

Title: Chief Executive's report		Meeting: Board	
Report authorised by: Chris Creegan, Chair		Date: 8 Sept 09	Item No: 6
Report author: Gavin Cansfield, Chief Executive		Classification: Open	Report type: Discussion/Decision
Business Plan Objective:			
<p>1. Neighbourhood Housing Service – to meet a refreshed promise to residents that describes the services they receive from us and the neighbourhoods they live in;</p> <p>3. Leaseholders – to provide a reorganised and customer-focussed leaseholder service that can demonstrate VfM;</p> <p>8. Customer Focus – to challenge and improve services by focusing on customer insight, customer information and access, and the drivers of customer satisfaction.</p>			
Financial implications:		Risk Management	
There are no specific financial implications of any of the decisions that the Board is being asked to make in this paper.		Reputation Leaseholder Income	
Summary		Recommendations	
<p>This report updates Board members on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Issues relating to good Governance; ▪ Action post the indicative Inspection; ▪ Work in the Neighbourhood Housing Service; ▪ Work on Customer Access; ▪ Work at THH post the fire in Camberwell; ▪ An incident at Wilkinson House; ▪ Performance in Leaseholder Services. 		<p>That Board Members agree:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the Board/Committee dates; ▪ the Committee membership; ▪ that the Board confirm the appointment of the Board Champions for Customer Access and Value for Money. 	

1. Governance matters

Since the last Board meeting, which took place on 14 July, and the Board Away, 17th and 18th July, Board Members have received the following communiqués:

1.1 Chair's Bulletin

This included a note on:

- the appointment of Mrs. Shahanara Begum as a Resident Board Member. An induction pack has been sent and a meeting took place with the Chair and members of SMT. The Chair has requested a report from the Governance Manager on the lessons learnt from the process with recommendations for succession planning for resident Board Members;
- the recruitment for an independent Board member; at the time of writing I can report that we have received some strong applications and that interviews will have taken place by the time the Board meets. A verbal update will be given at the meeting;
- action further to the HCA announcement regarding Decent Homes funding;
- the £3m additional funding approved by Tower Hamlets Council to deliver a comprehensive range of additional works including Door Entry Systems, Roof Access Systems, Front Entrance Doors, Estate Improvement Programme Plus (painting of communal areas), windows and a Neighbourhood Led Improvement Programme (NELIP) which will seek new and innovative ways of delivering value-for- money community led initiatives that promote sustainability and biodiversity;
- Our successful bid to the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) for £1.1m for Social Housing Cavity Insulation was successful. These funds will allow THH to target 'hard to insulate' properties, mainly high rise blocks of flats on our estates. This will help address the issue of fuel poverty by improving wall insulation and reducing resident's energy bills. This action will also reduce CO2 emission resulting in smaller boilers being required in future. We have now been informed that this amount has been increased to £2.2m;
- a bid to the Greater London Authority for a Low Carbon Zone on the Royal Mint Estate.

1.2 Board Away Day Output

A note, produced by Radojka, capturing the output from the Board Away day was circulated and this included suggested topics for future consideration:

- what sort of organization do we want Tower Hamlets Homes to be, what is the culture that we want to see developed?
- what is the unique contribution of Tower Hamlets Homes to the LBTH?

1.3 Recruitment of the Director of Housing and Customer Service

Board Members were notified of the decision, on the basis of electronic consultation, to appoint Barbara Brownlee to the position of Director of Housing and Customer Service on a permanent basis. Barbara's first day with Tower Hamlets Homes will be 1 September 2009. I would just like to reiterate my thanks to everyone for their participation in this process.

1.4 Governance Matters

The proposed dates for the meetings to be held in 2010 are attached at appendix one. The dates follow a similar pattern to this year with a few changes to the Performance Management Committee, which will now meet on a Monday or a Thursday. Board Members are asked to **agree** the schedule.

Committee membership has also been revisited with a suggestion that the quorum be increased to 3. The existing membership and the proposed new membership is attached at appendix two. Board Members are asked to **agree** the membership.

