

Housing, Finance and Customer Services Committee Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Committee date: 28th November 2018

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Portfolio: Housing and Customer Services

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- To ensure a smooth transition of CWH services back to in-house management while continuing to maintain and further improve service provision to CWH tenants and leaseholders
- Ensuring fire safety programmes are implemented to the Council's housing stock
- To Improve and expand on services around homelessness prevention
- Continue the digitisation of the Council's customer services and modernise the council's website to make our services easy to access

1. CityWest Homes (CWH)

City West Homes Board agreed on 6th November the termination of the Management Agreement by mutual consent (with WCC) with a termination date of 31 March 2019 (or such earlier or later date as the parties may agree)

Separate to the decision of the council to bring CWH back under direct council control with effect from 1/4/19 the council has asked CWH to close the City West Residential (CWR) arm of CWH. This is largely down to reputational issues due to being fined £15,000 by WCC Trading Standards in December 2017 and being placed on the rogue landlords and property agents database. Prior to making the formal decision to close down this trading arm of CWH, City West's board has agreed that a 2 week staff consultation is to run from 7-22 November 2018 subject to which the decision to close the CWR arm will be formally determined.

1.1 Contact Centre Update

The contact centre has experienced a number of challenges in recent months including high levels of staff attrition and sickness leading to a dip in performance. The contact centre also took back responsibility for repairs call handling from Agilisys in July.

An improvement plan is in place and a strong recruitment and training programme in progress. It is anticipated that the service will begin to stabilise during November. Focus for the remainder of 2018/19 will be to continue to improve the quality of service whilst delivering an improving level of performance in call handling rates.

1.1.2 Performance

In total, the contact centre received 59,751 calls in Q2, an increase of 1% from the previous quarter. The abandonment rate has increased in September; however year to date performance is within target at 8.1%. The Calls Abandoned target is 8%. Q1 and Q2 Performance can be found in the table below.

	April	May	June	July	August	Sept
Calls offered	19819	19322	19847	20195	20346	19210
First contact resolution	69%	74%	65%	62%	62%	54%
Average wait time	1:15	1:02	1:19	1:06	2:44	07:19
% calls answered in 30 seconds	69.17%	71%	65%	69%	46%	22%
% calls abandoned	3.9%	3.4%	4.6%	4.0%	9.7%	26%

Recently the IVR on the telephony platform was streamlined, which has removed the need for customers to navigate the previous complex system and deliver a more accessible service.

Average wait times significantly increased in September when the Contact Centre experienced extremely high levels of absence. In addition, the service was operating with a higher than usual number of vacancies. These vacancies have been filled during October with staffing levels now back to an acceptable level. It should be noted that more than half the staff in the contact centre are new recruits.

In order to deal with the expected increase in calls during the winter, from the 1st November all new repairs requests will be handled by Agilisys. This will also allow for additional capacity to facilitate the planned training programme for all Customer Service Advisor's. The Agilisys support will continue throughout the winter period up to March 2019.

The contact centre is also responsible for handling customer email enquiries. In Q2 10,176 were received and 56% were responded to two working days. Extra resources have been deployed to improve response times.

1.1.3 The issues affecting service delivery

A training program will be delivered during November to upskill staff. The programme will provide all call handlers with repairs refresher, product knowledge and systems training and upskilling on housing management and leasehold processes.

Additional training will also be provided on complaints handling and a day dedicated to customer service skills focussing on delivering services in a professional, positive and caring manner and developing empathy. To ensure the training is fully embedded a new survey that focusses on the way a call is handled is now in place.

1.1.4 Complaints

241 Complaints were received in Q2, with 191 in relation to a repair (79%) compared to 80% in Q1 of the total complaint volumes. The volumes of formal complaints have significantly reduced with 111 formal complaints received in July, 71 in August and 57 in September. There has been a considerable amount of work carried out with the repairs team to ensure that a quality response is issued to the customer.

Satisfaction with complaint handling is 53% year to date, this is based on 47 surveys, some customers have noted that the length of time taken to handle their response as a contributory factor to dissatisfaction.

1.2 Developing a Local Offer

The Local Offer is CWH's commitment to work with residents to identify and resolve local priorities.

The Housing teams will work in partnership with residents, the Council, other landlords, and private sector organisations to improve services, gain support for local initiatives, and give residents a voice in their neighbourhood.

The Local Offer will also cover other concerns residents may have, such as service delivery, maintaining their tenancy, the time and effort invested in the estate and open spaces, support with training, employment, welfare advice and making the community a cleaner and safer place to live. As a result, Local Offers may differ from area to area dependant on what is important to the local residents.

