

PROGRESS ON ISSUES FOR IMMEDIATE RESPONSE IDENTIFIED BY ARK

ARK Issue for Immediate Response	Progress reported to Cabinet on 17 May 2021	Further progress to report
<i>Compliance and Fire Safety</i>		
<p>i. Two unfilled posts in the Compliance function which oversees delivery of health and safety activities in the housing service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council is recruiting a Compliance Manager (interviews due on 17 May) and a Senior Fire Safety Surveyor (closing date for applications 19 May), in order to resource the compliance function fully. • As at 4 May 2021, 98.68% of all council social housing homes had a valid gas safety certificate. The council is taking intervention and enforcement actions to ensure all homes have a valid safety certificate. At 4 May, 39 homes were subject to enforcement action to ensure gas appliances are serviced. The level of non-compliance has fallen from 276 homes on 9 April to 172 homes (1.32%) without a valid certificate on 4 May. The council is introducing longer term improvement measures to achieve 100% compliance on all gas safety matters. • The council has instructed a specialist housing and repairs consultancy to undertake from 10 May 2021 a random dip test of homes that were subject to a high priority repair item to provide assurance, or to inform the need for further compliance audits in the months ahead. These tests will also cover gas compliance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance Manager has been recruited and starts on 2 August. • Senior Fire Safety Surveyor – 1 post at interview stage • Latest percentage compliance on all gas safety matters (currently 99.37% at 13 July, up from 98.68 on 4 May 2021)
<p>iv. Disruptive work may have compromised fire safety measures – the door to one flat does not meet the required safety standard. ARK has asked for confirmation that works identified in a Fire Risk Assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The door to a flat that is vacant, pending the repair of damage caused by the leak, will be replaced as specified by the fire risk assessment, as part of those repairs. • The other recommendations in the fire risk assessment related to residents' items in communal areas. Most of the items to the rear of the block have been removed as well as some 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All outstanding items identified in the Fire Risk Assessment have been completed. • The door to the flat has been replaced with a compliant temporary door, pending delivery of the permanent door. • All items have been removed from inside and outside the block (although residents to continue to dump items on communal landings and outside blocks). A dedicated caretaker visits the high rise blocks every day and removes items left on communal

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<p>undertaken in October 2020 have been completed in line with recommended timescales.</p>	<p>residents' items in communal areas. Arrangements have been made to remove two remaining items to the rear of the block and action continues for the removal of residents' items that remain in communal areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendations in fire risk assessment reports are made into works orders for immediate attention in the small number of cases that are rated as high priority; otherwise they fed into the planned maintenance programme. The council has sought independent assurance by instructing a specialist housing and repairs consultancy to undertake from 10 May 2021 a random dip test of homes that were subject to a high priority repair item to provide assurance, or to inform the need for further compliance audits in the months ahead. 	<p>hallways and takes them to a holding area outside. Weekly bulk refuse collections are arranged where required.</p>
<i>Repair issues at Regina Road</i>		
<p>ii. Problems at Regina Road such as a leaking roof are still treated as 'one-off' repairs, yet disrepair claims against the council are increasing.</p>	<p>Repairs staff have contacted all other tenants in the block, visiting the flats to identify any other disrepair in the building and schedule appropriate action.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Five tenants from 1-87 Regina Road have now been moved to alternative accommodation. Three are awaiting moves, along with another three from another Regina Road block. The repairs at Regina Road continue. In block 1-87, issues relating mostly to damage from leaks and damp have been reported in six flats since the last Cabinet report. On 20 June the roof of 1-87 Regina Road leaked again, with flats on one corner of the building having varying degrees of water penetration. Tenancy staff met the plumber and electrician on site and, with the ward councillors, knocked on all doors to notify tenants of what had happened and the action being taken to resolve the problem, and check whether they were affected. Notes were left where there was no answer. The leak was stopped quickly. Dehumidifiers were not required, the safety of electrical wiring was not compromised and no residents needed to move. A structural engineer and a roofing contractor made an initial

