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Tenant & Leaseholder Panel

Meeting held on Tuesday, 22 October 2024 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall,
Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Yaw Boateng (Chair);
Leslie Parry (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Adele Benson (online), Lara Fish, Alisa Flemming, Brigitte
Graham and Chrishni Reshekaron (online)

Resident Members

Jill Arboine, Ishia Beckford, Monica Binns, Tamara Coleman, Yvonne Davy,
Nicola Glover, Ian Leonard, Dave Mundy, David Palmer, Guy Pile-Grey, Kim
Wakely and Marilyn Smithies (online)

Also Present: Councillors Leila Ben-Hassel (online) and Ellily Ponnuthurai (online),
Lara Ashley (Housing Transformation Lead),
Mandy Dunstan (Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance),
Sue Edgerley (Resident Involvement Manager),
Verna Francis (Senior Resident Involvement Officer),
Sue Hanlon (Interim Director of Housing Assets & Repairs),
Cathy McCarthy (Head of Change, Assurance and Performance)

Apologies: Councillor Lynne Hale, James Gitau and Mary Larbie (Director of Housing
Management)
Councillor Alisa Flemming for lateness

PART A

106/24 **Welcome and Introductions**

The Panel Members, Councillors and officers in attendance introduced themselves.

107/24 **Disclosure of Interest**

There were no disclosures at this meeting.

108/24 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 30th July 2024 was agreed as an accurate record.

109/24 **Update on Damp and Mould Data**

Councillor Ben-Hassel entered the virtual meeting at 6.38pm. Councillors Reshekaron & Ponnuthurai entered the virtual meeting at 6.40pm. Councillor Flemming entered the Council Chamber at 6.45pm.

The Chair introduced the item and invited the Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance to address the Panel. The Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance conducted a presentation to the Panel, which can be found via the following link: <https://civico.net/croydon/meetings>

In response to questions from Panel members, officers informed the Panel that:

- There had been an existing Decant Policy in place since 2021. The new Decant Policy was currently being drafted and due to be reviewed by the Departmental Management Team by the end of November. It was likely to be published in December 2024.
- In response to a question about overflows, residents were encouraged to report dripping and running overflows to the Repairs Contact Centre. The caretakers, tenancy services officers and repair inspectors were also expected to log the issue if noted during visits or estate inspections.
- Mould washes were undertaken by Wates and Mears as part of the Stage 1 visits. The Interim Director would discuss with contractors for the requirement to wear PPE including safety goggles/glasses when using sprays.
- Damp and Mould training was being rolled out to the housing department including specialist training for the damp and mould team. The technical training also included on-site visits to voids to support diagnostics and remediation of damp and mould.
- The Council had been investigating the installation of humidity devices. 'Switchee' devices had been used by around 100 organisations including local authorities and housing associations in the UK. The devices would help identify potential damp and mould in homes. The Council was currently planning for a pilot to install 300 devices from January 2025.
- The Housing team acknowledged the nationwide challenge of fuel poverty leading to colder homes. The contractors would refer any concerns or issues from visits to the Housing Team.
- Tenancy Audits visits were being undertaken to access homes to seek information about the residents and their needs so that the team could tailor services to meet their needs and signpost residents to wider agencies. The team had been prioritising audit visits for the elderly, families with young children and residents with long term health conditions, where known.
- Discretionary support could be provided, such as support fund for energy or debts. Residents with financial needs were encouraged in

the 'Open House' newsletter to reach out for further advice and guidance.

