

Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel

Date: 3 November 2022

Subject: Clarion Housing Association Update

Lead officer:

Lead member:

Contact officer:

Recommendations:

A. No decision will be required as the report is for information only.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. Clarion Housing association manage over 8,800 Homes across the London Borough of Merton.
- 1.2. At the request of members this report provides an update and progress in relation to Clarion and its repairs and maintenance service.

2 CLARION REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

How the repairs service is delivered in Merton

- 2.1. The repairs function at Clarion is made up of a number of areas:-
 - Responsive Day to Day repairs – Delivered by Equans
 - Planned Investment – Delivered by United Living
 - Planned Reactive Maintenance
 - Mechanical & Electrical Works – Lifts, door entry systems
 - Building Safety – Fire prevention works including Cladding remediation
 - Legal Disrepair and Complex Cases
 - Resident Liaison Team
 - Strategic Asset Management
 - Regeneration
- 2.2. **Responsive Day to Day Repairs** - Our day to day responsive repairs service is delivered by an external contractor, Equans.
- 2.3. Residents can report a repair using a range of channels including the Contact Centre, our website (web form or live chat) or their online account. Emergency repairs (those affecting health and safety, or that could seriously damage the home if not dealt with quickly) can be reported 24/7, 365 days a year.

- 2.4. Our Customer Services team are able to book jobs directly onto Equans repairs system which enables them to provide an appointment date and time and reference number there and then.
- 2.5. Our Responsive Repairs and Maintenance performance data shows that:-
- We spent £4.44m in Merton in 2021/22
 - 22,646 repairs orders were raised in 2021/22
 - We have spent £2.80m in the first six months of this financial year
 - We have taken 1000 or approximately 10% fewer orders between October 21 and September 22 compared to the previous year's figures for this period
- 2.6. **Planned Investment** - Our Planned Investment Programme is delivered by our partnering contractor, United Living. The programme covers larger scale investment and component replacement, including:-
- Kitchens and bathrooms
 - Replacement windows and doors
 - Roof works, including fascia's and soffits
 - Cyclical redecoration in communal areas and externally on our properties
- 2.7. Other works being undertaken this year in this area include:-
- Sadler Close ventilation
- Fully mobilised and currently on-site
 - Estate wide communal ventilation renewal inclusive of new ventilation units and all associated ductwork within residents' homes and in communal areas.
 - Gladstone House south block is almost fully complete and operational.
 - Chart and Fountain House works to commence shortly with a target completion date of March 2023
- Eastfields roof
- The final phase of Installation of new roof on all properties is nearing completion
 - All roofs were upgraded to a Prokol (liquid synthetic) covering
 - We will be analysing repairs data over the coming months to help evaluate the impact of the works.



Other completed priority projects

- Ravensbury estate - Replace soffit, fascia, gutter and down pipes (where required), concrete repairs, window replacements, renewal of balcony flooring, internal and external decorating.
- High Path estate – Internal and external decorations.
- Glebe Court estate (Phases 1 and 2) - roof and window renewal, communal decorations, lateral and rising mains and emergency lighting
- Harlands estate - Replace window screen to stairwell, canopy roof replacement, emergency lighting, internal communal decorating, fire door replacements, replace boiler room doors and windows, removal of low level fencing across the estate, path repairs where required.

2.8. In 2021/22 we spent £8.45m on planned investment works (components and projects). We are forecasting to spend £12.6m in 2022/23. A detailed breakdown of spend can be found at Appendix 1.

2.9. Referrals for investment works can be submitted by frontline staff via the Housing surveyors who will inspect and check the repairs history before passing it to the Planned Investment Team.

2.10. **Reactive Major Works** - We have mobilised a new work stream within Planned Investment called Reactive Major Works. The primary function is to assist repairs colleagues with reactive projects that are of a larger nature than a standard day-to-day repair. Referral routes into this work stream include legal disrepair and urgent health & safety issues.

2.11. Examples of work covered within this work stream, include:-

- Rebuilding of retaining walls
- Major reinstatements of boundary fencing
- Individual or simultaneous component replacements such as kitchens and bathrooms where additional vulnerabilities and needs are identified.