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		<p>assessment of the roof on 25 June. However, due to conditions at the time and the presence of rooftop equipment (such as mobile phone masts and water tanks), further investigations are needed to provide the necessary analysis of the roof condition. These will require exposure of elements of the existing roofing and will take place by 16 July.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An asset condition survey of 1-87 Regina Road has been conducted. The draft report will be issued by 31 July due to ongoing assessment of the roof's condition. These surveys will inform an appraisal of options for the blocks at Regina Road.
<i>Culture and behaviours</i>		
<p>iii. Tenants were often seen as demanding, difficult to deal with and less worthy of respect. Some council staff lack empathy with tenants. These attitudes appear to be going unchallenged.</p>	<p>Directors, heads of service and managers have been specifically directed to challenge all instances of outmoded attitudes, disrespect and lack of empathy for tenants. Further action is set out in the initial action plan and this will be a key component of the Interim Executive Director of Housing's work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two large meetings were held with all council staff and contractor operatives about expectations with regard to behaviours, with case studies of good practice shared. There will be training sessions around customer service, equality and diversity and unconscious bias. Development of the Council's Cultural Transformation Programme is underway and will also address the need to transform the culture of the housing service while enhancing skills and capability. It will include setting new standards, benchmarking services and ensuring that outmoded attitudes are addressed. There will be training sessions around customer service, equality and diversity, and unconscious bias, as well as other gaps identified through a skills audit.
<i>Resident Engagement and Accessibility of the Housing Service</i>		
<p>v. ARK has some concerns about allocations, tenants' understanding of their tenancy status and overcrowding in the block that should be explored further.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All tenants at Regina Road now understand their tenancy status. Following the updating of records on household occupants, several tenants have been placed on the transfer list due to the level of overcrowding they are experiencing The allocations policy will not allow anyone needing only one more bedroom to join the housing transfer list, so these families have limited options, such as seeking a mutual exchange with another social housing tenant.

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<p>vi. The council lacks a simple, effective, clear and accessible route to get tenants' concerns and complaints resolved.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council staff were present at Regina Road for two weeks to give residents an opportunity to identify any other issues that needed addressing. • A letter to all residents in the block on 29 March gave details of how to contact their tenancy officer. In addition, the council wrote to the residents of all 16 council-owned blocks of flats of similar design with details of how to contact the tenancy service. • The council is in the process of helping Regina Road residents to set up a residents group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An audit of allocations to flats in Regina Road (against the allocations policy) is an action in the Improvement Plan. • Officers are organising a 'roadshow' door-knocking exercise across the borough between 13 July and September 2021 to create opportunities for residents to share their experiences of the Council's housing services. This feedback will inform the housing improvement plan and help to deliver a truly resident-focussed housing service. Blocks and estates where there is little resident representation have been prioritised. Ward councillors will receive the schedule of visits. • Two teams, each comprising an officer from the tenancy and the resident involvement teams, will invite residents to complete a survey which asks for feedback about their experience as a council tenant or leaseholder. Residents will also be encouraged to help the council monitor its housing services by getting involved in resident participation activities. Those not at home will be left a calling card so that they can provide feedback at a time that's suitable for them. An update with useful contacts in the housing service will be published in the next edition of <i>Open House</i>, a council publication sent to all council tenants and leaseholders. We will also ask residents about their preferred form of communication; this feedback will be shared across the service to improve how we engage, so that it's a more positive and satisfactory experience for residents • A similar approach has been piloted at Regina Road with a dedicated team comprising a tenancy sustainment officer, resident involvement officer, community development officer, repairs inspector and caretaker onsite. Residents welcomed the ability to speak to a council officer face to face regarding any issues or concerns and the direct access to a repairs inspector. • Residents at Regina Road have set up their own group. The Council is working to build a relationship with them, working closely with ward councillors and the Tenants and Leaseholders Panel.

