

Resident Board

Wednesday 24 February 2021

ZOOM Meeting

Main Meeting 6:30pm until 8:00pm

Present:

Aruna Bhatt	(AB)	Chair
Elizabeth Fitzgerald	(EF)	Co-Chair
Angela Shine	(AS)	Member
Carol Douet	(CD)	Member
Darwin Bernardo	(DB)	Member
Eileen Langan	(EL)	Member
Jade Lan	(JL)	Member
Jennifer Gentle	(JG)	Member
Linda Graham	(LG)	Member
Tatiana Jose	(TJ)	Member
Zac Gonis	(ZG)	Member
Deborah Beckford	(DBc)	Customer Engagement Co-Ordinator
Tim Blanc	(TB)	Head of Community Engagement
Camille Yerles	(CY)	Customer Involvement Officer
Greg Terefenko	(GT)	Head of Housing Management
Ryan Bolton	(RB)	Head of Repairs & Estates
Stuart Bishop	(SB)	Head of Property Services
Kate Laffan	(KL)	Director of Customer Experience and Improvement
Laura Davison	(LD)	Head of Customer Experience

Item	Title
1	Welcome & apologies Full attendance
2	Minutes from previous meeting Everyone agreed with the minutes from the previous meeting.
3	Action Log Nothing to discuss on the action log All actions have been completed
4	<p>Q3 Performance</p> <p>KL: For those who had previously seen the quarterly performance report, we are now trying a different format and we would appreciate any feedback. We will also try to give you benchmarking information so you can get a sense of where we fit against other providers.</p> <p>On the first page, you can see there is a quick snapshot of how we have been doing against the last quarter. We can see that in Q2 we have made some positive direction of travel, we have fewer red indicators. We are getting closer to our targets.</p> <p>Tonight, most of the operational Heads of Services are present, so we will do our best to try and answer as many questions as possible. The only representation that we don't have is around homelessness from Housing Options.</p> <p>AB: We will go page by page and invite members to ask their questions.</p> <p>JL: The first thing that stuck out to us is that we can see the overall tenant satisfaction in the report, but we are not able to see leaseholder satisfaction. We were wondering if you have the data, and if you could include it in the future reports?</p> <p>KL: We do measure overall leaseholder satisfaction, but it is not on this report. We can include it next time around in Q4 and we could add additional indicators for you to track.</p> <p>JL: Thanks. We also had another question around the targets. I am interested to know about who sets the targets, how is the number set, and what is the process to set them up?</p> <p>KL: What you will notice with targets is that generally they are never set at 100%, and particularly with satisfaction because it is a perception indicator. The only target that is set at 100% is gas safety because it is a matter of life and death, and there is no tolerance. But in terms of other target setting, we have an annual process to review targets, and we have a document called the 'delivery plan' which Barnet Homes shares with the council committee structure. We propose the targets ourselves, and usually then in dialogue with council colleagues and our Board we agree on these targets, and then the council committee signs them off. Sometimes the council might challenge our proposed targets if they think we are not setting stretching targets. But when setting a target, it is very important to find a balance between having a target that is challenging but also realistic</p>

and achievable. We have recently set next year's targets, and in light of COVID-19 and other challenges, we had to adjust to make more realistic for the operating environment. For example, in Income Collection

JL: Thank you very much. And, I agree, but what would be interesting is to benchmark against other boroughs, to see who is doing better or worst. And maybe we should share knowledge across boroughs to help re-shape the targets but also to help others.

KL: We regularly look into benchmark exercises with HouseMark. And we do look at who is best in the sector, to know who to contact to do a best practice visit. We often had people visit Barnet Homes to share best practice in areas that we excel in.

JL: For the satisfaction of repairs being completed right the first time, there is a monitor in the Q3 target. What does the monitor means?

