

HOUSING SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE 01 MARCH 2022

Report title: Community Works

Wards: All

Portfolio: Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness: Councillor Maria Kay

Report Authorised by: Neil Euesden: Director - Housing

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REPORT SUMMARY

In 2019, the council radically redesigned its housing repair and maintenance delivery arrangements and created nine strategic projects that collectively will allow it to maintain its homes and estates in a more informed and proactive way. One of these strategic projects was to create an in-house repairs team with a community and care focus (council employees undertaking repairs and property adaptations in the community) - responding to the council's pledge to insource services where feasible. It also addressed the feedback from a resident Task and Finish Group for communal repairs. A resident procurement panel was set up to support this process and provide advice from a service recipient's perspective. This proved invaluable and contributed to the success of the design process and subsequent mobilisation activity.

The in-house repairs team is called Community Works and was successfully mobilised in July 2021 and has gone from strength to strength – completing over 4,000 repairs and projects to date with very positive feedback from residents and members. The Team has settled in well and the targeted recruitment process has resulted in a diverse team with a number of internal promotions and over half of the new external appointments living in Lambeth - including Lambeth tenants.

This success has allowed Community Works to quite quickly increase its scope to include repairs stemming from periodic Fire Risk Assessments – giving the council more control over this key area of regulatory compliance.

A second recruitment campaign is about to commence and this will again be targeted at Lambeth residents. Robust campaigning is becoming more and more important due to the current post-Brexit labour shortage – something affecting Community Works as well as the new repair contractors.

FINANCE SUMMARY

There are no financial implications that arise as a direct consequence of this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To note the contents of this report.

1. CONTEXT

Service Redesign

1.1 Housing Services delivered most of its repair, maintenance and major work services via long term contracts procured over 10 years ago – and in many respects no longer aligned with current council priorities and technological advancements. With growing discontent amongst stakeholders, reprocurring the status quo was not an option. This prompted a radical review and redesign of housing delivery arrangements in 2019 and the creation of 9 strategic projects (75% complete and summarised in the table below) that will collectively transform the service and achieve the following strategic outcomes:

- a) Quality and socially driven repair and estate maintenance contracts with inclusive pricing structures;
- b) No contractor monopolies, less subcontracting, broader mix of contractors, reserve contractors;
- c) Create in-house services where feasible;
- d) Prioritisation of communal repairs and disabled adaptations;
- e) Significant investment in social value and environmental improvements;
- f) Holistic approach to asset management;
- g) Create a Resident Procurement Panel to help design and evaluate repair delivery arrangements;
- h) Better use of technology and reliable council-owned data;
- i) Long term investment planning;
- j) Supply chain diversity and more opportunities for local SMEs;
- k) Stronger clienting and better governance; and,
- l) Protect leaseholders’ rights to nominate contractors.

<p>In-house Repairs Team (“Community Works”)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communal repairs Disabled adaptations 	<p>New Repair and Maintenance Contracts (x10)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsive repairs & voids Gas and electrical servicing Lift maintenance 	<p>Call Centre Solution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital assistant Expert call handlers
<p>In-house Grounds Maintenance Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lambeth Landscapes 	<p>Unify Estate Cleaning and Street Cleansing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cleaning external areas 	<p>New Block Cleaning and Concierge Contract</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cleaning internal areas Concierge service
<p>Strategic Asset Partner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asset management strategy Stock condition surveys Long-term investment planning Procurement Compliance; disrepair reduction Social & environmental value 	<p>Asset Delivery Partners (x2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical support on major work projects Train and empower council delivery teams Self-delivery within 3 years 	<p>Dynamic Purchasing System</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficient project-specific procurement Diversify the supply chain Tiered approach Accessible ring-fenced opportunities Best fit contracts

- 1.2 One of these strategic projects was to create an in-house repairs team with a community and care focus (council employees undertaking repairs and property adaptations in the community) - delivering on this administration's clear commitment in its manifesto to bring services back in house 'where we can improve services for residents and deliver better value for money'. Following a naming completion with officers, residents and members, the in-house team was named Community Works – which was considered to best reflect its community focus.

