



**Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny
Committee**
25 January 2023

**Report from Corporate Director
Resident Services**

Brent Housing Management Update

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Non-Key Decision
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
No. of Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Tenant Satisfaction Measures
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Ryan Collymore Head of Housing Property Services ryan.collymore@brent.gov.uk Kate Daine Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods Kate.daine@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To outline the structure of Brent Housing Management (BHM) and how they contribute to BHM's overall work.
- 1.2 To provide data on the number of tenants and leaseholders broken down by ownership types showing how the number has changed over the previous 5 years.
- 1.3 To provide an overview of responsive repairs including Wates performance outlining any contractual penalties enforced.
- 1.4 To provide reassurance about how BHM deal with Damp and Mould following the tragic death of Awaab Ishak.
- 1.5 To provide an overview of planned and major works including how the service communicates with residents throughout the process.

- 1.6 To outline the role of compliance with communal areas specifically addressing how BHM manage fire safety.
- 1.7 To provide an overview of voids including re-let performance and rent loss.
- 1.8 To provide an overview of current levels of rent collection, arrears, write offs and actions taken including evictions. Highlighting the support available for residents who fall into arrears and how BHM work with residents and other agencies to help sustain tenancies.
- 1.9 To provide an update on resident engagement events undertaken this year and how that has helped the way BHM provides services for residents.
- 1.10 To outline the role of the housing contact centre and provide an overview of performance.
- 1.11 To provide information on the number of complaints received by BHM over the last 5 years.
- 1.12 To provide general updates on the service, not already included in the points above.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That the Committee note the contents of the report.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Brent Housing Management (BHM) consists of two main areas, Housing and Neighbourhoods and Property Services, both areas work closely to provide housing management services for Council housing and for the two housing companies Invest for Brent (i4B) and First Wave Housing (FWH).
- 3.2 Housing and Neighbourhoods consists of an Income Collection Team, Rent Accounting Team, Home Ownership Team and Tenancy and Estate Services (Caretaking). Housing and Neighbourhoods has approximately 150 staff members of staff. Property Services consists of the Asset management Team, Planned and Major Works Team, Responsive Repairs Team, Compliance Team and Voids and Lettings Team and has approximately 44 staff members.
- 3.3 The Income Collection Team ensure rent is collected, and support residents to make payments and sustain their tenancies, promoting a rent first attitude and also holistically signposting to other services where they become aware of problems tenants are experiencing.
- 3.4 The Rent Accounting Team set up and manage all rent accounts, including applying rent increases, provide housing support and administration, close down old tenancies where there is a death of a tenant, a relinquished tenancy, or a succession, and are currently promoting tenants to pay by Direct Debit.
- 3.5 The Home Ownership Team support all aspects of leaseholder management and Right to Buy, providing expert services to promote good relations with leaseholders, ensuring that they have a voice in how their homes and communities are managed and improved.

- 3.6 In Tenancy and Estate Services, Housing Officers deal with all aspects of tenancy management, from Anti-Social Behaviour, Domestic Abuse and gang violence, to verifications and tenancy audits, pre tenancy termination visits, process of successions and management transfer requests. As well as generic tenancy support around managing repairs, neighbour disputes, noise complaints and welfare support.
- 3.7 Housing Officers also enforce compliance of the tenancy agreement, seeking possession of properties where there is unauthorised occupation and breaches of tenancy terms and conditions, while focusing on sustaining tenancies with the right support.
- 3.8 The Caretaking staff of 70, manage the internal and external communal cleaning, including; window cleaning, deep cleaning for the blocks, removal of fly tips from the housing sites and secondary monitoring of contracted services (ground maintenance, waste removal, tree maintenance). The Caretakers, since becoming internal staff members, receive consistent compliments about how they manage the cleaning, interact with residents and support other services to carry out works. They engage with residents, members and officers alike to continually ensure the blocks are well maintained safe and cared for.
- 3.9 The Asset Management Team maintains and updates the information on our properties and monitors the lifecycle of components such as kitchens and bathrooms predicting when they are likely to fail. That information will then provide the planned and major works programme for the coming year. This team also leads on our energy efficiency data so we are aware of our worst performing properties to inform funding bids for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and alike.
- 3.10 The Planned and Major Works team manages cyclical replacements, kitchens and bathrooms, windows, roofs. Also major works including currently the four tower block refurbishments to Lodge and Manor Court, Windmill Court and Kilburn Square, which will cover replacement of some of the components mentioned above but include other works like internal and external wall insulation, internal drainage systems, lift replacement and replacing the heating systems.
- 3.11 The Compliance Team's main role is keeping our residents safe in their homes by adhering to our statutory requirements as a landlord. Which includes a regime of cyclical inspection for fire safety, gas, electrical, legionella and asbestos. They also contract manage the mechanical and electrical contractor like Oakray, Equans and Integrated Water Services.
- 3.12 The Responsive Repairs team manage the contractors who undertake responsive repairs on the Council's behalf. They also have a team of surveyors who inspect more complex repairs before issuing works to the contractor and post inspect a proportion of the works carried out by contractors.. The team also deal with legal disrepair, which is where a resident contacts a solicitor to act on their behalf when they are unhappy about the repair service they have received. It is important to note that the volume of responsive repairs is impacted by what the planned and major works team do as component renewals generally mean there are less responsive repairs to be done.

3.13 The Voids and Lettings team manage properties that have been vacated following a termination of tenancy. The surveyors specify the works that are required to bring the property up to a good standard and manage the contractors who undertake the works. The Letting Coordinators then take prospective tenants to view the property and assist the successful tenant in signing the tenancy agreement.

Table shows the number of Active Tenancies and Leaseholds at any point of the reporting year (not tenants)

Report Category	2017-2018	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
First Wave	354	353	357	349	346	330
General Needs	8533	8413	8338	8408	8554	8397
Investment for Brent (i4B)	62	195	262	324	516	580
Leaseholders		3777	3797	3807	3826	3846
Totals	8949	12738	12754	12888	13242	13153

*This figure is pre Granville Homes transfer, which has reduced the stock number to 216

Variance year on year

Report Category	2017-2018	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
First Wave		-1	4	-8	-3	-16
General Needs		-120	-75	70	146	-157
Investment for Brent (i4B)		133	67	62	192	64
Leaseholders			20	10	19	20
Totals		3789	16	134	354	-89

4.0 Responsive Repairs

4.1 The target for emergency repairs is to attend and make safe within 4 hours, the target for routine repairs is to attend and complete the repair within 28 days. For routine repairs we have asked Wates to aim for a 14 day completion and at present, we are achieving this in 89% of repairs. Emergency repairs can cause danger to people or to property, for example; a blocked and unusable toilet in a home which only has one toilet would be considered an emergency. However, the same issue in a home with another available and working toilet would not be considered an emergency.

