

Housing Improvement Board

Report on Compliance with the Voluntary Undertaking

1. Introduction

In March 2021, following reports in the media about appalling living conditions of social housing residents living on the Regina Road Estate, South Norwood, the London Borough of Croydon (LBC) commissioned the Ark Consultancy to investigate the issues causing the conditions endured by residents and at the same time made a self-referral to the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) for breaching the Home Standard and Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard.

In May 2021, LBC was served a regulatory notice by the RSH for these breaches of the Consumer Standards. In May also, the Ark Consultancy concluded from their investigation that there were several issues which led to severe failings within the Housing Service:

- A lack of capacity and competence
- A poor operating culture with a lack of care and respect for tenants
- Systemic problems in how the Council communicates and deals with tenants' concerns and complaints
- Weak performance management meaning senior managers do not appear to know what is going on
- Poor use of data and 'intelligence' by the Council and its contractors

In the May 2021 Cabinet meeting, LBC accepted these findings and agreed to develop a Housing Improvement Plan to address these issues and return to compliance.

Over the course of 2022 a new Housing Directorate and leadership team was established.

The new team developed a Transformation Programme comprised of eight workstreams and over seventy projects over a three to five-year timeframe. The workstreams were designed to address the wider issues identified by the Ark Consultancy as well as the breaches of the consumer standards. To oversee and drive the Transformation Programme the Council put in place the Housing Improvement Board which included residents and expert independent members.

This programme was endorsed by Cabinet in December 2022.

The expectation of the RSH is that where providers of social housing have the capacity to respond to such issues, and have formulated detailed plans to address the non-compliance, then they can enter into a Voluntary Undertaking

Such an agreement for a Voluntary Undertaking was agreed with the RSH in October 2023 (attached as Appendix 1).

This report to the Housing Improvement Board sets out the current position on compliance with the expectations set out in the Voluntary Undertaking and highlights those projects which directly addressed the breaches with the Consumer Standards so that LBC can evidence its return to compliance.

The question for members of the Housing Improvement Board posed by this report is:

'Are Board Members assured that the Council has sufficiently delivered on the commitments in the Voluntary Undertaking that it can reasonably seek the Regulator's agreement to return supervision of Croydon Housing Services to its normal level of engagement?'

We will be seeking Board Member views on this question at the meeting of the Housing Improvement Board scheduled to receive this report on the 6th of August.

2. The Consumer Standards

The regulatory notice served by the RSH in May 2021 set out breaches to the then, Home Standard and the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard.

2.1 The areas of the standards breached were:

Home Standard: Repairs and Maintenance

- Provide a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service to homes and communal areas that responds to the needs of, and offers choices to, tenants, and has the objective of completing repairs and improvements right first time
- Meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of the occupants in their home

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard

- Provide choices, information and communication appropriate to the diverse needs of their tenants in the delivery of all standards
- Have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible that ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly.
- Treat all tenants with fairness and respect
- Demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their tenants, including in relation to the equality strands and tenants with additional support needs.

2.2 In July 2023 the RSH published details of four new proposed standards. These were:

- Safety and Quality Standard – outcomes about the safety and quality of tenants' homes.
- Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard – outcomes about how landlords provide information, listen to tenants and act on their views.
- Neighbourhood and Community Standard – outcomes about how landlords work with other organisations to help ensure tenants live in safe neighbourhoods,
- Tenancy Standard – outcomes about how landlords allocate and let homes and manage tenancies.

For the purposes of this report and the determination of compliance with the Consumer Standards, it is with the relevant parts of the new Safety and Quality Standard and the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard that compliance will be measured.

In Autumn 2023 the Housing Service commenced an initial gap analysis against the provisions of the new standards. When the standards were confirmed on the 29th of February 2024, the Housing Transformation Team undertook a further gap analysis to better understand the areas where our compliance with the new Consumer Standards needed additional focus.

Our findings of current compliance against the breaches of the Consumer Standards are set out in Sections 4.2 and 4.3.

