

**London Borough of Enfield**

**Housing Scrutiny Panel**

**7<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

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**Subject: Estate Services**

**Cabinet Member: Cllr Gina Needs**

**Executive Director: Sarah Cary**

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**1. Purpose of Report**

The report sets out the service standards delivered on our housing estates including how these have been reviewed as a result of the increased waste being experienced as a result of the pandemic and changes to the way residents live..

**2. Relevance to the Council Plan**

**1. Good homes in well-connected neighbourhoods**

Our priorities are to:

- build more and better homes for local residents
- invest in and improve our council homes

**2. Safe, healthy and confident communities**

Our priorities are to:

- keep communities free from crime
- inspire and empower young Enfield to reach their full potential
- deliver essential services to protect and support vulnerable residents
- create healthy streets, parks and community spaces

**3. Background**

With ambitions to become the greenest borough in London, Enfield has a great opportunity to include its council housing portfolio in our plans. Having a clean, safe and well-maintained environment in which to live is clearly important to our tenants and we recognise that the appearance of an estate or group of homes enhances well-being and a positive environment in which to live. We therefore aim to make our homes and surrounding areas as attractive and well maintained as possible, provide greater opportunities for safe play and enjoyment and enhanced recycling facilities. Additionally, legislative and regulatory focus on living conditions requires that the sector to address the issue holistically and engage with residents and other stakeholders to determine standards and improvements.

**4. Main Considerations for the Panel**

**4.1 Resident views**

Feedback from residents and members is that the standard of estate services could be improved. In a recent resident satisfaction survey there was 17% of tenants and 24% of leaseholders reported a level dissatisfaction. We know that the pandemic has caused lifestyle changes which has increased the level of waste being experienced across London.

The Housing sector falls under the remit of the Regulator of Social Housing which sets standards landlords must comply with including the Neighbourhood and Community Standard. It is expected that we keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with our homes clean and safe. We will also work in partnership with tenants and other providers and public bodies where it is effective to do so.

## **4.2 Roles and service standards**

**Caretaking and management of common parts** - The Caretaking team have the key role in service coordination on our estates. For many of our residents, caretakers will be the only representative of the council they see regularly and this places caretakers in a key position of trust and responsibility. We have clarified the role of caretakers and others providing services to the blocks and will display this information publicly.

Caretakers deliver the communal area cleaning programme including a cleaning service for the Communal entrances, lifts, Balconies, Exits, Stairs, Doors, Glass, Floors, Landings, Hallways & areas outside of all flats; removal and disposal of all papers, junk mail, leaflets, litter, etc. Clean of the lobby, checking of all internal areas, reporting any bulk/graffiti/Health and safety issues; Cleaning for all communal floors/stairwells to get rid of removable marks and hazardous deposits. The team has conducted an internal review of chemicals and fragrances used and will be trialling different products across the borough to gauge the level of finish.

Caretakers sweep and spot clean balconies, clean any glass in the main doors, internally and externally, and any internal glass doors, remove any cobwebs from all communal areas, dust all fixtures/fittings, ledges, balustrades, ledges and skirting Bin rooms/areas.

The Caretaking team will fully disinfect/sanitise, conduct a spot clean of the bin rooms/refuse areas on the external hard, gravel & green spaces. Caretakers will conduct a litter pick round on all external hard, gravel and horticultural areas, including removing bottles, cans, general rubbish. The staff will remove hard surface weeds as & when required, raise and follow up on Communal repairs, replace any non-LED light bulbs as & when required and report any Anti-Social Behaviour issues to the Housing Team.

Following our internal review, we have identified the following improvements to be implemented or expanded in the coming months:

- A window cleaning programme. There are 623 low rise blocks and 52 towers meaning there will be a 'reach and wash' arrangement for low rise blocks and

abseiling for towers. There is also an opportunity to tie this in with a planned gutter clearance programme which as part of our cyclical maintenance.

- 'Deep Cleaning' Programme. This will be an annual programme of pressure washing, deep cleaning of bin chambers and gulleys.