4.2 Routine repairs are repairs that do not require immediate attention and can be appointed to reflect the resident's availability, some examples of routine repairs are listed below:

- An ease and adjust to a window that is stiff to open and close
- A garden fence repair
- A dripping tap
- A cracked plug socket
- Repairs that require a surveyors visit

4.3 This year, 2022/23 has been a challenging year with the cost-of-living crisis and inflation impacting on our partnering contractor Wates' ability to source reasonably priced materials and employ and retain operational staff. This is an industry wide issue. As a direct result, this has seen them struggle to deliver the works at the rate with which they are received. This means that for every 100 jobs Wates receive, they have been completing around 70 within the target

completion period as set out below. This has meant that Wates have been operating with a work in progress (WIP) of around 3000 jobs when they should have a WIP of around 1300-1400 jobs. WIP are all jobs raised but not yet completed.

- 4.4 We have a WIP reduction plan that has been in place since August 2022. Brent Repairs Team colleagues and Wates senior management meet weekly to discuss progress. We have seen an increase in completion of jobs in WIP and this currently sits at around 750-800 jobs per week against a current run rate of 600-650 jobs being raised each week.
- 4.5 An important part of the progress is Wates's acknowledgment that they needed to increase the number of trade-based operatives that service their contract with Brent. Wates have increased the number of operatives from 20 to 35 and they have also employed additional supervision and admin staff. Whilst there is some way to go to reduce the number of jobs in WIP the improvement is clear to see, currently there are circa 2600 jobs in WIP, this is likely to fluctuate because of the festive period.
- 4.6 We are preparing a tender for two additional back-up contractors through a framework agreement in conjunction with the procurement team. The invitation to tender will be published at the beginning of January 2023. The aim of the procurement is to be able to separate the smaller 'quick win' jobs from the larger complex work type projects. Wates are able to effectively deliver these 'quick win' jobs and tackle the bloated WIP and the supplementary contractors we aim to procure will be better equipped to deliver the larger more complex projects that often include inherent issues such as damp and mould or structural defects.
- 4.7 We have seen a number of missed appointments as a reason for residents expressing dissatisfaction with Wates and this has also affected WIP numbers. We have embedded a penalty within the contract that will result in £100 compensation payment, if Wates are found to be at fault for the missed appointment. In the year from December 2021 to December 2022 we have seen a reduction in missed appointments from 15 in February 2022 to 2 in December 2023. To date Wates have compensated our residents 12 times.
- 4.8 We are constantly reviewing disrepair cases that were received because of Wates' poor performance or were delayed because of Wates' resourcing issues and where appropriate we will pass on these costs to Wates.
- 4.9 We have also introduced a recharge into our contract with Wates if they fail to carry out all repairs associated with a live disrepair case when a 'Part 36' offer is reached. A Part 36 agreement is a provision in the Civil Procedure Rules (which govern the conduct of litigation in England and Wales). It aims to encourage parties to try to settle their disputes by setting out the costs consequences of offers to settle if they are made in accordance with Part 36. In layman's terms this means that Wates will carry out all repairs deemed to be disrepair on or before an agreed date and if this deadline is not met the contractor (not Brent) will pay further compensation to our resident.
- 4.10 Lastly, we are carrying out telephone integrity checks via a 3rd party, these calls are to residents who have recently received completed job and are to ensure

jobs that are being completed on the system are actually complete and not an attempt to remove the job from WIP.

Count Descriptions	Period				Grand Total
	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	
Priority 0					
Total Completed Work orders	2389	2356	2820	2571	10136
Completed on time	2246	2286	2795	2558	9885
Completed out of target	143	70	25	13	251
% Completed out of target	6.0%	3.0%	0.9%	0.5%	2.5%
Priority 1					
Total Completed Work orders	2774	3183	3571	2882	12410
Completed on time	2086	2895	2847	1926	9754
Completed out of target	687	285	722	956	2650
% Completed out of target	24.8%	9.0%	20.2%	33.2%	21.4%
Priority 2					
Total Completed Work orders	10068	7366	6491	3118	27043
Completed on time	7123	4261	3294	1501	16179
Completed out of target	2943	3104	3195	1617	10859
% Completed out of target	29.2%	42.1%	49.2%	51.9%	40.2%
Priority 3					
Total Completed Work orders	6801	9853	12043	7853	36550
Completed on time	5873	8183	9930	5649	29635
Completed out of target	925	1669	2109	2203	6906
% Completed out of target	13.6%	16.9%	17.5%	28.1%	18.9%
Priority 4					
Total Completed Work orders	801	523	215	1952	3491
Completed on time	651	313	157	1932	3053
Completed out of target	150	209	58	19	436
% Completed out of target	18.7%	40.0%	27.0%	1.0%	12.5%
Total Completed on time	17979	17938	19023	13566	68506
Total Completed out of target	4848	5337	6109	4808	21102
Total % Completed out of target	21.2%	22.9%	24.3%	26.2%	23.5%

5.0 Damp and Mould

5.1 Brent has a zero tolerance to damp and mould. In 2021, we made a decision to write to all residents who have reported damp and mould to us in the previous seven years. In total, we wrote to 880 residents. We asked them to advise if they were still experiencing damp and mould. We received responses from 220 residents advising that they were still affected by damp and mould and would welcome a surveyor visit to carry out an inspection. We recognised that the response to the initial letter was low, so we followed up with an email/text message in July.

5.2 Wates have dedicated a supervisor to project manage these works and to date we have issued 145 D&M work orders to Wates with a further 75 inspections

scheduled, these include the initial 220 and some stragglers that have responded since the first letter sent out in April.

- 5.3 Due to the lack of response, it was decided that we would write to the residents one final time giving them a deadline to respond or they would be removed from the damp and mould programme. Every Monday we post letters to residents, all located in a geographically patch within the borough so the surveyors can manage inspections efficiently. This final letter includes a direct contact number for the residents to call and book an appointment and the fact that we have issued the resident a deadline to respond to has prompted residents to get in touch with us via contacting the dedicated number or emailing our dedicated dampandmould@brent.gov.uk inbox.
- 5.4 There are now circa. 300 residents to contact. We have issued notices to 40 residents and advised of a deadline of 18/11/2022, 48 residents having a deadline of 25/11/2022. A further 70 letters were be posted out on Monday 28th November with a deadline of 02/12/2022. This approach has seen a number of previous uncontactable residents getting in touch and scheduling an inspection.
- 5.5 We are currently reviewing the information we hold on the residents that have not responded to our various attempts to communicate. We will be contacting all residents that have a preferred language other than English and signposting them to a translation service.
- 5.6 We are encouraging all overcrowded families to talk to their housing officer about housing options and are all our staff know how to refer overcrowded families to Housing Options. The Property Services team has arranged training sessions for all officers in BHM who go into people's homes, so that we can offer consistent advice and support when we spot signs of mould and provide the correct advice.
- 5.7 The specification for all homes that have damp and mould is to upgrade the existing extractor fan to a humidity-controlled extractor fan. We also carry out a 3-stage mould treatment and follow this up with a full redecoration of the affected rooms. Wates have dedicated a supervisor to project manage these works and to date we have issued work orders to Wates.
- 5.8 We are also employing technology as a tool in tackling damp and mould. Under the Internet of Thing (IOT) pilot, Brent has partnered with Vericon Systems and UK Bosch to install smart sensors in homes suffering from damp and mould. The sensors measure, heat, humidity and airflow as well as boiler usage and the data is available 'in the cloud'. Initially it was hoped that the data would be able to advise on measures taken to tackle pre-existing issues with condensation such as upgrading all extractor fans to humidity-controlled extractor fans. The data collected was inconclusive in determining the success of the newly installed humidistat fans in the kitchens, we realised that extra sensors are required to track moisture migration. In layman's terms this means we will be able to accurately determine whether moisture is being extracted from kitchens or bathrooms or migrating to the colder parts of homes and providing ideal conditions for further mould growth. Vericon are currently arranging for extra sensors to be installed at Lodge and Manor Court.

