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North West Local Housing Forum Highlights Report



9th December 2020



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Asset Management

Due to the second lockdown, the Repairs Service has moved to offering the following service:

- Emergency and urgent repairs
- Void property refurbishments
- Housing adaptations emergency repairs and urgent installations
- Emergency and urgent fire safety works
- External communal inspections
- External communal repairs at a reduced capacity
- External handyperson works
- Customers with repairs, works or claims that are unable to continue are being called and updated.

Asset Management continued

- Communal / Emergency Intelligent Lighting Installations are progressing as follows:

PORTER STREET – Complete

PARK STREET – Complete

GREEN WALK – Complete

PRIORESS STREET– Complete

REPHIDIM STREET, – Works in progress

TABARD STREET– Works in progress

THURNHAM HOUSE, – Works in progress

ROTHSAY STREET– Works in progress

POTIER STREET – Works in progress

- Lift refurbishment at Prospect House:

Both lifts have been fully refurbished and returned to service.

Asset Management continued

QHIP major works scheme on site at Haddonhall Estate and Rowland Hill House on Nelson Square Gardens Estate . Work to the underground mains at Setchell Estate is due to begin early next year. A dozen schemes are now in design and looking to start early in the next financial year. These include Rockingham Street, Applegarth, Helen Gladstone and Vaughan Houses on the Nelson Square Gardens Estate and Redman House, Haddonhall Estate Phase 2, 33-37 Southwark Bridge Road.

Customer Experience

- All face to face services (Peckham Service Point, Homeowners Service at the Blue and Bournemouth Road), remain closed due to COVID 19 restrictions. This situation will be reviewed following any lifting of lockdown and advice on resuming public services.
- The Contact Centre is presently taking emergency repairs calls only. The service is also running a COVID 19 hotline providing advice and assistance to residents. It is also assisting with the Test, Track and Trace service, calling those who have been identified as coming into contact with someone with COVID 19.
- Registrars service continues to register births and deaths but ceremonies have been suspended due to COVID 19 restrictions. The Coroners service is conducting jury inquests at Tooley Street where safe distancing can take place.
- The Homeowners Service continues to support homeowners and receive RTB applications despite the current closure of the Market Place office.

Communities

- The online panel of residents was launched at an inaugural event on 13th October. The panel consists of over 500 residents who have told us that they are willing to participate in discussions with the council around issues they are specifically interested. The panel is now up and running, with a task and finish group on leaseholder service charge statements its inaugural project.

- The council's new Getting Involved Grants programme (GIG) was re-launched in September 2020. These project-specific grants are for community organisations, aimed at promoting cohesive communities. The council received 20 applications from various groups across the borough, and a total of 17 projects have been awarded funding. The funding awarded covers projects ranging from £450 to £5,000.

For more information contact resident.participation@southwark.gov.uk or visit the council's website at the following link:

<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/housing/housing-getting-involved>

Resident Services

- Resident Services Officers in the North continue to make contact with all identified and known vulnerable residents as part of the welfare check programme being conducted since the first lockdown in March 2020. This is to ensure that our residents are well, responding positively to the changing times and that they are provided with the support and assistance they require.
- RSOs have continued to conduct weekly estate visual audits and monthly estate inspections.
- RSOs have noticed an upward trend in complaints of antisocial behaviour, mostly to do with noise nuisance, breach of social distancing guidelines or loud music since the relaxation of the lockdown rules and they are working with colleagues in SASBU, Noise Team and the police to address the concerns

Anti-social behaviour and grounds maintenance

Anti-social behaviour

The Anti social behaviour unit continues to work alongside Police and partner agencies to address concerns of drug use that affect communities. We continue to work with those identified and to take appropriate action where appropriate. Since April 2020 we have also led on and resolved a number of complex cases affecting residents on estates and managed to seek problem solving activities to these cases. We also work closely with outreach services to continue to work with those who are experiencing difficulties with housing and have worked tirelessly with agencies to support those in need.

Stats since April 2020 –

6 x Closure of properties for disorder.

3 x Injunctions

1 x Court undertaking

2 x Acceptable behaviour contracts

Grounds Maintenance

In terms of routine maintenance on housing estates the teams are currently concentrating on leaf removal which should be completed by early December, in addition we are also continuing to deploy grass cutting teams as due to the unseasonably mild weather the grass is continuing to grow on most estates.

Exchequer Services

- There has been some improvement in the COVID-19 related rent arrears position since that reported at AHF in September – and an even bigger improvement in service charge collection among homeowners
- These improvements followed the relaxation of COVID restrictions over the summer, an upturn in the economy and resumption of limited recovery action for unpaid rent and service charges by the Council
- The impacts of the new COVID restrictions from earlier this month are still unknown but are not expected to be positive
- Numbers of tenants claiming Universal Credit continues to rise and the rate of increase has accelerated since October

Exchequer Services continued

We still expect to see overall collection levels for rent and service charges to be significantly down on last year (2019/20)

- Government imposed restrictions mean that no evictions are likely to take place until next year – the Council will only seek to evict those with persistent arrears that pre-dated the pandemic
- We will shortly commence a procurement process for new insurance and garage maintenance contracts. We will be seeking homeowner input into the procurement of the insurance contract.
- We are considering whether to carry out a survey into impacts of COVID pandemic for tenant and homeowner household income, employment and earnings and whether these have affected residents' ability to pay bills. Any survey would take place in the new year and we would welcome residents views on this.