response times, but there is still more to do to ensure this focus on our residents is fully embedded.

Landlord Management	BHP	BHP	BHP/BHM (Oct 17)	BHM	BHM
KPI	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20 April - Dec
Number of stage 1 complaints received about the housing service	511	613	669	532	470
Percentage of stage 1 complaints responded to on time	80.3%	99.5%	84.0%	95.4%	96.2%
Number of stage one complaints upheld and partly upheld	230	388	334	328	223
Number of Stage 2 cases received	66	75	71	53	73
Number of stage two complaints upheld and partly upheld by the council	35	48	52	39	51
Number of member enquiries received	324	569	1072	1061	627
Percentage of Member Enquiries responded to on time	95%	100%	80%	97%	96%



### *Complaints*

8.2. Year to date BHM has received 470 Stage 1 complaints (96.2% of which were responded to on time) and 627 Member enquiries (96% of which were responded

to on time). Both the numbers and the response times are moving in a consistently positive direction. The following paragraphs set out the particular issues underlying the complaints for Housing and Neighbourhood Services (people) and Property Services.

- 8.3. The service areas that received the most complaints in the Housing and Neighbourhoods service were Tenancy and Public Realm:
- Complaints related to Tenancy were a result of service failure, communication and policy or procedure. The service has decided to revert the management of tenancies back to a patch based system as analysis of these complaints and a backlog of casework evidences that residents want a clear point of contact when they are experiencing issue. Re-introducing patch based working will also support case ownership for officers so they are able to keep a resident informed throughout the process.
  - Complaints related to the Public Realm were predominately a result of missed refuse collections and cleaning standards. Since the cleaning service has transferred back in-house, there has been a reduction in the complaints received relating to cleaning. The Service is now developing a new performance-monitoring framework for all estate services within the public realm. The service is now utilising systems introduced by digital transformation to support this. All activity related to estate services, including; waste collection, tree maintenance, ground maintenance, cleaning and parking will be captured holistically. This information will enable the housing service to cross-reference estate inspections carried out by Homes and Communities or the estate caretaking service with the data captured by contractors such as Veolia.
- 8.4. The repairs service accounts for 70% of complaints in Property Services, followed by Planned Maintenance, which makes up 14%. The root causes for both service areas are service failures (82%) either through delays, service not provided and the service not up to standard; communications (10%) with delays in contacting the customer; or a disagreement with policy or procedure (5%). Having said that, with about an average of 2,500 repairs carried out a month; this represents less than 0.5% of all repairs carried out. The repairs services has embarked on the second phase of the ongoing improvement plan. This will focus on the more complex repairs involving multi-trade work; Wates supply chain performance and internal communications and actions of leasehold, tenancy and property services teams.

#### *Engagement*

- 8.5. The service has an established Customer Experience Panel. Panel members are Brent Council tenants. The panel has met formally 5 times since January 2019. During that period, the Panel has been recruited and a scope of interest has been explored initially focusing on customer satisfaction with ASB cases, looking at complaint trends, general property repairs and customer journey. A new chair to the panel who is due to start in Feb 2020.
- 8.6. To date, the panel have conducted a review of the greeting and hold policy for the contact centre, assisted with the redesign of the telephony quality scoring metrics, feedback regarding scaffolding and communications regarding duration and this directly assisted us in our contract negotiations with Wates around scaffolding rules and measures.
- 8.7. With the Social Housing Green Paper committing to tackling stigma and ensuring tenants and leaseholders have a voice in how their homes are managed, the

service is committed to developing a wider engagement offer. This will include recruiting additional panel members and working together to create a new strategy for engagement. The service will also improve its approach to measuring the influence tenants and leaseholders have in decision-making.

- 8.8. The service has already held a number of survey engagements and consultations this year, which have and are still informing decision-making. This includes:
- Changes to Rent Proposals
  - Estate cleaning standards and specifications
  - Tenancy Management Policy

The development of the Asset Management Strategy will also be subject to an eight-week resident consultation process to commence in April this year.

### Keeping residents safe

- 8.9. The table below highlights the consistent performance in relation to key compliance and health and safety KPIs. This was a focus for BHP and it remains a strong focus for BHM. BHM has increased the focus on fire safety, for example, undertaking Level 4 Fire Risk Assessments (FRA4) for all high rise buildings to provide further assurance about the safety of those buildings (previously only FRA1s were undertaken).