**Grounds maintenance** - We have increased standards for grounds maintenance:

- Grass will be cut every 10 working days during the cutting season (March - Oct)
- Leaves will be cleared once a year at the end of leaf fall
- Shrub beds will be maintained twice a year
- weed-spray contract for controlling weeds growing on all hard surfaces on our land.
- Treatment of invasive species such as Japanese knotweed
- Maintenance work on trees according to priority, contractors will deal with trees that are a health-and-safety hazard first. There is an inspection regime for communal areas every 3 years.
- Delivery of ground maintenance estate improvement programmes, such as creating and supporting resident led greening projects such as Grow Your Own schemes and Allotments.
- Planting budget to enable us to consult residents on shrubbery to be used on estates to enhance their aesthetic.

**Bin stores** - The investment programme in existing stock encompasses bin storage areas in light of building safety legislation as well as communal parts and playgrounds. A review of the recycling facilities across council housing land highlighted several estates that required improvements and those are part of an existing programme underway on 20 sites with a further 30 sites being highlighted for the next tranche. The review looked at the sites from a building safety perspective and also from a perspective of increasing recycling rates. Typically these recycling facilities are relocated or upgraded according to assessment.

**Communal repairs and maintenance** - **There** is an increased focus on maintenance with new posts in the establishment focused on delivering cyclical works to the common parts. The caretaking team is integrated with Enfield Repairs Direct and shares common resource. This enables us to develop a dedicated communal repair response and improve the speed of completing communal repairs and to cross-train caretakers to undertake small repairs where appropriate. The categories of repairs are currently:

**Emergency repairs** We have responsibilities to carry out work in the event of an emergency. These will be completed in four hours of the request

**Urgent repairs** These are repairs that may cause discomfort, inconvenience or nuisance to our residents or a third party. We will complete these repairs within 48 hours of the request.

**Routine repairs**

These are defects that are not likely to cause any serious discomfort, inconvenience or nuisance to the customer or third party if not given an immediate or urgent response. We will complete these within 90 calendar days of

the request. There will not be any obvious consequential cost of not undertaking this work sooner.

**Out of Hours Repairs** For repairs reported outside of normal working hours we will only attend emergency repairs within 4 hours. We will try to fully rectify the issue, but it may be necessary to only make safe pending a full repair in line with the timescales given in the full Housing Service repairs policy.

**Planned Works** - These are works which have been identified as being required from a stock condition survey and which do not cause any serious discomfort, inconvenience or nuisance to the customer and which do not present an immediate health and safety risk. These may include external works such as fencing, gates, paving, larger roof or brickwork repairs and internal decent homes works such as kitchen, bathroom and heating replacements and will be put into a planned programme of work.

**Waste and recycling** - Communal domestic waste is collected from locations approved by the Council's Waste and Recycling service. The crews will remove all bins from the communal bin area, empty and return the bin to its original presentation point. Waste and Recycling Operations will ensure all bin lids are locked after collection, wheel brakes are secured, and any damaged bins are reported back to the Waste and Recycling service. Communal bin collection frequencies are weekly although on some sites a new additional collection will be carried out in order to better manage waste on estates.

Improving recycling rates are a key Council concern and for this reason we have embarked on a programme of improved facilities as mentioned above. In addition we also plan to launch an education campaign in conjunction with waste services to enable us to help more residents recycle.

Given the London wide increase in fly-tipping we have established two posts dedicated to waste enforcement on housing land. The officers have been successfully embedded and already issued in excess of 50 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs). The team work collaboratively to capture evidence through CCTV and witnesses. Additionally we have regular communications about estate services issues. Currently there is not the dedicated resource which we need to carry out enforcement to the levels needed.

**Anti-social behaviour** - We have a clear approach to ASB and, where proven, we will take tough action against anti-social behaviour or illegal acts. This includes domestic abuse, Hate Crime, physical violence, severe damage to property and other serious criminal acts. We comply with legislative requirements and work closely with the Police, other Council departments and other partner agencies to tackle problems and promote safer and sustainable communities.