As part of the process of strengthening the roles and functions of Board following the Board Away day, the Board are asked to confirm the roles of Customer Access champion, Iain Lawson, and Value for Money champion, Ian Fincher. Board Members are asked to **agree** the champions.

Area	Board Champion	SMT Champion
Resident Engagement	Alex Heslop	Barbara Brownlee
Diversity	Denise Jones	Jamie Carswell
Value for Money	Ian Fincher	Sayed Kadir
Customer Access	Iain Lawson	Les Warren

2. Post Indicative Inspection

At the Board Away Day there was a presentation on the immediate thinking and work to ensure that the learning from the indicative inspection was embedded within the Service Improvement Plan for THH. As reported at the Board Away Day the inspection was immediately followed by a series of workshops to explore the existing plans, the findings and the gaps that needed to be addressed. This resulted in the 2 Star Manifesto, sent to Board Members with the Chair's Bulletin, which we communicated to all staff to provide a very clear sense of a renewed purpose. Underneath that document there is, of course, a far more detailed plan that is being fed into the refreshed team plans. This will be followed by the 6 month check of individual staff members Personal Development Reviews to ensure that there is a connect between the overall vision and people's personal targets. This was one of the points raised by the Audit Commission.

A high level copy of the revised SIP is attached at appendix four.

3. Vision for NHS

One of the areas of weakness in the indicative inspection was the Neighbourhood Housing Service. It became quite clear that there was been a lack of coherent direction, prioritisation and sustainable improvement in this area. This will be a priority for the new Director but in the interim work has been ongoing to ensure that we begin to establish a clearer focus and that there are a set of targets that are both stretching

but deliverable, to ensure that we created some momentum. Some of that work is captured in item 4 of the report and attached at appendix five is a document that has been used to aid both discussion and action during July and August.

4. Customer Access and Customer Care

Providing a consistently *good* level of customer service across all services is imperative if THH is to achieve a two star inspection in June 2010. This means we must demonstrate:

- A clear Customer Access Strategy and ongoing delivery roadmap [customer focus];
- Insight into of our customer-base and of the needs of individual customers [profiling];
- That we provide clear and accessible service information [handbooks, leaflets, web];
- That we have set and meet challenging service standards, prioritised by our residents;
- That we provide high quality telephone and face-to-face response;
- That we organise a timely and appropriate service response [repairs];
- That we respond and learn from complaints, and utilise feedback and satisfaction surveys.

The recent inspections of Redbridge Homes [One Star] and Enfield Homes [Two Star] demonstrate the narrow margin for error, and the need to fix the full focus of this organisation delivering and demonstrating these attributes over the next six months.

4.1 Current Situation

The inspection has demonstrated that:

- We do not have a clear vision for delivering customer service;
- We are disconnected from residents by an arms-length service and lack of local contact;
- Our service standards are inconsistent, not challenging in some areas, and we
- The quality of the face-to-face and telephone service is relatively slow and of poor quality;
- Service requests are not routed or executed consistently, leading to a poor customer experience and a high level of rework and high 'cost of failure';
- The quality of response to complaints is not good, and we are not collating, joining-up and using the customer intelligence we have available.

4.2 Priority Setting

Current weaknesses cannot be addressed overnight, and a prioritised roadmap is required. However, a set of priorities for immediate action

have been recognised by SMT, and are set-out in the *Two Star Manifesto*. These are:

1. Provide a clear, high quality and fully accessible customer offering:
 - Refreshed service standards and an extended offer for vulnerable residents;;
 - Tenants', leaseholders', and repairs' handbooks, leaflets and website;
2. Develop a centralised, in-house customer service function and access 'hub':
 - Specialist management and highly trained customer service advisors;
 - Deliver front-line face-to-face and telephony services from a central 'hub';
 - Develop a strong two-way connection with operational delivery functions;
3. Improve the quality of response and effectiveness of the Repairs Service Centre:
 - Set and manage expectations of repairs ordering (including overnight service);
 - Roll-out new ordering rules, advisor training, content, management reporting;
4. Rationalise handling of non-repairs telephone contacts and bring in-house:
 - Simplified access map;
 - Call handling by THH staff;
5. Migrate the provision of face-to-face services to the in-house customer services function:
 - Open two THH customer access points (one of which will be the 'hub');
 - Work with LBTH to improve quality of remaining OSS and strengthen local contact.