Landlord Management	BHP	BHP	BHP/BHM (Oct 17)	BHM	BHM
KPI	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20 April - Dec
Percentage of properties which currently have a valid gas safety certificate	99.98%	99.98%	99.99%	99.43%	99.72%*
Percentage of high rise blocks (6 floors +) with Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) in last 12 months	No data	100%	100%	100%	100%
FRA - Completed Recommendations for high rise blocks	No data	No data	No data	100%	94%

\*Gas figures up to Nov 19 provided as unable to get Dec data.

### Fire risk assessments

- 8.10. When any FRA is undertaken (FRA level 1 to 4) it results in an action plan, which sets out the required remedial actions. These are classified as: fire safety works, mechanical and electrical maintenance, and management actions (actions relating to policies and resident behaviour for example), and they are further categorised as 'urgent works' or as 'programmed works'. The urgent works have all been undertaken in line with required deadlines.
- 8.11. The FRA4s undertaken for the high rise blocks are intrusive checks into the structure of the building, and in particular the compartmentation of the building. Although these assessments have led to a range of programmed works, they have not raised any significant concerns, which provides BHM management with

greater assurance about the safety of those buildings, and the appropriateness of the 'stay put' policy.

8.12. The 6% of outstanding actions relate to the availability of a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEP) in high-rise Premises Information Boxes (PIBs). All high rise buildings now have PIBs, and they all contain the relevant building information. PEEPs are a relatively new requirement of the FRAs, and BHM have now employed a project manager to co-ordinate and speed up the delivery of them. This programme started with a letter to all high rise residents, which was sent in December 2019. A 12 week programme will start in February to include an audit of all homes in high-rise blocks to ensure any resident who is identified has a PEEP developed and information on their needs will be passed to the Compliance team who will review any additional signage or changes required in that block.

8.13. In addition, this work stream also deals with works arising from London Fire Brigade (LFB) enforcement and advisory notices, and other fire safety works that arise such as the works required to NAIL properties. This facility is expected to be required on an ongoing basis to ensure that housing properties are maintained to a good standard. Senior managers meet with LFB on a quarterly basis to ensure that there is positive and proactive joint working.

## 9. Voids and Lettings

9.1. In the year to date, we have let 119 general needs properties. As stated above, improving re-let times relies on BHM (property and people) working together with Housing Needs. The focus has been on property and people and so there are still some delays in re-letting which need to be ironed out and this will be a focus for 2020/21.

Landlord Management	BHP	BHP	BHP/BHM (Oct 17)	BHM	BHM
KPI	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20 April–Dec
Average time to re-let standard void properties	31	27	57	39	37
Average time to re-let major void properties	59	49	83	146	62
Rent loss due to voids	0.59%	0.64%	1.50%	0.70%	0.69%

9.2. Forty-three void properties were classified as standard voids with an average turnaround of 36 days against the target of 24 days, 76 properties classed as major voids with an average turnaround of 62 days against the target of 72 days. The definition of a major void is where works could not reasonably be carried out with a tenant in occupation, for example structural works or full heating installations. However, the works in a standard void would involve new kitchens, bathrooms, rewires, boiler replacements and re-plastering and require significant periods to complete.

9.3. The targets for average turnaround time have not been achieved for standard voids so far this year. The main reasons for this are related to challenges within the lettings process. Delays in advertising properties owing to inaccuracies in the

property details such as the number of bedrooms / bed spaces. This information needs to be verified as part of the initial inspection and then any updates to the system are made by the rent accounting team to ensure that properties are advertised with accurate information. This affects our ability to advertise properties early in the process.

- 9.4. The implementation of the new CRM system started the process of overcoming the issues in the voids process. The new process design has resulted in the automation of many of the tasks and has helped communication between teams. However, a merger of the voids and lettings teams into a single services is now being explored to further embed a seamless approach.