- 5.9 Moving forward, in order to ensure that standards are maintained within the housing stock an audit process is being developed. Whilst it will be Council homes that are inspected, the audit function will sit within PHS. The aim will be to inspect in the region of 10% of the housing stock per year, initially focusing on those properties that are known to be more susceptible to damp and mould. The ambition is to have the process and function in place by April 2023.
- 5.10 The IOT sensor pilot started in February 2022, to date sensors have been fitted in twenty properties. The sensors measure, heat, humidity and airflow as well as boiler usage. We would have expected that at this stage we would have trialled these sensors in a higher number of properties. However, not all residents are happy for us to install them. At the moment we ask residents to read and sign a permission and privacy notice to allow us to fit the sensors and monitor the outputs. Some of the reasons resident are reluctant for us to install sensors are the potential costs however the cost to tenants for the use of these sensors approximately 1p a month (post energy price increase). Another reason is privacy, however no individual data is collected only boiler usage and air humidity in the property.
- 5.11 The findings so far from the pilots have been invaluable to establishing the reasons for damp and mould in some of the properties. Of the twenty properties in the trial through external monitoring, five have been identified as being at high risk of damp and mould. The humidity in these properties was 80% for 2 hours on 5 or more days a month. Two of the properties also had average temperatures of below 15 degrees Celsius. Below 18 degrees is recognised as a temperature which will affect an individual's health.
- 5.12 A further three properties were identified as medium risk. The humidity in these properties was 80% for 2 hours on 5 or more days a month. The pilot has also potentially identified the early signs of fuel poverty with one property only heating their property for three days starting on the Friday. This requires further investigation. However, the resident may have topped up their gas on pay day and then run out of gas later in the week.
- 5.13 BHM believe that the installation of the sensors will be ground-breaking in the fight against damp and mould in Council housing. This will enable early intervention without the requirement for residents to contact us when mould becomes an issue.

6.0 Planned Works

- 6.1 Planned maintenance is very different to reactive maintenance, reactive maintenance involves reacting to and fixing any issues as and when they occur, which means that officers don't need to spend time and money planning for maintenance or creating a maintenance schedule. Reactive maintenance is a simple process where officers react to issues as they arise, however this does make it harder to budget manage.
- 6.2 Many building components such as windows and roofs have a finite lifecycle. They can often be repaired when required or as part of an ongoing maintenance regime. However, they will eventually totally fail and / or become uneconomical to maintain. In addition, this may create additional damage to the building or affect resident's enjoyment of the property. Therefore, we operate a planned

work programme with its own budget. This considers the housing stock data held on our asset management system, together with physical site surveys, and referrals from residents and officers. This data is then reviewed, and properties are assigned to a relevant planned programme year based on the urgency of the works and the available budget.

- 6.3 Officers prioritise properties based on existing and potential building damage, volume of associated works required to ensure the efficient use of scaffolding, disrepair, etc.

7.0 Ongoing and pending planned works

- 7.1 The service has focussed on planned maintenance works over the last few years. The key work streams are external building fabric, kitchens and bathrooms, tower block refurbishments and fire safety works. The annual budget on each and is as follows:

Work Programme	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
External Planned Maintenance Programme	£4,000,000	£1,000,000	£1,000,000	£504,080	£510,000
Kitchen & Bathroom programme	£1,600,000	£500,000	£500,000	£500,000	£500,000
Tower block programme - High Rise retained (Fire Safety/ Climate Emergency)	£650,000	£11,103,543	£22,045,183	£5,851,809	£356,322
Energy Efficiency works	£125,000	£700,000	£1,006,250	£43,750	£0
Fire Safety Works	£1,000,000	£650,000	£650,000	£650,000	£650,000
Total	£7,375,000	£13,953,543	£25,201,433	£7,549,639	£2,016,322

- 7.2 From financial year 2023 / 24 the focus will be on energy efficiency works and major works to tower blocks. The Council will be spending approximately £40M over the next three years on its tower block refurbishment programme. The blocks are Kilburn Square, Lodge Court, Manor Court and Windmill Court. These blocks were built in the late 1960's and whilst they have had repairs and refurbishment undertaken over the last 60 years, there are some significant improvements required to the blocks if they are to continue to provide good quality housing.

- 7.3 The proposed specification is comprehensive and includes repairs to the building fabric; new energy efficient cladding; new windows; roofing; upgraded heating; upgraded mechanical and electrical services; internal refurbishment of the dwellings; and refurbishment of the internal communal areas. These works will ensure that the blocks have at least another 40 years life and that they offer good quality modern accommodation to residents. In addition, the blocks will integrate well with the new build developments.

7.4 The tower block refurbishments are due to commence mid-2023, this will include energy efficiency works partly funded by the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF). Kilburn Square is expected to start on site in June 2023. Lodge Court in Autumn 2023. Manor Court in Jan 2024. Windmill Court in Spring 2024.

7.5 In addition, energy efficiency works will be undertaken to circa 140 dwellings in the next 2 financial years.

8.0 Communication and Consultation with residents

8.1 There is a comprehensive consultation process with residents. At the outset of a project, we identify tenant requirements, specific leaseholder requirements and prepare a consultation plan if necessary. This includes resident consultation and co-design. Involvement of residents, takes place in the form of road shows, community consultations or public enquiries.

8.2 The major works team liaises with the Home Ownership Team regarding the leaseholders and also liaises with Housing Managers regarding (i) Residents Associations of other landlords list (ii) At Risk Tenants List (iii) Anti Social Behaviour Tenants List (iv) Elderly/Vulnerable Tenants List (v) Deceased Tenants List. This information is disseminated as required / appropriate. Ward Councillors are also consulted.

8.3 For each project the contractor sends an introductory letter to all residents. Several further letters are sent throughout the duration of the works ranging from details of the site set up to the striking of scaffolding. An initial resident consultation meeting takes place to present officer's proposals for the property. Residents ask questions and receive answers there and then, or as a follow up communication. These meetings are repeated when required usually at the resident's request.

8.4 A pre-formal consultation meeting takes place to present the final scope of works to residents and the proposed costs. Following any adjustment, the formal Section 20 Leasehold Consultation process is undertaken. Observations are considered and responded to. A start date is then provided to the residents and the works proceed.

8.5 For major works, additional engagement takes place. A detailed consultation and engagement plan will be developed for each block. This will cover:

1. General information about the works.
2. Member's engagement plan.
3. Meetings to review the proposed works and specifications.
4. Leaseholder S20 consultation.
5. Leaseholder payment options.
6. Individual household survey and management plan.

8.6 Works of this nature are complex and of a highly intrusive nature. This involves upheaval in residents' homes, and it is important to understand each household's situation and whether there are any vulnerabilities in terms of health and due to the impact of the works. Each household will be visited and the impact of each key element of the work assessed against the household.

