

HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 12 DECEMBER 2022 AT 6.30 PM
COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CROWDALE CENTRE, 218 EVERSOLT STREET, LONDON,
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SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

Wards

13. WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

Responses from Housing Associations and officers requested at the
last meeting of the scrutiny committee

(Pages 5 -
28)

Issued on: Friday, 9 December 2022

AGENDA ENDS

Clarion to provide a detailed response to the points raised in the Anonymous Deputation.

We have reviewed the key points raised in the deputation and have provided a response to the questions asked. As the deputation is anonymised it has not been possible for our teams to carry out a detailed and in-depth review of the issues raised. We have provided our response in the order the questions were raised for ease of reference. Our response details our general practice.

Repairs and Maintenance

Point 1: I would like Clarion to commit to insisting that all contractors operate on an appointment basis and to stop expecting tenants to allow access without notice.

We can confirm that our contractors do offer repair appointments to our customers with the exception of an emergency repair, in these cases we would advise we will attend imminently and within 24 hours.

Unfortunately, during the cyber incident Clarion could not provide a Business as Usual (BAU) service or use a number of our customer communication processes. An emergency service was put in place and during the period and despite system outage, Clarion completed 35,000 repairs nationally.

As of today we are almost back to BAU, we are presently completing 80% of reported repairs within 28 days, with the majority of appointments taking place within 2 weeks. We monitor how many appointments are made and attended along with customer satisfaction with the works carried out. Our contact centre send out a text message to customers confirming their appointment and a text following a repair asking for their feedback. If residents are dissatisfied with the repair our Clarion Response team will call the customer back in order to discuss and put things right.

Point 2: I would like Clarion to agree to give full details with timely notice to tenants and residents of any works to the communal areas or exterior of their buildings and of any requirements for access. This communication should include the name and contact details for a relevant Clarion officer.

In the situation of planned works we would provide the appointment details along with a work description and the name of the contractor, contacting relevant residents if access to their home was required. For day to day and emergency repairs this level of communication is not possible. We have a duty to ensure the health and safety of our residents, any communal repairs reported by residents would be attended promptly. For example if a faulty lift or door was reported we would not delay the repair by contacting each resident. In the example of a lift outage, if the repair could not be completed on the same day, the team would contact all residents providing an explanation and an expected completion time and date.

Point 3: I would like Clarion to award the £5 compensation for all missed appointments by any of their representatives without reasonable notice.

We operate in the same way as our colleague registered providers and have very clear customer service processes and standards across all our operational areas of business. These meet the regulatory standards and requirements. We do not have an automated system. We offer compensation for missed appointments on our repair service. We can confirm that the award is £15 compensation for missed appointments where we have failed to keep an appointment without giving 24 hours' notice. All other non-repair visits are not subject to this and officers if they cannot make an appointment due in the main to unforeseen circumstances we would either send a different officer or contact the customer to re-arrange the appointment.

Complaints

Point 1: I would like Clarion to implement a system which allows for continuity when dealing with repairs so that when problems occur tenants are not required to repeat the entire process or spend time cataloguing their experience.

Clearly there have been issues recently due to the cyber incident and our inability to access our core IT systems, including our repairs system. We can confirm that we have a customer relationship management system which in normal times captures all customer contact and Clarion action. We accept that we will not always get it right and that some matters are more complex than others. To address this we will ensure the customer is supported by a named Resident Liaison Officer who will work with residents on complex matters to conclusion.

In the absence of an address and specific issues we are unable to review what may have gone wrong for this particular customer.

Point 2: I would like to ask Clarion to freeze all service charges until the backlog of service charge queries and related complaints has been cleared.

Clarion adhere to the Service Charge legislation and have a clear complaints and service charge query process in place for residents. The service provision at schemes/blocks is contractual and we would not look to stop / freeze these services following an enquiry or complaint.

On concluding a service charge query or complaint, where a service charge refund is due, we will backdate any compensation value once our investigation has finished.

We do accept that this year has been particularly challenging with the IT systems outage which meant that all of our leaseholders, shared owners and tenants on variable service charges (c46, 000) received the legally required S.20 (b) notices.