The aim is to –

1. Focus on issues that are important to residents
2. Improve consistency and efficiency of services to all residents
3. Engage residents in the shaping and delivery of services
4. Improve the maintenance and upkeep of the environment
5. Ensure Westminster neighbourhoods are safe places to live

1.2.1 Resident priorities

In order to ensure that the main issues for residents are captured a variety of methods will be used. These will include a survey, 5 Open Door events, group meetings and meeting Resident Associations.

1.2.2 Who is involved in the Neighbourhood Offer?

The Housing Services Advisors (HSAs) will lead on the offers for their patches. They will work alongside a group of residents, other departments and any organisation that may have an impact in the area. They will, by using their local knowledge, draw up a list of relevant key public and private sector organisations, depending on what issues and priorities have been identified e.g. Schools, colleges, health centres, employment and training services and the Police (safer neighbourhood team, crime prevention).

1.2.3 Service offer

Although Local Offers may differ from area to area there are some core activities that will be present in all such as –

Monthly Estate Inspections where our officers and contractors will inspect and action all block and communal cleaning, repairs and health and safety issues. The results of these will be published. These inspections have already begun.

Quarterly Walkabouts where housing officers and contractors will undertake a published quarterly estate walkabout which residents and councillors will be invited to attend. This activity will commence in November 2018.

Local Housing Surgeries which already take place will be reviewed during November. The surgeries are where residents get a chance to meet their housing staff to discuss and resolve any issues e.g. ASB and rent arrears. The review will focus on the location, frequency and services provided.

1.2.4 Timescales

The intention is to have an offer that covers all estates by March next year with the first one in place by January 2019.

During October a desk top exercise was conducted to ascertain the volume of the issues dealt with by front line teams e.g. arrears levels and levels of ASB. October also saw the commencement of the new regime for Estate Inspections.

During November the approach to Local Offers will be presented to the borough Councillors. November will also see the first Open Door event. The events will see the front-line service and other tenant focussed services delivered out on the estate or nearby locations. It will also be an opportunity to gather information on the issues of importance to the residents.

1.3 Parking - Use of Traffic Management Orders (TMO)

‘Informal’ consultation, involving a factsheet, a questionnaire and six drop-in sessions, has now been completed on all estates. We have received 404 responses.

The main themes that have emerged are as follows:

- Concern that licences for bays (granting exclusive use) will be replaced with permits to park anywhere in the location. This is a by-product of traffic management orders as the legal grounds for enforcement switch from contract law to traffic law. On the Hallfield,

Wharnccliffe Gardens and Lilestone Co-op TMO, there is significant opposition to the proposal and a request that these areas not be included and instead rely solely on the bollards that are in place

- Access for disabled and elderly residents to convenient nearby space where exclusive will be lost

CWH and WCC Parking and GPH will develop a response to these issues, and the view of Ward Councillors will be sought.

CWH will then provide feedback and an updated FAQ in conjunction with the WCC Communications Team to all residents, clarifying the response to the key points raised.

Alongside this, and as the project is now entering the more technical phase, WCC parking are reviewing the project governance arrangements and plan a dedicated project manager resource be commissioned going forward. This resource has now been recruited to lead on the WCC parking project.

The requirement for CWH to repeat the consultation has caused a delay but we are working to ensure roll out commences in February 2019. Details of the proposed next steps and a timeline will be provided by the end of December 2018.

1.3.1 Estate Services Contracts

The evaluation of the commercial element (pricing) remains outstanding pending the provision of information in respect of some in-house members of staff who may be covered by TUPE. The urgency for the need for this information has been stressed. CWH have met with Joyce Golder, Principal Solicitor to identify any associated risks with timeline, given the decision to end the ALMO management agreement, and to mitigate against these.

A paper requesting an extension to the current CWH contracts from 7 December 2018 to 31 March 2019 is being presented to Project Assurance Board on 13 November, and will be passed to the Cabinet Member for decision immediately afterward.

Section 20 Notices will be issued as soon as the evaluation is complete and this is now expected to be in the second week of December.

1.4 Repairs Performance

The creation and content of the Repairs Recovery Plan was reported to the September meeting, the plan is wide ranging and the benefits are now beginning to be realised as the plan is implemented across the Repairs section.

Morgan Sindall is working with CityWest Homes responsibly, collaboratively and engaging with CityWest Homes throughout as the plan is being implemented.

The service in general is more stabilised which has been assisted by Morgan Sindall relocating key members of staff to work alongside CityWest staff at the same office location, which as well as fostering good partnering relationships provides immense benefits in resolving everyday issues and understanding closely what these issues are.

This has also been mirrored in the contact centre, with 12 Morgan Sindall employees being located in the Contact Centre to assist with more efficient management of dealing with follow-on works, the categorisation of works and the general administration of the contract.

