



ISLINGTON

Housing Services

Highbury House, 5 Highbury Crescent N5 1RN

Report of : Executive Member for Housing and Community Safety

Meeting of	Date	Agenda Item	Ward(s)
Executive	6 th November 2003		All

Delete as appropriate	Exempt	Non-exempt
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If exempt under paragraph 10.4, category (1-15) of the Access to Information rules give reasons. Because:

Subject: BEST VALUE REVIEW OF HOUSING MANAGEMENT

1. Synopsis

In accordance with the Best Value Performance Plan five-year programme, a Best Value Review of Housing Management commenced in April 2003. The following is the final report of the Best Value Review of the Housing Management Service as presented to the Best Value Group on the 1st October 2003. The report sets out an improvement plan for the service and seeks Members' agreement to these proposals.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the members of the Executive approve the improvement proposals set out in sections 5 and 6 of this report, specifically;
- 2.2 The Repair Line contact centre to be expanded to incorporate delivery of additional housing services.
- 2.3 Establish a Repairs Team under one manager to oversee and be responsible for the delivery of all repairs.
- 2.4 Expand the remit of locally based void teams under one manager to cover all technical, tenancy and allocations issues.
- 2.5 Establish a Door Entry/Security Team to be responsible for commissioning, procuring and administering of all Door Entry/Security contracts.
- 2.6 Transfer responsibility for Individual Gas Servicing from technical teams in Building Solutions for Islington to Housing Management.

- 2.7 Bring together the sections responsible for Capital Programme delivery into one division.
- 2.8 Transfer the budget and clienting role of the Adaptations service from Housing to Social Services.
- 2.9 Establish the post of Principle Surveyor in Area Housing Office Surveying Teams.
- 2.10 Introduce specialist Arrears Recovery, Anti-Social Behaviour and Court Officer posts.
- 2.11 Close cash payment points at all Area Housing Offices.
- 2.12 Consider expansion of the use of Neighbourhood Wardens in consultation with tenants and leaseholders and financed through service charges.
- 2.13 Expand the duties of the Housing Investigations Team to include responsibility for legal action.
- 2.14 Merge the roles of Estate Services Officers and Caretaker Management and introduce the role of Estate Champion.
- 2.15 Pilot the immediate removal of bulk lumber on estates.
- 2.16 Centralise estate parking functions and create one estate parking database.
- 2.17 Establish and adopt a comprehensive Tenant Participation Strategy.
- 2.18 Introduce specialist Housing Officers at Holland Walk and Central Street Area Housing Offices to work with Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) and Tenant Management Co-ops (TMCs).
- 2.19 Incorporate TMOs and TMCs into the Council's email and Intranet systems to facilitate improved communication and feedback.
- 2.20 Separate leaseholder charge calculation and collection within the Home Ownership Service.
- 2.21 That the Improvement Plan, which is attached as Annexe 1, is agreed.

3. Background

- 3.1 This is the final report of the Best Value review of Housing Management services. It summarises the review and sets out a series of recommendations that will provide continuous improvement in the service to bring Islington's performance into the top quartile of London authorities.
- 3.2 The Local Government Act 1999 came into force in April 2000. It confers a requirement on all local authorities to review their services in the manner prescribed within five years. There is also a duty to consult interested parties on how this review is undertaken.
- 3.3 The Audit Commission has set up a number of inspection services to see the proper implementation of best value and raise standards across the public sector. The Housing Inspectorate will judge Islington's Housing Management service following this review. They will look at the conduct of the review, the standard of service and the service's capacity for further improvement.
- 3.4 The Housing Inspectorate will judge this service on whether the review offers an effective improvement plan, and whether the service has the capacity to implement it and improve performance. They will want to see the evidence on which decisions have been based; how the Council has promoted the review,

and the efforts made to engage tenants, leaseholders and other stakeholders in the review

- 3.5 The Council is implementing a strategy that is aimed at reaching the Government's target that all Council housing should achieve "Decent Homes Standard" by 2010. The main focus of this strategic approach is the need to address the investment gap, identified in the Housing Business Plan 2002-32, to bring Council stock to this standard.
- 3.6 The Council has taken a 'mixed economy' approach to this question with a combination of solutions to close the 'gap' and bring in additional investment to the stock.
- 3.7 The Government has stated that local authorities that set up arms length management arrangements for their housing management and who deliver high standards may apply for additional resources. A decision was taken by the Executive in May 2003 to formally bid for additional investment funding of £157M for an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO). A requirement for additional funding for the ALMO is that Housing Management services should be judged as at least 'good' (two star) in an inspection of the ALMO approximately six months after its formation.