Now that system issues have been largely resolved, we will look to include the statement of actual costs for 2021/22 within the rent review mailing timed for February 2023.

What this will mean for leaseholders and shared owner residents is that they will receive their rent and service charge demand for 2023/24 and notice of any surplus or deficit for 2021/22 applied to account.

With record levels of inflation the cost of providing many of our services has also substantially increased. Commensurate increases in service charges are likely.

Cyber incident

Question: Can Clarion give 100% assurance to its tenants and residents that none of their personal data has been compromised?

We can confirm that Our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, where we keep the main bulk of our customer information, wasn't accessed. We are still investigating the extent to which data stored elsewhere may have been impacted. Our investigation is ongoing and we have been advised by our external experts in cyber security that it is important not to speculate further while the investigation is ongoing.

General issues not covered above

We have read the narrative provided in the Anonymous Deputation. We cannot investigate or respond in-depth on the personal experience detailed without the resident's name and address. If we are supplied with this information we can then carry out a full review of the allegations made.

We have noted some detailed comments which relate back to 2018 and 2020 and the comments made are indeed of concern. What we can advise is that our systems and repair process have gone through a period of change with tighter monitoring of customer communication and oversight. We know we do get some things wrong at times and we encourage resident feedback including complaints and use this to identify process and service weakness. We use these findings to inform our service improvement plans.

All staff and contractors during the pandemic had clear guidance on wearing masks and operating in residents' homes. If there was a breach in process, if this was reported to us we would have addressed it at the time. We cannot comment on the matter relating to short or no notice visits, but can confirm that we were operating a repair service throughout the pandemic and this was based on an appointment basis.

We take our fire, health and safety seriously and carry out communal area inspections of all our buildings. Where we find a fire risk such as residents storing belongings in the communal hall we would serve a TORT Notice and the goods/items would be removed on its expiry. Without an address we are unable to provide any further information.

We have invested the sum of £1,080,632.50 in our planned maintenance programme in the borough with a further £2.6m planned over the next few years. We would urge the resident to contact us to enable us to plan any required investment/ disability adaptations.

We note the comments relating to the text input box on the Clarion website and can confirm that our Digital Team has identified that the number of characters that can be entered into the text box on our website is a key driver for excessive complaints forms and duplication which causes customer annoyance.

We are working on a brand new complaints form which allows further content and captures all of the information required.

We have a team of Neighbourhood Response Officers working in the borough, if a visit is required this can be arranged. To facilitate this I have detailed below the various ways to make contact with us.

Telephone: 0300 500 8000 (24/7)

Live Chat Service: This is accessible via the Clarion website during our opening hours (<https://www.myclarionhousing.com>)

All Clarion Housing liveried vehicles have trackers fitted, if we can be provided with the address and date we can investigate and discuss with the driver the allegation of engine idling.

Section 2: All Registered Providers to provide further information on their approaches to:

1.0 Assisting tenants with debt management in light of the cost of living crisis

The economic outlook has seen inflation (CPI for September 2022) reaching 10.1% and this will have a serious impact on many of our residents.

Clarion Housing Group has a wide range of service provision that was in place prior to the current cost of living crisis to support any residents facing money, debt or energy challenges. This includes:

- Free access to debt advice for all residents through our partner StepChange. Residents who are identified as being in a more vulnerable situation can also access more intensive support through our debt advice partner Pennysmart
- Free access to our Clarion Futures Money Guidance service delivered by phone Monday – Friday in working hours. The team focuses on each household’s needs including checking entitlements, completing a budget, identifying savings and better deals, energy advice as well as hardship support through supermarket and energy vouchers as well as white goods and beds. They also refer onto specialist support such as Jobs and Training, Debt Advice and Tenancy Sustainment
- Our Sustainment and Benefits service works longer term with any resident whose tenancy is at risk to deal with the challenges they face and help maintain their tenancy.
- We have a cost of living hub on our website which also summarises the support available as well as our new You Are Not Alone information leaflets to help residents through the crisis <https://www.myclarionhousing.com/help-and-guidance/money-guidance/cost-of-living>
- To reach households who may not be aware of these services we make outbound calls to those residents who may be more likely to be at risk of money or debt challenges to inform them of the support available. Since August 2022 we have made over 2650 calls and engaged over 700 residents in support.
- Using our ‘Every Visit Counts’ methodology to ensure that if colleagues are in a property fixing or meeting for a separate problem, they look for signs of hardship, vulnerability alongside property issues such as condensation, damp and mould and raise any issue.