Current labour resources within Morgan Sindall is 55 directly employed operatives on the contract, comprising 47 operatives, 6 apprentices and 2 labourers. They are currently running a recruitment campaign to increase this to 60+ operatives. In addition, they utilise directly employed sub-contractors to assist with specialist work including scaffolding, and glazing.

Year to date, as of the end of September, overall resident satisfaction with repairs is averaging 81%, 96% of all emergency works are completed within 24 hours, routine repairs are averaging 75% with Appointments Made and Kept averaging 91%.

Currently, CityWest Homes is recording 99.8% of gas CP12's being valid, (2 outstanding) our CP15's communal boilers are 100% as are our water tank testing.

Electrical in-flat testing continues to be challenging due to gaining access to properties, we have an accelerated programme in place.

1.5 Planned Preventative Maintenance

In recent months, planned preventative maintenance programmes have been created. This entailed an analysis of repairs from the previous 18 months, which confirmed that 30% - 35% of all repairs are classified as being an emergency of which 40% relate to water ingress and blocked drains.

Further analysis via the creation of 'heat maps' was completed which identified the areas and blocks of most concern. A Planned Preventative Maintenance (PPM) programme has been created which Morgan Sindall are resourcing and implementing on a priority basis. This has already involved Churchill Gardens Estate, John Aird Court, Hallfield Estate and Grosvenor and Regency.

A team of operatives visiting the block, clear all debris from the flat roof and rodding and clearing downpipes and using drainage CCTV which videos the cleaned downpipe.

The initial results have concluded that many of the downpipes are extremely blocked with a wide variety of materials and debris being removed. Also concerning is the level of corrosion to the downpipes, in particular the cast iron, with many of these pipes running through concrete floor slabs, floors or brick walls.

CityWest Homes is reviewing the ongoing maintenance and renewal of these pipes to find a solution to reducing water ingress and repair the existing pipework, e.g. by inserting an internal sleeve, or applying a protective internal surface coating to the pipes. The details of which will be provided to the asset strategy team to programme into the capital investment programme for 2019/20 to assist with reducing repair demand for these types of issues.

However, early signs are promising. The Churchill Estate has had drains cleared to several blocks and following a heavy downpour over a recent weekend, no reports were received by the Call Centre of water ingress.

In tandem with the Planned Preventative Maintenance programme, and in response to the complexity of the type of leaks being experienced, CityWest Homes is ensuring a greater focus on

improving the diagnosis, tracing and repair of leaks, speeding up the process of gaining access, improving resident communications and ensuring consequential works are attended to.

As a policy, where there is a leak within a property and the operative attends and doesn't gain access, the repair is not permitted to be cancelled. Specific cards purely relating to leaks have been printed, notifying the resident they possibly have a leak in their premises and we require access, and have a dedicated telephone number to ring.

In addition, a review of gaining access to both tenants and leaseholders properties has been reviewed and refreshed, which involve local housing management teams.

1.6 Preparation for winter

CityWest Homes is preparing for the winter months. Following the winter of last year, much has been learned as the cold temperatures experienced expose any vulnerability within the housing stock.

A comprehensive winter plan is being created with the assistance of our term contractors and includes; resource levels for each trade, out of hours arrangements, provision of sufficient materials, bottled water for emergencies, ensuring that contractors have 'sized' their resources to the level of repairs presuming worst scenario etc.

Further discussions have taken place and are ongoing to ensure there are strong links with the Contact Centre, Housing and Estate Services with a read across to the Emergency Plan and Business Continuity Plans.

1.7 Resident engagement

Five open door events are being held from November 2018 – February 2019. WCC will be consulting CWH residents at these events over the future of housing services while CWH will help residents to report or chase repairs, talk with leasehold, fire safety, health and anti-social behaviour teams. It will be promoted to CWH residents via an invite flyer through their letterbox and posters in blocks, through CityVoice, the website and social media channels.

These will take place on:

- 26 November 3pm – 7pm at ETC Venues, 1 Drummond ate SW1 2QQ
- 1 December 1pm – 5pm at Greenside Community Centre, NW8 8SR
- 24 January 2019 3 – 7pm at Stowe Centre, 258 Harrow Road W2 5ES
- 28 January 2019 3 – 7pm at Moberly Sports Centre NW10 3NB
- 21 February 5pm – 7.30pm at St Anne's Church, Covent Garden W1D 6AF

2. Fire safety

2.1 Sprinklers

The Council's Policy and Scrutiny Committee met on 27 September 2018 to consider the recommendations from the Sprinkler Task Group. All recommendations were agreed by the Committee. I will now review the recommendations and respond to Policy and Scrutiny Committee on 14th January 2019.