Mobilisation and Service Scope

- 1.3 Community Works was mobilised in July 2021 and whilst the COVID pandemic presented a number of challenges, the biggest challenge of all has been the post-Brexit labour shortage.
- 1.4 Community Works' scope has recently been increased to include repairs stemming from periodic Fire Risk Assessments – giving the council more control over this key area of regulatory compliance. It has also completed a number of voids to support the south area repairs contractor.

Integration with Council Systems

- 1.5 All work issued to Community Works is done via the council's Northgate Housing Management System and its Resource Scheduling System. This gives complete visibility over repair orders appointments and each operative's diary. This single source of work order and appointment information for in-house teams and contractors ensures the service is joined up and allows for transparent performance reporting and auditing.

2. PROPOSAL AND REASONS

Community Works

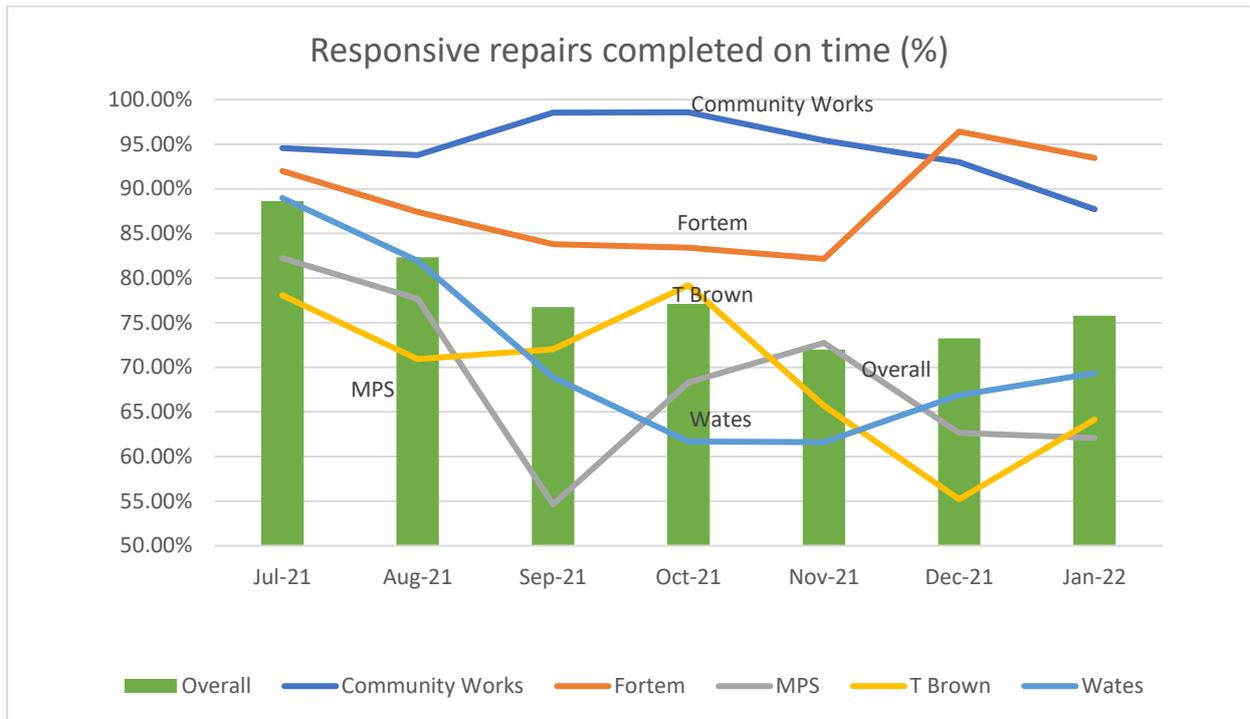
- 2.1 Mobilisation was a success and Community Work went live in July 2021 to coincide with the new repairs contracts. This was essential as most communal repairs are no longer within the scope of the external responsive repairs contracts. It also benefited from a managed material solution with Travis Perkins – avoiding the need to purchase or lease a depot.