Further detail is attached at appendix six.

5. Update post the Lakanal House Fire 3rd July 2009

Board Members will be aware of the fire in Camberwell that lead to a loss of life and the subsequent concerns regarding safety in similar blocks and, more generally, within public housing. This note provides Board Members with an update on the action taken by Tower Hamlets Homes as a result.

5.1 Actions Completed

- The 13 blocks that were initially thought to be of a similar design blocks were inspected within 48 hours and were found to have key design differences. Any repairs identified in the common parts have been addressed;

- Within 3 weeks all blocks over 8 storeys were inspected (54 in total by 1/08/09);
- Servicing of dry/wet risers, emergency lighting and automatic smoke detection/venting windows was bought forward;
- A Joint letter from myself and Bruce Epsley, the Borough Commander (LFB), was delivered to the blocks over eight storeys in height with a LFB advice leaflet (completed by 1/08/09);
- Residents received information about what to do the case of a fire via THH Residents leaflet "Open Door";
- THH Website has included links to the London Fire Brigades website providing further information about fire safety in the home for residents to access.

5.2 Actions Underway

- All residents will receive the London Fire Brigade information leaflet advising them what to do in the case of an emergency in the THH Residents leaflet "Open Door";
- The SMT agreed a Report for the delivery of Fire Risk Assessments which included;
 - To establish a Specialist Surveyor post for 12 months to undertake Fire Risk Assessments for THH managed properties;
 - As an interim arrangement the Health and Safety Team to continue undertaking Fire Risk Assessments for blocks between 6-8 storeys (blocks 8 storeys and above have already been inspected);
 - To establish a central Fire Risk Assessment register with all relevant information and auditable actions to demonstrate that THH has complied with the statutory requirements as required by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (RRFSO);
 - Housing and Customer Access Directorate to address estate management issues identified via the Fire Risk Assessments;
 - Housing and Customer Access Directorate to establish policies, standards and associated actions relevant to fire safety for common parts.
- Asset Management are reviewing the Knight Report, commissioned by the Department for Communities and Local Government, and identifying any actions to address the issues identified.

6. Fire at Ellen Wilkinson House

Board Members may have heard about an explosion at Ellen Wilkinson House on 11 August which sadly resulted in a resident being killed. One family were provided with temporary accommodation in a hotel for the night, all others were let back into the property, and as of the 12 August all the families in the block were allowed to return.

The deceased was the son of the tenant. He was not known to have any vulnerability; social services confirmed that he was not known to them and Bethnal Green Mental Health Team who informed us that he was known to the Early Intervention team.

No other properties suffered major damage. A neighbouring property had a cracked window pane and the property below suffered some damage to electrical wiring. Both were dealt with on an emergency basis. A further property has had a lock change due to forced entry by the emergency services.

I received a note from Cllr Rofique Ahmed asking me to thank Paul Herbert, Dave Boyle and Noel Walsh 'for their whole hearted help and support throughout the night to my constituents'.

7. Leaseholder Update

7.1 Collection rates

The collection rate for service charges [including major works] in recent months is as follows:

- April £1,225,405
- May £813,144
- June £525,946
- July £1,444,731

April was the month that we issued the first batch of clean accounts which resulted in a high level of collection. In the first week of August we collected £400,000, the highest since April and a very positive sign.

7.2 Arrears recovery work

- We have 9205 current leaseholder accounts (and an additional 11,448 former leaseholder accounts) ;
- Patches split to 16 areas and all officers are given individual target per month ;
- Officers are sending letters to their highest arrears cases (In June letters were sent chasing over £4m debt);
- Collection increased significantly in July and early indications show this is containing;
- Sublets targeted 2000 accounts with £10million arrears receiving letters throughout August;
- Good quality data being collected on every phone call [telephone numbers e-mails etc which will help with future recovery];
- Every phone call where a leaseholder is in debt is used as an opportunity to collect payment by debit or credit card immediately or make a payment plan.