2.2 Cladding (General)

Following the Government's consultation, they announced they will ban the use of combustible materials, including cladding from residential buildings over 18 metres high.

Whilst CWH expect building regulations to change within the year, they do not expect the new regulations to be applied retrospectively. This means that it will simply limit materials available to products achieving a European classification of Class A1 or A2 (limited combustibility).

However, as set out in my previous update, the Council is now considering alternative insulation solutions, as recommended by CWH including non-panel options, such as rendering. A final decision will be made by December 2018 on the future system to be used on our high-rise buildings.

2.2.1 Warwick and Brindley estate towers

Whilst re-cladding work is on hold until the insulation options are reviewed, residents continue to receive additional support via the dedicated CWH fire safety team on-site and monthly fire safety update newsletters.

In addition, fire door replacement work at Warwick and Brindley estate towers is taking priority and will commence within the year. Balcony resurfacing work will follow. These two large scale projects are taking longer than expected to coordinate, as there has been a change in contractors and work design.

2.2.2 Glastonbury House and Glarus Court

The precautionary cladding replacement work at Glastonbury House remains on hold for the reasons set out above. In the meantime, CWH are moving forward with the other important fire safety work, including the retrofit of sprinklers to flats. This work remains on track for completion by October 2019.

In addition, Glarus Court (low rise, extra care scheme) will also have sprinklers retrofitted to its 20 flats, within the next 12 months. Works are likely to commence in the spring following resident consultation later this year.

2.2.3 Torridon House

CWH have received approval from Building Control and are now waiting for Planning permission to proceed with the façade replacement work at Torridon House. The Council is working together with CWH to fast track the process, which can normally take up to 12 weeks.

2.3 Fire doors

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has completed its testing of Glass Reinforced Plastic (GRP) flat front fire doors and as a result are now moving on to test the wider market, beginning with solid FD30 timber doors. MHCLG have offered to include in their upcoming testing schedule any timber fire door manufacturers CWH currently have and so CWH will be providing them with a list.

CWH are continuing to inspect communal and flat fire doors, looking at findings and planning in work where required, using a risk based approach.

As a result of this work so far, the doors across Warwick and Brindley estate towers have been identified as requiring action first and work will start this year. All other buildings will be addressed and CWH will present the programme of priority buildings later in the year, once all inspections are completed and as information from MHCLG becomes available.

2.4 Bathroom window replacement at Ingestre Court

The work to install fire safety curtains over the bathroom windows at Ingestre Court remains on track for completion in November 2018, subject to resident access. Since the last update, CWH contractors have surveyed each flat, installed the required in-flat fire detectors and commenced fitting the curtains. The curtains will remain in the closed position until the system is tested and operating to standard.

2.5 Fire Safety Improvement Plan (FSIP)

The pilot of Fire Safety Improvement Plan distribution has started and residents have begun to receive these through the post. Councilors will receive an email copy of building's FSIPs within their ward.

The actions listed within each FSIP are identified as part of the recent Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) of the building. Residents do not need to take any action when they receive these plans, but can contact CWH directly on firesafety@cwh.org.uk or using an online form on the CWH website cwh.org.uk/fire-safety if they have any questions or concerns. Their questions will be answered by CWH's in-house team of fire safety experts.

Once the pilot is completed, CWH will review feedback from residents and Councilors on the content of the plans; the amount of detail and format of the plan and supporting documents, before FSIPs become part of business as usual operations.

3. Housing Policy

3.1 The Social Housing Green Paper

Consultation on the Green Paper, "a new deal for social housing", closed on 6th November and the council responded. The consultation asked 48 questions across a range of topics and the main points and proposals are:

Ensuring resident safety

- Government will respond to the proposals of the Hackitt review on fire safety and is looking at running a pilot on engaging residents in safety issues
- A review of the Decent Homes Standard is being considered

Effective resolution of complaints

- Residents should have a stronger voice to influence decisions, challenge their landlord and improve performance. Barriers to them seeking redress should be removed and residents should be supported to make complaints
- The role of the Ombudsman is being looked at

Empowering residents and strengthening the Regulator

- League tables for social landlords with key performance indicators on repairs, housing management etc, so residents are armed with performance information in order to make comparisons between landlords
- Consideration is being given to whether landlord performance should be linked to funding or to financial incentives and penalties
- Resident engagement needs to be more consistent
- Tenants should have a stronger voice over services and views are sought on different ways of achieving this
- Better value for money for leaseholders is needed with more transparency on service charges
- Stronger regulation is being considered