- The repairs team were investigating alternatives for accessing roofs/gutters such as cherry pickers and drones. The use of drones would allow roof inspections to be carried out without the requirement to erect a scaffold. The team was exploring whether they would secure a drone licence or use a licenced service provider.
- Stock condition surveys had been ongoing, with 60% of homes already completed. The results from all areas would be triangulated and reviewed, and that would support the team to plan the investment work programmes for the next 5-10 years. The data would also be used for the 30-year investment plan which would be presented to Cabinet early next year.
- For projects with significant spend requirements, option appraisals would be undertaken to evaluate value for money and the best option.
- The target timeframes for non-urgent responsive repairs were 12 days, and either 4 hours for repairs where there had been an immediate H&S concern or 24 hours for all other emergency repairs. A number of repairs reported were complex repairs that might involve scaffolding or require entry into multiple flats, and it might take time for the contractors to organise this. It was recognised that some complex repairs had previously been delayed, however reporting had been in place for all overdue repairs or repairs in danger of becoming overdue.
- Following a lesson learned review, there were now dedicated teams within Wates, Mears and K&T to respond to the leaks.
- Prior to the installation of devices, there would be a discussion with the residents about the data recorded and the use of data. Croydon Council would own the data, not the supplier of the humidity unit. An information sharing protocol would be signed and the residents selected could opt out of the pilot.
- The team were currently installing 300 domestic boilers as part of the planned programme. The boilers would be A-graded, and have a 10-year warranty in order to achieve a better value for money.
- For communal (commercial) boilers, Morgan Lambert, a third-party assurance company, was currently undertaking stock condition surveys of 27 plant rooms in the borough, expected to complete at the end of the following week. The team would review the results and decide the next steps. It was aimed to have energy efficient A-graded commercial boilers.
- Damp and mould cases would be referred to contractor once the cases had been triaged and categorised by the call centre. The contractor staff would then inspect the property and arrange remedial repairs and damp & mould washes.
- There would be opportunities to scrutinise the health and safety areas including fire and damp & mould within the new engagement structure.
- Under the new Decant Policy, decant requests would be approved by the Interim Director of Housing Assets and Repairs and the Director of Housing Management. A decant request would include the reason of

the decant, such as works leading to the property being uninhabitable for a period of time. Most of the decants would be temporary.

- Most temporary decants would utilise hotels or Airbnb-styled accommodation. The Housing team had been working with contractors and residents to ensure works identified had been undertaken in the agreed timeframe. Home loss and disturbance allowance would only be considered for permanent decants which were very rare, while other allowances might be offered for temporary decants.
- The Damp and Mould policy was reviewed in July 2024, and robust processes had been in place to manage this workstream. The current policy included best practice.
- Damp and mould guidance would be included in the next edition of residents' newsletter, Open House.
- Drainage survey would be arranged when a report had been received from residents and collapsed drain was suspected root cause. The repairs team would not be able to undertake proactive drainage surveys due to costs.
- A Section 20 notice would be issued to the leaseholders (including housing associations) to recover the cost for works over £250 if Council-owned properties were affected.

The Panel **NOTED** the update.

110/24 **Complaints Report**

The Chair introduced the item and invited the Housing Transformation Lead to address the Panel. The Housing Transformation Lead conducted a presentation to the Panel (available in the Appendix), which can be found via the following link: <https://civico.net/croydon/meetings>

In response to questions from Panel members, officers informed the Panel that:

- The response time for complaints within the Service-Level Agreement (SLA) was 10 days plus 5 days of acknowledgement.
- The Housing Ombudsman would normally encourage the complainants to exhaust the complaint process within the local authority before lodging complaints to them, albeit not mandatory.
- The new complaint process would ensure the team to contact the complainant as the part of the acknowledgement process and capture the accurate information.
- The staffing issue was recognised while the transformation process was underway for the team.
- The performance monitoring issue had been prioritised in both the Housing Directorate and the organisation.
- The Transformation Lead agreed that it would be good practice if a resident could be contacted by a designated officer to acknowledge and proceed with the complaint.

- The Housing Ombudsman reviewed cases dependent on the resource and availability.
- It was hoped that the complaint process could be a regular part of scrutiny under the customer influence and assurance group within the new resident engagement structure. The details were under discussion and yet to be confirmed.
- The response to a complaint had to include guidance for complaint escalation if not satisfied with the solution.
- The issues of data capture and insufficient triangulation of complaints data were recognised. Data analysts were reviewing the information to identify the hotspots for investment.

The Panel **NOTED** the report.

111/24 **Tenant and Leaseholder Panel Closure Presentation**

Before introducing the item, the Panel congratulated David Palmer who was awarded the ARCH Community Champion Award in the ARCH Conference. The Chair thanked him for his tireless involvement in the community over the last 28 years. David Palmer thanked the Director of Housing Management and the Resident Involvement Team, and hoped that the Council would build a better working relationship with residents by furthering the resident engagement work and recognising the input from resident volunteers.

