

Berneslai Homes Customer Services Committee 16th May 2024 – Meeting Summary:

Equipment & Adaptations – Improvements to Service Presentation & Tenant Scrutiny Report

The Committee received a presentation on the improvements to the Equipment & Adaptations service, together with the Tenant Scrutiny Report, which summarised the findings of the Tenant Scrutiny exercise into the Equipment & Adaptations service. The presentation gave the current position and performance for the service for 2022/23 and 2023/24 and works planned for 2024/25. Following a restructuring, the Equipment & Adaptations service will include a dedicated team at Berneslai Homes working more closely with BMBC to manage the programme, which will improve communication and overall management of the service. Customer insight will be enhanced regularly with surveys carried out, initially in June and December. An exercise has been completed by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel between March 2023 and March 2024, with a report and action plan produced, which recommends service improvements to enhance the service offer to tenants and reduce regulatory and compliance risk. The Equipment & Adaptations Policy is to be revisited in consultation with customers and a draft will be shared with the Tenant Voice Panel and other stakeholders. Officers advised that a plan is being developed to complete adaptations on the waiting list by March 2025 and they will be contacting those affected by end of May 24 to provide an update.

The Committee were assured on the progress being made on the Equipment and Adaptation service and the plans being worked towards to enhance the existing service.

Board Lead on Complaints – Draft Terms of Reference

The proposed Terms of Reference for the Board Lead on Complaints was presented for approval in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. The Committee were advised that the Complaints Champion is the Berneslai Homes' Board Co-optee and will act as the Member responsible for complaints and they will continue to attend the Customer Services Committee. The Complaints Champion will strengthen the tenants' voice and support continuous learning and improvement working close with BMBC's Cabinet Member Responsible for Complaints.

The Committee approved the proposed Terms of Reference for the Complaints Champion.

Customer Services Committee Self-Assessment Annual Report – Review of Actions

The Customer Services Committee Self-Assessment Annual Report monitors the actions approved by the Committee on 16th November 2023.

The Committee noted the progress on the actions resulting from the self-evaluation.

Update from the Building Safety Resident Engagement Panel

Committee received an update from the Building Safety Resident Engagement Panel, which includes residents and leaseholders from Albion, Britannia, and Buckley House. Three Panel meetings had been held with various items discussed; key ones being chutes, sprinkler systems, and immersion heaters. Residents and leasehold members of the Panel are trying to encourage the fitting of sprinklers where residents do not already have these fitted. Committee were advised that the presence of sprinkler systems within the high-rise properties has reduced tenants' home insurance which is being communicated to other residents. The Panel has also created a short video to highlight the benefit and impact of the Group. An electronic noticeboard will be installed in the high-rise buildings to improve communication, in addition to the newsletters and normal noticeboard currently used. The Panel are also involved in helping renew the new Building Safety Strategy and will continue to engage and evolve to new legislation. A recent Ward walk of the flats and surroundings streets has taken place with positive feedback received from residents in relation to the cleanliness and maintenance of buildings, how they are kept informed and how issues are dealt with. The report compiled from the ward walk will be shared with members of the Committee.

The Committed noted the Building Safety Resident Engagement Panel Update.

Damp & Mould Action Plan Quarterly Update

The Committee received a comprehensive quarterly update on the Damp and Mould action plan, which highlighted trends and key actions completed and in progress. Blocked gutters on two-storey properties are being addressed more efficiently with a new cleaning machine being purchased which will deliver better value for money. There has been an increase in disrepair claims, with around 64 disrepair claims being received between January and April, which was more than previous years but comparable across other organisations. It was felt disrepair claims should reduce further once the backlog of repairs is completed. Budgets have been allocated to manage unexpected damp and mould works, with additional provisions being set aside in anticipation of Awaab's Law being implemented. Any damp and mould issues reported from properties that have had retrofit work and external wall insulation carried out are being picked up and investigated.

The Committee were pleased with the work being carried in respect of damp and mould.