Tackling stigma and celebrating thriving communities

- Social housing residents can feel stigmatised and not listened to and the relationship with them and their landlords needs to be rebalanced
- Thriving neighbourhoods should be celebrated
- There could be a new performance indicator on neighbourhood management and tackling anti-social behaviour

Expanding supply and supporting home ownership

- Support for local authorities to develop new affordable supply (an earlier consultation proposed that councils should have more flexibility to use the receipts from right to buy sales to develop new supply)
- Local authority development should generally be through the Housing Revenue Account, but local housing companies are supported in some circumstances
- The higher value voids levy and the phasing out of tenancies for life, which were part of the Housing and Planning Act 2016, are not going ahead

- Social housing should be a spring board to home ownership and ideas are sought on how to achieve this

Overall the council supports the objectives of the Green Paper and has made the following points in its response:

- An updated Decent Homes Standard is supported and it needs to be more prescriptive in the areas of achieving gas and fire safety
- Social landlords need additional powers to ensure homes are safe and decent, particularly for leasehold properties
- A new performance indicator framework is supported, but care should be taken to ensure there are like for like comparisons, which take into account the age of stock and regional differences for example
- Residents can be supported to make complaints by training all staff about them, not just those involved in complaint administration, by enabling a verbal complaint to trigger the process, in the same way a written one does and by ensuring residents are aware of support available to assist them with their complaint
- Social landlords clearly have a role in tackling the stigma experienced by social residents, through treating customers with courtesy and respect, engaging with them, investing in neighbourhoods and through good design, they cannot do this alone however and it also requires the involvement of a range of organisations. Westminster has a good record in supporting mixed communities and its estates are particularly mixed with social tenants, leaseholders and private tenants
- Homeownership is difficult in high value areas such as Westminster and conventional shared ownership does not work well, new products are needed which are “mortgageable”.

3.2 Policies to support the housing renewal programme

A new Policy for Leaseholders in Housing Renewal Areas was agreed in September 2018. It sets out the financial compensation, rehousing options and general support for resident leaseholders where the council wants to acquire their properties to enable regeneration to go ahead. The updated Policy improves the offer to resident leaseholders.

It includes a new option for resident leaseholders to buy one of the new homes on a shared equity basis as well as with an interest free equity loan from the council. With both these options resident leaseholders are expected to have similar housing costs to now. The new Policy also has better provision for leaseholders to pass on these arrangements to their heirs, which will help to keep communities together.

The equivalent Policy for tenants in housing renewal areas is also being updated and a new draft Policy will be consulted on shortly.

4. Prevention Team

4.1 Supported Housing

4.1.1 Domestic Abuse Services

The Supported Housing Commissioner has successfully led on an ambitious re-procurement of our services to support women fleeing domestic abuse. Although not a statutory requirement, Westminster City Council remains committed to providing safe and psychologically informed environments for victims of domestic abuse and we were delighted with a strong response from providers to deliver this ambitious project. As we work through the procurement process, we expect to deliver the new service from 1st April 2019.

4.1.2 Mental Health Services

The Mental Health Commissioner has led, in partnership with Adult Social Care, the largest re-procurement of mental health housing in Westminster for some years. Specifications are now out to market and we are confident of a strong response. The re-procurement is an opportunity to review our response to vulnerable residents in need of supported living and we are proud that despite challenging financial times we have not reduced the bed spaces across the whole pathway – consistently delivering more provision than many other local authorities.

4.1.3 Westminster Assessment Centre

This project continues to be a vital resource in efforts to support rough sleepers away from the streets. Latest figures from quarter two have shown a significant impact to the flow of people arriving from across the UK onto the streets of Westminster; A new rough sleeper moved into the service every 2 days and someone moved out of the project to a more positive sustainable accommodation option every 3 days. This is a great achievement given the complexity of people our outreach services find on the street. We are now looking at ways we can build on that learning to offer more and more opportunities to connect people to the support they need to live sustainable lives away from the streets of Westminster.

4.1.4 Survivors UK

Westminster City Council is the first local authority to commission a specialist service to support rough sleepers who are survivors of sexual abuse. Levels of abuse amongst rough sleepers is hugely disproportionate, since the project began, eight people in our supported housing pathway have engaged with one to one counselling and support from a specialist worker, looking at a range of topics from childhood trauma to isolation. The Holistic Trauma Worker said: “It has been an extraordinary privilege to be given the opportunity to work in partnership with Westminster Homelessness Projects. Whilst it is evident that those who have experienced trauma are at far greater risk of homelessness, which is then a compounding trauma in itself, and whilst teams working in this field are familiar with a trauma-informed perspective, traditional therapeutic services simply have not been accessible for these communities. This pilot project has been set up with the aim of making therapeutic interventions accessible for those facing the multiple difficulties resulting from historical trauma and resultant homelessness.”

