

	<p align="center">Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee 22 November 2023</p>
	<p align="center">Report from the Corporate Director of Resident Services</p>
	<p align="center">Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Renters Security</p>
<p>Housing Management Update</p>	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Non-Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
List of Appendices:	Appendix 1 - BHM Tenant Satisfaction Measures Against Quartile Data
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	<p>Ryan Collymore Head of Property Services ryan.collymore@brent.gov.uk</p> <p>Kate Daine Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods Kate.Daine@bernt.gov.uk</p>

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides an update to the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on the work undertaken by Brent Housing Management to prepare for the implementation of Tenant Satisfaction Measures from April 2024.

1.2 The report also provides an update on Brent Housing Management's performance since the last update to the committee in January 2023. The report also details a number of priority workstreams taking place within the service.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 That the committee note the contents of the report.

3.0 Detail

3.1 **Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context**

3.1.1 The Borough Plan includes two priorities specific to Housing, these are;

- Strategic Priority 1 – Prosperity and Stability in Brent
- Strategic Priority 2 – A Cleaner, Greener Future

3.1.2 These two priorities re-affirm the Council’s ambition to continue building new Council homes with a target of 1,700 by 2028 and improving the quality of housing across the private sector and in our own housing stock. Housing is also a key stakeholder in the delivery of Green Neighbourhoods both through the engagement with Registered Providers and investment in Council owned homes, specifically retrofitting poorly performing housing.

3.1.3 Other strategies that are relevant to Housing include;

- Black Community Action Plan
- Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy
- Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy
- Equality Strategy
- Health and Well-being Strategy
- Procurement Strategy
- Local Plan

3.2 Background

3.2.1 The Housing Management service provides landlord services to tenants and leaseholders across the London Borough of Brent. The landlord function is carried out by two services: Housing and Neighbourhoods and Property Services. The two services work together closely to provide a joined-up service to our Council, Investment for Brent (i4B) and First Wave Housing (FWH) tenants and leaseholders. The numbers of tenanted and leaseholder properties in our ownership are reflected below.

General Needs	I4B	FWH	Leasehold
8122	578	217	3715
Brent Direct Leasing	Supported Living	Temporary Accommodation	
262	89	131	

3.2.2 The Housing and Neighbourhoods service comprises of the following teams, with approximately 150 members of staff.

- Tenancy Services
- Income Collection
- Estate Services (Caretaking)
- Rent Accounting
- Home Ownership Team

3.2.3 Tenancy Services are responsible for dealing with all aspects of tenancy, Housing Officers are often the first point of contact to provide support to tenants. Housing officers all have assigned ‘patches’ across the borough and are

responsible for all the tenants and homes within their patch. The support housing officers provide is varied but they will regularly deal with issues related to Anti-Social Behaviour, carry out tenancy audits and process successions or requests for management transfers or mutual exchanges.

- 3.2.4 Where necessary Housing Officers will enforce tenants' compliance with their tenancy agreements and will seek possession of properties where terms and conditions are breached. There is however a focus on sustaining tenancies and providing support to keep people in their homes.
- 3.2.5 The Income Collection Team ensure that rent tenants owe to BHM is collected and will support tenants who find themselves in arrears to make payments. Officers in the team promote a 'rent first attitude' alongside providing holistic support and signposting to other services and agencies when issues are identified.
- 3.2.6 The Rent Accounting Team set up and manage all rent accounts. They are also responsible for applying rent increases, providing administration support to the housing service and close old tenancies where required. The rent accounting team are also responsible for promoting the use of Direct Debit payments to tenants.
- 3.2.7 The Home Ownership Team is responsible for all aspects of leaseholder management and Right to Buy. They administer services and give leaseholders a voice and input into how their homes are managed and improved.
- 3.2.8 Estate Services is made up of 70+ caretakers who manage the internal and external communal cleaning of blocks on our estates, including deep cleaning, removal of fly tipping, monitoring of external contractors (ground maintenance, waste removal, tree maintenance). The caretaking service was brought in house in 2019 and our caretaking staff have since become one of our most complimented services and are well known and liked amongst our estate communities.
- 3.2.9 Property Services consists of the following teams, with approximately 40 staff members.
 - Responsive Repairs
 - Compliance
 - Planned and Major Works
 - Voids and Lettings
 - Asset Management
- 3.2.10 The responsive repairs team are responsible for managing contractors who undertake responsive repairs on the Council's behalf. The team is made up of surveyors who inspect more complex repairs before issuing works to the contractor, surveyors also post inspect works carried out by contractors to ensure quality standards are met. The team also manage disrepair cases, where a tenant will ask a solicitor to act on their behalf when they are unhappy with the repairs service we have provided.

- 3.2.11 The Compliance team are responsible for keeping residents safe in their homes and ensure we adhere to our statutory requirements. These requirements involve an inspection regime for fire safety, Legionella, asbestos, gas and electricity, referred to as FLAGE. The compliance team also monitors Mechanical and Electrical contractors.
- 3.2.12 The Asset Management team maintain and update information on our properties and monitor the lifecycle of components such as kitchens and bathrooms, to give an insight into when they are likely to fail. This information informs the work of the planned and major works programme for the coming year.
- 3.2.13 The Planned and Major works team manage the cyclical replacements as informed by the asset management team. They also carry out major works including refurbishments of blocks. More details of current works are provided in 11.0 of the report.
- 3.2.14 The Voids and Lettings team manage properties that are empty following the termination of a tenancy. Void surveyors will assess and specify works that are required to bring the property up to a lettable standard and manage the contractors responsible for the works. Our lettings coordinators will then take prospective tenants to view the property and sign them up to their tenancy agreement.

