

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Housing Improvement Board September 2022
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Item 4- Immediate Actions and Improvements
<b>REPORT AUTHORS:</b>	Velvet Dibley- Senior Strategy Office (Housing)

### Summary of the report:

This report provides an update on areas highlighted by the Housing Improvement Board in their March 2022 report as requiring greater attention. The report details the immediate actions and improvement activities being undertaken within the following areas:

- End-to-end review of voids
- Axis Repairs Contractor management and performance
- Improvements to Member casework
- Improvements to Complaints management
- Council-wide Telephony System

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Housing Improvement Board notes and comments on the following contents of the report:

- End-to-end review of voids
- Axis Repairs Contractor management and performance
- Improvements to Member casework
- Improvements to Complaints management
- Council-wide Telephony System

#### 1. End-to-end review of voids project

1.1. The Improvement project scope has been agreed by residents, Members and the Housing Directorate Management Team. An Operational Voids Improvement Group has been formed consisting of void stage leads and Adult Social Care & Health colleagues, and the corporate Project Management Office.

1.2. The Operational Group reports into the newly formed Strategic Voids Improvement Group which is chaired by the Corporate Director of Housing.

1.3. The project has enabled increased collaboration between teams alongside a better understand of each other's needs which is leading to improvements to performance and the customer journey.

1.4. The project action plan is currently being finalized following discussions with the Performance Monitoring Group.

1.5. At present, a progress average of 48% has been seen against the 62 Phase 1 actions (i.e., the 'here and now' improvements).

1.6. A further 44 actions have been identified for Phase 2 improvements which will test the performance of void management against industry-leading good practice.

1.7. Tenancy Team

Action	Complete/in progress
Better process for enforcement of four-week notice	Complete
Increased guidance to residents and enforcement of tenancy conditions in notice period	Complete
Using system to better record residents Notice To Terminate	In progress
Early notification of Notice To Terminate to repairs team so they can start their process	In progress
Early notification of Management transfer decisions (no notice situations) early to repairs to start the process	In progress

1.8. Lettings Team

Action	Complete/in progress
Handover of all keys and fobs to repairs (rather than disposal requiring lock change)	Complete
Advise Repairs Team where a property is likely to be hard to let based on previous experience so enhanced works can be completed	In progress

1.9. Repairs Team

Action	Complete/in progress
Appointment of Voids Project Manager	Complete

Additional contractors added to available supply to complete voids work	Complete
Changes made to payment arrangements and moving from a price-per-void to a schedule of rates method to resolve contractors not wishing to undertake work or providing poor quality work	Complete
Review of contractor performance resulting in poor performance	Complete
Better estimation of completion dates to enable the allocation process to begin earlier and better manage customer expectations	Complete
Improved quality through more Croydon Surveyors jointly specifying works, inspecting works in progress and signing off works	Complete

#### 1.10. Allocations Team

<b>Action</b>	<b>Complete/in progress</b>
Under-occupation transfers early notifications to Repairs to start the process	Complete
Starting pre-allocations and shortlisting earlier	Complete
Advertising property availability dates to manage customer expectations	In progress
Open viewing top-five applicants to be re-introduced	In progress
Reviewing age restricted blocks to widen availability to applicants	In progress

#### 1.11. Adult Social Care

<b>Action</b>	<b>Complete/in progress</b>
Re-design of process with new five-day target for nominations	Complete
Offer to assist key holding and access for viewings	Complete
Utilizing long-term voids for step-down care	In progress

1.12. Other activities planned or in progress

<b>Action</b>	<b>In progress/Phase 2</b>
Improved performance report	In progress (new reporting suite in place, further operational reports being developed and validated)
Development of the voids module in the new Northgate Housing IT system which will be automated and provide management visibility on the progress of each stage of voids	In progress (at testing and training staff stage)
Agreed the introduction of an officer to oversee the key-to-key process for all stages and teams	In progress
Consulting with residents on service standards such as lettable standard for new procurement contracts	In progress
Incentives and penalties being developed for new contracts on voids	In progress
Consideration of any day tenancy start dates	Phase 2
Consideration of utilizing the handyman service	Phase 2

**2. Axis Repairs Contractor management and performance**

- 2.1. Several actions have been undertaken by the Estates & Improvement division to deliver on the Mayor’s manifesto pledge to ensure our current responsive repairs contractor delivers a good service to tenants and leaseholders.
- 2.2. In June 2022, the Repairs Service was strengthened through the recruitment of additional managers to focus on voids and the backlog of disrepair cases.
- 2.3. The contract governance has been improved and is overseen by quarterly, minuted Strategic Core Meetings chaired by the Director of Estates & Improvement.
- 2.4. The number of key performance indicators reviewed at the monthly Operational Core Meeting has been increased.
- 2.5. Weekly meetings are held with the Council’s operational leads (incl. the leads for voids, repairs, and gas services) where action notes are recorded. Issues unresolved at these meetings are escalated to the monthly Operational Core Meeting.
- 2.6. Axis have increased the number of call center staff from nine to 15 in September 2022 to reduce the time in which calls are answered.

2.7. Axis have also increased the number of sub-contractors as of September 2022.

2.8. Key performance indicators show that the contractor's performance has improved. Key performance indicators for Q1 2022/2023 can be found in Appendix 1 (Performance Management Group Report Q1 2022/2023).

### **3. Improvements to Member casework**

3.1. In April 2022, two Member Enquiry Support Officers were recruited to assist Members in their complaints via the Croydon Members Casework app.

3.2. Whilst the Croydon Members Casework app existed prior to April, resource had not been allocated to support Members in using the app as opposed to emailing enquiries directly to officers.

3.3. Member enquiries are now managed by the Complaints Team and are captured alongside the Stage One corporate complaints. A Council-wide complaints report is shared with all senior managers on a weekly basis.

3.4. A dedicated caseworker has been recruited following the election of the Executive Mayor to manage mayoral enquiries.

### **4. Improvements to Complaints management**

4.1. The corporate Complaints Team has undertaken a review of the Housing Directorate's response to complaints against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

4.2. The Complaint Handling Code sets out good practice that allows landlords to respond to complaints effectively and fairly, and acts as a guide for residents in setting out what they should expect from their landlord when they complain.

4.3. The Housing Directorate's self-assessment against the Complaint Code will be used to inform a plan to improve the directorate's response to complaints.

4.4. A concerted effort has been undertaken to reduce the number of overdue complaints.

### **5. Council-wide Telephony System**

5.1. The new telephony system went live in August 2022 and a gradual increase has been seen in the number of customer calls being transferred directly to tenancy officers and other housing services.

5.2. The Telephony System is core to ensuring our residents find it easy to contact us and their query will either be handled at the Contact Centre or transferred

to the appropriate housing team. We are closely monitoring the call-handling numbers to ensure appropriate levels of customer service.

5.3. A programme has also commenced to update estate noticeboard with tenancy officer names.