4.2 Trailblazer

From March 2018 – October 2018 the Trailblazer has completed prevention activities with 145 households. Most frequently, the primary interventions have been to provide specialised housing and prevention advice and to identify support needs or risk and to then link households in with appropriate specialist services.

Our six-month evaluation shows that for 96% of households the team have engaged with, their tenancies sustained and homelessness prevented through intervention from the Trailblazer team. The remaining 4% of cases had urgent housing needs with imminent risk of homelessness and provided with planned referrals and support into the Housing Options Service.

Alongside our six-month evaluation, an independent evaluation of Trailblazer was completed. The ten clients interviewed reported that they felt that their risk of homelessness was reduced after Trailblazer support; Person-centred support from Trailblazer resulted in clients feeling more able to deal with other life challenges. For example, clients reported feeling less afraid of opening 'official' emails or letters in the future and acting on those letters. Feedback indicated a reduction in stress and therefore people were better able to manage and sustain their tenancy:

'If it wasn't for them...explaining to me about my tenancy agreement.... yes, I would have gone mad. I would have been in out of the hospital, which is not good'

Clients reported that their caseworker helped them to deal with concerns which were different to their initial or presenting concern, evidencing that the Trailblazer team are completing thorough case work and assessments and successfully identifying underlying needs prior to households self-identifying and prior to the point of crisis. These findings indicate that the existing Trailblazer service is supporting its clients effectively.

The phase two ethnographic research project is complete. The research identified a number of community and voluntary groups who are influential in the local community, critical in the dissemination of information and messaging and in supporting local residents. We are developing an engagement and local joint working strategy with the ten priority stakeholders who have emerged from this research, aiming to meet with each of them over the next few weeks.

4.3 Homelessness

The Housing Options Service has continued the transformation of its delivery of the statutory service since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) in April 2018, towards a person focused service, adopting a proactive focus on keeping people in their homes or if this is unaffordable or unsustainable and linking people into alternative housing solutions.

In the first 6 months of the HRA implementation, we are still experiencing a high volume of homeless applications. This was anticipated as we now must treat all households who approach in housing need as an applicant; in comparison with 2017/18, we have experienced an average increase of 170% in homeless applications. The service has achieved a 30% increase in preventing people from becoming homeless compared to the same period in 2017/18.

As part of the team's wider communications and change strategy we have implemented a major update and review of the housing pages on the Westminster City Council website, including compliance with the Duty to Refer requirements under Homeless Reduction Act 2017, this will improve customer access and advice for the frontline statutory service and customer interactions. Additionally, officers have rolled out a comprehensive programme of engagement to stakeholders; sessions include information related to our new statutory duties and the revised partnership and

delivery model. These were attended by over 100 staff and is now being extended to external partners and delivery of a dedicated Members session.

WCC has been accepted as a Stonewall Champion borough, as part of wider work that is being carried out by the Organisation Development team in the area of inclusivity and diversity. The team have taken this as an opportunity to commission a bespoke training package for increasing awareness our frontline homelessness services when working with LGBT+ communities in the borough and will also include targeted community based outreach sessions, to target hidden homelessness within the community.

We have undertaken a 12-month, £600,000 office refurbishment, relocation and agile working programme for our frontline homelessness delivery. This has included:

- Roll out of digital and IT solutions that allows staff to work more agilely in the delivery of advice and preventions services through community based locations and co-location with partner services in a variety of locations across the borough, which completed in November.
- The creation of a dedicated back office in Charlwood Street to stream line services across the borough and a new front facing dedicated family centre in Bruckner Street, specifically designed to enable the service to work in a person centred way to engage with families more successfully. The service is now in occupation in both sites and we are working towards the official launch of the new Housing Solutions Service on the 28th November.

4.4 Transformation

The Service Transformation lead in the Prevention Team has been working to review the governance for the Housing Solutions Contract; the new arrangements have been agreed with all partners (WCC, Passage, Shelter and Places for People). Officers have established a new Programme Board to manage work streams related to resources, risks, culture change, social value and service delivery transformation. The day-to-day delivery of the contract will continue to be monitored by the Performance and Data group monthly that will also include a move towards implementing a predictive risk analysis data set.

The Housing Solutions partnership is working to provide a Service Delivery Strategy. One year after the launch of the new contract, we have tasked the providers to take stock of year one and to produce a strategy by March 2019 of where and how they will continue to make improvements to delivery of the service. The main components for inclusion are customer experience, training and development, technology, data and establishing a culture of continuous service improvements.