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vii. Tenants do not know to whom they should report failures in the day-to-day repairs service or non-repair issues and often do not know their tenancy officer.	Council staff were present at Regina Road for two weeks to give residents an opportunity to identify any other issues that needed addressing. A letter to all residents in the block on 29 March gave details of how to contact their tenancy officer. In addition, the council wrote to the tenants of all 16 council-owned blocks of flats of similar design with details of how to contact the tenancy service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roadshows (with Tenancy and Resident Involvement Officers) are planned for all tower blocks. Information on contacts for raising issues to be handed out. Information on contacts will be included in <i>Open House</i>. See vi above. • 38 residents of the Regina Road blocks who have not yet had a direct conversation with housing officers will receive a letter offering a conversation or a meeting.
Contract Management		
viii. Relations between the council and its main contractor appear to focus on monitoring performance rather than actively managing it.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of operational and strategic meetings and workshops have been held with Axis to consider the future development of the relationship between the Council and its main contractor. • Weekly meetings look at cases involving high levels of spending and properties with a high volume of repairs jobs, those relating to disrepair and complex cases. The Council is working towards a more proactive use of this data to identify properties that may need more preventative work or an alternative approach. • The new Interim Head of repairs and maintenance started on 28 June 2021
Asset Management		
ix. Intelligence and data exist in 'silos' and do not appear to be drawn together to give a holistic view of asset performance or inform strategic decision making or budget setting.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A data gap analysis will need to be carried out to establish HRA asset intelligence. This analysis may be procured via the existing housing partnering advisor to coordinate as it will need input from multiple services and capacity is limited currently. • The gap analysis also applies to compliance data which is held in different data sets with different services and is not always consistent. • The current APEX asset management system is due to be replaced by December 2021 with a Northgate system. Significant data cleansing will need to take place before then. The new system is expected to improve asset data intelligence sharing and retrieval. • A corporate HRA investment strategy will need to be developed and agreed. This strategy will in part be informed by the stock condition surveys. Discussions are already underway as to how

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		<p>best to share and configure repairs data to inform planned investment decisions.</p>
<p>x. Surveys of half the flats at 1-87 Regina Road identified damp, mould and condensation. The council planned to investigate the installation of a mechanical ventilation system before Covid struck, but the roof was considered 'fit for purpose'. However, leaks into the top floor flats are now common, with patch repairs having limited effect.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asset condition survey of 1-87 Regina Road has been conducted. The draft report will be issued by 31 July due to ongoing assessment of the roof's condition (see ii above).
<p>xi. The high level of responsive repairs demanded suggests the need to proactively invest in homes. The council should assure themselves that key data on stock condition and health and safety responsibilities is accurate.</p>	<p>The council has authorised recruitment of two principal asset management analysts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment of two principal asset management analysts (one a secondment) is under way. The permanent post is at interview stage. The secondment has been offered to a candidate who has accepted. Asset condition survey of all tower blocks underway, starting with first seven blocks (including those in Regina Road). This will produce accurate and up to date data. Significant data cleansing will be needed prior to the introduction of a new Northgate asset management system, which is expected to improve asset data intelligence sharing and retrieval (see ix above).
<p>xii. The council should proactively survey other blocks of similar age to Regina Road and develop clear plans for their future.</p>	<p>Precautionary checks will be conducted at all 26 council-owned high-rise blocks, starting in May 2021.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A full and comprehensive technical assessment of the Council's 26 tower blocks is underway, beginning with seven blocks in South Norwood, New Addington North and Waddon wards (including all three blocks in Regina Road). The surveys are led by independent building surveyors and examine the following aspects:

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Structural integrity of the building ○ General condition of stock and key components (against the Decent Homes Standard) ○ Fire safety requirements ○ General compliance, health and safety (against the Housing Health and Safety Rating System) ○ Collation of available statutory certification and documentation. ● Having understood the type, urgency, volume and cost of works that need to be undertaken across the tower blocks, the scope of works will be defined and specifications and technical drawings produced, before delivery of the programme of works commences. External expertise will be commissioned to inspect and sign off all works. In addition, reactive and planned works will be coordinated in future and new condition surveys undertaken across the estate on a five-year cycle.