

ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES SELELCT COMMITTEE – 13 MAY 2024

REPORT BY COUNCILLOR GREG HAMMOND, CHAIR, RESIDENTS' CONFERENCE ON REPAIRS

This report provides a summary of the 4 March 2024 Resident Conference on repairs, maintenance and upgrades which formed part of the Housing and Communities Committee's annual work programme for 2023/24.

FOR DISCUSSION AND COMMENT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 At the Housing and Communities Select Committee (HCSC) meeting held on 30 June, the Committee agreed to hold a conference for the Council's tenants focused on repairs, maintenance, and upgrades, with the aim of hearing the voices of residents to provide assurance to the HCSC on the operation of the service.
- 1.2 Councillor Greg Hammond led on the development of the conference and provided updates to the Committee.
- 1.3 This report sets out the details of the conference and includes the main themes raised by residents and a summary of the responses.
- 1.4 Following the conference the committee visited the Repairs Call Centre on 24 April to gain a greater understanding of how the repairs process works as a whole.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Housing and Communities Committee is **recommended** to:
- 2.2 Review the feedback and comments from residents attending the conference, as well as the responses, and develop any recommendations to the Lead Member for Housing Management, Housing Safety and Building New Homes.

3. BACKGROUND

- 2.3 The conference was promoted in a number of ways:
 - Electronic estate noticeboards
 - Posters
 - Direct email to residents, association members and chairs
 - Housing News e-newsletter

4. THE CONFERENCE

- 4.1 The panel, which was chaired by Councillor Greg Hammond consisted of the members of the Housing and Communities Select Committee; Councillor Claire Simmons (Chair of the Committee) and Councillors Joanna Gardner, Lloyd North, Marie-Therese Rossi and Will Lane.
- 4.2 Senior officers from the directorate of Housing and Social Investment attended the conference including the Executive Director, and the Director of Housing Management.
- 4.3 Officers from the Housing Management Repairs Team offered a repairs surgery before and after the conference.
- 4.4 Additional officers from Housing Management sat at the tables with residents and took details of complaints and other matters requiring follow-up action.
- 4.5 Following a short introduction from the Chair, residents were invited to respond to questions from the panel. Approximately 25 residents were in attendance out of ~6500 households with council tenants residing in them in the borough.
- 4.6 The Housing and Communities Select Committee understand that this is a small proportion of residents but wanted the opportunity to hear from residents directly.
- 4.7 The main themes and responses are summarised below:

Experience of reporting a repair

- 4.8 Summary of issues raised by residents:
 - The predominant issue raised at the conference related to long hold times and the phone line being cut off before being able to speak to a member of staff.
 - Residents didn't always know who to contact in an emergency as they said they had to call the general number the following day after contacting the emergency number.
 - It was indicated communication was a key issue.
 - Residents did say there have been improvements in reporting repairs and that the online form worked well.
- 4.9 Resident suggestions
 - It was suggested the reporting system could be improved if residents were able to attach a photo of the issue to the online form.

Speed of a Response

- 4.10 Summary of issues raised by residents:

- The main issue raised was that the incorrect person was sent to complete the job. It could take up to four different engineers until the correct one was assigned the job.
- Additionally, residents experienced multiple tradespeople being sent to complete one job. E.g. one to photograph and different tradespeople to complete different stages.
- Residents experienced different 'job numbers' being given throughout the reporting process causing communication problems.

4.11 Resident suggestions:

- A deadline and a contact number to ring if work isn't started and completed.

Quality of work

4.12 Summary of issues raised by residents:

- The council only checks the quality of 10 per cent of jobs and residents thought this was insufficient.
- Occasionally tradespeople have broken other items in the house or not cleaned up after the job.
- An issue around 'quick fix' jobs was also raised where residents experience a patch up job rather than dealing with the bigger main issue.

4.13 Residents' suggestions:

- An opportunity to rate the tradespeople.
- The Council to check the quality of all jobs.
- Tradespeople to have to show before and after pictures to ensure other items in the property haven't been damaged, that the job was completed properly and the property left clean.
- An end-to-end document to record each stage of the process.

Pro-active maintenance

4.14 Summary of issues raised by residents:

- The new window installation was welcomed but again the issue that it took three or four different tradesmen to complete the job was raised.
- Residents confirmed that the Council is undertaking pro-active maintenance.

4.15 Residents' suggestions:

- Floorboards to be included in the pro-active maintenance.

5 REPAIRS CALL CENTRE

5.1 Following the conference members of the committee visited the Council's Repairs Call Centre on 23 April to gain a greater understanding of how the repairs process worked as a whole.

5.2 Members of the committee shadowed members of staff during phone calls with residents and were impressed with the high standard.

5.3 Below is a summary of their findings:

- There are approximately 23 officers working at the repairs call centre and they can receive up to 500 calls a day during peak months.
- Around 50 per cent of the calls are repairs related and the other 50 per cent are related to all other Housing Management functions e.g. neighbourhood estates, home ownership, rent income and housing needs. All members of staff are trained and fully equipped to deal with all of these issues.
- A resident can report an issue via a web form, an email or a phone call. Phone calls take priority and emails or web forms will be responded to within five working days at most.
- A robust six-to-eight-week training programme was introduced post covid, which was classroom based and included an in-depth induction pack and time spent shadowing calls.
- The call centre is open from 8am to 6pm. The call centre receives a report from the out of hours team each morning with all emergencies, on average 30 jobs each night, which are logged by a team member.
- All repairs are coded into:
 - Critical, 4hrs to make fix the issue or make safe
 - Emergency, 24hrs to fix or make the situation safe
 - Urgent, 5 days to fix the repair
 - Routine, 20 days to fix the repair
 - Planned, up to 90 days to fix the repair(s).
- If a critical or emergency situation cannot be fixed at first instance it is made safe and will usually be coded either urgent or routine depending on the circumstance.
- The call centre uses three systems, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) where staff members record notes about the issue, this will include historic issues the resident has had, service connect which books an appointment and One Housing which books the actual repair.
- One Housing and CRM are linked so when a job is completed it will automatically update the CRM notes, previously staff members had to manually update CRM.
- It is good practice to upload photos before, during and after to Service Connect, but it doesn't happen every time.
- If a job is subcontracted the repairs call centre do not monitor the stages of the repair, this is the responsibility of the subcontractor but the repairs call centre have the ability to check the subcontractor portal for updates.

- If a resident reports an issue, their building or block will be tagged so if other residents in the same block register the same issue, staff members at the call centre can see what stage the repair is at.
- If a job is completed and reoccurs it will be logged as a new job with a new job number.

FOR DISCUSSION

CLLR GREG HAMMOND

**Vice Chair, Housing and Communities Select Committee
Chair, Resident's Conference on Repairs**

Contact Officer: Bella Jessop Scrutiny and Policy Officer
(E) bella.jessop@rbkc.gov.uk (M) 07817095530