2.0 Retrofitting their stock

We have identified circa 50 homes in Camden as part of our 3 year retrofit programme. These are not scheduled for 2023/24 and therefore we anticipate the works taking place in the financial years 2024-2026.

3.0 Investing in fire safety measures

Over the last 4 financial years, our Building Safety Team has spent over £108m on fire safety. This work includes fire risk assessment actions, door replacement programmes, external wall system works and active fire system installations and upgrades.

We are predicting to spend a further £40m in 2022/23, with another £125m budgeted for over the next 3 financial years.

Specifically in Camden;

- we have invested in linked fire alarms systems to 135 converted street properties
- upgraded automatic fire detection at Belmore House and Jubilee House sheltered housing schemes
- are planning to commence upgrade works to Dennis Handfield supported housing scheme

4.0 Addressing over-crowding

All residents can access housing options guidance and advice on our website or request support via our customer services team as well as our tenancy sustainment team for more complex cases.

We're committed to improving our homes and communities, giving customers better places to live in safer, greener and more pleasant neighbourhoods. We decide where to regenerate based on the condition of homes, levels of overcrowding or under occupation, and the views of our residents.

We are looking at our pipeline, borough requirements and size of units. We know there has been a tendency from some local authorities to nominate households to us who would overcrowd units at the start of the tenancy, going forward we will only let to the units' permitted occupancy number.

We are currently researching financial incentives to offer to residents who are under occupying. It is hoped this will help release some larger family units to address overcrowding in our stock.

We are reviewing as part of our response to Damp and Mould how many of our units affected are overcrowded homes. We are looking at all households that have reported damp and mould in the last 2 years.

These homes will be revisited and where additional works are required these will be carried out. The visit may lead to financial support/hardship referrals and in some cases additional points for a management transfer to a bigger home.

5.0 Planned investment in 2022/23 in their Camden stock

The following provides a breakdown of investment completions for existing Camden stock during 2021/22 (including component replacements and cyclical works):

Cyclical Decoration (63 properties)	£330,274.80
Bathroom (41 properties)	£216,534.56
Electrical Upgrades (12 properties)	£20,415.55
Heating Upgrades (50 properties)	£226,813.93
Kitchens (32 properties)	£238,466.92
Windows (3 properties)	£48,126.74
Total	£1,080,632.50

We are currently working with our partners to specifically review the programme delivery challenges in Camden (including parking, supply chain issues to name a few). We have recently secured a Planned Investment operations hub at The Towers, 39 Dartmouth Park Avenue, NW5 1JP, this will assist in the mobilisation of our planned investment programme.

In 2022/23, our Planned Investment team will be investing a total of £2.6 million in cyclical works and component replacements across Camden. However, it is anticipated that a large proportion of these works will be carried forward to 2023/24 and will be subject to reprogramming and reprioritisation.

The majority of Camden properties are subject to planning approval (windows, roofs) with further restrictions within conservation areas or listed buildings. The average planning turnaround time is between 14-16 weeks, generally in these areas windows are required to be timber D/G, rather than UPVC and this product takes longer to be made.

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Response from Notting Hill Genesis

Relieving Overcrowding

We recognise that overcrowding is becoming an increasing problem and try to manage this through our lettings policy and our household member's scheme.

Statutory Overcrowding is a Band B on NHG's transfer list and non-statutory overcrowding is Band C. Transfer applicants can bid for properties that have the same number of bedrooms but more bed spaces, or properties which have less bedrooms than they are entitled to. However, the transfer will only be approved if the move would relieve statutory overcrowding. If, following the move, the transfer applicant is still overcrowded, their banding will be reviewed as they are likely to have moved from a band B to and band C.