4.0 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

Background

- 4.1 The TSMs are a result of new policy and legislation within the Social Housing Sector, these being the Social Housing White Paper and the Social Housing Regulations Act (2023). Both set out to reform regulation within the social housing sector by introducing robust, proactive regulation of consumer issues such as safety, transparency and tenant engagement which includes the launch of a national approach to measuring performance and tenants' satisfaction with landlords i.e., the TSM's. This commitment to increasing regulation followed significant tragic events such as the fire at Grenfell Tower.
- 4.2 The TSMs consist of 12 tenant perception measures, to be obtained through tenant surveys carried out by providers and 10 landlord management information measures. The measures are summarised into themes such as keeping properties in good repair, maintaining building safety, effective complaints handling, respectful and helpful tenant engagement, and responsible neighbourhood management. A copy of the full measures is provided in Appendix 1 – Tenant Satisfaction Measures.
- 4.3 The purpose of this new approach to regulating consumer issues seeks to introduce greater enforcement powers and tackle failing landlords. The aim of increasing regulation within the sector is ultimately to drive change in landlords' behaviour and ensure the needs of tenants are being met and landlords are held to account for their performance.

Methodology and Sample

- 4.4 In preparation for the introduction of the TSMs, Officers presented a plan to pilot collecting this information throughout 2022/ 2023 and methodology to the Corporate Management Team and Policy Co-ordination Group in October 2022. This approach was approved, and the Housing Management service has been collecting TSM information throughout 2022/23 using the draft measures originally proposed by the Regulator during consultation.
- 4.5 To collect the data, the Council opted to take a sample of tenants whose tenancy start date anniversary fell within the previous quarter. This was to encourage a sample with a good mix of demographics, property types and length of time as a Brent Housing resident. To ensure that access to complete the survey did not exclude anyone, 50% of surveys are completed over the phone and 50% in person. Though not a requirement, the Council opted to also survey leaseholders, plus First Wave Housing and I4B. These results will not be submitted to the Regulator but will provide useful insight on their experience for BHM to use.
- 4.6 In October 2022, Officers presented to the Corporate Management Team and Policy Co-ordination Group outlining plans to prepare for the TSMs. This approach was approved, and the Housing Management service has been collecting TSM information throughout 2022/23. To collect the data, the Council opted to procure an external company to survey a sample of tenants whose tenancy start date anniversary fell within the previous quarter. This was to encourage a sample with a good mix of demographics, property types and length of time as a Brent Housing resident.
- 4.7 To improve access to the surveys, the Council opted to undertake, 50% of surveys are completed over the phone and 50% in person. This split may be revised depending on finances as face-to-face surveys are more costly.
- 4.8 During this pilot year, 464 tenants have been surveyed and the following tables provide insight into the sample demographics and the current results. Note, these categories have been summarised for the benefit of this report, a more detailed analysis of age and ethnicity is provided on the dashboard. The tables below provide a summary of the age, gender, and ethnicity of respondents.

Gender	Number of respondents
Male	184
Female	279
Did not provide	1

*Further options for Gender are available but were not selected.

Age band	Number of respondents
18 – 24	8
25 – 44	80
45 – 54	107
55 – 64	132
65 and over	134
Not recorded	3

Ethnicity	Number of respondents
Asian	48
Black	153
White	108
Did not provide	125
Other ethnic group	30

4.9 The sample is broadly reflective of the tenant population living in Council homes.

Indicative results

4.10 Housemark, the social housing sector national benchmarking organisation have produced an indicative report pulling together results from a sample of social housing providers who are currently collecting the data. In this report, Housemark highlight a landlords operating context such as its size, type, location and tenant population will affect results. It documented that Local Authority tenants, or tenants living in cities such as London are less satisfied than housing association tenants or those living in more rural areas.

4.11 The table below gives a comparison of the current results collected by the Council to date against Housemark benchmarking.

Tenant Satisfaction Measure	Council Tenants Overall positive response	Housemark London only (median) Overall positive response	Housemark (median) Overall positive response
Overall Satisfaction with the landlord service	55%	60.2%	72.3%
Satisfaction with repairs over the last 12 months	58%	64.1%	74.5%
Satisfaction with time taken to complete repairs	56%	59%	70%
Satisfaction that your landlord provides a home	60%	57%	72.2%

that is safe and well-maintained			
Satisfaction that communal areas are clean, safe and well-maintained	53%	58.5%	66%
Satisfaction that your landlord makes a positive contribution to your neighbourhood	52%	54%	64%
Satisfaction with the handling of anti-social behaviour	57%	42%	57.6%
Satisfaction that your landlord listens to your views and acts upon them	51%	45.6%	61%
Satisfaction that your landlord keeps you informed about things that matters to you	60%	64%	71.4%
Satisfaction with the following statement 'my landlord treats me fairly and with respect'	67%	61%	78.2%
Satisfaction with complaints handling	53%	25.5%	34%
Satisfaction with the following statement 'I know how to make a complaint'	69%	Not collected	Not collected

4.12 The table above compares three sets of results, data from the Council's 464 tenants who have been surveyed, a report analysing the data collected by London Local Authorities including Arm's Length Management Organisations and then the latest publication from Housemark sampling 189 social housing providers across the country.