8. Ocean

Finally just a note to inform Board Members that on Tuesday 25 August the demolition of Aden House on the Ocean estate was started. I think everyone has been aware of the issues with squatting on the Ocean and this demolition, the first of seven blocks, marks the start of real change in an area that has seen a number of false starts in the past.

Appendix One

Proposed Timetable for Board meetings in 2010

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings start at 6.30pm

Month	PMC	Chairs Forum	Board	ODC	F&AC
January			Thurs 14 (formal)	19	26
February	Mon 1	9 (5.00pm)	9 (Forum)	-	23
March	Mon 1		9 (formal)	16	23
April	Thurs 1	13 (5.00pm)	13 (Forum)	-	27
May	Mon 3		11 (formal)	18	25
June	Thurs 3	8 (5.00pm)	8 (Forum)	-	22
July	Mon 5		13 (formal)	20	27
August	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess
September	Mon 6	14 (5.00pm)	14 (Formal)	21	28
October	Mon 4		12 (Forum)	-	26
November	Thurs 4	9 (5.00pm)	9 (Formal)	Mon 15 (Eid 16)	23
December	Thurs 2		7 (Forum)	-	14

Appendix Two

Board and Committee Membership:

Table 1: Current membership

Quorum currently at 2

<i>BOARD MEMBER</i>	<i>PMC</i>	<i>Finance & Audit</i>	<i>Org Development</i>
Chris Creegan (Chair)			
Councillor Alibor Choudhury			
Sheila Beeton			√(Chair)
Paul Bridge	–	–	-
Ian Fincher		√	√
Councillor Fazlul Haque	√		√
Councillor Shafiqul Haque		√	
Councillor Alex Heslop	√		
Shamsul Hoque	√		
Neil Isaac		√ (Chair)	
Councillor Denise Jones	√		
Abdool Kara	√ (Chair)		
Iain Lawson	√		
Shahanara Begum			
Independent person			

Appendix three

Proposed membership

This provides the basis of a minimum membership of 5 for each Committee and a quorum of 3 at every meeting:

BOARD MEMBER	PMC	Finance & Audit	Org Development
Chris Creegan (Chair)			
Councillor Alibor Choudhury		√	
Sheila Beeton			√(Chair)
Paul Bridge	–	–	-
Ian Fincher		√	√
Councillor Fazlul Haque	√		√
Councillor Shafiqul Haque		√	
Councillor Alex Heslop	√		
Shamsul Hoque	√		
Neil Isaac		√ (Chair)	
Councillor Denise Jones	√		
Abdool Kara	√ (Chair)		
Iain Lawson	√		√
Shahanara Begum			√
Independent person		√	

Appendix four

Service Improvement Plan

Appendix five

Vision for Neighbourhood Housing Service

Appendix six

Customer Access and Customer Care

Within a six month timescale THH will deliver distinctive, high quality, effective customer service. We must:

1. Clarify and refresh our customer offer (November 2009):

- Service standards;
- Tenancy, leasehold and repairs handbooks;
- Leaflets;
- Website.

[A workstream is in place to deliver these activities and it is not covered further]

2. Deploy a THH customer service team (October 2009):

- Appoint an experienced customer service manager;
- Specialist, trained customer service advisors;
- Delivering front-line telephony (excl. repairs) and face-to-face customer services;
- Connect to and support service delivery specialists within the Neighbourhood Housing Service and other central functions;
- Equip with service knowledge and technology support;

3. Rationalise our telephony service (January 2010):

- Set-up a service centre ('Customer Service Hub') with full call handling capability;
- Handle all general housing enquiries (364 5015) currently handled by LBTH;
- Centralise call handling for Area offices (and potentially some specialist teams);
- Rationalise repairs ordering and improve performance (LBTH customer Contact Centre), and improve performance of the overnight service (Vangent);

4. Rationalise our face-to-face service (January 2010):

- Withdraw service from the Poplar (Chrisp Street) and Bow (Gladstone) One Stop Shops;
- Open a THH 'Reception' for Poplar and Bow (co-located with the Customer Service Hub);
- Dedicated positions and 'meet and greet' space within the Bethnal Green (Rushmead) and Stepney and Wapping (Cheviot) One-Stop Shops;
- Improve local face-to-face contact through surgeries, and Repair Days etc...