If the resident is overcrowded the Housing Officer carries out an initial assessment and, if it is thought the customer may be statutorily overcrowded, a full assessment is carried out.

Household member's scheme

NHG operates a household member scheme that is aimed at relieving overcrowding by:

- Rehousing an adult member of the household into a one bedroom or bed-sit property
- Incentivising the release of family sized properties by offering separate smaller properties (one of which is a one bedroom) to the tenancy holder(s) and any adult household members

To be eligible, the applicant must:

- Be 18 or over
- Either be a single person or a childless couple
- Be part of a household that is either overcrowded or under-occupied and the tenant will separately transfer to a smaller home
 - Have been living at the property for the last 12 months

Debt Management and Cost of living crisis

NHG has a range of approaches to support residents in debt and to deal with the cost of living crisis. Some of these are delivered directly by NHG and others are through partnerships.

NHG's housing operating model and the size of the Housing Officers patch is unique amongst the G15. Housing Officers have an average patch size of 180 homes, and this enables them to have a deeper relationship with the residents. They are trained to do benefit checks and complete applications such as discretionary housing payments' and how to structure conversations around benefits and debt. Each

resident is visited on an at least an annual basis, where time is spent identifying their needs and reviewing current circumstances. Residents are also able to access a dedicated 'Cost of Living' guidance page on the main NHG website.

Housing Officers are supported by a team of 8 welfare benefit advisors where more complex support and assistance is needed.

This is all backed up by NHG's Resident Support Programme which has 3 strands to it:

- 1) Specialist welfare benefits service-** We have an in-house team of advisers offering specialist 1-2-1 advice to NHG tenants. Caseworkers support with challenges, backdating, appeals and attending tribunals. In Quarter 1 and 2 they were able to recover £2 million of income for residents. The team have received over 1400 new referrals in Quarter 1 and 2. Over 80% of these are in rent arrears.
- 2) The Hardship Fund** has £100,000 funding each year, which can be used to help tenants in hardship, such as ordering white goods and beds, emergency food support and utilities top-ups. The fund helps around 500 households per year.
- 3) The Volunteer Programme** aims to benefit our residents and the wider business by recruiting dedicated individuals and groups on a voluntary basis who support resident wellbeing and create wider community cohesion. The Volunteer Programme develops and maintains meaningful external relationships with partners offering specialist services and skills focusing on wellbeing such as befriending. These services directly benefit our residents and promote positive examples of our work in the community.
- 4) The Partnerships Programme** work with partners who provide support around employment and training, debt advice, budgeting advice, mental health support, wellbeing and digital inclusion. The team also manage our hardship fund and Love Where You Live fund of £120k, a new grant giving programme funding projects and initiatives that's benefit our residents. The fund has provided grants to set up a new baby bank at our community centre in South Kilburn, has funded a budgeting and winter food distribution project amongst others.

We negotiate with partners to get an easy route in to the service and guarantee the capacity for the organisation to deal with your referral.

We have a Resident Support Directory to enable residents to self-refer. The programme has facilitated 426 referrals in quarters 1 and 2.

Some key partnerships include:

Cheaper bills and advice to reduce energy usage

We work with partners such as Pocket Power who can help our residents switch to better deals on all bills such as mobile phones, car insurance and energy. They will support residents to look for discounts and grants. This project is funded by NHG.

Partners such as Green Doctors, South London Healthy Homes, Wish Plus also provide advice on reducing consumption, switching and applying for energy grants.

Debt Free London- we work closely with Debt Free London to promote debt advice services to our residents and increase awareness amongst staff so they are better informed to refer residents. For example Debt Free London spoke recently at the Temporary Housing away day and one of our partnerships officers also attends and speaks regularly at DFL's staff conferences. We have also set up a dedicated phone line for NHG tenants to self-refer in addition to usual referrals by staff.