This will identify where residents have either health or other reasons for not being able to remain in their homes for all or some of the works. Officers and the contractor visit each household, discuss the project and identify any issues for the household. A personal management plan is then put in place for each household. This could include respite care, decant or other support measures. This process has commenced at Kilburn Square.

- 8.7 Contact details for both the contractor staff and the major works staff are provided to all residents at the outset. This is both at meetings and via the introduction letter. The Council provides resident liaison officers and tenancy support officers, and the contractor provides resident liaison officers. Contact can be by telephone, email, or personal visits.
- 8.8 Issues can be escalated to both the major works team, and the contractor's management team. Ultimately, the Council's complaints process can also be followed where necessary.

9.0 Resident Engagement & Customer Experience

- 9.1 Overall, we have had a strong emphasis on community engagement with local residents in the last year. Officers have developed excellent processes for Resident Associations to be set up and focused on bringing back to life community rooms and gardens. In addition, warm spaces have been created, action days have been arranged and residents and Members have been involved in Estate Walkabouts to see how we can improve communal areas.
- 9.2 Officers have focussed on maximising social opportunities between neighbours, promoting opportunities to combat loneliness and isolation via our 15 resident associations (RAs).
- 9.3 Along with the RA's officers have concentrated on developing strong community buy in to the long-term maintenance and use of community spaces and events.
- 9.4 Notable projects and events are listed below which have taken place across the last year:

Moatfield garden project

- A Resident Engagement Day delivered
- Clearance work was completed for a topographical survey
- Monthly discussions with key/interested residents regarding next steps for the communal garden and how to deal with ASB issues
- Survey via pop up event and door knocking exercise held on Sunday 11th December 22
- Ideas taken from residents and noted down for the next steps development meeting in the new year
- Works estimated to be completed by Spring 23

Alpha, Gorefield & Canterbury - RA

- Waste consultation to improve the waste disposal programme for the blocks, the outcome was publicised in Oct 22
- Two onsite events arranged and feedback received from residents
- Online feedback was also promoted
- Five walkabouts in 2022 – resident ideas sought and acted on including gardening, repairs, bin placement, signage, ASB incidents to name a few
- An active RA in constant contact
- A gardening day arranged and completed in November 22 as a response to resident requests and ideas

Lodge & Manor Court - RA

- Three pop up action days
- One toy giveaway and action day
- New RA management and improved attendance at RA meetings
- Community Room revamped at residents request – painted and decorated, new equipment provided and the room now in use

William Saville/William Dunbar -RA

- Two open feedback sessions on site this year
- Three walkabouts and open sessions with residents
- Community room revamp currently in progress
- RA re-established – with a new chair vice chair
- Coffee mornings supported and paid for by BHM while the community room is out of action

Fiveways - RA

- Three walkabouts
- One open session with residents
- One event delayed but due to take place early 2023

CAM – Coomber Close – RA

- Three walkabouts
- One open session with RA
- Community room – due for revamp early 2023

St Raphs – no RA but active St Raphs Voice

- Two walkabouts
- One Action day at the children's centre in March and included physical and mental health advice as well as housing and financial advice

Pharamond – RA

- Two walkabouts

Windmill Court – RA (was handed over to Abi re new builds mid last year)

- Three walkabouts
- Two open sessions with RA and residents early 22
- Pop up support session planned for new year 23

Cavendish - RA

- Two walkabouts

Clarendon Gardens – no RA

- One walkabout
- Community room revamp underway

9.5 Officers currently have two promotion activities ongoing to drum up support to start a resident association and to encourage feedback from residents – these are at Lexington and Clarendon Gardens.

9.6 In addition Officers have created a Leaseholder Panel with initial meetings having taken place and the next one being arranged for January 23.

9.7 Two chair seminars have taken place, promoting cost of living support, and help and advice relating to cold weather, damp and condensation advice. The views were sought from Chairs and Members on what more Brent could do for and with them. Advice was taken on board and more events were arranged for communities; encouraging more socialising, combatting loneliness, and enabling pop up sessions for advice to residents as well as walkabouts for communal estate issues and gardening.

9.8 Officers have reached out to residents via:

- Resident Association meetings including annual AGMs
- Community action days and pop ups (these usually run all day with a selection of professionals on hand to give residents advice and assistance)
- Two consultations online for Alpha and Moatfield Estates
- Emails and posters in blocks promoting feedback and engagement
- Distribution of information sheets with feedback access
- Open online sessions promoted via email and posters in the relevant blocks
- Chair seminars to discuss issues and feedback from residents

10.0 Compliance in Properties and Communal Areas

10.1 BHM have a statutory duty to ensure compliance is met for FLAGE (fire, legionella, asbestos, gas and electrical) within all communal areas of Council housing stock. Non-compliance may likely result in an unsafe environment for residents and visitors to the building, as well as potential enforcement actions taken against the Council.

10.2 FLAGE Compliance in BHM housing stock is currently as follows:

- Fire (84.1% compliance) – Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's) have been completed to all high, medium and low rise blocks. Those outstanding are low risk street properties where the FRA has lapsed. The main issues that are picked up on these FRA's are usually housing management like possessions being left in communal areas, which are also picked up on routine visits by Housing Officers and Surveyors. All outstanding FRAs will be completed by the end of March 2023.
- Legionella (88.4% compliance) – There are only a few remedial actions that have come out of the risk assessments. Mainly bin taps and replacement of pear shaped cold water isolation valves. Contractors will complete by the end of Feb 2023.
- Asbestos - 100% compliance achieved.
- Gas - 100% compliance achieved.
- Electrical (74.9% compliance) - Aiming to complete 200 - 300 electrical installation condition reports (EICRs) per week. However, we have had a high rate of residents not giving us access. We have sent several letters, and now issuing warning cards to those residents who have failed to make an appointment. We have written to and offered an appointment to every property with an outstanding EICR. Remedial actions are 93.3% compliant. All Category 1 remedials were completed at the time of the inspection. The outstanding remedial actions are Category 2s and 3s which the contractor was unable to complete during the initial visit, and Category 2 actions will be completed by the end January 23.

10.3 Early in 22/23, we assessed our performance on compliance, particularly with electrical safety. As the performance was not as high as we would like in this area, we took the decision to self-refer to the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). RSH responded asking us to provide information on performance in all areas of compliance and our plans to improve compliance. After receiving this information, RSH wrote to say that the Council had not breached any consumer standards. We have an agreed timetable with the Regulator to become 100% compliant in all areas.

11.0 Fire Safety

11.1 The Council is in a relatively strong position with regards to fire safety compliance with our high, medium and low rise blocks This is primarily due to a robust system of Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's) but also due to the fact that we didn't have any high-rise buildings with cladding.

11.2 However, there are new standards and expectations, for example sprinklers, improved fire and smoke alarms systems, emergency lighting, smoke ventilation and resident information communication in the event of a fire.

11.3 Officers are available and regularly speak to tenants, offering an opportunity for them to raise any concerns. Should a customer remain concerned or unhappy

with how the council is dealing with something they can make a formal complaint.