2.12. **Mechanical & Electrical (M&E)** – M&E Repairs and servicing are delivered by a range of specialist contractors, including Smith & Byford who are responsible for gas, heating and hot water within our Merton properties. Other areas of work include:-

- Gas
 - Door entry systems
 - Passenger lifts
 - Domestic and communal electrics
 - Water hygiene (legionella)
- 2.13. **Building Safety** - Across Clarion we have spent over £40m on fire and building safety works with approximately £5m of this being spent in Merton. Our Building Safety Team carry out a number of different work streams that include:-
- Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) remedial actions – Building related actions such as fire compartmentation or flat door replacement
 - External Wall System remediation – Replacing the combustible cladding on the outside of some of our taller blocks of flats such as Frensham Court (£2.1m) where we were successful with a bid to the Building Safety Fund for the leaseholder related costs
 - Fire safety related repairs – Including the replacement of fire safety doors on the Eastfields Estate
 - Specialist programmes of work – Specialist active and passive fire safety projects across our stock, upgrading of fire alarms and emergency lighting.
- 2.14. **Complex Repairs and Legal Disrepair** - Over the last six months we have undertaken a reorganisation of the repairs and maintenance responsibilities within Housing, in particular introducing a Complex Disrepair Surveyor, recognising the complex nature of the buildings and their fabric within Merton.
- 2.15. The role provides more structure in coordinating internal and external partners with the ability to evidence responsibility. Frequently the causes and remediation of the most difficult R&M issues are shared between a number of different organisations and bodies, making resolution complex and time consuming. A case study is shown at Appendix 2 highlighting the value of this resource.
- 2.16. We have procured two new contractors to focus specifically on legal disrepair cases. PILON have been working with us for over six months now and SP Holloway started working for us in early October. They focus on large disrepair cases as well as some large voids (Empty properties) Progress has been good and has created additional contractor capacity.
- 2.17. This team also refer work to the Planned Investment Team where programmes are already in place or being scheduled. If there is no upcoming programme in the borough, they progress the referral through to the Reactive Major Works team. This has been working well with the contractors getting through a lot of works including kitchen and bathroom renewals for disrepair claims.
- 2.18. **Resident Liaison Team** - The Resident Liaison Officer (RLO) position within Housing was introduced in November 2021 and is integral to the provision of

the service in Merton. The RLOs provide additional support to the Surveyors so they can spend more time in the field and on complex cases.

2.19. The RLOs provide a wraparound service for customers in complex repairs cases. These may require multiple visits, trades or decanting from the property. They stay with the resident until a full repairs resolution is achieved. They are also able to provide an enhanced service and reasonable adjustments to residents who require additional support.

2.20. Since their introduction, the RLOs have been really well received and played a significant part in improving the customer journey and helping to drive up customer satisfaction. Some examples of positive feedback from Residents and Stakeholders include:

“I wanted to let you know what an amazing job Z has been doing since she started working with residents on Eastfields Estate. She has made a huge difference. Z is polite, caring, respectful and goes the extra mile in order to help residents in whichever way she can. She really is a credit to Clarion, and I wanted Clarion to know how much she is thought of, not only by us on the Residents Association, but by the residents she has been helping too. I am quick enough to email you to complain when things go wrong, but I feel praise should be given when due too. Please thank Z for all her dedication and hard work on our behalf.”

“I would like to begin by saying that the work of T to assist my constituent in this matter has been exemplary”

“I just wanted to say thank you for the endless support throughout. Myself and my children will forever be grateful to you.”

2.21. **Strategic Asset Management (SAM)** - One of the key challenges affecting Clarion housing stock in Merton is the non-traditional construction of some units which often makes repairs expensive and complicated.

2.22. The team carry out regular appraisals of sites across Merton detailing the financial and operational performance of each asset. The appraisal can be triggered by a surveyor referral, multiple/frequent repairs to an individual property or overall cost of repairs to a property within a defined period. Options appraisals are then conducted with a view to resolving any underlying issues. This will include options around upgrading the overall energy efficiency performance of a property.