RB: The reason why the satisfaction that repairs is completed right the first time has a monitor against the Q3 target is that we completely changed the methodology to collect data. We now monitor satisfaction over a year to understand what the baseline figure is, to set an achievable but stretching target. Next year's target will be 83%. And this is based on last year's monitoring exercise. The reason why we changed the methodology is because of HouseMark, which released a revised methodology for calculating the first-time fix.

KL: Wherever possible we try to use Housemark's methodology to make it easy to compare ourselves with others.

JL: It would be interesting to see how they monitor such things. I would think that for the satisfaction of repairs, they would ask tenants or leaseholders, but it seems like this has changed over time. Is there a document that explains how HouseMark measures such things?

RB: Yes, there is guidance which we can share with you. We now measure satisfaction for repairs via text messages just after the completion of the repair. We also have around 200 surveys a month that are being returned from residents upon completion of repairs, and we use that data to shape overall satisfaction.

JL: is 200 a lot? How many repairs are we looking at?

RB: The number pre-covid was 2000 repairs a month. But this has fluctuated through the pandemic. And for example, at the moment we are delivering only essential and emergency repairs, so this has affected the number of repairs completed each month.

KL: Is it fair to say that a text with an option to complete a survey goes out after the completion of every repair?

RB: Yes absolutely.

TJ: When looking at the overall satisfaction, why is non-secure tenants' satisfaction not included?

LD: We survey non-secure customers using the same methodology we use for tenants and leaseholders. Since Q3, we use an independent company called TLF to contact our non-secure customers. By the end of Q4, we will have a good number of non-secure customers survey responses. Traditionally, for overall satisfaction, we use only secure tenants because it is what we need to be able to benchmark against HouseMark. But we

do think it is very important to hear about the experience of customers who live in non-secure accommodations. We use the same set of questions that we use for secure tenants, and very similar to leaseholder as well. We recently started to survey people living in our temporary accommodations. We think it is important to engage with all our customer groups, and we can share those results with you quarterly. But for the indicators that the council looks at, it is only tenant satisfaction.

TJ: And with HouseMark you said you are using the benchmark, does this mean that other boroughs do not measure non-secure tenant satisfaction?

LD: I would have to check that; it is a very good question because it would be interesting if we could do a benchmark exercise for non-secure tenants.

KL: I am not absolutely sure, but I think we have got quite a unique scenario in Barnet because not all local authorities have regeneration estates with non-secure tenants living on these estates as a form of TA. So, we will certainly ask HouseMark the question, and it would be useful if they can provide any comparative data. But for the action log, it would be useful to show leaseholder satisfaction along with non-secure satisfaction and going forward we will report these as additional information for Q4 Performance Reports.

LD: And we can also break it down by questions unless it is too much information. We can share that as an appendix and create a dashboard.

TJ: Thank you, yes it would be interesting to reflect on the whole service rather than showing only one group of customers because otherwise you are not giving the full picture.

KL: Yes absolutely, and we will go back and ask Housemark if they can provide any comparative data.

DB: It was great to see in atHome that repairs services have moved in-house. But I was wondering where the new repairs employees are coming from, are they coming from Mears? How do you solve problems emerging from employees coming from the old contractor, what lessons have been learned? How do you measure and monitor this new in-house service?

RB: We have in-sourced old contracts we had with Mears for repairs, void delivery, and gas. We had a legal obligation under employment law to offer employment to these Mears employees. it is called Tupe, and if staff were eligible then we had an obligation to tupe transfer these employees. We had 60 employees transferred from Mears. A lot of these people are still with us today, but others have been managed out, some have also been made redundant.

We have also brought in some new managers into the service, and we have gone out to the market to find the very best people that we can to fill in the roles available in the new structure. But we now have a combination of ex Barnet Homes staff, ex Mears staff, and new staff.

In terms of skills when we Tupe transferred the operatives from Mears we did a skills assessment on them. And we are still in the process of delivering additional training based on that assessment. Mears also provided training and L&D reports, and because they did not have that much learning and development in the last couples of years we started fresh with a new training programme to make sure they get to the level they need to be at.