4. Executive Summary

- 4.1 In the Housing Green Paper 'A Decent Home For All' (April 2000), the Government set out its strategy to address the historical under-investment in council housing stock. This required local authorities to bring their housing up to the Decent Homes Standard (DHS), ensuring that all housing is in a reasonable state of repair and that facilities such as kitchens and bathrooms are reasonably modern.
- 4.2 The Government provided three possible means to secure the additional investment funding necessary to achieve this standard:
- Stock Transfer
 - Private Finance Initiative (PFI)
 - Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO)
- 4.3 Housing Services have adopted a mixed economy approach to housing investment. We have completed partial stock transfers, implemented PFI schemes and let management contracts to other providers such as Hyde Northside and Circle 33. In order to bring the rest of the stock up to the DHS by 2010, the Council applied for a place in Round 3 of the ALMO Programme. This bid was accepted by the ODPM in July 2003. However, this funding is dependent on housing management provided by the ALMO being judged as at least a 'good' two star service by the Audit Commission.
- 4.4 In July 2002 Islington's Repairs and Maintenance service was inspected as part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment of the Council. They concluded that the service provided was 'fair' (one star) and offered several recommendations for improvement that have been adopted by Housing Services.
- 4.5 To assess the performance of the rest of housing management functions, a simulated inspection was commissioned from an affiliate Audit Commission housing inspector in October 2002. This too found that the service provided was a 'fair' one star service with promising prospects and again the recommendations in the report provided focus for improvement in the best value review of housing management that seeks to bring about the essential improvement in performance and customer satisfaction.
- 4.6 Satisfaction in the service has been historically low with satisfaction ratings of 41% for the years 2000-01 and 2001-02 being the lowest in London. It is likely that this dissatisfaction is linked to the comparatively low level of housing investment through the 1990's. In neighbouring Camden, for instance, the average weekly spend on housing management and repairs per unit in 2001-02 was £57.41 compared to Islington's £40.08. For Islington to match this level of expenditure would require an additional £26m each year.
- 4.7 This level of dissatisfaction was very disappointing, not least because housing management performance, as measured by a suite of performance indicators, was clearly improving. However the 2003 Tenant's Survey recorded a 9% rise in overall tenant satisfaction to 50%. The survey also said that 40% of tenants thought the service had improved over the last two years. There is a sense in this authority that

the corner has now been turned in terms of customer perception, and the improvements recommended in this report should further enhance the satisfaction of our tenants and leaseholders.

- 4.8 The most important housing service to tenants is the repairs service. It is increased satisfaction with this service, and especially access to the service through the contact centre Repair Line, that appears to have been the main factor in improved overall satisfaction levels.
- 4.9 More choice has been extended to tenants in the way that they make rent payment to the Council. They have largely exercised this choice by using their local Post Office (59%) to pay rather than their Area Housing Office (22%). The unit costs analysis of these different methods of payment show each transaction at an AHO costs nearly three times as much as any other method. The review recommends that cash collection in cash offices at AHOs should be phased out and that we continue to develop alternative value for money options for payment. This proposal will release approximately £250k pa to resource other improvements set out in this report. This recommendation caused little or no unease when discussed with Area Housing Panels as it was recognised that these resources could be better utilised.
- 4.10 There was also a level of dissatisfaction with other aspects of the service delivered from AHOs. Tenants said that the three things the Council should concentrate on improving in AHOs were:
- The length of wait to see someone
 - Ability to talk without being overheard
 - Staff knowledge
- 4.11 Indeed satisfaction with staff knowledge has fallen 15% in the last year. The review concluded that access to more housing services through a contact centre like Repair Line, with more specialist backroom support in such areas as rent arrears and anti-social behaviour should form the basis of future access to Islington's housing services.
- 4.12 There is room for debate about whether this contact centre should form part of the proposed corporate call centre, 'Contact Islington', or be a dedicated housing contact centre within the ALMO, commensurate with ALMO independence. Currently these discussions are ongoing between the Directorates of Housing and Customer Focus.
- 4.13 This would be a move away from the traditional generic housing officer approach to service delivery from AHOs, but the recommendations set out in this report suggest a gradual move of services away from AHOs to a contact centre, as determined by the ALMO Board in consultation with service users. This strategy does not presume the closure of AHOs as access points for services as there will be tenants and leaseholders who will continue to need front desk advice and support, however with the loss of council property to direct housing management through initiatives such as PFI and partial stock transfer the number of access points will be kept under review.
- 4.14 Housing Inspectors have a plain expectation that local authorities should have a set of service standards that enable customers to clearly understand what they can

expect from the Council. The review also confirmed that customers did not always know what duties and standards they should expect from, for instance, their caretaker. After three months of consultation through Area Housing Panels, tenant focus groups and staff groups, the first service standards, or Customer Commitments (CCs), have been published. These are to be followed by another twelve CCs, which will cover the range of housing functions that we hope will add to the satisfaction levels of our customers.

- 4.15 If, as we expect, our aim to improve our housing services to at least two star standard is realised through this review and the resultant improvement plan, then we will be able to access the additional ALMO funding from 2005. This will approximately double the amount of housing investment available until 2010 and, together with the ALMO's concentration on service delivery and increased tenant and leaseholder empowerment, will transform council housing services in Islington.
- 4.16 However, the additional investment means that we must increase our capacity to effectively and economically deliver decent homes. The review has found that the current process for delivering the capital programme is time consuming and repetitive and involves staff from several divisions, each with their own administration and requirements. Options for improving performance and capacity include the formation of one division with overall responsibility for delivering the capital programme. Consideration will also be given to inclusion of repairs investment within the division to improve the co-ordination and ratio between planned and responsive repairs.
- 4.17 The current practice of tendering almost every capital works job is not delivering consistently what the Council, the customers and contractors want. We are therefore undertaking a pilot framework contract in 2003/04. The second stage of this strategy is to establish a 10-year Borough-wide Framework Contract with a number of contractors that adopts the partnering principles now being adopted more widely by the Council and nationally across all public sector construction procurement.
- 4.18 The best value regime, adopted by this authority since its inception, has changed the way we plan our services. Consultation with our tenants and leaseholders is now mainstream activity and informs our strategy and processes. However, many of our clients, whilst aware that we seek their views on a whole range of housing and tenancy matters, do not always see how their input is being used. All tenants who took part in focus groups for this review were recently invited to a Challenge Day event, along with other stakeholders in the service, which sought to consult on the options set out in the interim report. Other recommendations in this report seek to ensure that tenants are kept informed about how their complaints and suggestions are utilised in the formation of housing policy and procedures.
- 4.19 Housing services in Islington are improving. With acceptance on Round 3 of the ALMO programme and with the long-term improvement plan for the service that accompanies this report, we have the chance to make a step change in performance and quality of housing that will improve the lives for our tenants and make Islington Housing a three star service.