5. Address other access channels (January 2010):

- Rationalise correspondence management;
- Rationalise email management
- Launch a distinctive, locally managed website and intranet;

LBTH Support

To deliver this plan, THH will need the full backing and support of LBTH:

1. Deploy a THH customer service team:

To agree the principle of THH setting-up a customer service team and taking responsibility for delivering customer services directly:

Resources

- Review and rework SLAs and agree resource allocation ;
- Identify TUPE considerations and deliver an agreed human resource plan;

Technology

- Enable THH to set-up a dedicated 'company' within Comino (corporate CRM for THH), to allow THH to manage its own customer data and mediated content;
- Enable THH to deploy Comino to service delivery team (service request management);

2. Rationalise our telephony service:

THH Customer Service Hub

To agree the principle of THH setting-up a customer service hub and:

Either -

- Work with THH to identify accommodation within the LBTH portfolio (such as 41-47 Bow Road) that could be used to as the Customer Services Hub and 'reception'
- Ensure the new BT telephone system is available to enable THH to deploy the corporate call handling solution, or support the installation of a stand-alone solution if the new system is not available
- Provide technical and facilities support to THH, to equip the accommodation

Or -

- Support THH in identifying and leasing suitable accommodation
- Provide technical and facilities support to THH, to equip the accommodation

Repairs Service:

Work in partnership to set-up and manage a two-star repairs service, by:

- Embedding a THH manager within the Customer Contact Centre for an agreed period of time to roll-out the simplified repairs ordering process, review and update ,mediated content, and develop a set of performance reports and metrics;
- Allowing service advisors provided by the repairs contractors to answer follow-up calls

Overnight Service:

Work in partnership to set-up a fit-for-purpose out-of-hours service for THH, by:

- Working jointly with Vangent to implement and manage the agreed range of OOH services;

3. Rationalise our face-to-face service:

Agree a plan to enable THH to provide a distinct face-to-face service:

- Remodel the Bethnal Green (Rushmead) OSS;
- Remodel Stepney and Wapping (Cheviot) OSS;

4. Address other access channels:

- Grant THH autonomy in developing the look and feel, and content management of a dedicated website and intranet;

Outline Design

Customer Services Team

A dedicated, specialist customer services team will provide a high-quality front-end for the service, with end-to-end responsibility for the provision of customer service. The team will take responsibility for an initial range of services from launch and extend ownership over time. At launch it will:

- Respond to general telephone requests (excluding repairs and specialist team calls);
- Deliver a face-to-face services at the two new THH access points and at the dedicated ;
- Support the provision of local face-to-face services (mobile, estate-based drop-ins);
- Undertake customer service support activities (correspondence, profiling, satisfaction surveys, outbound calling, mailings);
- Oversee customer service provision delivered by LBTH.

To be successful, the team will require:

- A specialist, experienced customer services manager;
- Industry standard roles and job descriptions;
- Recruitment based on an aptitude for customer care (existing staff/new full-time recruits)
- A comprehensive training programme and ongoing coaching/support
- Effective IT (service request management, core systems, mobile telephony)
- Networked in to service delivery specialists (communications, processes):
 - Neighbourhood Housing Service (housing officers and charge-hands)
 - ASB team
 - Voids/New Tenancy Team
 - Leasehold
 - Income management
 - Technical specialists

Customer Services Hub and dedicated access points

It is proposed that a Customer Services hub be created at a new operational location, which will provide THH with:

- A central operational base for a new customer service team and serve as a focal point for the provision of all customer and neighbourhood services;
- Service centre capability to handle a range of general service enquiries (not repairs or enquiries aimed at specialist teams), across all access channels;
- A dedicated walk-in access point for THH customers.