## **10. Planned works**

### *Planned Maintenance*

- 10.1. The Planned maintenance programme is made up of maintenance projects across street properties and blocks. Since the service came back into the Council, there has been a significant amount of work to improve the quality of planned maintenance and residents' experience of these works. Critical to these changes have been the BHM property team taking back control of the programme in order to set the agenda for the works as part of a more proactive approach to asset management. This can be seen in:
- operational matters such as the approach to scaffolding, which has seen a significant reduction in complaints. All scaffold now have signs, which give contractor contact details, reason why the scaffold is up and duration of the works. A scaffold register for scaffolding erected by reactive, planned and other contractors is held and updated and all scaffolds beyond the removal date are investigated weekly
  - strategic matters such as the approach to the low-rise fire safety programme. BHM provided the focus, undertook the surveying, design, scoping and works scheduling for each block. Wates were then provided with the necessary instructions, priorities and agreed a programme to commence from November 2018 for one year.
- 10.2. This change in approach means that the majority of the programme has delivered on time and to defined quality standards. The exception to this is the low-rise fire safety programme, which is delayed due primarily to supply chain issues.
- 10.3. However, it should also be noted that an increased focus on resident satisfaction in the development of the asset management strategy has also identified a broader challenge: despite 93% of homes meeting the Decent Homes Standard when the service came in-house, resident satisfaction with the quality of their homes is only 63%. Further work has identified that where works were undertaken by BHP, for example, a new kitchen or bathroom installed, residents may be less satisfied with the quality of their home. BHM now undertake surveys with residents after all planned works to understand resident' views on those works, and to ensure the significant amount of money invested also contributes to residents having greater satisfaction with quality of their homes.

### *Planned programme – conversions and street properties*

- 10.4. Historically conversions and street properties were not included in BHP planned works programmes and there was a backlog of works when the service came in-house. These properties are older, and the lack of maintenance on them has meant that they now need extensive and costly works. In the last two years, we have steadily been working on these properties. To date, the service has carried out works to 147 properties, replaced 132 roofs, a common cause for complaints

and repairs requests. 38 houses had windows replaced with energy efficient double-glazed windows, increasing the thermal efficiency for our stock, reducing fuel bills for residents and contributing to the carbon reduction target for Brent Council. 52 are programmed for works to the end of the financial year. A total of £3.1million was spent on the external fabric works of street properties.

#### *Planned works - blocks*

10.5. The service spent £4.06 million on works to 18 blocks. This work included:

- Roofs (13 were replaced)
- Double glazed windows
- Insulation to roof spaces and flat roofs
- External fabric
- Paths, gates, fences outhouses
- Painting
- Eradication of penetrating damp
- Asbestos removal
- Rainwater goods replacement
- Structural Concrete repairs

10.6. Forty-eight flats within these blocks had windows replaced with double glazed energy efficient windows. These measures increased the thermal efficiency of the dwellings within the block leading to lower fuel bills for residents and reducing the carbon footprint for the Council.

#### *Planned programme - Kitchens and Bathrooms*

10.7. Last year the service received a high number of complaints and dissatisfied tenants with the kitchen and bathroom programme. This year, a Brent Contract Manager visited each property and carried out a survey before confirming with the resident that they were getting a new kitchen/bathroom. The programme therefore commenced later in the year (October) and we are on track to complete the works in January 2020. There has not been a single complaint this year about the programme, which is nearly completed.

10.8. In addition we assessed each property and where residents asked for an extra WC to be installed in a bathroom with a separate WC, due to the number of family members, where this was practical, we installed the extra WC as per the tenant's request. This is something we have rarely done previously, tenants got like for like without assessing the needs of a modern home. In future, when the property is re-let this will make it more attractive to prospective tenants.

Tenants now have a choice of colours for tiles (we only used to offer white tiles) and a wider choice of kitchen and floor finishes.

- Number of Kitchens renewed 22
- Number of Bathrooms renewed 12
- Estimated total spend £190k

#### *Low Rise Fire Safety Work Programme*

10.9. The one area of the planned works programme where progress has been slower than expected is the Low Rise Fire Safety works. This is an important work stream and the scope of works also includes lighting, decoration and floor finishes to increase the overall standard of the stock. The works were mobilised in April 2019 and has been progressing slowly but steadily since then. The programme consists of:

- 654 street properties comprising 1608 dwellings (673 of these dwellings are leasehold), and
- 454 purpose built low and medium rise blocks comprising 4606 dwellings. (1872 of these dwellings are leasehold)

10.10. Approximately 160 street properties, and 40 blocks have now been completed. £2.24m expenditure has currently been certified. It is expected that a further £1m will be certified by the end of March 2020.