5. Proposals for Improvement

The full set of options for improvement that the review proposed at the interim stage, are contained in the review Interim Report that was approved by the Performance Review Committee on the 4th September 2003. Following an option appraisal process, which included consultation with tenants through the Review Reference Group, a Challenge Day and Area Housing Panels, Members, staff and other stakeholders, the following proposals for improving services to the home are recommended. The list of recommendations for improvement is not exhaustive and does not include all options recommended by the review, however, the remainder are service improvements that will become part of individual work programmes for the housing functions concerned.

The Home

In July 2002 the Repairs and Maintenance service was inspected by the Housing Inspectorate as part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment of the Council. This inspection was undertaken without the service previously being subject to a best value review. In order to assist the inspectorate, a gap analysis of the service was undertaken prior to the inspection and this was made available to the inspectors. Following the inspection a number of recommendations were made. These were incorporated into the gap analysis and this in turn was turned into a working improvement plan for the repairs and maintenance service. The following proposals for improvement appeared in the review interim report and have subsequently been subject to option appraisal.

5.1 Repair Line

- 5.1.1 The Best Value Review considered that access to the repairs service through the Repair Line contact centre had proved popular, with 97% of initial contact on repairs issues through this route, and this was a major contributor to the increase in tenant satisfaction with the overall housing service. In keeping with the E-Gov agenda and in line with strategic objectives for the future, the review concludes that Repair Line should be expanded to form a Housing (or ALMO) contact centre.
- 5.1.2 The addition of supplementary housing services into the contact centre will be a planned and incremental expansion, taking into account the capacity of I.T. systems to deliver, that will include the first point of contact on rent arrears recovery, anti-social behaviour, caretaking out of hours service and rehousing issues.
- 5.1.3 Customers want a contact centre that is pro-active and builds on current practice of conducting telephone satisfaction surveys.
- 5.1.4 Future consideration will be given to outsourcing the contact centre function once it is a fully developed and working utility.
- 5.1.5 Plans are already progressing toward a corporate Islington contact centre – ‘Contact Islington’. This forms part of the ‘One Islington’ corporate agenda. On the face of it a housing contact centre does not sit well with this corporate objective.

However, a separate housing contact centre is commensurate with an ALMO's required independence. Currently these discussions are ongoing between the Directorates of Housing and Customer Focus.

- 5.1.6 Other proposals on access to the repairs service were considered in the appraisal of options. Among these was an option to transfer the repairs ordering function, including the Emergency Repair Service, to Caxton Islington. In 2004 there is to be a contractual best value review of the Joint Venture Contract with Caxton Islington. The Best Value team felt that this question amongst others was best considered as part of that review.

5.2 The Repairs Process

In order to streamline the repairs process, it is recommended by the review team to set up a repairs team under one manager to oversee and be responsible for the delivery of all repairs. This is in line with recommendations for delivery of the Capital Programme (see Capital Programme improvement recommendations below).

Consideration was also given to passing the whole client-side repairs function to the contractor and co-locating the client and contractor for all pre and post inspections. However, the review team considered that these issues should be considered in the contractual best value review of the Joint Venture Contract.

5.3 Management of Voids

- 5.3.1 Performance in the management of voids has been an area of success for the Authority in terms of the average relet-time performance indicator. In order to improve the service further and build on the success of existing locally based teams the review recommends that we expand and concentrate their remit to include:

- One manager and team to cover the technical, tenancy and allocations issues comprehensively in each area with the process managed from notice of the end of tenancy until two months into the tenancy.
- In order to facilitate more available funding for voids refurbishment it is recommended that we minimise spending on non-landlord issues by introducing mandatory visits to all properties once notice has been activated, together with a policy and procedure on recharging and reclaiming costs for non-landlord issues such as lumber clearance.

- 5.3.2 Should Housing Services receive ALMO investment funding as a result of obtaining a minimum of two stars in an inspection of the ALMO, we will consider the efficacy of upgrading properties that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard to the DHS when they become void. This will be a further raising of our Void Standard and should help increase general satisfaction with the housing service.

5.4 Door Entry and Security Systems

- 5.4.1 It is recommended that a door entry/security team be established within the services group that will be responsible for all works of this nature. They will work with local staff to establish, in consultation with residents, which systems to decommission, which to resource for improvement and repair and which new

systems to initiate. This team will lead on all projects, commissioning surveyors and architects as required and procuring and administering new maintenance contracts.

5.4.2 In the short term we will also work with our partner contractor, Caxton Islington, to upgrade maintenance and repair skills in this specialist area giving consideration to buying this in from the existing market.

5.5 Individual Gas Servicing

5.5.1 Although individual gas servicing performance has been improving for some time there needs to be a step change in the reduction of homes to which we do not get access in any one year. The review has concluded that current processes are insufficiently pro-active to make this required improvement. The review therefore recommends that:

- Appointment times are booked in advance with all tenants
- The contractor moves away from a purely weekday 9.00am – 5.00pm activity to offering evening and weekend appointments.
- The responsibility for gaining access to 'non-access' tenants will move from technical teams in Business Solutions for Islington to Housing Management.

5.5.2 In addition we will introduce incentives to the contractor to prioritise and gain access to those properties where access was not achieved in the previous financial year.

5.5.3 We will investigate the IT potential of linking the process with Islington Repair Line so that properties where gas servicing has not been completed are flagged up when a repair is requested co-ordinating the repair and service.