3. Housing Transformation Programme

3.1 As prefaced in the introduction to this report a thorough diagnosis of the failings within the housing service was undertaken with resident and staff involvement as well as independent findings from Ark to understand the roots of non-compliance and with a view to creating a programme of transformation which would address the core issues across the service. This programme was approved by LBC Cabinet in December 2022 and endorsed by the Housing Improvement Board in the same month.

The programme is governed by the Transformation Steering Board which is chaired by the Corporate Director for Housing and attended by the Cabinet Member for Homes and meets monthly to review progress.

Reports on progress against this programme are made regularly to the Housing Improvement Board, the RSH and Cabinet.

The latest update on the programme was provided to the Regulator in June 2024 and is set out below.

3.2 Projects which address the Safety and Quality Standard

Project	Purpose	Progress
1.5 Re-structure of the Housing Directorate	To conduct a review and restructuring of the Housing Directorate divisions following reviews of performance, operating practice and delivery to best deliver efficient and effective services to customers. To stabilise leadership at a senior level to deliver improvements and lead employees in transforming the service.	<p>The senior leadership team has been stabilised. We will be out to advert shortly for the final position of Director of Regeneration.</p> <p>We have also recruited for all the Head of Service positions across the directorate</p> <p>The restructure of the directorate is moving forward with plans in the final stages. We anticipate the bulk of the restructure to be underway by September 2024.</p>
2.1 Performance review framework	To devise and implement a Performance framework which sets out clear measures of performance for service areas and enables appropriate objective setting for staff, projects and initiatives with focus on customer services. To refine which KPIs are shared to improve business intelligence.	Complete - KPI dashboard agreed with Housing Improvement Board in October 2023. We are currently reviewing targets against HouseMark benchmarking data.
4.3 Asset Management Strategy	The Strategy will detail our long-term plan for the management of our Council stock (as part of a ten-year rolling programme) and link in with clear financial planning.	<p>Complete - The Asset Management Strategy was approved by Cabinet and full Council in July 2024.</p> <p>The stock condition surveys continue to be rolled out and these are on currently 55% completed.</p> <p>The revised HRA business plan will incorporate all data analysis from stock condition surveys, and we are in the process of acquiring the appropriate modelling tool.</p>
6.3 Repairs restructure and behaviour change programme	To have an effective, motivated and skilled workforce which can manage the new repairs contracts and deliver our capital and asset management programmes. To have sufficient capacity within the Compliance	We have recruited a new Compliance Team, including a Head of Fire and Building Safety and a Head of Property compliance. The new team includes managers/officers for the Big 6 areas (Asbestos, Electrical, Gas Fire, Lifts and Water).

Project	Purpose	Progress
	function to monitor and provide assurance against the Big 6	Permanent staff have now been recruited into all the contact centre advisor roles.

3.2 Projects which address the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard

Project	Purpose	Progress
3.2 Resident engagement strategy	To set out how residents will be engaged in decision-making, information-sharing and consultation	Complete - The Resident Engagement Strategy was approved by Cabinet and full Council in July 2024.
3.4 Customer Information Review	To evaluate the information captured for customers, profiling customer information, ensuring characteristics are used to inform communication channels and service delivery.	The Tenancy Look Up feature on the website will enable residents to identify key officers connected to their postcode, this is currently in test mode with a view to 'Go Live' by early August 2024. Data profiling continues as a rolling programme.
3.7 Customer Care Training Programme	Transform customer interactions through a programme of training focused on behaviour and creating a positive customer experience	Training has been rolled out with 214 colleagues and managers attending between 1 st May and 8 th July. Preparation for Phase 2 delivery is underway with invitations being sent to remaining staff for August/September. Embedding and communication plans are now in place to continue the momentum of the training programme.
3.8 Review of our Complaints Process	Improve and standardise responses, minimise backlogs and learn from complaints – ensure the process for managing complaints is easy to navigate for customers	We are developing capacity in customer insight including through the recent recruitment of a permanent Customer Insight Manager, a new Business Intelligence and a Complaints Manager Completed self-assessment against the complaints code.
6.6 Review of Policies and procedures	Aligned with a new operating model, new contractors, new service standards and utilising our customer data – a review of our procedures and	We continue to review policies and procedures with the active assistance of the Readers' Panel, who are currently