- 11.4 The Fire Safety Act 2021 extended the scope of fire risk assessments to include the building structure and external walls. This includes requiring a Responsible Person to review and update the risk assessment process. The responsible person is the Director of Housing and his delegates.
- 11.5 The Council carries out risk assessments once a year in all of its high-rise residential buildings and every three years in medium and low rise. The Council also has a process in place for Caretakers and Housing Officers to report on any fire safety concerns when they carry out their regular cleaning and inspections.
- 11.6 Where urgent risks are identified in an FRA they are logged and sent to the relevant teams. Where the urgent risk can be repaired it is sent through to the day-to-day responsive team to complete. Where the repair is not urgent and is more specialist, we pass to the contractor who undertakes our fire safety planned work.
- 11.7 Within flats, consideration is given to the integrity of compartmentation around openings in walls and floors for services such as gas, water, electricity, telecommunications and drainage. These may be present where such services enter from the common parts or pass between flats. In most cases, the extent of any openings and the extent of fire stopping may require opening up panels in kitchens, bathrooms and other areas.
- 11.8 This programme of work has started to and will continue to address a number of risks identified in the Housing Scrutiny Report dated 25 April 2019 which was submitted to the then Housing Scrutiny Committee.
- 11.9 The Council has continued to undertake fire safety works within its Housing stock. There has been ongoing works throughout all types of properties including high-rise. The low and medium rise programme commenced in 2019 as these properties had not had work undertaken for some time. The high-rise blocks have benefitted from targeted works over the last few years. Major works to high-rise blocks will commence from later this year. This is due to the large scale and logistics of the works and the corresponding budget that is required.
- 11.10 The low and medium rise fire safety works programme is now nearing completion. This has been a significant investment and has addressed all of the low and medium rise housing stock.
- 11.11 These properties now have a high standard of fire protection and are able to operate as stay put or evacuation properties as relevant.
- 11.12 The Council has undertaken significant fire-safety and internal communal area refurbishment related works to its housing low and medium rise stock. The properties include street conversions and purpose-built blocks. These works included extensive fire compartmentation, emergency lighting, smoke alarms, and the redecoration of communal areas. The Council has undertaken this work to 454 blocks and 654 street properties, to bring them up to modern standards

and upgrade the fire rating of the properties. 6214 number of households benefited from this programme, and circa £5M has been spent.

- 11.13 The high-rise fire safety works programme. The high-rise fire safety works programme has been driven by the FRA programme and is ongoing. However, the high-rise blocks will be subject to a higher level of fire safety specification once the high-rise refurbishment programme commences. This will include new sprinkler systems.
- 11.14 These works include fire safety compartmentation, fire doors and smoke alarms to the high-rise blocks and are ongoing. It is our intention to continue the investment in our high-rise blocks to extend the life of the blocks and improve the fire safety. Over the next three years, the Council plans to invest approximately £40m in refurbishing high rise blocks. This will include comprehensive refurbishment of all elements in the block but specifically as regards to fire safety, installing sprinkler systems, further fire compartmentation works, and communal fire door replacements.
- 11.15 Electrical upgrades to dwellings. These works are part of an ongoing five-year programme of electrical testing and upgrading to dwellings. We will be spending approximately £1.2M each year on electrical testing. These works are particularly important with regards to fire safety as faulty electrics rank number 4 in the most common reasons for house fires. Faulty sockets, extension leads, and outdated wiring are a few of the reasons why electrical fires start and these will all be identified and remedied as part of the programme.
- 11.16 The current building regulations for new build tower blocks stipulates those buildings over 30m in height are to be fitted with sprinklers in flats. The blocks assessed as part of the type 4 FRA project have each been in excess of 30m in height.
- 11.17 Under the high-rise refurbishment programme, we intend to install sprinkler systems to the following blocks:

High rise block
WINDMILL COURT
KILBURN SQUARE
WATLING GARDENS – 3 BLOCKS
THE OAKS
MANOR COURT
LODGE COURT

- 11.18 The Council has invested in fire safety measures previously with new ‘Gerda’ fire doors being fitted throughout the blocks to flat entrances, cross corridors and stairs.
- 11.19 In addition to the installation of fire doors, certified fire proofing and stopping works have also been carried out to a large majority of accessible risers to corridors and lobbies within communal areas.

- 11.20 The compartmentation in the Common Areas was to a good standard with no major breaches in compartmentation identified to common areas nor any trends in compartmentation deficiencies in the blocks.
- 11.21 What is common throughout the Flats in all blocks, is the high level of fire separation within risers between vertical floor levels. The majority of service penetrations that are in the main cast, steel and copper pipework, between floors have been in-filled by a concrete pour with no major breaches apparent.
- 11.22 However, there is presence of open flues that rise through the height of the building connecting flats below and above, that historically were used to discharge flue gases from former gas fired heating units. A number of the openings were found to be proofed but the majority inspected were open thus providing passage for smoke and fire. Proofing works are ongoing in this area and Council officers hope to complete these works as part of this year's fire safety programme.
- 11.23 The Council will be installing or upgrading to an enhanced Grade D, Category LD2 or LD1 smoke alarm system in each dwelling as part of our electrical testing programme and will also include these as part of our voids specification. These provides additional smoke and fire monitoring within the dwelling and includes the lounge and sometimes the bedrooms in addition to the escape routes and kitchens. This provides early warning to the occupants of the dwelling and means that there is less reliance on higher levels of compartmentation as the occupants would either vacate or raise the alarm as soon as smoke or a fire became apparent.

12.0 Building Safety Act 2022

- 12.1 Going forward, the Council will be focussing on the new Building Safety Act. This will focus on the following:
- A more stringent regime for higher-risk buildings and drive improvements in building safety and performance standards in all buildings.
 - Ensure residents have a stronger voice in the system and establish additional protections for leaseholders in relation to financing remediation works.
 - Additional obligations under The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005:
 - The Council is in the process of recruiting a building safety team to put a plan together and deliver the requirements of the Building Safety Act.

13.0 Voids

- 13.1 We have 3 types of void property for reporting purposes, a minor void, a major void and an out of management void.

- A minor void property has minor repairs and maintenance and does not require any major component renewals such as a new kitchen or bathroom.
- A major void property may have a number of components renewed such as a new kitchen, a complete electrical or heating installation renewal.
- An out of management void will have significant works such as a structural defect, inherent damp and mould or require works by a third party that are out of Brents control such as gas or electricity supply issues.

Current live voids

<i>Scheme</i>	Major Void	Minor Void	Out of Management	Total
Council Owned	75	25	5	105
First Wave	2	0	2	4
Investment for Brent (incl PRSLBB)	20	10	1	31
Total	97	35	8	140

Average relet times for Council owned properties with major voids

Qtr. 1 2022 – 2023: 2,181/9 = **242.3** days

Qtr. 2 2022 - 2023: 3,791/21 = **180.5** days

Average relet times for Council owned properties with minor voids

Qtr. 1 2022 – 2023: 326/2 = **163** days

Qtr. 2 2022 – 2023: 741/6 = **123.5** days

	YTD	
	Major	Minor
Council	214	121
First Wave	91	71
I4B	84	109

14.0 Rent collection

- 14.1 As at week 37 (ending 18.12.22) BHM were at 95.81% based on the weekly report run by the Performance Team.