5.5.4 A publicity campaign will be initiated to increase public awareness with the issue of gas servicing.

5.5.4 The Tenancy Audit programme will be utilised to include access for gas servicing where this has not previously been accomplished.

5.5.5 All gas records will be entered onto OHMS (Islington's repairs software) so that these records are migrated onto SX3 when OHMS is replaced in 2004.

5.6 The Capital Programme

5.6.1 If, as we expect, our aim to improve housing services to at least two star standard is realised through this review and the resultant improvement plan, then the investment funding available until 2010 will be approximately double that of current resources. We must therefore plan the increased capacity we will need to deliver the capital programme for decent homes. The review recommends that the current processes for the capital programme, spread as they are over four of the six housing divisions, will be improved by the formation of one Asset Management division within the proposed ALMO. This division will have the responsibility and resources to deliver the capital programme from updating of the stock condition survey, development of the future maintenance plan, procuring of works and the maintenance of an asset register.

- 5.6.2 It is further recommended that the repairs service is located within this division to ensure a co-ordinated approach to asset management with special focus on the ratio between planned and responsive repairs.
- 5.6.3 In order to improve our procurement of contractors we are undertaking a pilot framework contract in this financial year. The review recommends that the second stage of this strategy should be the establishment of a ten year Borough-wide Framework Contract with a number of contractors that adopts the partnering principles now widely implemented in the Council. The objectives of this Framework Contract include the reduction of expensive duplication in multiple tendering and a significant improvement in customer care, customer liaison and reduction of customer complaints.

5.7 Adaptations

In recognition of the fact that decisions about adaptations expenditure relates to the needs of the client, the review concludes that Housing Services explore with Social Services the undertaking of a greater client role in the adaptations programme, whereby Social Services sets priorities and becomes the budget holder. This will ensure that the budget is utilised towards those in greatest need.

In order to address the lengthy average time-scale for adapting properties it is proposed that the adaptations process be subject to Service Quality Design to challenge the current procedure and effect improved redesign.

5.8 Legal Disrepair

The review concluded that the Legal Disrepair multi-disciplinary team works well in dealing with disrepair cases and no changes are recommended to the work of this team. The issue is to stop repair cases escalating into a case of disrepair.

It is clear that the Disrepair surveyors are of high quality. This is not always matched in the surveying teams based in Area Housing Offices. Where repairs are particularly difficult or prone to misdiagnosis this can lead to dissatisfaction and future disrepair issues. The review recommends that in each surveying team a Principle Surveyor is appointed on a more exacting job description to ensure that the skills are available to each team to deal with more difficult cases. This needs to be complemented by a proficient technical team in Repair Line to minimise misdiagnosis in repair requests received by the contact centre.

6. Proposals for Improvement

The Service

- 6.1 In October 2002 the housing management service in Islington underwent a simulated inspection process modelled on that overseen by the Audit Commission. The overall assessment of this inspection, expressed in Audit Commission terms, was that the Council provided a 'fair' service that has 'promising' prospects for improvement. The inspection provided early guidance on the areas that Housing Services, and later an ALMO, would need to focus on in order to bring about the

service improvements that would increase satisfaction levels among tenants and leaseholders (see 10.6).

6.2 Rent Collection and Arrears Recovery

- 6.2.1 The review believes that the creation of specialist arrears and court officers will improve the collection of rent and arrears recovery and will provide a fairer and more consistent service for the tenants of this authority, meeting the demands of the tenants we have consulted.
- 6.2.2 It is further envisaged that once these specialist arrears officers are in place that the provision of arrears collection should be centralised as back room support to the proposed housing contact centre providing a more effective service with a consistent approach.
- 6.2.3 It was determined during the review that nearly 60% of tenants now pay their rent via the Post Office. In 2002/3 only 22% of tenants used the cash collection facility in our Area Housing Offices to pay their rent. The cost to the Council of each transaction in AHOs is approximately £1.00 more than in Post Offices. As these costs are fixed and the numbers using this method of payment continues to fall these costs will increase. With 12,000 such transactions a month, the review concluded that this represents poor value for money for our tenants. We therefore recommend that cash collection at AHOs be phased out and that we should continue to develop additional methods of payment such as the recent introduction of credit/debit card payment through Repair Line.
- 6.2.4 In May 2003 the Housing Benefit contract with ITNet was discontinued. In furtherance of improvement to this service, the review recommends the continued devolving of Housing Benefit services to AHOs to provide a seamless service where individual HB circumstances are taken into account, effecting more control over arrears recovery and presenting a more joined up service in court.

6.3 Tenancy Management

- 6.3.1 **Anti Social Behaviour**
Dealing with anti-social behaviour is an area within tenancy management where considerable improvement has been made. There is a sound strategy, innovative practice, including the introduction of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs), which have been adopted as good practice by the Home Office.
- 6.3.2 To further improve this service the review recommends that the responsibility for all casework be retained within the local office structure but that we introduce specialist officers to deal with this area of work. That we also retain the central Anti-Social Behaviour team to promote and disseminate good practice but that their brief be widened to include harassment and a strengthened advice and guidance role.
- 6.3.3 In the longer term, with the introduction of a contact centre for many housing services, we may move to a contact centre approach. A customer services officer will deal with initial enquiries, with cases being passed onto a specialist ASB team where the issue cannot be resolved by initial contact.