4.13 The table shows that Brent is higher than the London average for the following areas

- A safe and well-maintained home
- Handling of anti-social behaviour
- Listening to tenants' views and acting on them
- Treating tenants with fairness and respect
- Complaints handling

4.14 When compared to national results however, the Council is in below average. The Council is in line with the national average for the handling of anti-social behaviour (57%) and above the national average for satisfaction when handling complaints.

4.15 Measures such as:

- Overall satisfaction
- Repairs and time to complete repairs
- Communal areas being safe and well maintained
- Tenants are kept informed

4.16 are below both the London and National average. Some changes to these service areas have already been introduced such as a new Grounds Maintenance contract, additionally, the housing management service has started the process for procuring a new repairs and maintenance service which will involve both members and residents. The service is also finalising a new tenant and leaseholder engagement strategy and has created a new dedicated team for engagement meaning the focus on keeping tenants informed and showing how their views are used to inform service delivery will increase.

Monitoring and planned improvement

4.17 The Council has created a dashboard which all managers of people in the Housing Management service have access too. This means the results of the TSMs can be fed back to officers at team meetings and as part of performance management.

4.18 The engagement team hold a monthly meeting with all people managers to provide feedback from any engagement activities e.g. a tenant led scrutiny of complaints and TSM results. This allows for more detailed analysis to be provided.

4.19 New communications channels such as text messaging and bulk emails are now being developed to send out to tenants and leaseholders so more regular communication and important operational messages can be issued regularly.

5.0 Major and Minor Voids

5.1 A 'void' is defined as a property that is unoccupied. BHM has 3 classifications of void properties for reporting: minor void, major void, out of management void.

- A minor void has minor repairs and maintenance and doesn't require any major component renewals i.e. new kitchen or bathroom
- A major void property may require several components renewed such as a new bathroom or a complete electrical or heating renewal.
- An out of management void will require significant works, such as structural or major damp and mould issues – or require works by a third party such as gas or electricity supply issues.

5.2 Processing void properties efficiently is important as the Council loses rental income every week that a property is not let. Having properties void for extended periods of time leads to longer wait times for residents on the social housing waiting list. It is therefore key that void properties are processed as quickly as possible for the benefit of residents and the Council.

- 5.3 The processing of voids was identified in the previous financial year as a key area of concern for BHM. Inaccurate data on the Housing Management service's Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) meant that the statistics used for performance reporting were skewed and did not represent an accurate view of the council's void properties. This coupled with high staff turnover within the voids and lettings team led to issues at several key stages of the void process, and therefore delays.
- 5.4 Work to address issues with the voids process has been ongoing. The entire void journey from tenancy termination through to new tenant sign up has been reviewed to understand where improvements could be made to IT systems, processes, and ways of working.
- 5.5 Extensive work has been undertaken to cleanse historical data on BHM's CRM system to give those responsible for processing voids a clearer understanding of BHM's position in relation to its number of void properties. Following this work the number of voids on the system has reduced from 1500 to 203. Many of the properties removed were from blocks demolished as part of the South Kilburn regeneration scheme. This has given BHM a better understanding of its void data for reporting purposes.
- 5.6 New processes to improve void turnaround times have also been introduced. A suited key system for all new voids was introduced in August 2023, whereby a locksmith will attend a property within 24 hours of it becoming void and installs a suited key that allows various stakeholders in the void process to access the property with no delays. Surveyors are now also attending a new void within 24 hours to carry out a pre-inspection, before issuing the works to a contractor.
- 5.7 The focus on void processing has led to considerably improved performance, in the number of current void properties. The average turnaround times for properties Pre and Post April 2023 are detailed below.

Number of Void Properties November 23

Ownership Type	Major	Minor	Let/Pre-Let	Out of Management	Total
General Needs	72	29	25	22	148
I4B	3	7			10
FWH	2	1	2		5
Total	77	37	27	22	163

Number of Void Properties November 22

Ownership Type	Major	Minor	Let/Pre-Let	Out of Management	Total
General Needs	81	36	48	17	182
I4B	4	13	6		23
FWH	2	9	2	2	15
Total	87	58	56	19	220

Average void turnaround time (days)

Void Category	Pre April 2023	Post April 2023	Post July 2023
I4b / FWH	275	85	
General Needs	293	105	43

6.0 Compliance

6.1 The Housing Management Service has a statutory duty to ensure that all its tenants and leaseholders are safe in their homes and are compliant with FLAGE requirements (fire, legionella, asbestos, gas and electrical). Non-compliance may lead to an unsafe environment for residents and visitors and could result in enforcement action being taken against the council.