The Vice-Chair introduced the item and invited the Resident Involvement Manager to address the Panel. The Resident Involvement Manager conducted a presentation to the Panel, which can be found via the following link: <https://civico.net/croydon/meetings>

In response to questions from Panel members, officers informed the Panel that:

- 260 residents had already expressed their interest in engaging with the Council within the new resident engagement structure.
- The Resident Involvement Team had received over 300 enquiries and over 100 applications for the recruitment of the customer influence and assurance group. Due to the limited spaces of the assurance group, the team was looking at different panels that may suit the unselected applicants.
- The team would also proactively invite residents who expressed their dissatisfaction in tenant satisfaction surveys to panel meetings.

The Panel **NOTED** the presentation.

112/24 **Report from Resident Representatives**

The reports were **NOTED** by the Panel.

113/24 **Any Other Business**

Ishia Beckford raised the following question to the Interim Director of Housing Assets and Repairs. As the Interim Director had already left the meeting, Ishia requested the Democratic Services to note the question in the minutes.

‘What is the difference between a temporary decant and permanent decant? Why is home loss not afforded to the tenant or leaseholder, when returning after works have been carried out?’

Closing Remarks

In marking the final Tenant and Leaseholder Panel meeting, the Chair and Vice-Chair thanked the Panel members and officers for their contributions since April 2002.

Panel members thanked the Chair and Vice-Chair for their service in the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel.

The meeting ended at 8.56 pm

Signed:

Date:

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Review of Complaints

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Quarter 1 2024

Lara Ashley

22/10/24

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Minute Item 110/24

Housing Ombudsmen – to note (in summary)

- The new complaints handling code – April 2021 – became statutory in April 2024
 - 10-day turnaround for stage 1 (excl. 5-day acknowledgement)
 - 20 days for stage 2
 - Can only have a two-stage process
 - Can use extensions but should agree with complainant
 - Clear distinction between service request and complaint
 - Annual self-assessment against the code

Total complaints (stage 1,2,Ombudsmen)

Breakdown by complaints

4. Housing - Complaints & LGO Cases

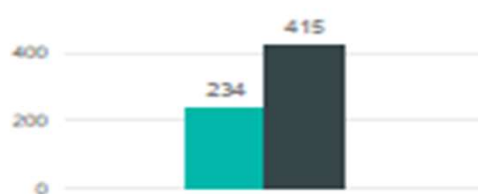
Departmental Complaint Distribution by Complaint Type

Corporate Stage 1 (blue) Praise (teal) Corporate Stage 2 (yellow) LGO (dark grey)



Corporate Stage 1 Volume

Previous Year (teal) Current Year (dark grey)

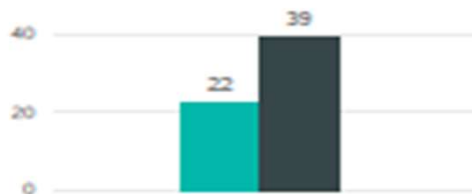


Increased

77%

Corporate Stage 2 Volume

Previous Year (teal) Current Year (dark grey)

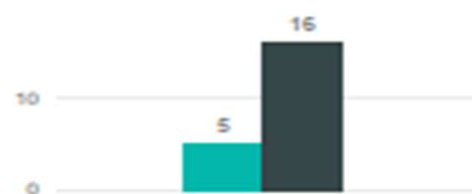


Increased

77%

LGO Volume

Previous Year (teal) Current Year (dark grey)



Increased

220%

124 per 1000
(Lower Qtle)

88 per 1000 for
London boroughs

4.1 The volume of stage one has increased by 181 complaints compared to the same period last year

4.2 The volume of stage two has increased by 17 complaints compared to the same period last year

4.3 The volume of LGO has increased by 11 investigations compared to the same period last year

Total complaints by Division



Total volume including Stage 1,2 and Ombudsmen

Forename Surname

New SLA applied in November 2023 – compliance with Housing Ombudsmen Code – 10-day response