- 6.3.4 Neighbourhood Wardens have been a popular innovation in the Lyon Street Housing Area managed by Hyde Northside. The funding for this scheme and one other in the Holland Walk Housing Area has been a mixture of ODPM Neighbourhood Warden Grant and contributions from the Islington Strategic Partnership Board. This funding is due to cease in 2004. In order to retain these schemes, and to add to them in other parts of the borough, we recommend that residents are consulted on their wish to see the scheme introduced into their area together with their willingness to pay for the scheme through increased service charges.
- 6.3.5 We recommend that we pilot and evaluate the use of mediation as a tool for resolving nuisance. To gain the expertise we further recommend that this service be outsourced, making use of the existing market.
- 6.3.6 Housing Investigations
The review concludes that service improvement in Housing Investigations will be effected by giving the team responsibility for clienting the complete investigation process from referral to closure including responsibility for legal action.
- 6.3.7 At the same time it is recommended that the remit of the Housing Investigations Team be extended to take on additional areas of investigation work for functions that will fall within the proposed ALMO, for example suspected non-occupation of HRA temporary accommodation by homeless applicants.
- 6.3.8 Support for vulnerable clients
As the Supporting People service has only been operational since 1st April 2003 a review of the service has not yet been undertaken. A review will take place within the first three years of the initiative, under the arrangements for Supporting People. However, in order to provide improvement to the service in the short term, we have developed a support plan template that will provide for individual plans for each of our clients. These will be drawn up in line with the supporting people framework, and in consultation and with the agreement of each client. This will offer an improved and more consistent service and one where outcomes can be more easily measured and evaluated.

6.4 Estate Services

- 6.4.1 Consideration was given in the review to the outsourcing of either the entire caretaking function or the cleaning aspect of their role. However, given that a long running review of caretaking has only recently concluded with the benefits just now coming through (see 19.3.1), the Best Value Review Team felt that this was not appropriate.
- 6.4.2 Further to the Caretaking Review recommendations the team recommend the development of the caretaking role to that of Estate Wardens who will carry out;
- Lift, lights, boiler room and tank room checks
 - Health and Safety repairs inspection checks
 - Minor repairs
 - Graffiti and steam cleaning co-ordination
 - Input on anti-social issues

6.4.3 The review found that there is some duplication in the roles of Estate Services Officers (ESOs) and Caretaker Management. There is a tendency for both these roles to be 'head down' in nature with too much ESO time spent ordering and chasing individual repair orders. This limits the more pro-active 'head-up' approach to co-ordinating services on the estate that is required. There is also little focus on anti-social behaviour. The review recommends that the roles of ESOs and Caretaker management be merged with the additional creation of one Estate Champion for each housing area to fulfil the 'head-up' role. These Estate Champions would focus on;

- Co-ordinating services rather than delivering them
- Ensuring joined up thinking about delivering repairs services and capital investment decisions
- Consultation with tenants and other stakeholders
- Publicity of services, performance and feedback to residents
- Anti-social behaviour

6.4.4 The review found that most authorities with well performing Estate Services did not store bulk waste but arranged for its immediate removal. This was found to be a high priority for tenants in Islington. The review therefore recommends that bulk waste storage is phased out in a pilot area in favour of immediate removal and that this pilot be evaluated for costs/benefits before consideration is given to rolling it out across the borough.

6.4.5 Consultation

The review recommends that we offer clients of estate services more involvement and choice through:

- The finalisation of Estate Services Agreements through continued consultation, building on the statements of service currently being produced.
- Development of an annual customer feedback process, which is estate rather than Area based.
- Investigating ways of making Area Housing Panel decisions on Compact spend more open to those areas not represented by Tenant and Resident Associations.
- Commencement of a Caretaking Improvement Group involving housing managers, Trade Unions and representatives of the Federation of Islington Tenants Associations.
- Pursuing the 'Eyes for Islington' model through the pilot planned in the Holland Walk Housing Area

6.5 Estate Parking

The review reported that the allocation of parking facilities and the management of waiting lists are currently decentralised functions administered from the Area Housing Offices. This can produce inconsistency and duplication. It is therefore recommended that these services be centralised.

This will facilitate a further recommendation for improvement, which is to develop a single database for all parking facilities.

6.6 Tenancy Consultation and Participation

- 6.6.1 Islington has a well developed structure for tenant participation and involvement through Area Housing Panels, Housing Consultative Panel, Leaseholder Forums and others (see Section 21). We also have the largest number of Tenant Management Organisations and Tenant Management Co-ops of any authority accounting for more than 10% of the stock. Islington has taken a positive but pragmatic view of tenant participation. The review confirms the view of the Affiliate Housing Inspector who reported on our Housing Management functions in November 2002 and recommends that this now needs to be projected forward into a comprehensive Tenant Participation Strategy.
- 6.6.2 The Tenant Participation Compact (TPC) is an agreement entered into between the Council and its tenants which sets out areas, some statutory and some locally agreed, in which tenants and leaseholders will be consulted and how this will be done. The current TPC is considered to be over long and not user friendly. In 2003-04 the Council and the independent Tenant's Advisor will together produce a summary of this review to be added to the Tenant's Handbook in order to bring the benefits of the Compact to all of our tenants and leaseholders.
- 6.6.3 During this review tenants commented that whilst they were aware that the Council sought their views on many housing issues it was not clear how we used this information and whether it had an effect on how we shaped policy and procedures. It is recommended that Housing Services seek to address this with the introduction of Local Service Improvement Plans (LSIP). These are designed to create a 'virtuous cycle' process that continuously takes the results from surveys and complaints analysis and feeds them through formalised action plans that will in turn translate into tangible improvements that will be reported back to residents.
- 6.6.4 The review further recommends that:

We arrange tenant/leaseholder involvement in Area Newsletter publications through inclusion of a resident on the editorial team or through resident contributions.