6.2 The Housing Management Service's FLAGE compliance in its housing stock is detailed below:

Compliance Area	Performance
Fire Risk Assessments	100%
Legionella	100%
Asbestos	100%
Gas	99.98%
Domestic Electrical	91%
Block Electrical	100%

6.3 Gas Safety (Domestic) is currently 99.98% compliant. There are currently 2 properties with expired gas safety certificates. The process to force entry to ensure compliance is in progress and compliance is expected to be 100% by the end of November.

6.4 Electrical Safety (Domestic) is currently 91% compliant. There are currently 752 properties that are non-compliant, this number has reduced from 1352 in the last 6 months. BHM has issued letters and warning cards to compel residents to book an electrical safety check appointment. Residents who continue to ignore requests will be subject to injunctions to gain access.

7.0 Building Safety Act 2022

7.1 The Building Safety Act 2022 was introduced to improve the housing safety standards for residents giving them more rights and protections. The Building Safety Regulator (BSR) will oversee the safety and performance of all buildings with a special focus on high rise buildings.

7.2 Main requirements:

- Registration of high-risk buildings with the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) **Deadline 30th Sept 2023.**
- Structural and safety information added to registered buildings **Deadline 30th Sept 2023.**
- Evidence of good quality and comprehensive records on the design, construction, repair, and maintenance of higher risk buildings.

- Preparation of Building Safety Cases **Deadline April 2024**.
- Golden thread of information.
- Evidence of the record keeping we maintain on our IT systems which record all the data and evidence that we have to have in order to demonstrate compliance, and which enables us to report to residents, the BSR, Members and CMT.
- Evidence of understanding our obligations of engaging with residents in higher risk buildings and what our strategy and plans are for doing this, along with timescales.

7.3 The Housing Management Service registered all the high-risk buildings and added all of the structural and safety data before the Regulator deadlines. A letter has been sent to all residents living in high-risk buildings outlining the Councils duties. Resident building safety meetings are being scheduled over the next six months. The next big deadline is for completion of the building safety cases in April 2024. In order to meet this deadline, we will need to outsource some of this work to consultants who have experience of putting building safety cases together.

8.0 Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022

8.1 Following the Grenfell Tower inquiry findings published in October 2019, there was several recommendations made to prevent such a tragedy from ever happening again. The Government undertook to introduce new regulations based on these recommendations. These regulations take the form of the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 and extend duties imposed by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

8.2 Main requirements:

- Information to residents
- Fire door checks
- Buildings registered on London Fire Brigade (LFB) portal
- Secure information boxes
- Wayfinding signage
- Lifts and essential firefighting equipment

8.3 The Housing Management Service has delivered all the above duties, information has been shared with residents on the importance of fire doors and how to charge electric bikes and scooters safely. Fire door checks are ongoing however all doors have been checked on our high-risk buildings.

9.0 Income Collection

Performance

9.1 The Housing Management service's monthly collection rate for the 2023/24 Year to Date (YTD) is reflected below, the cumulative collection rate for 23/24 is 96.5%:

April 2023	May 2023	June 2023	July 2023	August 2023	Sept 2023	Oct 2023
92.15%	95.54%	94.91%	95.02%	91.59%	95.34%	97.16%

9.2 The Housing Management service's YTD performance compared to last year is detailed below. This chart compares the cumulative collection rate for Weeks 1-31 2023-24 to Weeks 1-31 2022-23.

Scheme	Weeks 1-31 Cumulative collection (23/24)	Weeks 1-31 Cumulative collection (22/23)	Diff (+/-) of weeks 1-31 cumulative collection for 23/24 to 22/23
Council	96.47%	95.33%	1.14%
FWH	98.86%	99.56%	-0.70%
I4B	92.36%	90.51%	1.85%
TA	88.41%	77.01%	11.40%
BDLSK	109.53%	101.56%	7.97%
BDLS	98.66%	94.45%	4.21%
NAIL	96.54%	82.01%	14.53%

9.3 There has been an increase in the collection rate for the month of October 2023 and a continuing trend of increased collection from the same point in the previous financial year 22/23 to the current cumulative figure of 96.5%. Despite this increase in collection rate, the Housing Management Service recognises that this figure requires improvement.

9.4 To improve rent collection a rent income review of all income related functions has commenced and is ongoing. The review will result in improved processes and improved performance of the Housing Management service's income teams.

9.5 Income officers have returned to the office and work 4 days in the Civic Centre to ensure improved access to income teams for residents. In addition, officer in the income team have received renewed targets related to their day-to-day work. Further support and guidance will be provided to staff to enable them to continue improving BHM's rent collection levels.

10.0 Tenancy Sustainment - Evictions

10.1 Two Housing Management service tenants were evicted in the period between November 2022-November 2023. This is a very small number, which can be partly explained by the backlog within the court system that makes it difficult for Brent Housing Management to pursue legal action against tenants efficiently.

10.2 The number is also low due to the sustainment approach taken by officers in the Housing Management service. The council will not evict tenants who cannot afford to pay and will instead offer holistic support to tenants, utilising the resident support fund and other financial benefits to keep people in their homes.

It is only in circumstances where tenants do not engage with this support or refuse to pay their rent outright where enforcement action is taken.