Money A&E- we have funded a budgeting project with Money A&E to provide 1-2-1 financial education sessions with NHG residents. Topics covered include drawing up a budget, income and expenditure, universal credit and savings as well as any other issues that arise.

Credit Union

NHG helped set up London Plus Credit union back in 2008. We work with the credit union to promote choice and awareness of responsible alternative options to the many subprime lenders who thrive by preying on lower income households. To promote the ethos of saving but also help residents who may turn to credit to meet costs throughout the year we have worked to offer a NHG savings bonus to NHG residents who may choose to take a 'Borrow to Save' loan product to deal with unexpected costs such as household items breaking down, children's clothing or to meet the cost of Christmas. The product helps tenants to build financial resilience through developing and rewarding savings habits in association with responsible borrowing options. This project is not targeted at people in crisis or high rent arrears but is there as an alternative solution to support tenants on low incomes.

In addition, London Plus Credit union has delivered webinars and articles for our resident newsletter around financial educational topics. The project has overwhelmingly been accessed by single parents and women.

Some specific Camden partnerships include:

- **Camden advice network-** linked into partners and council staff as part of the advice network. The NHG Resident support team and housing officers attended the Camden advice fair on 21st July 22 to network with other providers and speak to residents.
- **Tutors United project-** We are running free tutoring for Camden children in years 4,5 and 6 at primary school in a venue in Kings Cross. The tutoring recently started and runs for a year, 1 hour a week alternating between maths and English.
- **SPACE baby bank-** We have opened a new baby bank at our community centre in South Kilburn. The centre is very close to the Camden border and can be accessed by Camden NHG tenants for free,

baby equipment, clothing and support to access debt, employment and wellbeing advice.

- **Ingeus**- we work with Ingeus to promote their Central London Works programme designed to help people aged 18+ with a health condition or other barriers into work. Ingeus will provide a holistic support package to address health needs as well as practical help with interview clothing, travel costs etc. Camden is one of the boroughs included in this project.

Camden Building Safety Update

BAU:

For all of the properties that we have responsibility for, we ensure that we complete our Fire Risk Assessments up to date, with the cycle dependant on risk.

We have a fire team who oversee the completion of fire actions that arise from the FRA's.

Building Safety: Overview

We have around 6,500 properties across NHG that require an FRA, in Camden we have 19 blocks that are 5 storeys or above, all of which are up date.

We have a dedicated building safety team who have responsibility for ensuring that Notting Hill Genesis meet the requirements of the Fire Safety Order and the Building Safety Act ensuring that we are ready to respond to the secondary legislation.

Having so many properties to review, we have applied a risk matrix to prioritise the properties that we review. Within the risk matrix, our first priority has been properties over 18m so that we can understand the make up of our buildings that fall within the scope of the Building Safety Act.

Based on the risk rating, we start by undertaking visual surveys to confirm the data that we have on our asset data base. We score different attributes to give us a visual risk rating for each building and we arrange intrusive surveys for any high risk buildings.

Depending on the outcomes, we determine with a fire engineer whether we need to install interim measures. We also contact the developing contractor to persuade them that we want them remediate any defects for us at their cost. Where we are able, we apply for funding to the Building Safety Fund, or any other insurance policy that we are able.

We are gearing up to meet the requirements of the Fire Safety Order by employing contractors to undertake fire door checks for us, agreeing the approach they will use on our behalf with a fire engineer.

We have commenced a programme to complete floor plans and provide digital information to Fire and Rescue Services.

We are working to build up the information we require to register buildings of 7 storeys or over 18m that we are responsible for with the Regulator of Building Safety which is required to be completed by 30th September, developing our Building Safety Case approach, prioritising to complete the higher risk properties first and are planning to complete all cases within 2 years rather than delaying completion across the 5 years the Regulator has said they will need to review them all.

Camden:

There are 27 building over 11m within Camden.

8 Blocks are over 18m/7 storeys, 5 are our responsibility for the external walls, responsibility for the other 3 sits with external managing agents.

Of the 5, 4 properties have had intrusive surveys, with the other programmed in for this financial year.