And about the management of contractors, we try to deliver as much as possible with our employees, but for specialist things, we do need to outsource professionals. So over time when it makes commercial sense to do so, we will deliver that work in-house, but we do need to use some other contractors for certain specialist services. We do see it as a

	<p>priority to measure customer satisfaction of the repairs service delivered by external contractors.</p> <p>DB: And in this new digital world, how much are they retaining from online training? Because sometimes there is a gap between theoretical training compare to a real-life situation? How do you ensure they are confident and comfortable? How do you move away from theory to practice and ensure a smooth transition?</p> <p>RB: Yes, and it has been an absolute challenge, but we have not been able to do training physically with large groups of operatives due to the current restrictions. We have carried out some mandatory training via Zoom and MS team but this is not ideal. We are in the process of setting up a training hub to deliver specific training to managers, supervisors, and staff as soon as we come out of lockdown. This will include Health and Safety Briefings, toolbox talks and specific training sessions aimed at upskilling the work force.</p> <p>DB: We were astonished to hear that some operatives from external contractors are coming to the properties without the correct PPE. How do you ensure your contractors are keeping residents safe? And how do you also ensure to maintain Barnet Home's reputation safe?</p> <p>RB: We did get isolated complaints from residents saying operatives turned up without PPE in Q3. We did send a clear message at the start of the pandemic regarding strict safety measures in place, but we reissued that message by end of Q3 about how strict we should be in terms of safety. And since we had barely any complaints. We appointed a Senior Health and Safety Compliance manager within the service, who is now doing audits and regular safety checks on operatives and contractors to ensure they are adhering to COVID-19 safety measures.</p> <p>JL: If 60 employees were transferred from Mears, how many employees do you have in total?</p> <p>RB: The majority of employees are the ex-Mears staff. Out of the total of repairs operatives and gas engineers, we transferred across, 25% will be new or agency staff that we brought in.</p> <p>JL: Okay thanks.</p> <p>RB: When you have an in-sourcing exercise, it's a massive challenge in itself because you have to set up new IT, procedures, hardware etc. And there has been additional pressure with the pandemic and most staff working from home. My honest assessment is that we are a bit behind, but it is because most staff are working from home. And when staff will be back in the office it will drive performance.</p> <p>AS: About the fire risk and the cladding. How much cladding in the borough has been removed and how much is there left to be removed?</p> <p>SB: We are very aware of what our responsibilities are in terms of cladding. In terms of fire safety, the focus at the moment is on the building of 6 stories or 18m and above. We have in total 20 blocks falling in this category. Post Grenfell, we did checks on the cladding, and we had one significant block in Granville towers, and we had to remove the cladding and replace it, and that was done a year ago.</p> <p>In all the other schemes, as part of a strict fire safety regime, we are carrying out fire safety surveys. But in terms of combustible cladding, we don't have any scheme in scope that is concerning. But there are new fire safety regulations and legislations coming up as part of a new Fire Safety bill. Which means that requirements on landlords will be</p>
--	--

tougher, and we will need to do new assessments on all of our blocks. At the moment we are ahead of the game compared to other Local Authorities in London. We are fortunate in terms of the numbers, some of the bigger landlords have between 100 and 200 buildings to look at. Our number is around 20 so it is much easier to manage. But it won't be straightforward and to take on board all the new regulations we will have to take on new resources, and that's part of our strategy.

AS: Has the replacement of cladding cost the leaseholder any money? And are our buildings safe enough to not have fire wardens?

SB: We have increased our security patrol, but comparatively there is a low-level risk. We are not looking to carry this on across time, this is only a short-term measure. We will soon have new measures in place so we don't need the patrol. And in both situations, it does not cost leaseholders.

AS: What do you consider short-term in terms of the security patrol?