No Upheld- reduced for Repairs and Housing mgmt. Increased for Housing Needs

Housing Ombudsmen – typically organisations are upholding 66%

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Complaint SLA % by Division

Previous Year Current Year

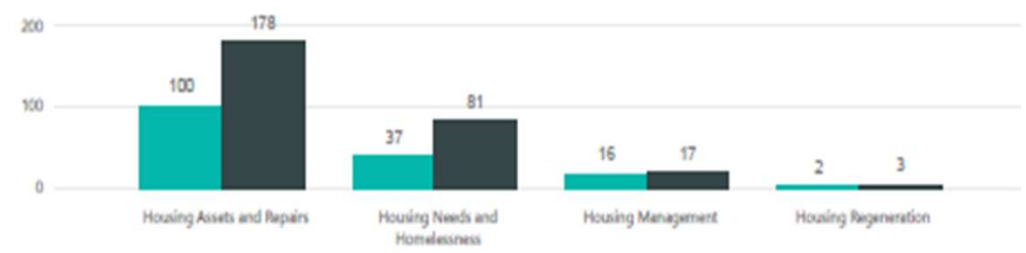


4.5 The SLA % of complaints by Division for Q1 of 2024

Often cases will extend due to their complexity and in consultation with the complainant. Cases that have been extended are not included

Complaint Upheld Volume by Division

Previous Year Current Year



4.6 The volume of upheld complaints by Division for Q1 of 2024

Complaint Upheld % by Division

Previous Year Current Year



4.7 The upheld % of complaints by Division for Q1 of 2024

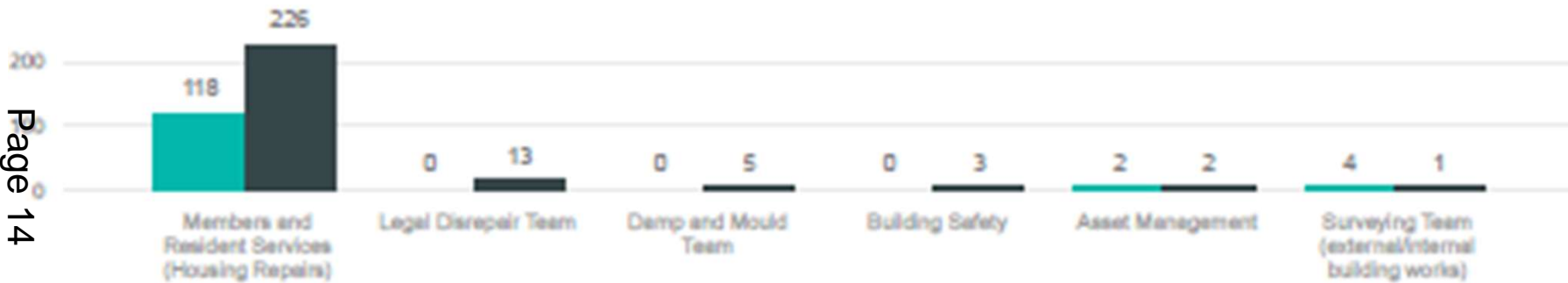
Quarterly Complaints Report - April, May, June - Quarter 1 2024

Data Last Refreshed: 24/07/2024 05:31:00

Breakdown by type – Assets and Repairs

Highest Complaint Volumes by Service Team

● Previous Year ● Current Year



4.8 Total volumes of complaints at stage one, stage two & LGO in the Housing Assets and Repairs division

Members and Resident Services (Housing ...

Corporate Stage 1 Volume

● Previous Year ● Current Year



Corporate Stage 2 Volume

● Previous Year ● Current Year



4.8 The volume of stage one has increased by 90 complaints

4.10 The volume of stage two has increased by 13 complaints

4.11 The volume of LGO investigations was 8 in 2024

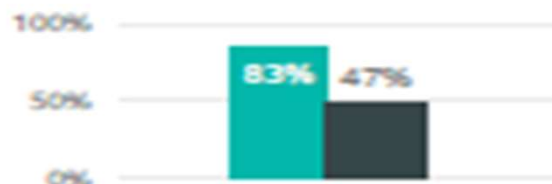
Corporate Stage 1 Upheld %

● Previous Year ● Current Year



Corporate Stage 2 Upheld %

● Previous Year ● Current Year



4.12 81%, or 162 complaints were upheld at stage one.