Annual Assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Code and Draft Complaints Policy

The Committee received and considered a report requesting their support to the revised Complaints Policy which aligns with statutory duties under the Social Housing Act 2023 to comply with the 2024 Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. The risks around the application of the policy in terms of seeing an increase in complaints and the ability to deal with them in the timescales in line with the Code were highlighted. The revised policy has been developed and influenced by involved tenants and fully aligns with the new Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. Under the Housing Ombudsman Code, the Council is responsible for ensuring compliance, and there is a new requirement for landlords to have a Member Responsible for Complaints. The policy was approved by EMT and published from 1st April 2024. BMBC will present the policy at Cabinet in June 2024, and complaint insight, performance, and learning reports will be presented routinely at Cabinet. The self-assessment against the code has been completed in draft, and actions have been highlighted to ensure compliance. Temporary vacancies for the service have been recruited to help deal with complaints more effectively and quickly for tenants. From a tenant perspective, it is recognised the self-assessment is a lengthy document, therefore a summary will be published on the Berneslai Homes' website along with a frequently asked question document. A detailed discussion took place around complaints where BMBC are involved and how these are tracked and captured moving forward together with the recording of complaints regarding grass cutting and Neighbourhood services, with a suggestion made that this be raised at future internal meetings with BMBC and Neighbourhood Services.

The Committee confirmed their support of the policy, noted the actions which aim for full compliance from 30th June 2024 and acknowledged the areas where there may be a risk of non-compliance. The Committee approved the draft self-assessment and delegated authority to make final amendments and sign off to the Executive Director of Customer and Estate Services. Berneslai Homes' Board Complaints Champion to draft their response to the self-assessment by 18th June 2024.

Quarterly Performance Year End 2023/24

The Quarterly Performance Year End information was presented and discussed. The year end performance reflected on 43 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), RAG (Red, Amber, Green) status, including Tenant Satisfaction Measures. The key strengths and areas of focus were outlined. Due to challenging targets for 2023/24, some KPIs are rated as red but are performing in line with or above peer group upper quartiles. The 2024/25 targets for all KPIS have been set and agreed with BMBC based on this year's performance and peer group upper quartiles. The staff satisfaction levels were discussed with the reasons and actions being taken to address this. A session is being held with Tenant Voice panel to review the year end performance.

The Committee recognised the areas of strength, areas for improvement and the action being taken to address these.

PRIP Performance Report Quarter 4

Quarter 4 performance information for the contractor delivery of the repairs service was presented and discussed. The report shows the performance of the contract partners on 14 key performance indicators (KPIs) for the fourth quarter, with 8 KPIs met and 6 not met. In respect of reactive repair appointments, sub-contracting percentage value and gas safety contract partners achieved strong performance. On reactive repair appointments and attending repairs in 24 hours and 3/7/25 days the target of 99.5% was exceeded and targets were achieved in respect of sub-contracting percentage value and gas safety. The areas of focus in relation to KPI targets not achieved were outlined although overall performance is reasonable, and it is recognised where improvements are required to address this.

The Committee were assured by the performance information provided and recognised the areas of strength and areas for improvement.

Your Comments Count Annual Report

The Committee received the Your Comments Annual Report, which summarised the activities and outcomes under the Your Comments Count Policy for 2023/24. Whilst Berneslai Homes positively received Housemark accreditation for its complaint handling service and remained compliant with the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) Complaint Handling Code and scheme, the annual report outlined the range of organisational challenges faced and the key areas of concern in relation to complaint handling and learning together with the positive actions and outcomes achieved. Actions being taken to improve areas of concern includes addressing the backlog of repairs and replacements, moving Planned Maintenance Officers to a patch-based model, increasing temporary resources in the Customer Services and Property Services Teams, reviewing the Policy and Procedure Framework, and implementing a Company-wide Customer First training programme.

The positive actions and outcomes were compliance with all orders from the Housing Ombudsman Service, improved employee awareness of the complaints process through training and internal staff communications, identified learning from complaints, and review of the Complaint Policy to align with the 2024 Housing Ombudsman Code.

The Committee noted the positive compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code, the revised complaint policy and self-assessment, which will be presented for approval to the Committee, and were assured of the positive actions being taken to improve the complaint handling service and that the residual risks will continue to be monitored. The Committee provided feedback on the organisational challenges identified through the complaint handling service.