SB: We have extended it to another month, it is on a month by month basis because we know that shortly, we will be able to deal with the issue in different ways. For example, with sprinklers and fire alarms.

AS: I was told a few years ago, that fire alarms in communal areas are inefficient because if something goes wrong and the device is inefficient, the council or Barnet Homes is liable. Therefore, if residents want a fire alarm it should be down to them to install it and monitor it. So how will you monitor fire alarms to ensure that they are working at all the times?

SB: With new technologies, we can now monitor fire alarms remotely, so regular testing and reporting of problems will not be a problem anymore.

LG: There were two situations where there was increased security, can you name those two, please?

SB: Two schemes currently have extra safety patrols: Hanshaw Drive and Whitefields tower blocks.

JG: Fire doors don't meet the targets, and I was wondering when will they all be completed?

SB: We have an ongoing replacement programme to replace all fire doors that do not meet the current regulations. It is a significant programme as there are thousands of doors to replace. By the end of the year 2021/2022, we should have replaced all non-compliant doors. We will also introduce regular maintenance checks on the new fire doors – only alterations to fire doors approved by the Fire Safety team will be undertaken and these will be done by a specialist contractor.

JL: I had my door replaced and they did a fabulous job. And they came back to do a check after as well. But I think it was mentioned during our induction that there has been a pause in the programme, can we have an update on this?

SB: There might have been a slight delay due to COVID-19. These doors are manufactured elsewhere, and there was a period where contractors were not receiving the resources, they needed due to COVID-19. But we are now back on track, and it's going well despite the slight delay.

	<p>JL: It was reassuring to have people come to check the fire doors and following up. Thank you!</p> <p>ZG: What has been happening in terms of anti-social behaviour?</p> <p>GT: In terms of anti-social behaviour, we are seeing an increase in youth hanging around the estates. But on the other side, we are seeing a reduction in what we call 'high level' ASB. We are working closely with the police and other groups to address ASB. We are installing new door systems, to prevent people from outside the estate to enter. 'Low level' ASB is increasing, but 'high level' ASB is reducing due to proactive work. We are right in our target, and we prioritise evicting perpetrators of high-level ASB. 'Low level' ASB is mainly increasing because of lockdown, youth are out of school and people have nowhere else to go. And when we benchmarked against other providers, we have noticed the same. This is an issue across the UK at the moment.</p> <p>DB: What is 'high' and 'low ASB</p> <p>GT: 'low level' of ASB relates to youth congregating and causing graffities for example. It also means that we would not consider taking tenancy enforcement actions, which means taking the premises off the tenant. 'High level' of ASB relates to drug trafficking, breaking entry, what police would class as a serious crime</p> <p>DB: ASB with youth congregating is a known issue. Who would you refer the young people to, and who are the partners we are working with to help reduce ASB?</p> <p>GT: TB is my go-to person. We have regular conversations to talk about youth and ASB, but also look at employment and skills, as well as sources of funding for development opportunities.</p> <p>TB: In the past, when we have received a high level of youth related ASB, the ASB Team would normally have a conversation with me and we would carry visit in the estates and engage with organisations such as Art Against Knives. As an example, on The Grange estate, a couple of years ago, we had youth-related issues and we commissioned Arts Against Knives to deliver youth provision for 3 years. Whether it is a high or low level of ASB there is a need for a multi-agency approach.</p>
5	<p>Q3 Complaints</p> <p>TB gave an overview of the Q3 complaints report on behalf of Laura Giles, Head of Strategy and Compliance, who could not attend the meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is something of a strange time for you to be reviewing complaints, because this area has been impacted by COVID-19. It's difficult for us to compare performance meaningfully with previous years because we're not providing a full service in some areas and are experiencing unprecedented issues across all services. Complaints are lower than they were a year ago, but it's difficult to tell how much of that is due to COVID. We have seen an increase in complaints throughout the year following the significant decline during the first lockdown. • The key context regarding complaints is that we were previously experiencing very high numbers of complaints about Repairs under Mears. We expected, in time, for complaints to reduce due to the service coming in-house and although it's hard to tell exactly where we stand because of the impact of COVID, we have seen a reduction in complaints in this area.