5. IT and Digital

Core performance of IT is good, with no significant service or compliance issues arising in last quarter. Significant structural change has occurred, with transition of separate Bi-borough Adults IT and Westminster Digital teams into the corporate IT function, and CityWestHomes IT staff due to transition April 2019. An increased demand for IT support to a range of change initiatives including IBC (SAP) migration, City Hall recant and Windows 10 rollout planning has been absorbed.

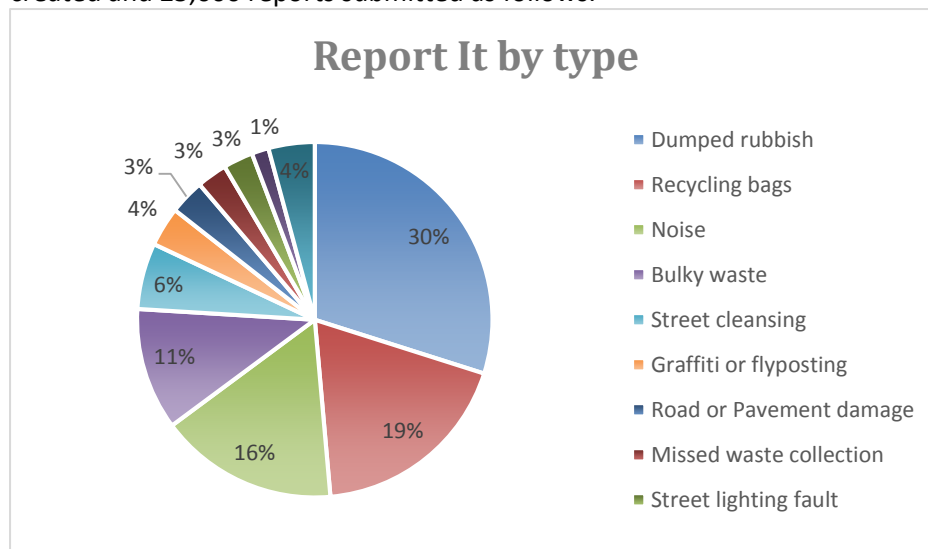
Significant emphasis has been placed on increasing digital delivery capacity for Westminster, with establishment of a new business programmes function (see below) and strengthening of architecture and portfolio governance. IT continues to work with ELT colleagues to refine and agree our wider portfolio of projects (including former digital initiatives), to maximise alignment with corporate policy priorities.

IT Business Programmes (includes former Westminster digital programme)

Corporate IT Programmes

Report It and My Account

Since implementation of this new solution in January 2018 there have been 10,000 user accounts created and 25,000 reports submitted as follows:



The underlying Microsoft Dynamics based technology platform is highly strategic for Westminster, and has delivered planned efficiencies through end-to-end integration with Council/subcontractor case management systems and workflows. However, significant usability issues have been raised.

To address these, the following improvements have been delivered over recent months:

- Removal of the requirement to register for an account to report street issues
- Review and simplification of the wording and complexity of individual report forms
- Comprehensive upgrades to the “Evolve” technology components, focussing on mobile integration and connectivity issues

Feedback to date has been broadly positive, whilst reinforcing the need for further improvements. An updated account portal and further form simplifications are scheduled for delivery before end December 2018. Furthermore the MyAccount solution will be extended to integrate with planning and licensing, supporting new “eConsultation” subscriptions to planning and licensing registers.

5.1 Contact Centre platform

Work is continuing to deploy the Microsoft Dynamics platform which underpins MyAccount into the Agilisys contact centre, replacing their existing Lagan technology. When completed at end of April 2019, this will allow the contact centre to fully support our online customers, and to use the same fully-integrated street reporting processes, improving efficiency and building a more holistic single view of our customers over time. This project will enable further deployment of our single customer

view into additional Council functions - including backoffice staff – as part of a future multi-channel contact solution which converges currently disparate Council and CWH operations.

5.2 Growth Planning & Housing, City Management & Communities IT Programmes

5.2.1 Effective Neighbourhood Working

Work has commenced, in anticipation of full business case approval, on a range of mobile working initiatives covering Food, Health & Safety, City Inspectors and the Residential Team. These require significant changes to internal system workflows (focussing on geographical area rather than professional discipline) as well as new strategic corporate capabilities including task scheduling based on resource availability and integrated mobile platforms. Delivery is expected in summer 2019.

5.2.2 eConsultation

Implementation of a new technology platform, integrated with MyAccount, and capable of replacing hardcopy consultation letters sent in response to planning and licensing applications (subject to approvals etc) is expected to complete by end December 2018.