1 block required no remediation work, 2 blocks have had works completed to the external wall and EWS 1 forms issued, and 1 requires remediation work to the external walls, the scope of which is being finalised following the completion of a PAS 9980 review. As mentioned above, 1 property still needs an intrusive survey.

Of the 19 buildings between 11m – 18m, the external walls of 9 are the responsibility of an external managing agent. Of the 10 where the responsibility for the external walls is NHG responsibility, 2 have had intrusive surveys with remediation plans being developed, 2 have had visual surveys and identified as low risk properties so there is no urgent need to undertake works. The other 6 blocks require surveys to be planned in.

22/23 cyclical programme - 135 GN homes to be delivered this year and 214 LH
To date, we have completed 76, 24 are work in progress with a number of completions due in Nov/Dec and a further 26 due to start over the next few months as planned.

We made some changes this year to reduce the risk of properties been carried over - which included submitting all planning applications early in the year, and to date we've issued all section 20 notices to leaseholders.

- Recruited more staff within the planned works team to help drive efficient delivery and improve overall quality of works.

Challenges - lead times for planning application decisions and windows can take 6-8 weeks when in manufacture.

20 General Needs kitchens and/or bathrooms in total on the **K&B programme**, of which 14 are completed already and 6 due to be completed in the next few months.

Retro Fitting our stock

NHG has a stretching target to improve all its rented homes to EPC C by 2030. Meeting the target requires approximately 12,500 D, E, F and G properties to be improved in the next eight years. This implies an average of around 1,500 homes being retrofitted with energy efficiency improvements and renewable technologies each year to 2030.

Our planned investment programme includes £21m to support us in reaching EPC C. In addition to this, we have bid for £8m from SHDF wave 2.1 to support accelerated roll-out of retrofit improvements from 2023 onwards.

We envisage just over half of our homes below EPC C can be made more efficient as part of our planned improvement programmes. For the remainder of properties (i.e. solid wall and heritage properties requiring deeper retrofit), we'll be delivering a dedicated retrofit programme - using the PAS2035:2019 process.

Richard Bellis

Regional Head (North) | Housing

ENDS

Response by One Housing Group

Assisting tenants with debt management in light of the cost of living crisis

We are committed to supporting our customers at this very difficult time. We have two specialist Welfare Benefit Advisers and two Affordable Warmth Officers available to offer advice and support for all residents who require this. The Welfare Benefit Advisers work with residents to assist with income maximisation, making sure that customers are claiming all the benefits they are entitled to. They work closely with other services such as Citizens Advice and Money Advice and where residents need additional support will signpost customers to other organisations. This year we have launched a new Helping Hand (crisis) fund. Residents can apply for a Helping Hand grant up to a maximum of £500 per household each year for help with a variety of items including travel fares and white goods. Our Affordable Warmth Officers support residents specifically with concerns with their energy bills and work with our Asset management teams to review any issues that may impact on a residents ability to heat their home. The Officers consider EPC levels to target those residents most likely to be affected.

Retrofitting our stock

One Housing and Riverside have made a joint submission to the BEIS under the SHDF bid process for over 1000 properties across our entire stock. This amounts to a total bid of £28m with £15m being provided by us and £13m of SHDF grant from the BEIS if successful.

125 properties within London are included in the joint bid. As soon as know more about the success of our bid application we will be able to confirm the plans for individual local authorities.

Investing in fire safety measures

We have a range of blocks in Camden including those over 5 storeys, where we undertake Fire Risk Assessments. We have engaged Savills to carry out these Fire Risk Assessments which are reviewed at appropriate intervals and findings recorded on a system called Riskhub. All our relevant internal teams and contractors use RiskHub to manage Fire Risk Actions including both management and remediation actions to ensure effective tracking and completion in an appropriate and timely manner. An intrusive survey programme is in progress for buildings with an External Wall System and a programme is in place to install or renew Premises Information Boxes in 2023 on all One Housing owned buildings above 18m in height as per the requirements set out in the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022.