Performance Indicators

- 2.2 The council has developed a complete new suite of Power BI performance reports that cover the key performance indicators for Community Works. These new reports allow performance to be reviewed at borough level, neighbourhood level and operative level – allowing for informed and targeted improvement activity where necessary.
- 2.3 The following table and graph show the latest performance results for Community Works:

Table 1: January Community Works Performance

Communal repairs completed on time	96.14%
Property adaptations completed on time	94%
Average time to complete a communal repair	14.49 days
Repairs passing the council's post inspection	97%



Commercial Management

- 2.4 Community works has a dedicated Commercial Manager to manage contracts with material suppliers, subcontractors and generally ensure the cost of the team doesn't exceed the value of its output. This includes:
- Monthly commercial Meetings with finance teams;
 - Budget monitoring and year-end forecasting;
 - Forensic analysis of all applications for payment;
 - Undertaking subcontractor reviews;
 - Undertaking and commissioning annual reviews;
 - Reviewing and calculating annual indexation provisions;
 - Monitoring commercial trends;
 - Supporting operational teams;
 - Managing new procurements; and,
 - Commissioning and supporting independent audits – continuous and ad-hoc.

Service Management

- 2.5 Community Works has two dedicated Area Managers to manage operatives' performance and on-site activities. There is also a dedicated Health and Safety Manager to give assurance on procedural and operation activities. This includes:
- Post inspections / quality audits of completed repairs;
 - Weekly toolbox briefing with all operatives; and,
 - Awaken system – tracking all safety requirements and training.

Health and Safety

- 2.6 All new operatives receive full Health & Safety training, customer service training and two days working with a mentor to embed Lambeth's culture. 44 Health & Safety Toolbox training sessions have been carried out to date - 8 of which were delivered by external providers and operatives received certificates of competence after completing the required health and safety test.
- 2.7 New reporting arrangements for accidents and injuries have also been introduced to make reporting easier. New guidance on training and competence of working supervisors has been put in place to

ensure there is a common minimum standard of professional competence in managing operatives across the team.

Service Governance

- 2.8 Whilst the Community Works management team has been carefully recruited and possess a lot of experience, it was deemed good practice to have an independent Governance Board (independent of the day-to-day operations) that meets quarterly to monitor and scrutinise the governance, performance and financial management of Community Works and provide strategic direction as necessary. The Board has had its first meeting to cover terms of reference, familiarise itself with the setup, performance measures, Board structure, legal, finance, audit and Health and Safety requirements.
- 2.9 The Board is made up of two Cabinet Members, Legal Services, finance, Audit and Counter Fraud, Health and Safety, the Housing Director, an Assistant Housing Director and an external representative/advisor as follows:
- a) Cllr Maria Kay, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness;
 - b) Cllr Sonia Winifred, Cabinet Member for Equalities and Culture;
 - c) Neil Euesden, Director - Housing Services;
 - d) Andrew Jacques, Assistant Director – Repairs and Maintenance;
 - e) Andrew Ramsden, Assistant Director – Finance;
 - f) Gregory Carson, Principal Lawyer – Housing, Property and Planning;
 - g) Michael O'Reilly, Counter Fraud Manager;
 - h) Claire Saunders, Head of Corporate Health and Safety; and,
 - i) External Adviser, TBC.
- 2.10 Community Works is also continuously audited by the internal audit team (PWC) that will review the necessary key controls. The fieldwork for the first audit has been completed. Additionally, there will be an independent annual audit (again by PWC) of financial transactions and reviewing operating costs and work value.

Quality Assurance

- 2.11 All works are recorded on the Northgate Housing Management System and issued via the same Dynamic Resource Scheduler used across all contracts. This guarantees the fastest available appointment slot and sends this directly to the operatives PDA. The operatives take a pre and post completion photos whilst on site. Information is reported in real time through the interface, so team members are always aware of each jobs' status, including appointment date and completion information. Schedulers use a skills matrix which identifies an operative's skillset, so the right person is sent to the correct job.
- 2.12 Additionally, surveyors under physical post inspections of completed jobs.