5.2.3 Highways and Parking IT contracts

Highways technology requirements currently supported by the Council's existing *Confirm* technology include asset management and reporting, and streetworks have been subject to a recent procurement exercise. The results of this are now being reviewed to determine next steps, in context of wider opportunities of new parking contract (2020) and potential street licensing/permitting solutions.

5.2.4 CityWest Homes IT Transition

In addition to the transition of core IT staff and services (desktop, network, support etc) into the Council, opportunities are being taken to improve the service to customers wherever possible. IT are now reporting to transition board on several mobile working and contact centre initiatives intended to improve the service in the short to medium term.

5.3 Children's IT Programmes

5.3.1 Familystory

Work is proceeding towards December 2018 deadline for the first Alpha release of this platform to support practitioner engagement with families and better outcomes for children. The underlying Azure cloud hosting and local integration solutions are established, and a review is commencing on next phase approach including consolidation of historically separate legacy case management systems for Westminster and Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (as well as London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham who remain partners in this project).

5.3.2 Special Educational needs

Following market analysis and agreement on procurement approach, it is intended to award contract for a new Special Educational Needs case management system and commence transition in January 2019.

5.3.3 Access to Services

Award of contract to an established provider of Referrals & Family Hub technology is expected imminently, following which transition will commence. This is an external grant funded project.

5.4 Adults IT Programmes

We are working with Adults colleagues to supporting establishment of new customer-facing technology solutions including a web portal, e-marketplace and self-service tools.

- The new solutions will signpost and navigate residents to the most appropriate service / department, that offers greater integration with health and that support the Bi-Borough's Personalisation agenda.

- Staff and service users need an easy to use system that reduces time-spent logging on, navigating to information, services and products.
- Providers need a web portal that is informative, offers market and needs intelligence to assist with market shaping, that is easy to update and offers a way of promoting their services to residents.

Such a system will contribute towards the following strategic outcomes:

- Reduce and streamline current pathway activities
- Meet the Government Digital Service requirements around “Accessible design is good design”
- Enable ASC operational activities to be orientated towards delivering more care and resources to higher priorities and thus better value for money from operational budgets
- Facilitate greater choice and control for residents
- Offer improved outcomes for the borough and service users
- Manage demand for paid for services by supporting prevention and early intervention
- Facilitate greater number of providers operating in the social care markets

We have:

- Completed soft market testing with potential suppliers
- Drafted a commissioning and procurement approach
- Submitted a Capital bid for finance

Over the next quarter, we will:

- Host a digital visioning day on 26 November to start formalising our approach and to share our requirements with providers
- Have follow up 1:1 provider sessions to help shape our procurement approach with regards using a framework or OJEU Process
- Start WCC Gate processes to ensure compliance and integration with existing capabilities and data (eg MyAccount)
- Develop procurement documents
- Deliver a tender exercise in the New Year following which mobilisation and build will commence.

5.6 Workplace technology schemes

The major programme to upgrade over 3,000 officer laptop and desktop PCs to Windows 10, whilst also replacing existing hardware with new (primarily Microsoft Surface Pro) devices is in pilot phase, with full rollout (including to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea) due to commence in mid to late January 2019.

The IT refit of the refurbished Westminster City Hall, including new network and WiFi services and meeting room technologies is progressing, working with facilities colleagues.

6 Report It and My Account

Since the implementation of the initial Report It/My Account phase, without any promotion, there has been significant uptake with approximately 4,000 accounts registered, and 10,000 cases created.

There has been feedback from Councillors and customers that the Report It forms have not been as user-friendly as they could be. The feedback included that other Councils had implemented better solutions years before WCC had chosen to go with the Evolve platform. The areas of concern were:

- The need to register to use some of the forms
- The performance of the mapping feature
- The look and feel, particularly when accessing via mobile devices.

Many changes have now been made to the report-it in light with the comments and issues that have been raised, with continual improvements made to the user experience side of Report-it. To ensure that the tool is as customer focused as possible.

7 The Westminster website

The current WCC website was implemented in 2014 and drew on the style and success of the award winning GOV.UK website by using statutory design principles. However, many journeys on the website have been evolved to suit the needs of Council Services rather than users. The experience when carrying out transactions is fragmented. To address the root causes of the issues, beyond the aesthetics, work has commenced to revisit user journeys and interactions.

An external agency, Rainmaker, has been commissioned to review of the website through customer research, and provide a view of what customers hope to achieve when visiting, 5 'lightning sprints' has covered the following:

- Homepage
- Find It
- Apply & Pay
- What's New in Westminster
- Moving into Westminster

Incorporating the outputs from the customer research, a technical plan for implementation, as well as addressing the underlying technology has now been developed, the intention being that there will be a gradual, incremental role out of improvement to the website with final changes being made in Jan/Feb 2019.