2.23. A key function of the SAM team is to manage and coordinate the delivery of the Regional Investment Plan. This brings together all of the individual strands within the repairs service into one list of priorities for the region. Surveyors and senior managers from each of the repairs strands meet and discuss properties/estates of concern including where problems or larger scale issues have been identified. This allows a route for escalation, a unified approach and a full options appraisal where required, which focuses on the best value approach to remediation.

2.24. The team are currently delivering a three year Asset Condition Strategy. A crucial aspect of this strategy is delivery of condition surveys of all stock in Merton. In Phase 1 we have already completed the five priority estates Watermeads, Cherry Trees, Phipps Bridge, Laburnum and Sadler Close.

- 2.25. We are now developing medium and long term improvement plans for these sites and carrying out further intrusive surveys to assist with this. The final plans for these estates will be submitted to the Clarion Group Board in Q4.
- 2.26. **Regeneration** - Clarion's Merton regeneration project involves a £1.3 billion investment in three neighbourhoods in south London. The redevelopment will transform the Eastfields, High Path and Ravensbury areas, providing 2,700 quality new homes alongside 9,000sqm of community and commercial space.
- 2.27. As part of the approach to developing regeneration proposals, we will ensure that a medium term asset management plan is presented at the point of approval for the project. This plan will then be reviewed twice a year to ensure it remains fit for purpose and homes remain in an acceptable condition. Residents' experiences and views are considered as part of this work.
- 2.28. We acknowledge that the Regeneration of estates takes many years to conclude. Our Planned Investment Team continue to complete remedial repairs and redecoration to the blocks in the latter phases of the regeneration of the High Path estate and works on upgrading the roof at Eastfields. This work will ensure that the blocks remain a safe environment in which to live until their eventual demolition.

3 CONTRACT AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

- 3.1. Each of the contracts are managed through Operational Core Group meetings with senior management. These focus on the agreed performance metrics within each individual contract.
- 3.2. We measure customer satisfaction with Equans on a monthly basis through an independent survey company, The Leadership Factor (TLF). The survey tests five requirements of the perfect repairs experience:
- Quality of the work carried out
 - Reliability of appointments
 - Helpfulness of the contractor
 - Safety of the property while work is carried out
 - Meeting the deadline promised for completion of the repair
- 3.3. The raw data (scores and customer comments) is analysed with the contractors along with themes and trends from complaints and action plans developed.
- 3.4. Our surveyors post inspect jobs where issues have arisen due to:-
- The complex nature of the work
 - Non-attendance and failed resolution
 - Complaints or enquiries

Individual performance and quality issues are immediately raised with the appointed contractor representatives.

3.5. Below is a summary of Equans' performance year to date:



Equans - Merton KPI Dashboard (2022/23)

KPI No	Target	KPI Measure	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	YTD 2022/23
KPI 1	85.00%	Resident Satisfaction (Responsive Repairs)	83.10%	82.70%	85.40%	86.90%	82.20%	TBC	84.06%
KPI 3	90.00%	First Time Fix (Responsive Repairs)	95.93%	98.54%	97.61%	97.66%	96.91%	97.33%	97.34%
KPI 4	98.00%	Responsive Repair Completions Times - 24 hr Emergency Works	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
KPI 5	95.00%	Responsive Repair Completions Times - 28 Days Routine Repair Priority Repairs	97.91%	97.24%	96.97%	95.61%	96.26%	96.93%	96.91%
KPI 6	98.00%	Communal Repair Completions Times - 24 hr Emergency Works	98.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	99.55%
KPI 7	95.00%	Communal Repair Completions Times - 28 Days Routine Repair Priority Repairs	95.48%	99.10%	97.28%	97.84%	96.27%	95.77%	97.08%
KPI 8	95.00%	Appointments Made & Kept - Property	95.08%	95.20%	95.01%	95.13%	95.09%	93.11%	94.76%
KPI 9	12.00	Voids Average Working Days	51.25	40.07	68.45	31.50	72.21	7.50	50.03