4.13 47%, or 9 complaints were upheld at stage two.

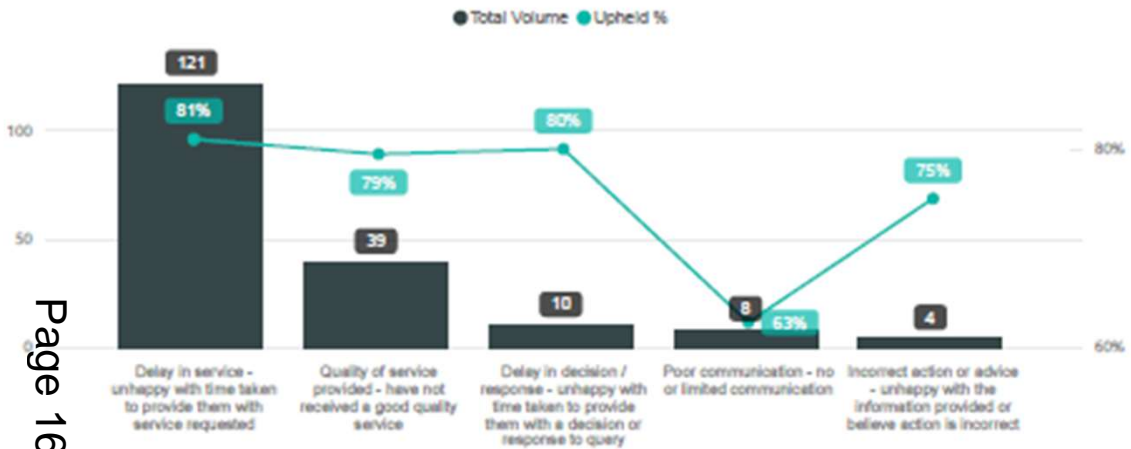
Stage 1 - 39% answered within the SLA of 10 days

Stage 2 – 32% answered within SLA

4. Housing Assets and Repairs - Complaint Themes

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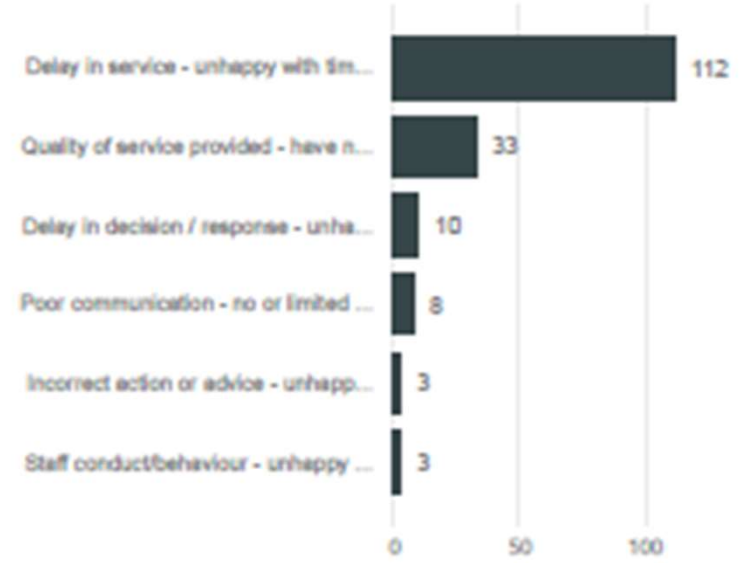
Highest Volumes for Corporate Stage 1 - Reason for Complaint



4.23 The graph shows the highest complaint volume by reason for Housing at stage one
The Bars show the Volume of Complaints with the Line showing the Upheld % by Reason for Complaint

Members and Resident Services (Housing ...

Highest Volumes for Reason for Complaint - Stage 1



Housing Ombudsmen – three most common categories – Property Condition, complaint handling, ASB

Actions

- Reviewing the way in which we capture data – to make analysis more meaningful – to do this = system changes
- Training of complaints staff and wider teams to achieve SLAs
- Focus groups with complainants to identify further areas for improvement
- Complaints improvement plan – in development
- Resourcing and dedicated staffing
- Incorporating strategic review of complaints

Thank you