We develop a consultation and involvement process aimed at tenants and leaseholders involved in capital maintenance and repair schemes. This will include;

- Tenant representatives will be invited to take part in the contractor selection process
- Newsletters will inform residents once schemes are identified
- A core resident group will be set up for each scheme
- Newsletters to residents will explain the contractor's proposals
- The core resident group will meet with the contractor regularly during works

- Residents will be asked to complete a satisfaction questionnaire upon completion of works
- Newsletters to residents will report on overall project results, including resident satisfaction at the end of the project

6.6.5 It should be further noted that tenant involvement in the direct management of Housing Services will be enhanced by proposals for the ALMO Board to consist of seven tenant/leaseholder Board Directors alongside five Council nominees and five independent Directors.

6.6.6 Our six existing Area Housing Panels will remain in place as the formally convened local consultative body. Leaseholders in stock managed by the ALMO will be represented through the existing Leaseholder Forum and residents in areas managed by Hyde Northside, Partners for Islington (PFI) and TMO/TMC units will be able to feed into these processes through the ALMO's specific sub-Board for management of this stock.

6.7 TMOs and TMCs

6.7.1 The review recommends the introduction of specialist Housing Officers to work with Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) and Tenant Management Co-ops (TMCs) as piloted in the Holland Walk Housing Area.

6.7.2 The newly established Tenant Management Commissioning Team is currently developing an effective TMO performance management regime. It is recommended that we incorporate TMOs into the Council's IT systems to facilitate this through improved communication and feedback.

6.7.3 Consideration was given in the review to splitting the functions of TMO/TMC development and performance monitoring. No firm conclusion has been reached at this stage and this issue will be kept under review.

6.7.4 It is further recommended that we;

- Work with TMCs on anti-social behaviour issues, including attendance at police liaison meetings as is current practice in Holland Walk and Lyon Street AHOs.
- Introduce a standard format for TMOs to provide information on leaseholder service charges.
- Introduce a quarterly newsletter for TMO staff and committee members to disseminate information and encourage networking.
- Encourage TMOs to produce regular newsletters, hold general meetings and carry out customer satisfaction surveys.
- Investigate the feasibility of merging TMOs where their sustainability is in doubt or adjacent housing stock is split between several TMOs.

6.8 Home Ownership Services

- 6.8.1 One of the options for improving Home Ownership Services that was evaluated during option appraisal was the outsourcing of the valuation and the conveyancing services that we receive from the Borough Valuers and our Legal Services. The review recommends that we market test for valuation services that are more timely and represent better value for money. However the in-house legal service received by Housing Services will be subject to a review of support services received by the proposed ALMO in the first twelve months of its existence. It is recommended that a further analysis of the conveyancing service provided to Home Ownership forms part of that review.
- 6.8.2 Performance in calculation has been subject to significant improvement work and is now up to date, however collection of leaseholder charges performance is comparably poor. The review concluded that undertaking both of these functions through generic housing officers was contributing to poor performance with too much time allocated to calculation and insufficient resources invested in charge collection. It is recommended that these functions be split within the Home Ownership Team.
- 6.8.3 Consideration will be given to service charges collection going to a centralised arrears recovery team when that team has become established.

On major works that effect leaseholders it is recommended that the Section 20 consultation process be transferred to the section or sections commissioning the work.

6.9 Performance Monitoring and Business Planning

The review concluded that Housing Services has a robust performance management regime. Therefore no major structural changes are recommended in this report. However, improvements can be made and the following actions are recommended;

- Explore ways to increase resident involvement in the setting of divisional plan objectives and targets.
- Review departmental and divisional local KPI's to ensure reporting on key service areas such as Estate Services.
- Introduce an audit of the Business Plan by an external consultant
- Implement a nationally recognised quality assurance scheme i.e. BSI ISO 9000:2000 model.
- Introduce a system of self-managed assessments/quality audits.
- Review Performance Indicators covering the Housing Support function to ensure they meet Supporting People requirements.

- Current work in drafting service standards (customer commitments) be completed to cover all key services areas within housing as this would assist in bringing clarity of purpose to, in particular, lower levels of the organisation.

7. Scope of the Review

7.1 The scope of the review was set out in detail in the Project Initiation Document (PID) that was approved by the Best Value Group in their meeting on 21st February 2003.

The PID sets out the operational activities of the Housing Service that have been subject to review. These activities cut across all six divisions within the current Directorate and are set out below:

- Rent collection and dealing with arrears
- Tenancy management
- Estate management, including caretaking and concierge services
- Empty property management
- Stock investment and repairs
- Tenant involvement
- Right to Buy administration
- Leasehold management
- Management of other HRA assets
- Business development and performance management, including production of the HRA Business Plan

7.2 The PID explains that the review is set against a background of legislation and national and local initiatives and issues that include:

- Decent Homes Standard – the Government's target to bring all homes up to the decent home standard by 2010.
- Consideration of Housing Management's shape and role in the event of taking forward the 'in principle' decision, taken by the Executive meeting of November 2002, to move Housing Management functions to an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO)
- The priorities of stakeholders and tenants and how these groups are involved in decision-making.
- Working with neighbouring authorities and other agencies to address regional and national priorities, such as crime and disorder.
- Building reputation levels with tenants and leaseholders to be measured in increasing levels of satisfaction with the Council as landlord.

Commensurate with a possible ALMO's operational independence, support services that will be functions within the ALMO were not reviewed in the course of the Best Value Review of Housing Management. These will be subject to review, adopting a best value approach, within twelve months of the formation of the ALMO, to ensure efficiency and value for money for the tenants and leaseholders of Islington.