Project	Purpose	Progress
	policies to deliver better outcome for our customer base	prioritising the review of nine Tier 1 Health and Safety policies. The new Heads of Services in Asset and Repairs are reviewing to ensure their policies align with new legislative, service and customer requirements.
7.2 Enabling high-performing teams and setting behavioural expectations	Creation of a competency model setting out clear behavioural expectations and linking it with succession planning, recruitment and recognition	Change management sessions are being designed to support the changes within the directorate and establish standards in the way we work. This plan will include team building sessions, standard setting sessions; engagement activities; training needs analysis, housing induction and creating “Housing Manager” guides. The competency model is being embedded into recruitment and appraisals, with the redesigned appraisal form in draft mode. Customer First Training commenced in June for all colleagues. Managers are receiving broader training in this area to support culture change.

3.3 Projects which address both Standards

Project	Purpose	Progress
1.3 Housing Strategy	To compose a Housing Strategy which sets out the long-term Strategic Aims of the Housing directorate incorporating the environmental and organisation constraints	Complete – Housing Strategy approved by Cabinet and full Council in December 2024 We have undertaken a significant information gathering exercise with key stakeholders in the directorate to ensure that LBC can evidence meeting the specific expectations in the
3.10 Consumer Standards Review	Assessment against the four new Consumer Standards to ensure compliance and best practice and implementation of action plan	

Project	Purpose	Progress
		<p>new Standards. Evidencing the expected outcomes will be monitored and tested to provide additional confidence in this area.</p> <p>A communications plan to share information about the new expectations with staff across the Housing directorate has been developed which includes raising the profile of changes to the consumer standards across the directorate.</p>
3.15 NEC	Delivery of NEC Housing	<p>The new Housing Management IT system, NEC went live in June 2023, replacing OHMS and a number of other manual systems. This forms an essential part of the organisation's way of working, as it increasingly facilitates a performance focused, data driven culture.</p> <p>Work has commenced on the Asset Management and Compliance modules.</p> <p>The Compliance module mobilised in July 2024 with asbestos management data, and the next area due to be rolled out is gas. We are taking a phased approach to mobilisation of the Compliance module to manage risk. The Asset Management module is being scoped and we expect this to mobilise in Winter 2024.</p> <p>The contact centre is utilising the NEC diagnostic tool. This is positively impacting on appropriate repair issues, and we are receiving improved levels of satisfaction with the service. We are validating the impact on call volumes, complaints and service delivery cancellations.</p> <p>Work has also commenced on the Voids key to key process with a view to</p>

Project	Purpose	Progress
		simplifying the voids path and enabling improved reporting to better manage the process.

4. Voluntary Undertaking - Evidencing Compliance

4.1 Key Performance Indicators

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are an integral measure of the effectiveness of the projects within the programme. These KPIs are monitored monthly by Housing's Departmental Management Team and the Regulator of Social Housing as well as by the Housing Improvement Board at each meeting and the Council's Cabinet quarterly.

4.1.1 KPIs for the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard:

Measure	Actual (Q4 2022/23)	Actual (Q1 2024/25)	Target Sept 2024
Overall satisfaction	50%	54%	60%
Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them	40%	41%	45%
Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them	53%	58%	60%
Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect	55%	60%	62%
Satisfaction with Complaint Handling	22%	24%	27%
Complaints responded to within the CHC timescale	21%	TBC	80%
% increase year on year of data profiling on our customers/tenants	n/k	8.8% (June)	5%
Escalation of complaints to stage 2	n/k	6.9% (June)	7%

4.1.2 KPIs for the Safety and Quality Standard

Measure	Actual Q1 23/24	Actual Q12024-25 and June 2024	Target Sept 2024
Gas safety Checks	99.5%	99.8%	100%
Fire Safety Checks	99%	100%	100%
Asbestos Safety Checks	98.5%	100%	100%
Water Safety Checks	100%	100%	100%
Lift Safety Checks	98.1%	100%	100%
Electrical Checks (EHICS)	93%	94.07%	100%
Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standards	TBC	TBC	0%
Repairs completed within target timescale	Former contractor data not available	91.5%	80%
Satisfaction with Repairs	65%	61%	70%
Satisfaction with time taken to complete recent repair	53%	53%	62%
Satisfaction that the home is well maintained	52%	56%	58%
Satisfaction that the home is safe	65%	59%	69%
Appointments made and kept	Former contractor data not available	92%	80%