We are dedicated to working with residents to resolve reports of anti-social behaviour which we will investigate and, where there is clear, proven evidence, the necessary and appropriate action will be taken. We can only do this with resident commitment throughout the process which means that we are reliant on receiving reports of anti-social behaviour as part of the case management process. Our primary aim is to resolve cases without the need for legal intervention and, in fact, very few cases require this approach.

Each estate has an allocated First Response Officer, who will case manage all reports of low level anti- social behaviour on council owned and managed estates. The First Response Team work in close partnership with the council's community safety unit, the police and diverse partners within the community to minimise anti-social behaviour and crime in the borough.

**Resident engagement** - Through our resident engagement service, we seek to involve a wide range of tenants, leaseholders and other residents, not only in housing issues but also in the context of place shaping in the borough, specifically our plans for the future for areas and neighbourhoods. The service supports residents and community groups to ensure their involvement in scrutinising council services and performing a wider community capacity building role.

Working with our Customer Voice Group, caretaking operatives will run a pilot of a digital 'check in' through the HouseMark inspection app. This data will help identify any missed blocks, real time attendance and evidence that a service has been provided. This will not replace the Caretaking manager inspections. The app has additional features such as the 'Report it' function. This allows the inspector to raise a quick report of a specific issue. In this case we will be looking to use this to report fly tipping across the borough. This detail is logged as part of a heat signature map which will highlight a specific hotspot area.

**Monitoring and maintaining standards** - The Council's Housing services team undertake monthly physical inspections of all council owned and managed blocks to identify and remedy Health and Safety Issues and expand participation to residents and ward councillors.

The team will resolve Fire Risk assessment issues and enforcement for Council owned and managed blocks – i.e Bulk and rubbish repeatedly left outside residents' doors and on walkways, dry riser checks, flooring issues such as carpets and furniture stored in communal areas.

During monthly estate inspections, housing staff will raise and remedy:

- low level communal repairs and will undertake site inspections with surveyors for raising larger planned repairs works where required;
- Repairs to all communal interior and exterior areas including drainage, gullies and guttering.
- Caretaking issues; including stairs, glazing, doors, signage, lighting, walls, flooring, internal decorations, electrical intake cupboards, loft hatches, lift motor room security.
- Estate Exteriors; including shed conditions & repairs, drying area conditions, drying facilities, fencing, boundary fences & issues, pathways, bin chambers, garages, fly tipping, Play park inspections, and visual checks of play equipment and rubberised matting etc.
- Car parks: car park conditions, illegal parking, abandoned vehicles, untaxed and SORN vehicles, and the attempted enforcement of these areas.
- Entry com (IRS systems) and Digi lock issues.

SLAs – recognising that services are delivered by colleagues in different teams, SLAs will be concise and practical and performance will be tracked through monthly client meetings to ensure satisfactory outcomes and value for money. A KPI framework will measure performance across those areas.

## **5. Conclusions**

Following on from our resident feedback suggesting that improvements are needed in the management of our external areas on housing land, the investments in the service enhancements above puts us in a position to improve over the coming year:

1. Co-location and integration with repairs will enable a more focussed management of the communal area;
2. the role of the caretaker is better defined and purposeful;
3. enhanced waste collections and fast response fly-tipping pick-ups will enhance the appearance of the estates;
4. investment in communal waste facilities will enable us to increase recycling rates and enhance the appearance of the estate,
5. greater engagement with residents either via participation on walk-about or via the App
6. Enforcement will target those engaging in fly-tipping and negatively impacting our estates
7. Planned cyclical works and deep cleaning will enhance the quality of finish
8. Greater resource in Grounds Maintenance and a planting budget for shrubs, bushes and plants will enable us to enhance the look and feel of our estates

In completing these actions we will fulfil our obligations under the new regulatory regime and it provides a greater opportunity to work with our residents in our planned objectives in the Council Plan.

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**Appendices: Standards Document**