3.6. Current satisfaction with Equans is 82.2%. The main areas identified for improvement are:-

- The reliability of appointments
- Meeting the deadline promised for completion of the repair
- Managing the customer's expectations especially where the repair cannot be completed at a single appointment

3.7. **Equans Improvement Plan** - We acknowledge that satisfaction levels in Merton are static and below those achieved in other areas. Our Head of Repairs has been working with Equans on an improvement plan to address some of the common themes borne out in complaints and customer feedback including:-

- Equans' managers and senior staff basing themselves in the Morden Office a number of times each month
- More frequent and formal liaison with Equans' Senior and Area Managers
- New escalation procedures for complaints and complex repairs issues
- Reduction of number of Works in Progress (WIP) which has reduced from 1,963 in October 2021 to 832 in September 2022 halving the number of residents waiting for a repair to be completed at any one time
- Increasing Equans' resourcing including recruitment of an additional six operatives to assist with the resident engagement days being delivered as part of the Merton Engagement Strategy.

3.8. Central to the improvement plan is the roll out of Localz which allows customers to track engineers and rate their repair. Equans have rolled out the system in two phases:

- Phase 1: 'Track My Engineer' functionality was launched in November 2021. An SMS is sent to the customer when their operative is on route. They are then able to track the operative. This is in addition to existing appointment confirmation/reminders. Further enhancements

and communications to residents about the service and how to use it are required, which will be a focus in Q3 and Q4.

- Phase 2: 'Rate My Engineer' was soft launched around a limited number of properties within Merton in June 2022. The service allows the customer to provide feedback on the operative and their work which is then issued to the branch. This is then used to either praise the operative or contact the customer for a full resolution and ensure the next steps are understood.

- 3.9. The 'Rate My Engineer' application now requires a full launch and resident communications and publicity to ensure it is understood and used. During September, out of 1,233 feedback links we received 69 responses (5.6%) with an average engineer rating of 4.09 (out of 5). Some recent feedback includes:

"He was the most polite workman I've ever had. You could tell he genuinely wanted to help me repair things."

"Excellent. C was amazing very polite and was able to complete my repair"

"The repair has been carried out on time and the window is now fixed"

- 3.10. These initial responses are positive and the rating is broadly in line with the customer satisfaction score from The Leadership Factor's surveys. The numbers returned however, are low and that is reflective of the need to advertise and promote this application to residents. One of the ways this is being achieved is by providing Equans operatives with scripting at toolbox talks to encourage residents to use it. Other actions include promotion via the website, at resident engagement days, and in newsletters.

4 ENHANCED PEST CONTROL

- 4.1. We have adopted an enhanced and more proactive approach to pest control in Merton. For any reports from residents about mice, rats, squirrels, cockroaches or pharaoh ants in their homes, we will instruct our pest control contractor (ARK) to attend the property to survey it and commence a treatment programme. We will also arrange for holes and access points to be filled.
- 4.2. Several of our estates (Eastfields, Sadler Close and Phipps Bridge) are on a call out contract and ongoing treatment contract. This arrangement runs in parallel to the preventative communal area cover already being provided on these estates and is designed to maintain continued control in those homes where the infestation has been stubborn to shift (primarily due to structural issues) enabling ARK to carry out follow ups with baits in homes long term rather than having to remove them after the standard three visits. At the same time, this service will provide an emergency call out facility so that any other property on the estate that reports an issue will simply mean logging a call out with ARK's office and a technician will automatically be despatched rather than raising new individual orders for each address.