4.2 Consumer Standards

The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard

Standard	Current position
<p>4.2.1 Fairness and Respect</p> <p>Registered providers must treat tenants and prospective tenants with fairness and respect.</p>	<p>A Residents' Charter has been developed by members of the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel (TLP). It details the standard they expect from all staff at LBC.</p> <p>A customer care training programme begun in May 2024 has been rolled out across the directorate to transform customer interactions with a focus on staff behaviour and creating a positive customer experience. The training is ongoing, but half of staff and managers have already attended</p>
<p>4.2.2 Diverse Needs</p> <p>In relation to the housing and landlord services they provide, registered providers must take action to deliver fair and equitable outcomes for tenants and, where relevant, prospective tenants.</p>	<p>LBC is gathering relevant information about tenants and will use this to adapt its services to their diverse needs. Data from June 2024 shows that there was an 8.8% increase in data profiling on our residents, exceeding the annual target of 5%.</p> <p>As the first one-thousand tenancy audits are completed, the tenancy audit form has been updated to capture equalities data. Further data is being collected through the contact centre as residents are asked to submit data during interactions with call centre staff who input it into NEC. Data will be compared to the 2021 census to identify the different groups in the borough. There will be an assessment of requirements regarding service delivery adaptations based on the information collected.</p> <p>By the end of July, all manually recorded data will have been entered onto NEC. Data is being analysed to plan resident outreach and adaptations to service delivery. For example, seven surgeries were designed and delivered between April and May 2024 in areas where resident satisfaction measured by the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) was low. Demographic data about age and disability was also used to inform the installation of hearing loops in community centres at two sites.</p> <p>The roll out of My Account allows LBC to have oversight of the proportion of residents who are using the Council's digital services. The resident magazine, Open House, is posted out to all tenants and has publicised avenues for residents to access support in using the Council's digital services. Large print versions are also available.</p>
<p>4.2.3 Engagement with tenants</p>	<p>Tenants have been at the centre of the Transformation programme at LBC. They were instrumental in the creation of the programme and have played an integral part in many of the projects as they have developed. This includes:</p>

Standard	Current position
<p>Registered providers must take tenants' views into account in their decision-making about how landlord services are delivered and communicate how tenants' views have been considered.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cleaning Standards - HouseMark photo app - Estate Inspection Framework - Regeneration of Regina Road - Development of the Housing Strategy - Development of the Asset Management Strategy - Development of the Resident Engagement Strategy - Selection of Customer Care Training Provider - Development of the Voids Standard - Review of Policies and Procedures as they are updated <p>The Resident Engagement Strategy has been developed using the views of residents and with the involvement of TPAS. It has now been passed by full Council. Tenant involvement has a strong influence on the practice and policy of the organisation with all new policies and procedures being reviewed by resident scrutiny groups, and the performance monitoring group.</p> <p>Resident engagement events are held in varied formats and planned with accessibility in mind. Resident engagement has taken place through phone calls, surveys, face to face focus groups, mystery shopping, task and review groups, and PMG and scrutiny bootcamps. Using face to face and online engagement methods, and varied times for the meetings has supported the diverse needs of tenants and provided them with opportunities to engage with the Council.</p> <p>Closing the loop toolkits are being developed to ensure that when residents' views are sought, possible actions are recorded and feedback from the results is fed back to participants in a target time of five days.</p> <p>Actions are recorded to show where residents have influenced the service, such as TLP and PMG – reports and minutes are provided of the meetings held. Information is disseminated to affected residents when changes occur, and different options and the possible impact of them are laid out, where possible.</p> <p>Resident Involvement Officers have been assigned 'patches' which will help to build relationships and understanding of the diverse needs of tenants.</p>
<p>4.2.4 Complaints</p> <p>Registered providers must ensure complaints are addressed fairly, effectively, and promptly.</p>	<p>The resident satisfaction with LBC's approach to handling complaints has increased (from a low base) by 4% in 2023/24 compared to 2022/23.</p> <p>The complaints handling policy has been assessed by the Residents' Complaints Panel and is now live. The policy document is available on the Croydon website. It details how</p>