As part of the new requirements of the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022, we have already engaged a Fire Door specialist to carry out appropriate Fire Door Surveys which will inform future remediation programmes. We are also in the process of upskilling existing staff members to be able to carry out more frequent Fire Door safety checks in addition to their existing compliance duties.

Addressing overcrowding

We currently have 355 residents living in Camden registered for a transfer. 32% of these are overcrowded. We have a detailed Allocations Policy with priority for overcrowding given under the terms in the 'bedroom standard' with children of the opposite sex becoming eligible for a separate bedroom when they reach 10 years. We may will also award priority for overcrowding when bedrooms are exceptionally small. All our available Homes, not passed to the local authority through the nominations process, are advertised through a choice based letting process with Home Connections.

While we award extra priority depending on the level of overcrowding we acknowledge the shortage of large family homes in the borough, and the long wait these families face. To help address this we have opened our transfer list for adult children living in an overcrowded home. As long as they are over 21 years and been part of the household for the previous 3 years and currently share a bedroom they can register in their own right and bid for a bedsit or one bedroom flat if these are available. This is also based on the priority of their application.

We are members of the national mutual exchange schemes and work with residents to register in addition to their transfer list application. We also signpost to other housing products such as shared ownership or the private rented sector where appropriate but recognise that from an affordability perspective this, for many, can restrict access.

Our specialist Allocations and Onboarding team are available to support residents.

Planned investment in 2022/23

We undertake 20% stock condition surveys each year to support our 5 Year Planned Investment Programme. We are budgeting for over a £1m in Camden for 2023/24 which will include windows, doors, kitchens, bathroom and cyclical decorations.

I hope this helps but please do let me know if you have any further questions.

Sandra Fawcett

Director of Customer Operations

1. Cost of living provisions

Our services to support residents in financial difficulty include

- Affordability assessments for each incoming resident, which means that we can offer support as needed
- A specialist financial inclusion team to provide advice on debt, benefits and income maximisation, helping to secure Discretionary Housing payments, backdated benefits etc
- Access to charitable funds including for furniture and white goods
- Access to fuel vouchers and festive food hampers
- Hardship fund
- One to one specialist support to get into jobs and training

We recognise that the rising cost of living may lead to higher rent arrears. Our approach is Support First rather than enforcement, with a focus on early engagement so we can help people prevent or manage debt. We also make prudent provisions in our financial plan for unrecoverable rent arrears.

We have a tenancy sustainment service for those who are vulnerable or in crisis and have recently created a broader based Support Hub within our Care and Support team, including a mental health professional to support neighbourhood managers in helping vulnerable residents.

2. Fire safety

Fire and building safety has been a top priority for a number of years, even before the Grenfell tragedy. Between 2017/18 and 2021/22, we have invested £29m on fire safety, averaging £5.8m per year across our 7,600 homes to meet fire safety requirements and our 5 year financial plan makes provision from 2022 onwards for another £62m.

We created and recruited an expert fire and building safety team of professionals from 2018 and have procured competent contractors to deliver on fire risk actions. For example, £356,000 was spent on fire door replacements alone to 623 properties in 21/22 (26% of our Camden stock)

All Fire Risk Assessments are up to date.

We have a risk -based programme of intrusive fire risk assessments for our high rise and medium rise blocks.

Our safety case programme for our buildings of 18m+ is underway with one completed with expert consultant input and two in progress.

3. Retrofit

We have needed to divert significant resources to fire safety in recent years meaning we have had to defer a comprehensive programme of retrofit until this point. Our stock generally benefits from high levels of thermal efficiency, with only 17% identified as being below SAP C.

Next year (2023) following the completion of our stock condition programme to obtain up to date surveys on 100% of our homes, we will have the required data to fully understand the investment needed in our resident's homes over the next 30 years and the works needed to bring our homes to Sap C by 2030. We will be developing a full resourced and deliverable plan to reach the 2030 target to bring all properties to SAP C and our journey to carbon zero, with a focus on existing stock. Funding this may require some selective disposals. We already achieve GLA carbon zero on new developments.

4. Addressing overcrowding

Overcrowding is a concern for us too. Our Camden stock by bed size is shown in the table below.

