Introduction

Now that Housing Management is back in Lambeth, there are significant opportunities to improve and develop joint and integrated services. There have been significant improvements in performance and work has started to develop a new programme for improvement based on four priorities raised by residents and other stakeholders during consultation.

Not everything will change immediately, and there are challenges due to an uncertain future over policy and funding. The Government has announced it will reduce council tenant rents which will restrict future funding. Policies to move more social housing tenants into home ownership will further reduce the number of homes to rent and impact on the provision of housing services.

Cllr Matthew Bennett, Cabinet Member for Housing
Neil Wightman, Director Housing Management

Priority 1: improve repairs and capital works

Getting repairs done and improving residents’ homes is a top priority. The largest number of complaints we receive are about how quickly we do repairs and the quality of work. We also know that we can do a lot better informing residents about when their home is going to be improved under the Lambeth Housing Standard (LHS).

We will:
Improve the way we communicate with residents and Members. This years LHS programme is now on the website and we have written to all residents due to receive improvements. All future works will be on the website by March 2016. We will also move to open data so residents can easily access information.

We will:
Improve our repairs service by offering 2 hour appointments slots, piloting a handypersons service and developing a mobile application (App) to improve the management of repairs. This will allow us to raise repair jobs, take photos on our estates or in tenant’s homes and track jobs.

We will:
Develop Wednesday Walkabouts with Lambeth staff, contractors and other stakeholders to tackle priority issues and develop new ideas. Review services to provide more resident advice and support available from the area

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Priority 2: improve services for leaseholders

Leaseholders represent nearly a third of our residents and this will grow each year. They told us through the STAR survey and in workshops that they are dissatisfied with the service.

Only

- 15% were satisfied that we listen to and act on views;
- three quarters of leaseholders told us they had no opportunities to participate in decision making;
- and overall only 24% were satisfied with the service.

We will:
Set up a repairs task force with officers and residents to monitor improvements and produce an action plan. This will inform the procurement of repairs contracts from 2016 onwards and make sure contractors know what we want and what needs changing.

Priority 3: support vulnerable residents

Residents told us that they want better joined up services to protect and support vulnerable households.

We will:
Develop a better understanding of who is vulnerable and what services could and should be offered. Part of this will be to review the services and projects currently on offer to assess whether they are benefiting as wide a group of residents as possible. Residents will input into both the range and design of services.

We will:
Support the newly appointed Independent Expert, Martin Arnold Limited, to drive up leaseholder satisfaction and improve services.

We will:
Set up a new leaseholder task and finish group to help deliver the Leasehold Major Works Plan (formerly Leaseholder Action Plan).

We will:
Be on estates once a week listening to residents. During Wednesday Walkabouts, Lambeth staff, partners and contractors will visit an estate, coordinate clear ups and
Priority 4: engage and involve residents

It was clear from consultation and the STAR survey that the way we engage with residents isn’t working. Most tenants and leaseholders are not involved and we want to increase meaningful engagement.

It is proposed to move away from our traditional way we involve residents. We want to rely less on formal meetings, which can be adversarial, engage with a very small number of residents and tend to be drawn into very localised issues.

The overwhelming majority of both tenants and leaseholders told the council in the Future Model of Housing Management survey that they hadn’t heard of tenant or leaseholder council or area forums. Participants at the engagement workshop found the structure of layers of meeting both confusing and at unhelpful.

We will:

With LEAP (a lottery funded service supporting families in three Wards who have a child under 4) develop a project to help families in overcrowded conditions.

We will:

Develop a tailored offer for tenants in sheltered accommodation.

We will:

Ensure that tenant and resident associations remain the backbone of engagement. We will support both the current TRAs and residents who want to set up a new TRA. We will work with all estates, or clusters of estates, using TRAs, organised open meetings, walkabouts or evening forums. These will be regular and planned to ensure we talk about plans for their estate, address issues that have been raised and to talk about other opportunities such as estate pride, food growing etc.

Resources will be diverted from area forums to support more work with estates and we will invest in technology to enable housing officers to access the necessary information at meetings to respond to questions rather than having to ‘take it away’.

We will:

Set out proposals to replace Tenants Council and Leaseholder Council with a biannual meetings.

We will:

Review Area Office and the Contact Centre opening hours and hold surgeries.
We will:

Make our engagement individual by keeping residents informed (50% of residents just want to know, not to be involved). This will be addressed through better communications.

We will:

Recruit and train people to sit on resident panels. The first panels will be contract Procurement, awarding grants (taking over the role of the residents’ steering group) and overseeing the final review stage of complaints.
There have been no overdue home repairs since July.

We have completed more responsive repairs than last year.

We do 1000 follow up calls to tenants per month following a repair.

We are developing a mobile App to improve the repairs service.

Introducing 2 hour appointment slots for repairs.

Developing Open Data so information can be viewed on the website.

Launched the Lambeth 500 to increase resident involvement.

Complaints have fallen from 2100 in 2013/14 to 530 last year.

66% of tenants are satisfied with the quality of their home.

All scheduled 2015/16 capital works now available on the website.

All homes to be improved this year have received newsletters.

We have provided iPads to estate officers to manage work in the field.