8. THE SERVICE

8.1 Corporate Plan

The Council's Corporate Plan provides the framework and the direction for the Council as a whole. This includes the concept of 'One Islington', designed to ensure that all Council Departments and partners work together for the benefit of those who live, work in or visit Islington. This review had at its core the Plan's four themes:

- Performance Improvement – to deliver value for money, high quality services that strive continually to improve
- Customer focus – to involve and empower communities and individuals
- Regeneration – to work effectively in partnership with Islington's diverse communities and local providers, to regenerate the borough, tackling crime, health and educational issues
- Sustainability – to work towards a sustainable 'greener' future for Islington

8.2 Housing Departmental Key Aims

The Best Value Review of Housing Management seeks to provide continuous improvement in the service in terms of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. It further seeks to maximise the contribution of the service to the Council's key aims in Housing. These are:

- Improve the Housing Service as a landlord to at least a 2 star standard
- Improve customer perception and satisfaction
- Maximise the involvement of tenants and residents in the management of their homes including the creation of an ALMO Shadow Board
- Achieve the Decent Homes Standard by 2010 and the Islington Homes Standard by 2015
- Bring back in house, and initiate a 'step change' improvement in, the Housing Benefit service
- Continue to give greater choice in Allocations and work with partners to meet housing need

8.3 Islington Housing Management division manages some 32,300 residential tenures mainly comprised of 25,000 tenancies and 7,300 leasehold properties providing a comprehensive range of landlord services. It is responsible for five of the six Area Housing Offices.

8.4 Hyde Northside manages the Lyon Street Area of the borough on behalf of Housing Services with 5,100 tenancies and 1,800 leasehold properties.

8.5 Thirty-six Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) and Tenant Management Co-operatives (TMCs) manage between them a total of 2734 homes.

8.6 This amounts to approximately 43% of the homes in the borough¹. Our updated stock condition survey (2002) shows that 61% of our homes fail the decent standard and that by 2010 a further 20% of homes may become 'non decent'. It is also acknowledged that the 'Decent Homes Standard' is a relatively modest standard and should act as a 'trigger' for action for broader investment. We have therefore adopted a decent plus criterion, the 'Islington Homes Standard', to meet our additional responsibilities and tenant priorities including lift renewal, communal and security works, double-glazing, Agenda 21 priorities and thermal upgrading. Our investment strategy and Business Plan outline our proposals for achieving this.

In addition, a variety of communal facilities like play areas, homeless reception centres and community centres are maintained by Islington Housing Management.

8.7 Client Group

The following statistics are drawn from the 2002-03 Kwest Tenant's Survey.

Household Composition	% of households
One adult aged 75 or over	9%
Two adults, at least one aged 75 or over	4%
One adult aged 60 or over	14%
Two adults, at least one aged 60 or over	6%
One adult under 60	25%
Two adults both under 60	10%
One parent with at least one child	13%
Two parents with at least one child	9%
Other	9%

Time in Home

The Council serves a relatively long-standing population. Indeed, four in ten (40%) have been in their home for 21 years or more, whilst a quarter (23%) have been a tenant for between 11 and 20 years. Around one in ten people (10%) have lived in their home for less than two years.

Work Status and Income

Around three in ten people are currently in paid employment - a fifth (22%) are employed full time, whilst 7% are employed part time and 2% are self-employed. A quarter of households (27%) contains someone who is retired, whilst a fifth house someone who is permanently sick or disabled (19%).

In terms of income, one in ten households receive less than £60, three in ten earn between £60 and £99, and a third earn between £100 and £199. A small proportion of households earns £400 or more. Around six in ten households (62%) currently receive Housing Benefit.

Ethnic Profile

¹ Housing Needs Survey 1999

Almost one in four (24.7%) of Islington residents belong to an ethnic minority group.² This proportion, although high in the national context, is below the average for Greater London and only two thirds that of inner London.

Within the broad ethnic categories of Asian or Asian British, Black or Black British and Chinese or other ethnic group, the most significant local categories are Black African, Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi in that order, although all of these groups are represented in Islington at levels below their proportions in inner London. While the proportions of residents in the Black or Black British and Chinese/other groups in the borough are above the average for London as a whole, the proportion of Islington residents in the Asian or Asian British group is well below half that for London and only slightly above the national average.

8.8 Description of Service

8.9 Area Housing Office Based Services

Housing management services in Islington are now delivered by housing teams based in six area housing offices (including one managed by Hyde Northside), the PFI 1 company 'Partners for Islington' managing some street properties and sheltered housing from offices of Circle 33 Housing Trust. The Area Housing Offices provide the following services:

- tenancy and leasehold management
- rent collection and recovery
- letting of empty properties
- management of estate services
- management of residential caretaking and estate cleaning services
- housing support, to assist tenants in maintaining their tenancy e.g. income maximisation and claiming welfare rights
- tenant and resident participation through Area Housing Panels and Tenants' Associations
- consultation on and management of major repairs and improvements to housing estates

8.10 Centrally Based Housing Management Services

8.10.1 The Home Ownership Service

Home Ownership Services deal with matters of concern to leaseholders who have purchased former council properties. They are also responsible for the raising and

² Census 2001 – Key Statistics

collection of leasehold service charges and for processing applications made under the Right to Buy Scheme.

8.10.2 Estate Parking Service

The Estate Parking Team deals with parking enforcement on estates and the introduction of new parking control schemes. The team also manages the contractor who tows away or wheel-clamps illegally parked vehicles. The Council currently operates over 150 parking control schemes.

8.10.3 Housing Investigations

A team of 8 staff deal with allegations of fraud or misuse of Council property. Most referrals are sent by area housing office staff, after initial checks have been carried out and there is concern about fraud or illegal occupation. Last year the team repossessed 80 properties from unauthorised occupants.