At same stage (week 37)

21/22 – 97.81%

20/21 – 98.56%

19/20 – 99.25%

- 14.2 As above there has been a steady decline in income collection over recent years. Work is underway to look across the service at how rent collection can be improved. There are some social and economic issues that can be attributed

to poor rental collection; such as the cost of living crisis, and the changeover to Universal Credit. The change for most residents to Universal Credit from Housing Benefit means that their income is paid in arrears, and when there are any problems with the account being set up it is extremely difficult to recover arrears for that period, as Universal Credit is strict on backdating.

- 14.3 There is however more that can be done to improve and encourage a 'rent first' culture among tenants, and early intervention to ensure there is help and support for those who are struggling.
- 14.4 With targeted use of the Resident Support fund and Discretionary Housing Payments, residents can be supported to clear current arrears and get on top of their payments. Individual portfolios also require different approaches to collection, for example i4B tenants are predominantly working and claiming Universal Credit, whereas residents in Brent owned Ananci and Knowles House are claimants of Housing Benefit.
- 14.5 Projects are being initiated to carry out analysis into current collection rates for the individual portfolios and establish where the blockages are to rent collection and how a supportive and proactive approach can be used to improve rates.
- 14.6 Other than the odd ad hoc cases (where there is a debt relief order) officers have not had a rolling practice of writing off arrears since 2018. At present Brent Housing Management has contracted One Source to chase former arrears debts for former First Wave tenants as a pilot. If successful then this may roll out to former general needs Council tenants.
- 14.7 Currently an exercise is underway by officers to look at the impact of writing off arrears more than 6 years old.

15.0 Tenancy Sustainment

- 15.1 Housing Officers support tenants to help them sustain their tenancies from the start. Tenants' expectations are managed and their obligations made clear at the tenancy sign up and with introductory visits.
- 15.2 BHM support tenants to manage neighbour disputes, report repairs, and carry out audits to trouble shoot. This ensures tenants have early access to supportive services if there are signs that they may not be able to manage their tenancies, or are struggling financially. Referrals are made to Adult Social Care, who provide support with Mental Health Services, Complex Needs and Outreach Teams.
- 15.3 Housing Officers assist with issues of hoarding, cuckooing, and transfers where a property becomes unsuitable to tenants with ill health or who develop additional needs.
- 15.4 Evictions are only used as a last resort, the primary focus for tenancy management is to ensure every opportunity is given to tenants to succeed. Where there are serious breaches of tenancies relating to Anti-Social Behaviour or crime enforcement action is taken with legal advice, support from the Police and Community Protection, and an awareness of any vulnerabilities and the Equality Act 2010.

- 15.5 During Covid there was a ban on evictions. Where a tenancy looks as though it may fail due to rent arrears, officers follow the pre-court action protocol which defines the role that all social landlord providers need to follow in assisting a tenant to sustain their tenancy. These would include measures like making affordable rent arrears payments, signposting to a debt advice agency, contacting support services etc. Ultimately, where engagement fails or is successful then we will proceed to obtain a possession and as a last resort, an eviction.
- 15.6 Where there is no engagement and a Court Order is sought BHM seek suspended possession orders to give tenant an opportunity to sustain the tenancy and recover the debt with minimal financial difficulty to the tenants.
- 15.7 The Homelessness Prevention fund can be used as a last resort to support tenants on the cusp of eviction, but more regularly tenants are assisted to apply for Discretionary Housing Payments and the Resident Support Fund, both of which are non-refundable and can be used to clear arrears.
- 15.8 Where an eviction seems likely officers refer tenants to Brent Hubs for legal advice from the Citizens Advice Bureau, digital and financial inclusion advice and assessment to ensure they are maximising their income and Housing Needs to look at their housing options going forwards, as well as notifying Social Services if there are vulnerabilities or children in the household.
- 15.9 Before an eviction can take place a report must be written detailing the actions taken and support given and be sent to a panel of senior officers to scrutinise to ensure that everything has been done to sustain the tenancy.

16.0 Rent arrears evictions

- 16.1 The number of tenants evicted for rent arrears since 2019 is detailed below. The numbers are extremely low, in part due to the pandemic and ban on evictions, but also demonstrating that Brent adopt a sustainment approach, only utilising an eviction if there is no possibility to sustain the tenancy.
- 16.2 The Council does not evict residents who cannot afford to pay. Officers work with all tenants to offer support and only in instances (which are very few) where tenants refuse to pay or engage is when enforcement action is taken. In the vast majority of instances officers are able to sustain tenancies and utilise the Resident Support Fund or other to keep people in their homes.

Year	Number of Tenants Evicted due to Rent arrears
2019	5
2020	4
2021	4
2022	2

17.0 Partnership working

17.1 BHM necessarily partner with multiple internal and external services to ensure tenants are well and supported.

These services include but are not limited to:

- Interaction with GP surgeries- attending GP forum to discuss damp and mould and the effects on health, what BHM are doing about it and the impact on residents
- Occupational Health for minor changes to the home for medical purposes
- Violence Against Women and Children forum to discuss best practice
- Police and Safer Neighbourhoods Team and Community Protection when there is any concern around Anti-Social Behaviour
- Brent Joint Action Group and MARAC where there is high level Anti-Social Behaviour and the perpetrator or victim may be vulnerable
- Environmental Health and Pest Control
- Social Services in all departments, especially relating to safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults, hoarding or cuckooing
- Domestic Abuse MARAC, where all cases of Domestic Abuse are discussed at a multi-agency meeting to ensure a clear, joined up approach that promotes safety and is person centred
- Veolia to manage grounds maintenance
- Care Leavers Team where there are instances of Care Leavers who may be struggling to maintain a tenancy to optimise their engagement and sustain their tenancy

18.0 Housing Contact Centre

18.1 Overview-

The Corporate Contact Centre (CCC) is responsible for handling all initial contacts from residents by phone and email, acting as the 'front door' for BHM since January 2021.

18.2 The CCC is also responsible for supporting residents to interact via the Council's 'My Account' Portal, which includes encouraging BHM tenants and leaseholders to transact via this channel and providing support for basic IT issues.

18.3 BHM consists of two main service areas, Housing and Neighbourhoods and Property Services and this SLA includes calls to both service areas.

18.4 The CCC holds regular Joint Working Meetings with all stakeholders to facilitate a first touch and responsive service with a focus on understanding and reducing failure demand.

18.5 The CCC acts as the first point of contact for the following areas:

- Responsive Repairs including New Build Defects
- Planned and Major works
- Compliance
- Tenancy Management
- Estate Services (BHM provided only)

19.0 Telephony

19.1 A phone service is provided from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays) covering the following telephone line: Brent Housing Management 020 8937 2400. The KPI for call answering is **80%** of all calls received.

20.0 Triage – Emails

20.1 The CCC is required to ensure there are effective processes in place to manage and triage any emails received at HousingManagement@brent.gov.uk. This service is required to operate 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays).

20.2 All emails received for the CCC to action should be actioned within the maximum target or 10 working days but where possible should be responded to at the earliest possible point to ensure a good customer experience.