10.3 The number of tenants evicted due to rent arrears in the past 5 years is shown below.

Year	Number of Tenants Evicted due to Rent Arrears
2019	5
2020	4
2021	4
2022	2
2023	2

11.0 Complaints

Year	Stage 1s Received	Stage 1 outcomes	Stage 2s received	Stage 2 outcomes
01/01/2022 – 31/10/2022	571	257/568 (45%)	91	66/85 (78%)
01/01/2023 – 31/10/2023	522	319/552 (58%)	101	81/101 (80%)

11.1 The data for outcomes is based on cases closed during the period rather than received. The information in the table compares the number of cases upheld or partly upheld out of the cases closed to provide the percentage upheld/partly upheld in brackets.

11.2 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.

11.3 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.

11.4 The data shows that the Housing Management service has received fewer overall complaints this year compared to this period in the previous year. There has however been an increase in the percentage of complaints upheld at Stage 1 and Stage 2 compared to last year, and an increase in the number of complaints that were escalated to Stage 2. Work continues to ensure that it uses complaints to inform improvements in service delivery. It should be noted that in line with Ombudsman guidance the Housing Management Service actively encourages complaints and utilises these as a direct form of resident engagement, to understand the issues that affect residents, matter most and require fresh intervention. It can be expected because of this and complaints

publicity campaigns, that the numbers will increase, and this should not be seen as a negative- but should show that engagement is occurring and be welcomed as a learning tool.

11.5 In October 2023, the new engagement team hosted a tenant led scrutiny of complaint responses. Five Council tenants and one leaseholder took part in the exercise where they reviewed a random sample of complaint responses. In total 28 responses were scrutinised and scored against six questions:

- How clear was the content of the letter to understand?
- How would you rate the tone of the letter (empathy and professionalism)?
- Did the response fully address the concerns raised by the complainant?
- How satisfactory would you say the outcome was?
- Was the complainant contacted and how useful would you rate this approach in terms of managing the complaint?
- What overall rating would you give the letter?

11.6 For each complaint, a maximum score of 30 could be given. The results showed eight complaints received a score of 25 or more (of which five were given 30/30), 12 received a score of 20-24 and 8 a score of 19 or less. Recommendations from this tenant scrutiny group were as follows:

- Making sure that complaint responses are proofread to avoid typos and grammatical errors
- Keep responses clear and structured so they are easy to follow
- Explain why something went wrong to improve transparency
- Reduce the use of jargon and technical terminology

11.7 Comments also included were:

- *“Very clear response professional tone, fully addressed resolved with actions, very well structured which managed the level of frustration felt by the complainant”*
- *“Very clear and concise, honest with empathy shown all points addressed and answered”*
- *“Fully acknowledged the complaint and carried out inspections for thorough repair. Job raised as a priority 1 excellent”*

11.8 This exercise will be repeated in 3 months' time and feedback has been issued to all people managers within the Housing Management Service.

12.0 Housing Customer Contact Centre

12.1 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

12.2 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.

- 12.3 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

Performance

Month	Calls answered	% Calls Accepted	Average Wait Time	Longest Wait	Emails Processed
October	4119	80	9 mins	42 mins	2773
September	3614	83	7 mins	57 mins	2754
August	3664	87	5 mins	31 mins	2780

Year	Calls answered	% Calls Accepted	Average Wait Time	Longest Wait	Emails Processed
23-24 YTD	26881	87	6 mins	58mins	22584
22/23	50825	79	8 mins	54 mins	33041
21/22	42689	80	7 mins	54 mins	No data

- 12.4 Housing Customer Services have been working closely with Housing Management service colleagues and Wates to reduce failure demand and improve the customer journey. Wates age WIP (Work in Progress) and outstanding roof works was a major factor in failure demand as the service received a high volume of chase up calls from residents.

- 12.5 There were also system issues that prevented the team from responding effectively at the first point of contact and all teams have worked together to improve this. Insisting upon Wates, surveyors and Property Services adding clear notes and updates has also resulted in improved communication and more effective enquiry resolution.

- 12.6 Staff turnover both in Wates and Property Services as well as in the Corporate Contact Centre impacted officer capacity. Wates have a proactive team who work collaboratively with the Housing Management service and Customer Services, and which has led to several improvements including:

- Updates to resident email address and phone numbers
- Reduced the number of duplicate jobs
- Seen a reduction in complaints relating to outstanding repairs
- Reduction in no shows by sub-contractors
- Improved communication between service areas/teams
- Improved visibility of appointment availability for Customer Service
- Improved call answer rates
- Reduced WIP backlog

- 12.7 The Corporate Contact Centre champions Customer Service and as a result, several of officers have moved onto roles with the Housing Management service or the rest of the Council. This has presented challenges in terms of

recruitment and training which requires resource and inevitably impacts frontline services. Turnover has been particularly high this financial year and we often struggle to recruit to both temporary and permanent roles. We have invested in our team by ensuring they receive regular service updates and refresher training as well as engaging them in our Joint Service Meetings with stakeholders.