- We can definitely see an impact of COVID on the most common primary theme of complaints, with Delay being higher than Customer Care for the first time in a long time. This is understandable due to the number of repairs jobs that are on hold while we deliver an essential repairs-only service.
- Performance in time (that's answering complaints within 10 working days) was unusually low in Q3. Due to the high number of Repairs complaints, the team's performance has a significant impact on overall results, and Repairs' performance during the last quarter was unusually poor. This is currently being explored with the service so that we can drive improvements.
- Satisfaction with complaints-handling remains an area of challenge. We've had very low completion rates of the surveys and have found that customers seem more likely to respond if they have experienced a continuing issue. We've been able to introduce telephone surveys in 2021, and hope this will give us a better completion rate, so we understand better how we're doing. We're making sure to follow up on the comments received where customers believe their issue has not yet been resolved.
- Finally, the complaints report is quite long and detailed, so I'd appreciate any feedback members have on how easy it was to understand, and on how useful the information is - is it pitched at the right level, and do they want to focus on any particular aspects of complaints-handling, or for anything in this report to not be included next time?

DB: The report shows that repairs had 159 complaints. And because you mentioned earlier that 75% of staff came from Mears, and that complaints were higher under the Mears contract, do you think there is a correlation between the two? Is there a pressing need to push on training for operatives get to the standards?

RB: A majority of complaints relate to repairs not being completed within the timeframe, and this is due to our reduced services. Looking at the overall complaints, pretty much every organisation in our sector are receiving the highest number of complaints around repairs. And that's because we have the most contact with residents. I don't think we are massively behind compare to other organisations. The repairs service is always the most complained about service due to its nature.

We now have started to do customer care training for all the Mears staff that came across. And we are still looking to improve on the communication side of things, to better communicate with residents when we don't achieve that first-time fix. It is still a work in progress, and it is hard to compare the numbers truthfully due to fluctuations between pre and post covid world. But we are focusing on looking at the lesson learned and what is coming out of the complaints so we can improve the service.

JG: I wanted to go back to section 4.1.4 which touches on the fire doors and the quality of the installation. It looks like there have been complaints around the quality of the fire door installation. Are you using the same contractor for the whole programme or do you use different contractors? And how do you monitor satisfaction over time?

SB: The whole programme has been left to a single contractor and this is as part of the value for money exercise. Getting one contractor is much more cost-efficient. That being said we are constantly monitoring what our contractor is doing, and given they will be installing many thousands of doors, I think inevitably we will get the odd situation where perhaps the quality of installation is not what we expected the first time around. While we