20.3 Any internal emails that relate to an emergency or priority work must have the words “RED ALERT” in the subject field so as these emails can be identified and processed as they come in.

20.4 Processing times for Triaged emails is 2 working days to allow BHM teams the maximum time to respond.

21.0 Out of Hours

21.1 An out of hours service is provided by officers on a rota between the hours of 5pm to 9am Monday – Friday, and for 24 hours over weekends and all bank holidays and emergency closures. The service offers good value for money and resilience as it operates from two sites.

21.2 The service is contracted to SPS Doorguard, and they consistently meet their target call answer rate of 95%.

22.0 Performance

	<u>Total Calls Accepted</u>	<u>Average Handling Time</u>
Qtr. 1	85.31%	00:07:04
Qtr. 2	80.73%	00:07:20
Qtr. 3	80.18%	00:07:35

- 22.1 Performance data is circulated to BHM Managers on a daily basis and also discussed at Joint Meetings. All calls are coded, and we are able to share this insight with BHM colleagues.
- 22.2 The CCC has exceeded the 80% call answer rate target since taking over the service, however, there have been some recent months where capacity has presented a challenge in terms of managing both phone and email demand due to increased staff turnover, and the inability to fill vacant posts quickly enough. As a result, Triage emails have been processed within 2 - 4 working days some months, however the current processing time is 4 working days, and the service is working towards meeting the 2 working day target within the next few weeks.
- 22.3 The team receive on average 100 emails per day which equates to approximately 2200 per month, based on 22 working days.

23.0 Complaints

Complaints				
	Stage 1		Stage 2	
Year	Total Received	% upheld/ partly upheld	Total Received	% upheld/ partly upheld
2017-18	579	70%	74	76%
2018-19	558	65%	49	67%
2019-20	602	56%	97	72%
2020-21	692	61%	78	71%
2021-22	589	63%	93	77%

- 23.1 Stage 1 complaints are where officers investigate complaints internally and provide a response which details what has happened, the issues identified and how they have been rectified. Any compensation owed will be decided and paid, and remedial actions arranged and monitored.
- 23.2 Should the complainant be dissatisfied with the response or outcome a Stage 2 complaint can be raised which is dealt with by the Corporate Complaints department. They are impartial and able to investigate in detail the specific issues and decide if the measures taken are proportionate. Where they are not corrective actions will be decided and carried out. If a complainant remains unhappy they have recourse at this point to raise a case with the Housing Ombudsman.
- 23.3 Across the social housing sector, there has been a significant increase in the number of complaints received. In a recent benchmarking exercise carried out by London Councils, BHM was only one of two Councils (the other being Hillingdon) where the number of stage 1 complaints for 2021/22 went down. This means for last year BHM not only bucked the trend in London but also nationally as many landlords across the country are reporting high complaint volumes as provided by the Housing Ombudsman. The ombudsman in their annual report on complaints stated that in 2021/22 demand reached unprecedented levels with a 104% increase in all enquiries and complaints compared to the previous year. Housemark also recorded BHM receiving below

average number of complaints when compared to the wider sector in their annual 'pulse report' which takes a temperature check of social landlords performance.

- 23.4 To make performance comparable, benchmarking experts HouseMark and the Housing Ombudsman recommend the measure of complaints per 1,000 homes. BHM has the 3rd lowest number of complaints received per 1,000 homes at 48, with Hillingdon first with 19 and Enfield second with 38. At the other end of the scale is Barnet, Kensington and Chelsea and Homes for Haringey all who have over 100 complaints per 1,000 homes.
- 23.5 For stage 2 complaints, the key measure is the escalation rate, with BHM ranking in line with the group average of 15.48% compared to Enfield, which had the lowest escalation rate at 7.51%, and Barnet at 10.48%. This suggests that whilst Barnet has a high volume of Stage 1 complaints, that the majority of complaints are resolved at Stage 1.
- 23.6 In terms of performance for 2021/22, Housing and Neighbourhoods (Housing Management Customer Services) has seen a reduction of 46% from 306 stage 1 complaints received in 2020/21 to 165 stage 1 complaints received in 2021/22. This reduction in complaints is attributed to the successful embedding of patch-based working for housing officers as previously the majority of complaints were related to tenancy services and a failure to respond.
- 23.7 For Property Services, there has been an increase in complaints, this however is reflective of what is happening in the sector with more national scrutiny on issues such as damp and mould, disrepair and compliance. For 2020/21, Property Services received 327 complaints and in 2021/22 stage 1 complaints, which is an increase of 23%.
- 23.8 Year to date, BHM has received 888 complaints, of which 866 were responded to on time. this is a performance rate of 97.5%, which is one of the highest in the Council.
- 23.9 Going forward, the service is working to continue reducing complaints by continuing to learn from re-occurring issues and making service improvements. This will also reduce the number of complaints that escalate to a stage 2 and could have been resolved at stage 1. The Council's corporate complaints team continue to work closely with BHM to share insights and expertise highlighting areas of improvement and deliver regular training for managers who handle complaints.

24.0 Current work streams

- 24.1 The below are current workstreams relating to Brent Housing Management:
- Tpas (a tenant participation body for tenant engagement which promotes best practice) is being commissioned to drill down into our engagement

with residents and find ways to make sure services are delivered in line with tenants needs

- Leaseholders and tenants alike are already being surveyed to see how we can improve and take action from their feedback, and this will continue
- Every four years a tenancy audits and verification takes place to ensure that tenants are supported at the earliest stage with all aspects of need, that tenancies are being sustained and well managed, and residents have contact with their Landlord
- Managing PEEPS, safeguarding and the risk register; in line with our Landlord obligations officers assess every individual resident and provide information to the fire brigade of every vulnerable person that has been assessed. The information is held in gerda boxes on the ground floor of each block in order that the fire brigade are able to access it and assist those in need in the event of a fire or other emergency
- How Officers across services deal with and respond to instances of cuckooing is being reviewed with a view to developing a protocol between Adult Social Care and Housing services
- The Decant Policy is being developed to ensure all tenants are managed to move as they need and are enabled back into suitable permanent homes promptly and with adequate support
- Creative work is taking place to address arrears in the Housing Revenue Account, drive up Service Improvement and reduce inconsistencies between portfolios
- A review of tenancy processes has been completed and training is taking place to promote consistent best practice
- An update of the CRM is ongoing and is providing opportunities to manage performance and deliver services more efficiently with less duplication and quicker turn around
- A review and monitoring of services delivered by the contractor-Veolia is ongoing
- An ASB policy and procedure has been developed and implemented and training completed, the process will now be monitored and improvements made in an agile way to bed in cross service work
- The service has successfully completed a pilot on 5 estates to stop inconsiderate and unauthorised parking and is now rolling it out to a further 17 Estates
- The repayment options for Leaseholders has been reviewed and will be rolled out, improving the options for resident leaseholders and

differentiating between resident and non-resident leaseholders, ahead of significant bills that are expected with Major Works to several blocks

- Direct Debit payments are being set up for tenants with a focus on improved convenience and efficiency
- A Home Owners panel has been set up and is developing better understanding between the Council and its leaseholders of what is important to them, and giving them a voice

25.0 Regulator of Social Housing

25.1 In December 2021, in line with what was set out in the November 2020 white paper, the RSH launched consultation around their proposal for a new set of regulatory Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM). The twenty-two proposed measures are set out in Appendix 1 and consist of 12 satisfaction survey measures and 10 management information indicators. Data for the measures will need to be submitted annually to the regulator. The measures sit across 6 key themes:

- Overall satisfaction with the services provided by the landlord
- Keeping properties in good repair
- Maintaining building safety
- Respectful and helpful engagement
- Responsible neighbourhood management
- Effective handling of complaints.