Standard	Current position
	<p>tenants can make a complaint and what tenants can do if they are not satisfied with the way it was handled or the outcome.</p> <p>There has been a significant reduction in the backlog of complaint responses within the Housing Service over the last year. By the 19th of July the backlog in repairs complaint responses was down to nine from over 300. Similar reductions have been achieved in other areas including the Homelessness division. Overall, there are currently 45 outstanding Stage 1 responses, of which 15 are overdue.</p> <p>A Customer Insight Manager has been recruited to LBC and started on 22nd July 2024. She will provide additional oversight of complaints across the directorate including the learning which can be achieved from emerging patterns and themes.</p>

4.3 The Safety and Quality Standard

Standard	Current position
<p>4.3.1 Health and Safety</p> <p>When acting as landlords, registered providers must take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of tenants in their homes and associated communal areas.</p>	<p>Compliance</p> <p>Our compliance against the 'Top 6' areas has improved over the last six months with Asbestos, Fire Risk Assessments, Lifts and Water all at 100%. Domestic Gas Safety checks (LGSRs) are at 99.86% as at the 30th of June and continue to improve each month as we focus on gaining access to the remaining 19 overdue properties. Commercial LGSR compliance is 100%. Domestic EICR compliance is 94.09% and communal EICR compliance is 100%. No access continues to be our main barrier to securing domestic EICRs and following a review, we have increased our 'door knocking' activities and increased resident communications to highlight the importance of this safety check. We expect compliance to improve over the coming months.</p> <p>We have commenced a data cutover plan to move 'Top 6' data off spreadsheets and onto NEC (Northgate). During June 2024, we moved asbestos data onto NEC. During the Summer we will move gas data onto NEC and over the Autumn, data for electrical, lifts and water components will be moved onto NEC. We are considering whether NEC is the best IT solution to hold data in relation to fire safety.</p>

	<p>In terms of meeting new fire safety regulations, we have one tranche 1 property, and our fire team are finalising our first building safety case. We are also considering how we can improve digital management of fire safety information and are working towards this 'golden thread' across departments.</p> <p>We are in the final stages of procuring two Fire Safety contractors who will be dedicated to undertaking Fire and Building Safety improvement works.</p> <p>Large Panel System high-rise buildings</p> <p>We have engaged Structural Engineers who specialise in analysis of these types of tower blocks, and surveys are underway at a tower block which is awaiting demolition (1-87 Regina Road) including intrusive investigations. The results from these surveys will help us to understand the structural safety of our other LPS tower blocks (15 in total).</p> <p>Resident Engagement</p> <p>Resident engagement events have been undertaken at all of our LPS blocks. During these events we explained what an LPS block is, how we intend to gather information about structural stability and how these aligns with aspects of the building safety programme.</p> <p>Fire Door Checks</p> <p>We have commenced annual surveys of individual flat front entrance doors in line with the Fire Safety (England) Regulations. Quarterly communal fire door inspections continue, and we have 67 buildings within scope.</p>
<p>4.3.2 Repairs, maintenance and planned improvements</p> <p>Registered providers must provide an effective, efficient and timely repairs, maintenance and planned improvements service for the homes and communal areas for which they are responsible.</p>	<p>The Repairs Contact Centre was insourced on 1 August 2023 and now has a full complement of permanent, fully trained staff. KPI results have improved since April 2024, with call wait time reducing from 7.37 secs (Jan) to 0.48 secs (June) and call answered up from 80.5% (Jan 2024) to 97.95% (June 2024).</p> <p>Residents are now better informed about their repair appointments – they receive a text message when they raise their repair, a further text message two days before the appointment; a further text message on the day of the appointment and they can track their operative on the way to their job via the contractor's portal. Residents can also reschedule appointments online.</p> <p>Repair completion KPI's are improving, with both Wates and Mears either at target or very close to KPI target. Resident satisfaction with repairs was negatively impacted in May and June 2024 as a result of our focus on clearing c200 overdue repairs from Winter, which resulted in a dip in satisfaction. We expect satisfaction to improve over the coming months as more repairs are now completed within our service offer.</p>