Lessons Learnt

- 2.13 Whilst Community Works mobilised well, there have been a number of lessons the council has learnt from this process. The key lessons are as follows:

a) Backlog repairs

During the latter stages of the tender process and upon not being shortlisted for the final stage, the previous contractor allowed a large backlog of repairs to accumulate – including communal repairs. On future wholesale re-procurement projects, the council will implement a resilience contract whereby an alternative contractor can support the outgoing contractor in undertaking outstanding work to limit the build-up of work at contract handover.

b) Advanced recruitment campaign / post-Brexit labour shortage

Most procurement and insourcing projects require some degree of early recruitment activity. On future procurement and insourcing projects, the council should develop a recruitment campaign and form links with employment partners to prompt interest and inform support needs well ahead of mobilisation (6 months ideally). This is even more important during the current post-Brexit labour shortage.

3. FINANCE

3.1 There are no financial implications that arise as a direct consequence of this report.

4. LEGAL AND DEMOCRACY

4.1 There were no specific legal implications arising out of this report.

4.2 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 sets out the new public sector equality duty replacing the previous duties in relation to race, sex and disability and extending the duty to all the protected characteristics i.e. race, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership and gender reassignment.

4.3 The public sector equality duty requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to:

- a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- b) Advance equality of opportunity; and,
- c) Foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

4.4 Part of the duty to have “due regard” where there is disproportionate impact will be to take steps to mitigate the impact and the Council must demonstrate that this has been done, and/or justify the decision, on the basis that it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. Accordingly, there is an expectation that a decision maker will explore other means which have less of a disproportionate impact.

4.5 The Equality Duty must be complied with before and at the time that a particular policy is under consideration or decision is taken – that is, in the development of policy options, and in making a final decision. A public body cannot satisfy the Equality Duty by justifying a decision after it has been taken.

4.6 There were no further comments from Democratic Services.

5. CONSULTATION AND CO-PRODUCTION

5.1 The procurement and insourcing process was been developed, from the outset, with residents, members and officers to ensure the new delivery arrangements have a high degree of coproduction. This includes responding directly to the recommendations of a repairs Task and Finish Group and priorities that came out of workshops with the Council’s Resident Procurement Panel (a resident-based advisory and consultative panel set up to assist the Council design, procure and manage the suite of new housing repair and maintenance contracts and direct delivery arrangements).

- 5.2 The involvement of the RPP will continue and members will play a key role in the future monitoring and review of the service. It also supported the council in its review and updating of Lambeth's Repairs Manual.
- 5.3 The key areas in which Community Works will positively contribute to the equality of borough citizens include:
- a) Employment opportunities targeted at local residents – with particular focus on those furthest from the job market;
 - b) Support for those unfamiliar the job application and interview process;
 - c) Trade and professional apprenticeship programmes again targeted at local people – including care leavers;
 - d) Working closely with the local colleges and university to provide training;
 - e) Career progression opportunities (with support and training) within both Community Works and Council;
 - f) Council terms and conditions – including pension;
 - g) Reducing the inequality of poor air quality and its effect on the most vulnerable residents (young and elderly); and,
 - h) Providing property adaptations to support disabled, vulnerable and older adults in maintaining their independence and remaining in their homes.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 The main risks that have an impact on the successful delivery of communal repairs are set out below:

Table 2 – Risk Register

Item	Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Score	Control Measures
1.	Latent COVID-19 demand	2	2	4	This demand is far less for communal works.
2.	Resource levels	3	4	12	Second recruitment campaign being developed for 2022.
3.	Backlog Mears repairs	4	2	8	Works have been packaged together to make their completion more efficient.
4.	Contract and performance management	2	2	4	Contract and performance management framework equally applies to Community Works. Governance Board in place to provide oversight and strategic direction.
5.	Affordability	2	8	16	Community Works use pricing schedules produced by the National Housing Federation to give better budget certainty and more accurate forecasting

5.	Financial viability	2	4	8	The council's Commercial Services Team and the Finance Team periodically review Community Works expenditure. Community Works use pricing schedules produced by the National Housing Federation so its cost can be benchmarked against the wider sector.
6.	Systems interface(s) - ICT solutions not in place to enable real time data interfacing and performance reporting.	2	4	8	All data is securely held on the council's Northgate Housing Management System – complete with back-up servers. Performance reporting uses council data taken from Northgate (one version of the truth) and presents data using Microsoft Power BI.
7.	Communications	2	2	4	Regular briefing notes are being developed to better inform stakeholders of service developments.