- 12.8 The Out of Hours Emergency Telephony contract with SPS Doorguard generally operates effectively and provides value for money at a cost of around 2FTE Officers. Overall, calls to SPS have increased year on year since 2021 as can be seen below. The call volumes as a baseline for BHM was 13100 for '21 and '22 and this was exceeded both years. The baseline was increased to 14000 in '23-'24 to include call cover between the hours of 8am and 9am, Monday to Friday.
- 12.9 SPS Doorguard aim to achieve an answer rate of 95% and this has been achieved most of the time. On rare occasions, the lowest answer rate achieved has been 90%. Monthly contract meetings are held with SPS and these are attended by the Housing Management service, Wates, Customer Service and other service areas such as Homelessness and Environmental Services.

13.0 Planned Works

- 13.1 The Housing Management service currently has a number of planned works projects that are currently in progress or in scope and at the planning stage, these projects are undertaken by the Major Works team. These works contribute to refurbishment and improvement of our existing stock to ensure residents continue to live in homes of a high standard.

Kilburn Square

- 13.2 The mobilisation of a contractor for the works has now been completed without any major issues and planning has been approved in addition to the building warrant. Work on site began in October and is expected to be completed in April 2025 with an estimated cost of £12m.

Windmill Court

- 13.3 The team is awaiting quotes from the design team for the works, although surveys have started. An issue with Vodaphone telecommunications persists and works are likely to start in July 2024. A resident consultation event is planned for November 2023. The works are expected to be completed by March 2026 with an estimated cost of £11m

Lodge and Manor Court

- 13.4 The team is awaiting quotes from the design team for the works, although surveys have started. The freeholder's solicitor has requested detailed design information and is insisting on this before a request to refurbish the blocks is considered. The Housing Management service is currently awaiting a response

to the information provided. Works are expected to be completed in June 2026 with an estimated cost of £15m.

Granville Homes

- 13.5 The consultant and design award to Michael Dyson has been approved, with the award report published. BHM is working with the consultation to finalise the project programme. Works are expected to be completed in December 2026, with an estimated cost of £25m.

Energy Efficiency Programme

- 13.6 There have been approximately 95 designs completed for works to take place. So far 6 scaffolds have been erected to houses and to 2 blocks of flats. Window installations have commenced, and £420k has been drawn down from grant funds so far. The Housing Management service is agreeing data collection protocols with tenants in advance to ensure this data is received post works. Works are expected to be completed in July 2025, with an estimated cost of £3.2m, with £1.3m of this made up in grant funding.

14.0 Other Relevant Workstreams

Repair re-procurement

- 14.1 The current contract we have with Wates, to deliver the integrated asset management, planned and cyclical maintenance and responsive repairs maintenance works comes to an end 30th September 2024.
- 14.2 The Housing Management Service worked with members to agree on the new Hybrid delivery model which consists of at least two contractors delivering voids, planned and responsive repairs. A local contractor framework to be used by the main contractors and a handypersons service completing communal repairs.
- 14.3 A Members working group has been set up to provide constructive oversight and feedback on the design and delivery of the Hybrid Repairs delivery option and to ensure officers deliver the service as originally intended.

Lynton Close Travellers Site

- 14.4 Lynton Close Gypsy and Traveller site is designed to hold 31 pitches which each contain a kitchen unit and shower unit, and a static home. It is currently chronically overcrowded with additional vehicles- touring vans, mobile homes and some static homes. Lynton Close is the largest known Gypsy and Traveller Site in London. Each pitch is overcrowded with an additional 1-3 vehicles.
- 14.5 Following a recent audit there is a need for a minimum of 61 pitches to adequately accommodate the families on Lynton Close, and ideally 80+ to comfortably accommodate young families, single adults and the anticipated near future growth of the community

- 14.6 The current overcrowding is due almost entirely to generational growth over the last three decades since Travellers and Gypsies originally settled there and gained the right to remain. The sites overcrowding has direct impacts on poor quality of life for residents, poor educational attainment and health and welfare, increases ASB and reduces the ability to effectively manage the site.
- 14.7 The overcrowding gives rise to a more immediate and chronic risk which relates to fire safety. The sites most recent fire risk assessment found the site to be at intolerable risk of fire, largely due to the intensity and volume of homes, which leave no gap between them due to lack of space and would allow a fire to 'jump' from one vehicle to another should one break out. It is widely recognised that large sites are very difficult to manage, and sites should be no larger than 8 pitches ideally.
- 14.8 To deal with the above issues work is underway to urgently identify alternative sites that can be used to decant the additional families and vehicles to address the immediate fire concerns. Permanent smaller sites across the borough are also being identified with the intention of closing and decanting Lynton Close, where the air quality is very poor, and the site unmanageable due to size and layout. Smaller, well-designed sites will enable families to live healthy lives where they are well integrated with the wider community, less stigmatised and have meaningful access to services.
- 14.9 An advocacy agency – London Gypsies and Travellers- has been engaged to assist with communicating with Lynton Close residents and support them. Legal action is also being taken to ensure that decant is possible and that the safety of everyone on the site is kept paramount. This workstream is a key priority for the Housing Management service. It will take time and require considerable support from Members.