5 IMPROVING COMMUNICATION WITH RESIDENTS

- 5.1. In May 2022 we launched our new regional business plan under the theme of “Reconnecting with our Communities”. The main thrust of the plan focused on the Neighbourhood Response Officer (NRO) and their role in the community and on our larger estates. It seeks to re-establish this pivotal connection between Clarion, residents, stakeholders and the wider community. Much of the activity within the plan is shaped by the insight received from customers and stakeholders through satisfaction surveys and complaints.
- 5.2. Each NRO has a defined estate/area that they lead on. Estate Services and Surveying patches have also been reviewed to ensure alignment. The intended outcomes are to increase personal responsibility in the management of the estate through collaborative working with different service areas to understand the issues. This will also include the responsibility for coordinating the different repairs service areas and communicating future programmes and plans to residents.
- 5.3. An example of this approach in action is our response to a small gas leak identified in Gladstone House, Sadler Close on 29 July. The supply to all 64 properties was disconnected and for the majority remains so. Since then, we have visited every household to assess their individual needs and identify vulnerabilities. We have also kept members and officers from the council updated. Further information on our response has been included at Appendix 3.
- 5.4. We also recognise that with previous Planned Investment works, we have relied on the contractor to communicate with residents. Our Planned Investment Managers now lead on all communications, writing to residents as part of the initial consultation process to advise of proposals (scope of works, which blocks will be affected, why we consider the works to be necessary). Once feedback has been taken into consideration, they then write again with a finalised scope of works and explain what will happen next. They are also working more closely with the Site Manager and Resident Liaison Officer (RLO) of our contractors delivering the works.

6 MERTON CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

- 6.1. Members have been updated at previous Committee meetings of Clarion’s strategy to engage local residents and stakeholders across homes in Merton. The overall aim of the strategy is to identify the main challenges and issues faced by residents in their home and draw up targeted local action plans to deliver improvements in resident satisfaction and their neighbourhood. A leaflet explaining the strategy to our customers was mailed out in July as was a document for wider stakeholders to communicate the engagement plan.
- 6.2. As part of the strategy, we are delivering a series of Resident Engagement Days across the ten priority estates identified from analysis of statistical information paired with local knowledge. The Merton Community Panel have helped to co-create the programme and the focus of these days. We have carried out three events to date at Sadler Close, Phipps Bridge and Cherry Trees. A baselining satisfaction survey of residents is undertaken prior to

each event to assist with planning and to understand resident's views and issues. Follow up surveys will then allow us to measure the impact of our interventions.

- 6.3. Feedback from residents on each of the days has been positive with them welcoming the increased visibility of staff and the opportunity to raise and discuss issues. Having representation from our contractors including Equans, Smith & Byford and ARK has also meant that we have been able to respond proactively and where feasible, undertake necessary repairs works there and then.



7 REPAIRS STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT

- 7.1. The development of the Group Repairs Blueprint is now well established and progressing well, with a working group established from senior teams across the business.
- 7.2. The Blueprint is wide ranging, visioning how Clarion will offer future services to residents and how customers will choose to access repairs services over the coming years. The review is not solely limited to our in-house contractor, Clarion Response's, services and includes all supply chain partners and business teams involved in the repair process.
- 7.3. A number of projects have been established made up of staff from across the wider business in order to look at new initiatives and ways of working to improve the repairs service from a customer's perspective whilst also using the latest available technology.
- 7.4. We recognise that for some residents it is difficult to report repairs via the Contact Centre, our Director of Customer Services is attending an ongoing working group with residents and the Contact Centre team to review the repairs reporting experience. Part of this work involves residents listening to calls and offering feedback on how the repairs reporting process and communication can be improved. The learning from this will be fed back into our blueprint.

8 THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE 2023/24 RENT SETTLEMENT

- 8.1. On 31 August, the Government opened a consultation exercise seeking views on the introduction of a rent ceiling from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. Registered Providers were asked to comment on 3%, 5% or 7% as potential ceiling options. The consultation closed on 12 October.

- 8.2. Government has now suggested that there could be a 0% increase in rents for a period of two years. Any new cap on rent increases, and rents not keeping pace with inflation, will significantly impact on our ability to provide services to residents and invest in homes, resulting in planned improvement works being deferred to later years.

9 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 9.1. None

10 TIMETABLE

- 10.1. None

11 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. None

12 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. None

13 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. None

14 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. None

15 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1. None

16 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- Appendix 1: Detailed breakdown of Planned Investment spend 2022-23
- Appendix 2: Case study on the Complex Repair Surveyor role – Langdon Road, Morden
- Appendix 3: Response to the Sadler Close gas leak

17 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 17.1. None

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