10.11. Significant concerns have been raised with Wates during 2019 regarding their management of the programme. At our request Wates have replaced the senior managers on the contract and have introduced two further supply chain contractors, and two further door manufacturers. This is in answer to a lack of resources, which has meant that the programme has not progressed as expected. This significantly increases the resources that have the greatest impact on the programme. The door supply is now being realised and this will result in increased completions going forward. It should be noted that delivery of this programme is carried out in a very challenging market with respect to available resources for fire safety work.

## **11. Financial implications**

11.1. Brent Housing Management Services are funded from the ring-fenced Housing Revenue Account (HRA), which is monitored alongside other Council budgets. Any adverse or favourable variance resulting from management performance is expected to be contained within existing balanced budgets for 2019/20.

## **12. Legal implications**

12.1. Since October 2017, the Council's housing management functions have been carried out by the Council's in-house Housing Management Service after they had previously delegated to its then Arms Length Management Organisation, Brent Housing Partnership between 2002 and 2017.

12.2. Under section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, the Council as the landlord has a duty to keep in repair and proper working order the structure and the exterior of the residential properties it owns as well as certain installations for the supply of water, gas and electricity. Failure to comply with this duty leaves the Council to be liable to legal action from its tenants for being in breach of the tenancy agreement in relation to housing disrepair.

12.3. Tenants also take legal action in relation to housing disrepair against their landlords by issuing proceedings in the Magistrates Court where the premises are in such a state as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance as set out in section 79 of the Environmental Protection Act 1980. 'Prejudicial to health' is defined as '...injurious, or likely to cause injury, to health'.

12.4. The Regulator of Social Housing has set out standards which registered providers of social housing must meet. The Home Standard which was set by the Regulator of Social Housing deals with quality of accommodation and repairs and maintenance.

12.5. In relation to quality of accommodation, the Home Standard states that registered providers of social housing, which includes local authorities, should do the following:

- (a) ensure that tenants' homes meet the standard set out in section five of the Government's Decent Homes Guidance and continue to maintain their homes to at least this standard;
  - (b) meet the standards of design and quality that applied when the home was built, and were required as a condition of publicly funded financial assistance, if these standards are higher than the Decent Homes Standard; and
  - (c) in agreeing a local offer, ensure that it is set at a level not less than these standards and have regard to section six of the Government's Decent Homes Guidance.
- 12.6. In relation to repairs and maintenance, the Home Standard states that registered providers of social housing, which includes local authorities, should do the following:
  - (a) provide a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service to homes and communal areas that responds to the needs of, and offers choices to, tenants, and has the objective of completing repairs and improvements right first time; and (b) meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of the occupants in their homes.
- 12.7. Under section 105 of the Housing Act 1985, the Council as a local authority landlord has a duty to consult with those of its secure tenants who are likely to be substantially affected by matters of housing management, which includes the management, maintenance and improvement of dwelling houses let by the Council under secure tenancies and the provision of services in connection with such dwelling houses. The consultation requirements under section 105 of the Housing Act 1985 must enable the secure tenants likely to be affected by changes in relation to housing management as mentioned above to be informed of the Council's proposals and to make their views known to the Council within a specified period.
- 12.8. Section 20 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 imposes a requirement on Landlords to consult with Leaseholders (as opposed to secure tenants) in respect of qualifying works (e.g. where leaseholder's contribution is in excess of £250 p.a.) or a qualifying long term agreements (ones entered into by the landlord for a period in excess of 12 months which result in a contribution of a leaseholder in a year is in excess of £100). Failure to comply with the consultation requirements will mean that only £250 per leaseholder per financial year can be recovered by the freehold owner in respect of qualifying works and only £100 per leaseholder per financial year can be recovered by the freehold owner in respect of qualifying long term agreements during the duration of those agreements. These various consultation requirements are set out in the Service Charges (Consultation Requirements) (England) Regulations 2003.
- 12.9. In some circumstances, it will not be possible to meet all the necessary consultation requirements (for example, very urgent works on the grounds of safety) and in those circumstances, the landlord can apply to the First Tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) to apply for dispensation from complying with the consultation requirements pursuant to section 20. The Tribunal has discretion to grant dispensation if it takes the view that it is reasonable to do so.

### **13. Equality implications**

- 13.1. This report is an update on performance, so there are no equality implications to note.



***REPORT SIGN-OFF***

***PHIL PORTER***

Strategic Director Community and Wellbeing