25.2 The regulator has proposed that the 12 satisfaction based measures should be generated from periodic tenant perception surveys rather than interaction-based transactional surveys in order to create better comparability of data across providers. The RSH no longer supports transactional surveys as the default feedback method, despite this being the direction the social housing sector has shifted toward. Instead, the RSH has outlined the importance of retaining perception based feedback, which has resulted in the proposed TSMs. There is however still, a role for transactional surveys according to the RSH and this is as a tool for operational or contract management of services. As outlined in 3.5, BHM will continue to utilise transactional surveys as a tool for service improvement alongside the new TSMs.

25.3 In their published consultation document, the regulator is clear that it would expect the use of a 5-point satisfaction scale, which would be a move away from the 10-point scale BHM has been using over the past two years. The RSH will only require TSMs to be reported on in relation to tenants, not leaseholders and so an approach for measuring satisfaction in leaseholders is left to individual organisations to establish themselves.

25.4 In order to bring BHM's approach to measuring resident satisfaction in line with the new RSH expectations and also place more structure around use of satisfaction data, the following changes are proposed:

- Move from the biennial satisfaction survey to a quarterly perception satisfaction survey, which would be conducted face to face and via telephone using an independent surveying company and use all 12 questions required by the RSH.
- Survey a sample of tenants on an annual basis but using their tenancy start date anniversary to determine which quarter of the year they are surveyed in (to date, all other surveys conducted have been a 10% sample of Council tenants, meaning all tenants having the opportunity to give feedback every year is a significant change).
- Though not a requirement, survey a sample of leaseholders using the same approach for consistency.
- Though not a requirement, adopt the same approach for FWH (landlords with under 1,000 homes are only required to publish data every two years) and i4B (not a social landlord) as per the Board's approval.
- Continue to embed and use the transactional surveys already introduced through CRM as an operational tool for further more in-depth feedback about specific transactions with the service e.g. ASB.
- The RSH requires landlords to publish their TSM data from April 2023, BHM started collecting this data from June 2022 to ensure there was time to refine the methodology and build up data prior to the RSH's deadline.

26.0 Current Financial Position

26.1 Since 2020/21, and originally for the following four years, the Council had the power to increase rents annually up to a maximum of CPI plus 1%. However due to the rapid rise of inflation within the context of the cost of living crisis, the government consulted on introducing a rent increase cap.

26.2 The rent cap was agreed at 7%, which was the higher amount that was consulted upon. The 7% rent increase provides the HRA with an extra £1m per year. However with the current budget pressures BHM will have to find savings to cover the deficit of £1.3m.

26.3 Savings will need to come from a reduction in staff and costs associated with contracts and services. Including a reduction in our Planned and Major Works programme.

27.0 Financial Implications

27.1 The budgets for the Housing Management function are contained within the ring-fenced Housing Revenue Account (HRA), consisting of a balanced budget set for 2022/23, where income from rents and service charges are matched with expenditure on stock maintenance and management at £57.5m.

- 27.2 The HRA is forecasting a break-even position for 2022/23. Within property services, this is a net result of overspends on voids and disrepair claims being offset by underspends due to staffing vacancies and a reduction of the capital programme.
- 27.3 Within customer services, income reductions attributable to major works service charge billing being are offset by additional rental income from new builds. There are also a number of other risks and uncertainties in this area that could pose financial pressures.
- 27.4 High levels of uncertainty around the inflation and rising interest rates pose a financial risk to the HRA. This has an impact on the cost of materials and repairs, as well as the cost of new build contracts. Rising energy costs are to be passed on to tenants and leaseholders resulting in an increased risk of non-collection. Rising cost of living is likely to further impact rent collection rates and consequently result in increased rent arrears. In addition, an increase in service requests relating to damp and mould is likely to put additional pressures on the budgets.
- 27.5 Other pressures involve the capital programme as there is no new government funding having been made available to meet environmental priorities and requirements such as carbon reduction works to homes.
- 27.6 These risks are being continuously monitored and reflected in the HRA Business Plan and the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- 27.7 There are no direct financial implications arising as a result of this report.

28.0 Legal Implications

- 28.1 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.
- 28.2 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.
- 28.3 Issues with damp and mould in the Council's own housing stock and failure to properly address it can, depending on its extent, be a breach of both Part 3 of the Council's tenancy terms and conditions and section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (LTA 1985). In addition, the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 (the 2018 Act), which has applied to all tenancies since March 2020, introduced certain amendments to the LTA 1985. Section 9A LTA 1985 specifically states that there is an implied covenant that a property is fit for human habitation at the time that the lease is granted and will remain fit for human habitation through the term of the lease. Whilst section 10 LTA 1985 sets out the factors that need to be considered in an assessment, as to whether a property is unfit for human habitation. These include "freedom from damp...".

- 28.4 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. In these types of cases, damp, condensation and the presence of mould in the premises are considered to be prejudicial to health and a nuisance. 'Prejudicial to health' is defined as '... injurious, or likely to cause injury, to health' .
- 28.5 The Social Housing Regulation Bill is currently going through the Committee stage in Parliament and if passed, the Bill will aim to improve the regulation of social housing by introducing a number of provisions to enhance the powers of both tenants and the Regulator of Social Housing to drive a stronger and more proactive regulatory regime in respect of consumer standards.
- 28.6 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.
- 28.7 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.
- 28.8 The leaseholder protections in the Building Safety Act 2022 (the 2022 Act) came into force on 28 June 2022 with new financial protections for leaseholders in buildings above 11 metres or five storeys with historical safety defects. The accompanying secondary legislation came into force on 21 July 2022, providing further detail on how the measures in the Act will work and ensuring that the full range of leaseholder protections have their full effect. Qualifying leaseholders are protected from all cladding system remediation costs. Those whose property is calculated as being less than £325,000 in Greater London) or whose building owner has a group net worth of more than £2 million per relevant building, as of 14 February 2022, are exempt from all historical safety remediation costs. The 2022 Act ensures that any contribution required from qualifying leaseholders for non-cladding defects and interim measures (including waking watch costs) is firmly capped and spread over 10 years, with costs already paid out since 28 June 2017 counting towards the cap. If remediation costs exceed the cap, building owners must make up the difference.

28.9 The effect of the Fire Safety Act 2021 is to require fire risk assessments of buildings with two or more sets of domestic premises to be updated to take account of structure, external walls and doors, if they have not already done so - the Fire Safety Act 2021 amends The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 to bring this into effect.

29.0 Equality Implications

29.1 This report is an update on the performance of Brent Housing Management Service and therefore, there are no equality implications to note.

Report sign off:

Peter Gadsdon

Corporate Director of Resident
Services