Fly Tipping

- 14.10 Fly tipping is an issue that the Housing Management service is working hard to address, The Housing Management service acknowledges the negative impact it has on local environment, public health and how our estates are perceived by residents. It also has a large financial impact due to the cost of clearing the illegally dumped waste.
- 14.11 The Housing Management service know that fly tipping is widespread across the borough and unfortunately on some BHM estates, with hot spots in South Kilburn, St Raphs and other estates such as Westcroft Court and Eskdale and Loweswater. It has been found that when hot spots for fly tipping are identified by perpetrators, they are likely to use those sites continually to the dismay of local residents and the Council.
- 14.12 The Housing Management service has been working to prevent fly tipping across the borough. There are currently two tipper trucks that clear fly tips Monday-Friday. Each truck has a two-man crew who respond to scheduled and reactive requests for clearances. The hot spot sites are visited once a week and sometimes twice a week depending on demand.

- 14.13 In order to bolster the Housing Management service's ability to prevent fly tipping on its estates, the service is in the process of ordering more signage to discourage fly tipping and is planning to install CCTV cameras at Westcroft Court in consultation with leaseholders and tenants. The Housing Management service is also planning to introduce widespread CCTV coverage on St Raphs estate as part of the wider regeneration of the estate.
- 14.14 The Housing Management service is also working with the housing resident engagement team to provide educational leaflets to tenants on fly-tipping and will ensure that guidance is periodically refreshed to reflect best practice.
- 14.15 The Housing Management service is also working with the Neighbourhood Management team, who are leading on a long-term project to install boroughwide CCTV to target hot-spot areas which should have a positive impact on prevention and enforcement in the medium to long term.

Estate Walkabouts

- 14.16 To ensure that Housing Management service officers are regularly on estates and can respond proactively estate walk abouts are aiming to take place on all estates monthly once the service is fully staffed. Action plans will be developed and shared with all relevant stakeholders, and ward Councillors will be invited on a rolling basis through an Estate Walkabout calendar. The action plans will be live documents that will be updated and used to ensure transparency and accountability in getting strong and fast resolutions to issues.

Works to improve flow of Council properties

- 14.17 To improve the flow of properties to help to alleviate the waiting list for social housing properties, officers have been focusing on improving our case handling in instances where a tenant dies. The processing time for these cases has been reduced due to new processes and regular monitoring via meetings and officer supervision.
- 14.18 The Housing Management service now works more closely with the Housing Needs department to incentivise tenants who are over occupying a property to downsize to a more suitable home. This is intended to release larger sought-after properties to homeless families on the social housing waiting list and allow the over-occupying tenant to move to a more affordable home.

Changes to Invest for Brent and First Wave Housing Management

- 14.19 Housing Companies, i4B and FWH will be moving away from a specialist style of Housing Management to a generic style. I4B and FWH are seeking to improve in areas such as rent collection, void turnaround times and overall tenant satisfaction. A move towards a localised offer with one direct contact for tenants is anticipated to have a positive impact.
- 14.20 The roles will be focused on increasing income, supporting tenants to sustain tenancies, minimising void times and completing regular and meaningful tenancy audits, while providing holistic support to tenants that are struggling.

The purpose of this new role is to provide more effective tenancy management and prevent delays caused by hand-offs to different teams.

- 14.21 BHM has created new policies and processes in relation to the key functions of Housing Management to facilitate a seamless transition and it is expected that the successful candidate for the role will be in post by December 2023

Restructure

- 14.22 The Housing Management service are in the process of restructuring services to improve resident engagement and satisfaction. The restructure will enable greater visibility on estates, provide more localised services that promote accountability and empathy, reduce the stigma of social tenants and aim to create long term savings in reductions of waste, failure demand and handoffs between teams.

Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement

- 14.23 A new tenant and leaseholder strategy is shortly due to be presented to Cabinet ahead of final consultation being carried out. This strategy has been developed with Council tenants and leaseholders, through a range of activities including, a roadshow of 11 estates which engaged 86 tenants and leaseholders, a focus group to review the proposed strategy engagements and what they mean, a survey available on the Council's website and a dedicated session with all chairs of resident associations operating from Council estates.
- 14.24 The new approach to engagement within the Housing Management service will be an integral part of the culture going forward. The service has committed to achieving the national Tenant Participation Advisory Service Landlord Accreditation by September 2024.

15.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 15.1 The Cabinet Member has been regularly briefed on the implementation of Tenant Satisfaction Measures and the ongoing work undertaken by the Housing Management service.

16.0 Financial Considerations

- 16.1 The landlord function undertaken by Brent Housing Management (BHM) is funded from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Budgets are ringfenced where income from rents and service charges are matched by expenditure on repairs and management.
- 16.2 Rental income is the main source of funding in HRA totalling £57m. Due to the rapid rise of inflation within the context of the cost-of-living crisis, the government imposed a rent cap of 7% in 2023/24, which has resulted in a need to incorporate £3m worth of challenging cost reductions to deliver a balanced budget.
- 16.3 Rent collection rates have a significant impact on future budgets. If level of rent collection remained consistent at 96% for the year, this would result in an

additional budget requirement of up to £1.2m in order to allow for increased risk of non-payments. The Council's Resident Support Fund helps to alleviate some of financial hardship being faced by tenants. However, collection rates continue to be impacted.