	<p>A dedicated Damp and Mould (D&M) team has been established within the repairs service. The Damp and Mould Manager has reviewed our policy and service offer and residents have been involved in this work (June 2024). During this review we took into account both changes that may arise as a result of Awaab's Law and the Housing Ombudsman spotlight report on damp and mould.</p> <p>We have introduced a 2-phase approach to assessing D&M cases and have a dedicated team within our contractor structure to manage remedial repairs and major works.</p> <p>The Senior Management Team (SMT) receives monthly performance reports in respect of damp and mould KPI's.</p> <p>The Head of Responsive Repairs has strategic responsibility for the management of D&M cases, ensuring compliance is achieved and maintained.</p> <p>We have completed 55% of our Stock Condition surveys (as at 30/6/24) with a further 25% due by 31 March 2025. The data, along with data from repairs, Damp and Mould and disrepair cases is being triangulated to support us with developing our future capital works programmes.</p> <p>A mapping exercise has been carried out by Clear Futures which will be shared with large Housing Associations in the borough on 30th July. The mapping will illustrate the communal areas managed by Croydon Council and those of other Housing Providers and depict the areas of overlap. Further demographic information will be presented on the map, such as deprivation. This will drive improvements in the quality and standards of communal areas and allow Croydon to make more informed decisions about planned improvements and neighbourhood management.</p>
--	---

4.4 Housing Transformation Programme

As set out in section 3, the programme comprises a series of projects focused on transformation of the housing service provided to residents of Croydon Council and remedying the breaches to the Consumer Standards.

These measures were agreed with the Regulator, the Improvement and Assurance Panel and the Housing Improvement Board and are regularly monitored by all parties.

There has been considerable progress in this programme of improvement, some of which is listed below. However, improvement in the Housing Service is a process not a destination and along with specific actions such as the introduction of the NEC Housing Management IT system and performance improvement measured in KPIs, Croydon is also embarked on a

culture change in customer care and a culture of continuous improvement, because improvement is never complete.

- Residents Charter co-created with residents
- Procurement of three repairs contractors – residents involved in the procurement process
- Programme of Stock Condition Surveys (55% complete with a further 25% by the end of March 2025)
- Housing Strategy – circa 500 residents and partners involved. Approved by Cabinet in December 2023
- Asset Management Strategy – consulted on with residents and approved by Cabinet July 2024
- Homelessness Strategy – circa 400 residents and partners involved in development – approved by Cabinet in July 2024
- Resident Engagement Strategy – Extensive resident consultation and approved by Cabinet in July 2024
- Rent consultation – annual programme of resident consultation
- Customer Service training procured and rolling out from May 2024 – residents involved in procurement process
- Policies and procedures – new, clear policies and procedures in development and being rolled out
- Competency Model – setting out clear standards of behaviours and linked to recruitment
- Capital Delivery contract review – residents involved in feedback sessions
- An Estate Inspection Programme has been developed. The inspections are now advertised to tenants with a minimum of 10 days’ notice. A wider range of people are now involved in the inspections so that feedback can be communicated directly. Repairs contractors, Councillors, Tenancy Officers, and residents are now present at the inspections and develop holistic action plans, including the logging of repairs, to improve estates.
- Improved Voids Lettable Standard – co-designed with residents and in place
- Increased capacity in Complaints and a Complaints’ improvement plan in action
- KPI Dashboard – monitoring the key regulatory indicators and additional programme progression indicators in place
- NEC Migration: The NEC Housing Management IT system was successfully implemented in June 2023 – this creates a single housing system to deliver better streamlined services to residents
- Regina Road Phase 1: design of an estimated 225 units is progressing. A bid for GLA funding has been accepted at £54m which is approximately 50% build cost. Project Architects were appointed in December 2023.
- Compliance plan for Building Safety Act – All high-risk buildings were registered to deadline with the Building Safety Regulator in October 2023.
- Repairs Contact Centre: In-sourcing of the repairs contact centre bringing greater ownership of the customer journey. Fully staffed and providing measurable improvement for customers.