	<p>see 15 complaints about Property Services, I am not sure how many are related to the fire doors but that could be 2 or 3. Relatively I don't believe this is a cause for concern, but we have project managers and RLO constantly scrutinising the contract. And if any issues are identified by us or residents, we will take them directly to the contractor.</p> <p>DB: What does delay means to Barnet Homes, especially in a world where people are confined in their homes for a long period. What is an acceptable amount of time to hear back from Housing Officers?</p> <p>GT: In respect of whether people are working from home, delays exacerbate the frustration. What's acceptable to our customers is 10 days response time and this is set according to the standard across the sector. But I believe the frustration is around lack of communication and update. And it does frustrate me as Head of the Service if we don't at least update our customers about the progress of their requests promptly. And I have asked the complaints manager to come to my meeting monthly to show what best practice looks like. Of course, we will always have complaints, but what is in our remit is to better manage the way we communicate with our customers, and that's what we are going to focus on because that's what we can change. And as an action for myself, I will go back and find out if there are any opportunities to review our processes from a Housing Management perspective.</p> <p>AB: We are running out of time, DB if you have any additional questions please send them to me and I will forward them to GT.</p> <p>TB: There are a couple of areas for members to consider, in the report it does cover stage 1 and 2, and previous quarters are included. So that's one area to ensure the Resident Bard monitors during future meetings. And if we move down on the report there is a lesson learned section, which covers points raised regarding repairs and housing management. It is for the Resident Board to ensure they keep track of this and look for improvements in the next quarter. If members have any other questions, please pass them over to DBc or CY so they can pass them to Laura Giles.</p> <p>AB: Thank you to all the Head of Services for coming to our first Resident Board meeting.</p>
6	<p>Resident Board Forward Plan</p> <p>TB invited the RB to discuss the priority areas it wanted to focus on for their 2021/22 forward plan</p> <p>AB: We are now going to discuss the Resident Board moving forward, and the areas we would like to focus on. Last year we looked at the three-following service areas: Repairs contract, Gas contract and the Building Fire Safety. I want your views about what you feel should be a priority for the coming year.</p> <p>CD: I'd like us to do more scrutiny on complaints, and on all aspects of complaints, whether it is leaseholders or tenants. Complaints are always really high, and I think we should scrutinise this at every meeting. It is not okay to have these many complaints, I don't think it is acceptable.</p> <p>TB reminded the RB the Resident Support Group is in place to support the Board and be actively taking part in service reviews, such as taking part in focus group, surveys and mystery shopping</p> <p>CD: I want feedback on the training that is happening with the repairs staff. And ask why staff who are getting complaints are still working with Barnet Homes, and why are they</p>

	<p>still keeping the old staff? I am conscious that you can't just fire people, but I want to know what they are doing to improve the standards of work?</p> <p>TB: If you look at the report you can see a lot of lessons learned, so the expectation is that everything that is listed highlight the areas they are working on, so there should be a reduction in the next quarter. And if not, you should ask them why not, and how many of the lessons learned are working.</p> <p>CD: So, we should look at how many of the lessons learned have been learned really.</p> <p>TB: So far in the forward plan, I have leaseholder satisfaction, complaints, gas and repairs, ASB, building and fire safety. Any others?</p> <p>AS: Yes, lack of communication with housing officers, because you can never see them or get hold of them, you are never sure who they are.</p> <p>TB: Let's put that as the entire Customer Experience programme. You got six items in your plan so far, so you will need to think about what the priority for the June meeting is.</p> <p>DB: Does gas fall under repairs automatically?</p> <p>TB: Yes, I have listed gas and repairs as one.</p> <p>DB: Looking at repairs, complaints, leaseholder, building safety, and customer experience, and that seems to encompass everything.</p> <p>LG: I have a question around leaseholder, what if a leaseholder rents its property, how is this information captured in terms of who is living there?</p> <p>Board requested an understanding of leaseholder obligation around gas safety checks. (add to action log)</p> <p>TB: I have added the role of the absent landlord within the leaseholder piece of work, so we can encompass that as a whole.</p> <p>EL: I'm wondering if the calls are recorded, if so how is this monitored? Can this be used for training purposes? Also, in terms of booking repair appointments, how flexible can they be? Can there be late night appointments ie after 5 pm or weekends to accommodate people who are working?</p> <p>TB: I don't know if calls are being monitored. But it is a valid point and we will report back on this.</p> <p>LG: Do managers have the ability to listen-in a call when an operator is dealing with a customer.</p> <p>TB: Yes, they do, and what would have happened normally as part of your Resident Board induction, we would have invited you to our Customer Contact Team to take part in listening-in. But that should still happen when things go back to normal.</p> <p>AS: When you reach out to most companies via phone it first says, 'your call is being monitored'. Why Barnet Homes does not monitor calls? This could be used for training purposes.</p> <p>TB: Let's add this to the question log.</p>
--	--

7	AOB No AOB
8	DONM Thursday 10 June 2021