Key

Likelihood	Very Likely = 4	Likely = 3	Unlikely = 2	Very Unlikely = 1
Impact	Major = 8	Serious = 4	Significant = 2	Minor = 1

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 The equality impact assessment (EIA) that covers the whole transformation of repairs and major works has been assessed and cleared by the Member-led Corporate EIA Panel. The EIA not only mitigates negative equality issues but demonstrates that the new delivery arrangements will make tangible improvements to social equality in the borough.

8. COMMUNITY SAFETY

8.1 Community Works closely liaises with the Council's neighbourhood housing teams in developing and delivering their Estate Action Plans which, where required, include proposals to mitigate crime and disorder on estates (including anti-social behaviour) and associated work to improve safety within neighbourhoods.

9. ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Environmental

- 9.1 Community Works is committed supporting the council achieve its goals for the borough – including its net zero carbon commitment through sustainable travel and helping to reduce the inequality of poor air quality and its effect on the most vulnerable residents (young and elderly).
- 9.2 Community Works use a range of hybrid vans and fully electric cars to reduce the carbon footprint across the borough.

- 9.3 A managed material contract with Travis Perkins has avoided the need for a depot (materials are delivered to operatives vans or dedicated drop off points).
- 9.4 Community Works uses a specialised waste removal provider ensure the maximum amount of waste generated is recycled locally.

Health and Wellbeing

- 9.5 The Community Works Health & Safety manager incorporates 'health & wellbeing' into regular tool box talks ensuring it is an open discussion point between operatives and management to highlight concerns.
- 9.6 Providing property adaptations to support disabled, vulnerable and older adults in maintaining their independence and remaining in their homes.

Corporate Parenting

- 9.7 Community Works are working closely with Children's Services arrange apprenticeship interviews for care leavers.

Staffing and accommodation

- 9.8 The Community Works staffing structure is set out below and operates for the Kennington Lane Housing Office. All recruitment is targeted at Lambeth residents and over 50% of external appointments are with Lambeth residents.

Responsible Procurement

Education & Learning

- 9.9 Community Works has engaged a Carpentry apprentice and is currently interviewing for more carpentry and groundwork apprentices to begin in April. It is also looking to engage a business admin apprentice.
- 9.10 Community Works has engaged with the '16+ care leavers service' and 'Women in Construction' to help source apprentices from priority groups.