5. Conclusion

There have clearly been great strides forward in Croydon's Housing Service over the last two years. Over this time, we have been putting in place the foundation stones for ongoing improvement. Central to this programme of improvement has been listening to our residents.

The Residents' Charter, released in June 2022, was developed with residents and overseen by members of the Tenant and Leaseholders' Panel, to give residents a stronger voice in the development of policy and decisions that affected them as tenants and leaseholders. The Residents' Charter key principles include treating residents with respect, being transparent with our residents about how we are performing, giving residents a voice and encouraging meaningful decision-making activities.

This is true too of the Housing Improvement Board who oversee the transformation programme, the Resident Reading Group who are tasked to comment on and help improve policy, the myriad opportunities for listening to residents for instance from Regina Road, the residents of LPS blocks to those tenants and leaseholders that advised on the Resident Engagement Strategy approved by Full Council on the 17th of July.

The spur for renewal of the housing service was the exposure of appalling living conditions suffered by the residents of Regina Road and the evident lack of a resident voice made worse by poor management and indifference on the part of some staff.

The immediate aim of the service is to be able to confidently evidence compliance with the Regulator's Consumer Standards of which Croydon Council's Housing Service was in breach in 2021.

This report seeks to set out a fair and honest summary of the current position by looking at all of the elements of the Voluntary Undertaking and setting against these the progress we have made. These include actions that address the fundamental failures identified by the Ark investigation and set out on page 1. These include a new Leadership Team, the introduction of structural elements such as NEC a new Housing Management IT system, a new professionally staffed Repairs Contact Centre focused on efficiency and the customer experience, a new Housing Strategy, Asset Management Strategy and Resident Engagement Strategy and crucially a programme of culture change within the staff group.

Whilst there is progress shown by the KPIs that form part of the monitoring framework, the improvement in customer satisfaction-based indicators, is not yet showing in a way that we would wish. There is no doubt that the extensive publicity rightly given to the failures at Regina Road and with the Council more generally, along with residents' own experience of customer care in the Housing Service will have severely dented confidence in the organisation. In these circumstances, and though there is increasing satisfaction improvement in some areas, there may well be a time lag in restoring overall trust in the service and this being reflected in satisfaction data.

An issue that has proved difficult in this process has been the historical lack of data across wide areas of the business. Our former repairs contractor, Axis, provided little in the way of data on customer contact through calls or complaints. So, for some time with the new contractors, we were working blind on our customer's needs. We have decisively moved towards owning these customer relationships, professionalising the contact centre, improving the customer experience and using calls to increase data on our customers to

improve the housing service overall. To further this end, we have recruited a Business Intelligence Manager to enhance our data collection and use, so that we are able to take more effective, data-driven decisions and are better able to meet the diverse needs of our residents.

For data on our stock to properly inform our Asset Management Strategy we are working through an extensive programme of Stock Condition Surveys that are 55% complete with an aim to complete 80% of surveys by the end of this financial year.

In summary, we are clearly an improving organisation. Performance is not yet satisfactory, but we know where it is not and we know what we are doing to address the deficit and we have a clear and shared ambition across the organisation to provide a good and improving service.

In order to support the Regulator in coming to a determination on our compliance with the Consumer Standards and the Voluntary Undertaking we will seek validation from an external provider or providers who we will commission to undertake an independent review of our compliance.

There is no set process for reaching agreement with the RSH to remove the special measures with Croydon. When the Council feel the time is right, we will write formally to the Regulator with our evidence of compliance and the findings of an external review. The Regulator will then have this moderated and come to a decision.

In the meantime, we ask that members of the Housing Improvement Board review and digest this report and provide your views both broadly and on specific areas on which you think the service should give special focus.