- 16.4 Repairs contract costs can be expected to increase upon renewal in September 2024. Inflation on re-tendered contracts is estimated to range between 5% to 10% and could result in additional budget requirements ranging between £1.7m to 3.4m in 2024/25. In addition, implementing a hybrid repairs delivery model is estimated to require £1.2m.
- 16.5 Property Services are experiencing continued increase in cost associated with expenditure on void properties in order to bring them to lettable standards. The service is required to balance competing demands, there is a need to recruit to vacant positions and at the same time achieve saving targets. Budgetary pressures identified for void and responsive works require additional funding estimated at £0.5m - £1m in 2024/25.
- 16.6 Void turnaround times have an impact on rental income while the property remains unoccupied. Void rent loss is at £0.9m year to date, based on this run rate the projected rent loss for the year is £1.8m, making up 3% of budgeted rental income.
- 16.7 Compensation claims for disrepairs have experienced increased number of open cases and settlement payment, this has resulted in the need to fund additional legal support. Additional budget requirement is estimated to be between £0.3m and £0.5m in 2024/25.
- 16.8 Council tower blocks refurbishment programme is estimated to cost in the region of £42m, pending detailed costing information per block. The current estimated investment is projected to be part funded through borrowing. Funding profile for debt repayment and interest involves mitigating cost reduction of £0.7m in revenue budget to be achieved between 2023 to 2025. Saving targets have been identified in void repairs, disrepair works and staff vacancies. In addition to revenue savings in the short term, budget reductions to long-term capital programme totalling £33.5m have been profiled between 2026 to 2048, to provide for debt repayment.
- 16.9 High levels of uncertainty around 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. The increased costs experienced by the HRA would have to be met by rent inflation and modifying service delivery, in addition to the annual saving targets which are incorporated into medium term financial strategy.

17.0 Legal Considerations

- 17.1 The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, which received Royal Assent on 20th July 2023 is intended to be the catalyst for a new proactive approach to regulating social housing, ensuring standards are met and taking action against

failing landlords. The Act itself describes its purpose as being to “reform the regulatory regime to drive significant change in landlord behaviour.

- 17.2 The Act provides the Regulator with a power to give directions to Registered Providers (RPs) to collect, process and publish information about their performance in relation to the regulatory standards. The Regulator has already consulted on and published the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) in April 2023, the Regulator introduced 22 mandatory TSMs creating a new system for assessing how well social housing landlords are doing at providing good quality homes and services, this includes those applicable directly to building safety as well as those based on tenant perception. The requirement on RPs to start collecting data also started from 1st April 2023 and it is anticipated that the first year of data from RPs will be published in Autumn 2024.
- 17.3 **Electrical Safety:** The Act extends the power for the Secretary of State (under the Housing and Planning Act 2016) to impose duties on landlords for the purpose of ensuring that electrical standards are met during any period whilst a premises is occupied under tenancy to cover all RPs, rather than just private landlords.
- 17.4 **Gas Safety:** The Council already utilises paragraph Schedule 3, paragraph 2 Environmental Protection Act 1990 to obtain warrants for entry in the Magistrates Court for access to properties which deny access for gas safety inspections to ensure the safety of the Council’s housing stock.
- 17.5 **Rent Collection:** The Council needs to comply with the Pre-Action Protocol for Possession Claims by Social Landlords before initiating possession proceedings. The protocol requires that the landlord should take reasonable steps to make pre-action contact and exchange information, to enable the landlords and tenants to avoid litigation and settle disputes out of court. Court proceedings should be a last resort. If the landlord does not comply with the protocol the court can consider compliance when making any order for costs and where the claim is brought on discretionary grounds, adjourn or strike out the claim
- 17.6 **Maintenance of Housing Stock:** The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, section 11, 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. This obligation is from the commencement of the tenancy therefore voids property should be in a good state of repair. Failure to comply with this duty leaves the Council liable to legal action from its tenants.
- 17.7 **Planned Works:** 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.

- 17.7 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.

18.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 18.1 The Council must, in the making of decisions in exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, pursuant to s149 (1) Equality Act 2010. This is known as the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:
 - remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it
 - encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

- 18.2 The Public Sector Equality Duty covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

- 18.3 Housing is currently carrying out an exercise to improve diversity data held on system to ensure that any equality impact assessments carried out are informed and fully understand the impact to residents who have protected characteristics.

19.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

- 19.1 Housing is a key stakeholder in delivering the Council's Climate Action Strategy. The actions Housing is responsible for are as follows:

- Retrofit work to three tower blocks
- We will deliver further retrofitting projects via the Council's Carbon offset fund
- We will develop and implement employer requirements for energy efficiency standards within all new Council housing
- We will explore and identify an opportunity for an exemplar net zero new build within the NCHP
- We will review developments within our NCHP pipeline to ensure that all aspects of sustainability are holistically addressed, with a special focus on the proposed development plans for St Raphael's Estate
- We will explore funding for a dedicated energy efficiency works programme within the Housing Asset Management Strategy
- Support the implementation of Green Neighbourhoods by engaging Housing Associations and Private Landlords operating in the areas.

19.2 The financial position of the HRA will determine Housing's capacity to deliver the actions outlined above.

20.0 Communication Considerations

20.1 Any changes to how the Housing Management Service's ways of working will be communicated to staff internally and will be embedded by regular training sessions.

Report sign off:

Peter Gadsdon

Corporate Director of Resident Services