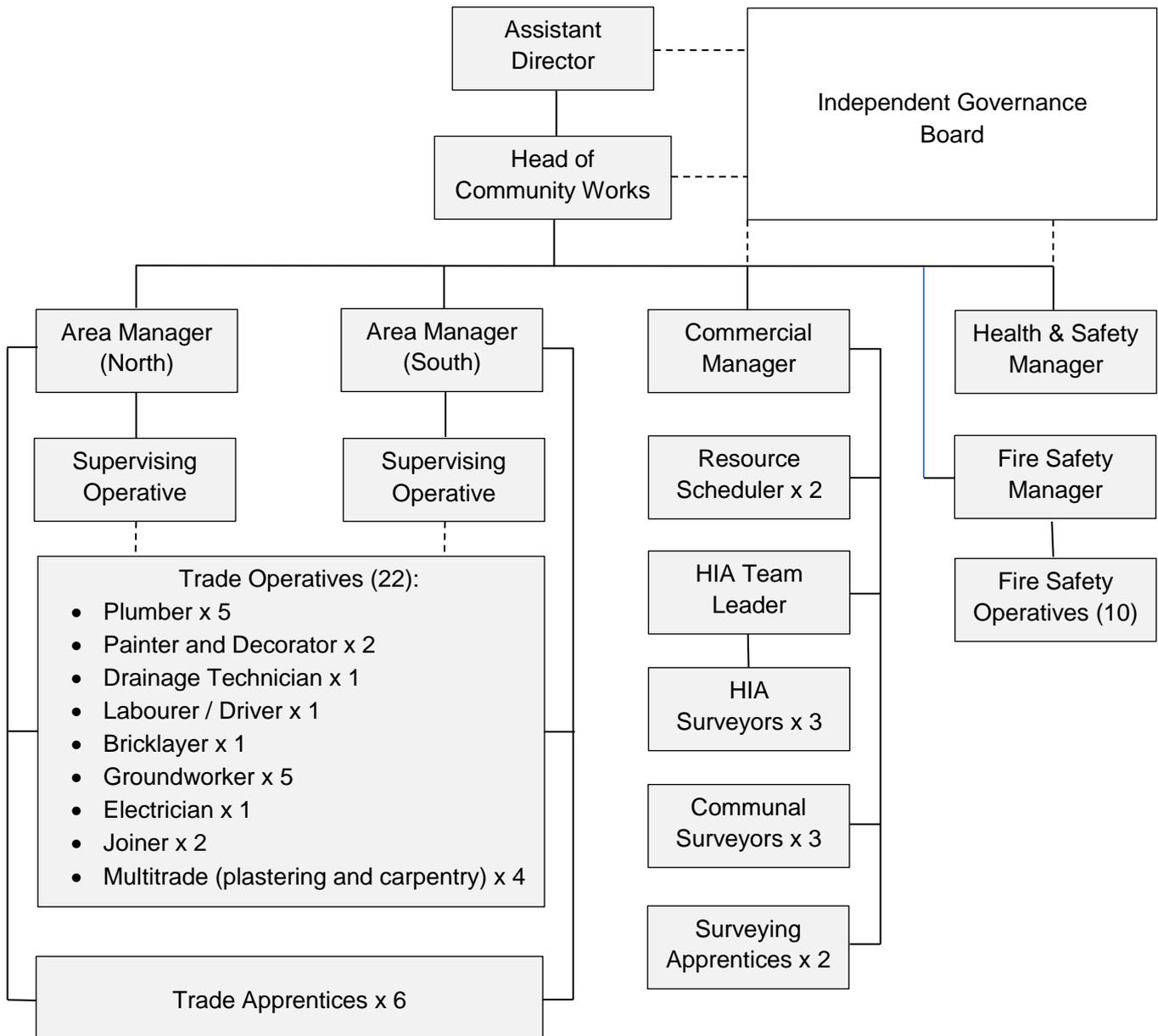
Jobs, Earnings & Business

- 9.11 Community Works has spent over £700,000 with suppliers within the Lambeth post code.
- 9.12 Travis Perkins (Community Works' primary material supplier) has employed a dedicated supervisor who lives in Lambeth to work with Community Works.
- 9.13 Community Works advertises all roles through Opportunity Lambeth, Love Lambeth publication, estate notice boards and the Lambeth jobs board on the Lambeth website.

Community Participation

- 9.14 Community Works collected £1000 which was used to buy Christmas food hampers and distributed across '100' residents who were a mixture of vulnerable tenants and those living in sheltered accommodation.
- 9.15 Community Works has attended a number of community days across our estates carrying out minor repairs as requested on the day.
- 9.16 Community Works staff took part in a community event in partnership with the oasis Foundation inviting local residents to come and enjoy a fun interactive day and provide an opportunity to speak about the service and any concerns they may have.

Community Works Staffing Structure



AUDIT TRAIL

Name and Position/Title	Lambeth Directorate	Date Sent	Date Received	Comments in paragraph:
Councillor Maria Kay	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness	16.02.22	18.02.22	All
Neil Euesden, Director of Housing	Resident Services	16.02.22	17.02.22	All
Andrew Ramsden, Finance	Finance and Property	16.02.22	18.02.22	3
Greg Carson, Legal	Legal and Governance	16.02.22	17.02.22	4
David Rose, Democratic Services	Legal and Governance	16.02.22	17.02.22	All

REPORT HISTORY

Original discussion with Cabinet Member	Ongoing
Report deadline	21 February 2022
Date final report sent	18 February 2022
Part II Exempt from Disclosure/confidential accompanying report?	No
Key decision report	No
Date first appeared on forward plan	Not applicable
Key decision reasons	Not applicable
Background information	Lambeth Council Responsible Procurement Policy
Appendices	None