The proposed initial configuration of access points is:

Bow (Gladstone Place): Replace with a dedicated THH access point/hub

Poplar (Chrisp Street): Replace with a dedicate THH access point/hub

Within the other two One Stops Shops we will require our own service presence:

Bethnal Green (Rushmead): Dedicated counter/front of counter space

Stepney and Wapping (Cheviot): Dedicated counter/front of counter space

This configuration will be in-place at the time of the full inspection, but part of a roadmap to bring all customer services (excluding repairs) in-house.

Face-to-face Service Provision

We must create a high quality 'customer experience' at all THH access points. Our model for our dedicated access points we will be to provide:

- Clearly sign-posted locations
- An open plan, well laid out, and welcoming environment
- High quality information
- Self service capability
- A mix of desk-based and floor walking service advisors
- Informal and private interview areas

The access points must be DDA compliant:

- Ramps and wide, automatic doors
- Hearing loops and dropped counters, and accessible interview rooms
- Accessible lavatories

We will offer a comprehensive and flexible service:

- Opening hours to meet resident needs (one late evening, Saturday morning)
- Take payments, broker referrals with THH specialists and third parties, order repairs etc.
- Offer pre-booked and drop-in appointments with customer service and specialist staff
- Offer specialist advice sessions (benefits etc.)

An extended range of face-to-face service options needs consideration, with a view to providing an extended range of access points prior to the inspection:

- Part-time offices (old neighbourhood offices, community halls);
- Mobile office;
- Shared offices (RSLs, service partners).

Telephone Service Provision

Access Number Strategy

Telephone access to the service is currently handled through a range of central and specialist support team numbers:

LBTH Customer Contact Centre (Vangent – out of hours):

General Housing	020 7364 5015
Repairs	0800 376 1637
	0800 736 1638 (Sylheti)

Area Offices:

Bethnal Green	020 7364 3880
Poplar	020 7364 5120
Bow	020 7364 3335
Stepney & Wapping	020 7364 3844

Leasehold Services: 020 7364 0732

Estate Management: 020 7536 5675

Other team numbers: Rent arrears, FTA, rent accounting
Complaints

Specialist help lines:
ASB 0800 917 5918

DV	0808 200 0247
Hate Crime	0800 138 0521
Noise Patrol	020 7364 5007
Fraud	020 7364 1222

Prior to the inspection we must simplify our access number strategy:

Repairs: As now (but see improvement actions below)
[The repairs and maintenance contract to be let from April 2011 will include customer service provision]

General Housing/Areas/ Estate management: Single access number (08nn + mobile friendly alternative)

Other Team Numbers: Calls handled by the central THH customer services team

Specialist help lines: Review front-line customer service provision on a case by case basis for inclusion in THH service centre model

As now (subject to management of P1 ASB cases)

Telephone Service Provision

The repairs ordering service (representing 60-70% of all customer contacts) provided through the LBTH Customer Contact Centre is currently an area of weakness:

- The timeliness (wait time) and percentage of call answered does not meet our targets
- The quality of care is not to the standard we aspire to
- The accuracy of orders placed and appointment setting is variable, resulting in a very high percentage of repeat calls and callbacks
- A comparatively high level of emergency orders are raised
- The new contract with Vangent for the provision of the out-of-hours service is not yet operating effectively
- This level of customer care results in poor levels of satisfaction with the service.

A fundamental re-shaping of the service is required, undertaken in partnership with LBTH, to ensure the service meets our customers' expectations. This will be achieved by embedding a THH team leader (could be a specialist interim hire) to oversee restructuring and to monitor the service until it meets performance targets. This will involve:

- Deploying the simplified Schedule of Rates codes and business rules set-out in the repairs handbook
- Deploying the web-based diagnostics tool already purchased
- Provide general training and support in housing to advisors
- Routing follow-up calls to the embedded contractors
- Developing a management information suite with the Call Centre Analyst
- Resolve operational issues arising (contractors, leasehold service requests, variations etc.)
- Resolving out-of-hours service issues directly with Vangent