Stock type	Room	Studio	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5 Bed +	Total
General Needs		83					24	1906
			606	652	440	101		
Sheltered Housing		22						208
			180	6				
Supported Housing (including hostels)	139		30	2				171
Market Rent		2	16	8		5		31
Intermediate Rent		6						86
			43	34	3			
Key worker								0
Shared Ownership								88
			39	45	3	1		
Total	139	113	914	747	446	107	24	2490

As we consider the Council is best placed to assess relative housing need, we offer our vacant homes to Camden nominees (with a few exceptions for urgent management transfers) However this means that our existing residents who have become overcrowded have to go through the Council's waiting list. Quite understandably residents have told us that they feel we should do more to help them directly, so we have recently altered our policy to allow for this – whilst still ensuring that we keep to existing nomination arrangements with the Council for new and existing stock. This will still mean a long

wait for people as the key barrier is lack of social housing. Consequently, we continue to develop new homes in the borough, mainly through section 106 acquisitions from private developers - with the size of these homes dependent on the Council's planning requirements.

Last year we completed 33 new homes in Camden (3 x 1 bed; 16 x 2 bed; 12 x 3 bed and 2 x 4 bed) This year it is expected to be 26 (4x studios, 4x 1 beds, 8 x 2 beds and 10 x 3 beds), with a further 164 homes on site due to complete next year. We have a future pipeline of 335 homes in Camden that we are currently working on to bring into contract for future delivery.

We do offer incentives to under occupiers to free up family homes, but we would be interested in working with the Council around introducing a 'hand-holding' scheme to encourage more. In addition, if we were able to offer new 1 bed properties to existing under occupying residents in large homes, we would then offer the subsequent vacancy to the council.

5. Planned investment in our Camden stock

In 21/22 we reinvested as follows:

Component	£s	No
Bathroom	220,512.81	47
Building	176,971.38	35
Door	356,514.51	623
Electrics	217,525.97	131
Heating	465,091.76	180
Kitchen	475,319.55	64
Lift	37,403.04	2
Roof	133,403.33	10
Windows	19,737.23	5
Other cyclical maintenance	59,618.76	21
<u>Responsive repairs</u>	1,740,625.95	
<u>Void repairs</u>	684,145.33	
TOTAL	4,586,869.61	1118

In 22/23 we have the following works planned/underway:

- £500,000 programme of cyclical works
- £2,000,000 on windows and doors
- £1,000,000 on key component replacements such as Kitchens, bathrooms and roofs
- Fire safety improvements as required
- Updating stock condition surveys

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Response by the Director of Property Management

In the past 12 months, we have received an increased demand for call-back requests.

This was expected as we have heavily promoted this option for residents unable to report repairs online and those who may be suffering financial difficulty occurring costs using a mobile phone while contacting us. Our agreed SLA target is to clear all call-backs left from that day on the same day, and on the whole, this is achieved. We publish the number of call-backs received daily on our dedicated open data webpage on the Camden website - [Housing repairs - Camden Council](#).

2022	Call-backs
Q1	2081
Q2	2429
Q3	2824

We will typically try up to 3 separate occasions to speak with the caller on the day the message was left. However, if no contact details are provided, there is no voicemail, or the caller does not answer, we will be unable to complete the call. The vast majority of call-backs are successfully closed.

Since the launch of SMS reporting in June of this year, we have seen significant activity here. Residents and staff have generally embraced this way of contacting us and, once used, will often report further issues. Along with the webchat service, we record a positive customer satisfaction rate of over 85%. Both services offer the opportunity to contact us in over 100 languages, and we are already seeing a positive uptake with this offer. WhatsApp reporting will go live during December 22.

2022	SMS	Chat
Q1	918	3960
Q2	5128	5221
Q3	6382	5022

The Housing repairs contact centre continues to offer more contact opportunities for our residents to engage with us. When WhatsApp is up and running, we intend to go live with video calling in January to report damp, mould and condensation.

We invite any member of the Housing scrutiny committee to join us to see the whole operation in action and to review the current ways of working.

ENDS

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