8.10.4 Legal Disrepair

The Legal Disrepair Team co-ordinates Housing Service's response to legal disrepair issues. The team comprises lawyers and surveyors working together to deliver a prompt and co-ordinated response to claims of legal disrepair.

8.10.5 Link Line

The Link Line service provides a 24 hour, 365 days a year community alarm service to 1600 customers. Customers are supplied with a small unit fitted in their home and are given a body pendant to wear. When activated, Link Line staff are alerted and respond by telephone. In some situations a mobile warden may be sent to the property to give assistance. The Link Line service was subject to best value review and inspection by the Audit Commission in 2001, when it was judged to be a good 'two star' service.

8.10.5 Anti Social Behaviour Team

The main role of the ASB Team is to liaise with all partners in the Crime Reduction Partnership and to provide a focus for multi-agency working. They work with others to reduce anti-social behaviour, particularly problems caused by young people on estates and around schools. Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, as pioneered in Islington, were featured in the recent Police Reform white paper.

8.10.6 The Repairs Service

Islington's Repair Service is provided in partnership with our repairs contractor Caxton Islington Ltd., who are part of the Kiers Group. Islington's Housing Management provide access to the service through Islington Repair Line, a centralised contact service, and the out of hours Emergency Repair Service. Hyde provide access to their repairs service through their Area Office. 9.00am – 5.00pm Monday to Friday.

Additional support is provided by three repair teams based at Area Housing Offices, who:

- provide technical support for the repairs function
- specify repairs over £500 and post inspect these repairs
- deal with the re-servicing of empty properties, and;
- manage planned maintenance and cyclical repair projects

8.10.7 Islington Repair Line/Emergency Repairs Service

The Repair Line is a centrally based contact centre that operates Monday to Friday from 8am – 8pm and Saturday from 8am to 12 noon. It takes and logs all repair requests from tenants. Outside of these hours the authority operates an emergency repairs service through Link Line.

8.10.8 Partnerships

Caxton Islington Ltd.

Islington Housing Services established a repairs partnership agreement with Caxton Islington in Oct 2000. Over five hundred Council staff transferred to a Joint Venture Company and the resulting Partnership has been recognised nationally as “The only contract for a manual service to meet all the model factors of an effective Strategic Service Delivery Partnership.”²

Caxton now delivers the day-to-day repairs service to all Islington tenants apart from the properties included in the first round of the Private Finance Initiative.

Hyde Northside

In 1999 a strategic decision was taken to externalise the housing management of the Lyon Street Housing Area. Following a rigorous tendering process Hyde Northside were awarded a five year contract from July 2000. They now manage all Council tenancies and leasehold properties in the Lyon Street Area on behalf of the Council.

PFI 1

The Private Finance Initiative (PFI) has been adopted as a specific solution to the investment needs of our street properties. The PFI 1 Street Property Contract for 1800 Council tenancies and 550 leaseholders was let to Partners for Improvement in Islington in May 2003. The first PFI HRA housing scheme in the country.

Circle 33 Housing Trust

In November 2001 Circle 33 Housing Trust commenced management of the authority’s sheltered housing. This will be subject to stock transfer to Circle 33 should there be a positive outcome to a ballot of the residents in November 2003.

Mullaley Ltd

Currently piloting a new partnering framework contract for cyclical repairs on the external envelope.

² Enid Allen, author of: *Strategic Partnering for Local Service Delivery: A practical guide*, New Local Government Network, June 2001.

OCO Ltd

Now in the second year of a 5 year partnering contract for the maintenance and repair of Islington's communal heating systems and commercial boilerhouses in other Islington buildings.

Caxton Gas

Now in the second year of a 5 year partnering contract for the repair and maintenance of individual gas fired heating installations.

Independent Lifts Ltd

This contractor is in the first year of a five year contract to maintain and repair lifts in housing blocks.

Otis plc

Otis are piloting a new partnering asset management contract for lift maintenance in the Finsbury and Clerkenwell area of the borough, which combines both revenue and capital spend. We chose this particular area because of the high density of high rise blocks and associated lifts.

Keir plc

Partnering contract arrangements for the major refurbishment and partial redevelopment of the Marquis Estate, on site and nearing completion.

8.11 Capital Investment Delivery

The Capital Programme is currently delivered by staff in three separate divisions within Housing Services.

The Housing Investment Team, part of the Strategy & Commissioning division, set budgets and output targets.

Area Housing Office staff propose schemes using the Stock Condition Survey and 7-year programme and consult on these proposals with Area Housing Panels.

Individual projects are then commissioned through Project Officers based at AHOs and contractors identified through the tendering process. The majority of contracts are managed by Building Solutions for Islington.

The resources available in 2002-03 were £44.6m. A full spend against these resources was achieved. In 2003-04 it is estimated that the Capital Programme will have £49.9m available.

9. THE BEST VALUE PROCESS

9.1 Methodology

The review of Housing Management was the biggest and most cross-cutting so far in Housing Services. It extended across all services received by tenants and leaseholders and touched on all six divisions in the department.

9.2 The review was led from outside of the service by Louise Round, Director of Law. The review steering group included both Islington Housing Officers and representatives of an ALMO and an RSL (see fig. 1).

9.3 The functions under review were divided under two review teams in order to make the workload more achievable. They were – Repairs/Investment and Housing Management functions. There were tenant representatives from the Federation of Tenants Associations on both of these review teams.

9.4 In turn these teams headed work groups engaged in research into current performance, comparison with other agencies, consultation with residents and other stakeholders and the other fundamentals of review. See figs 2 and 3.

Fig.1

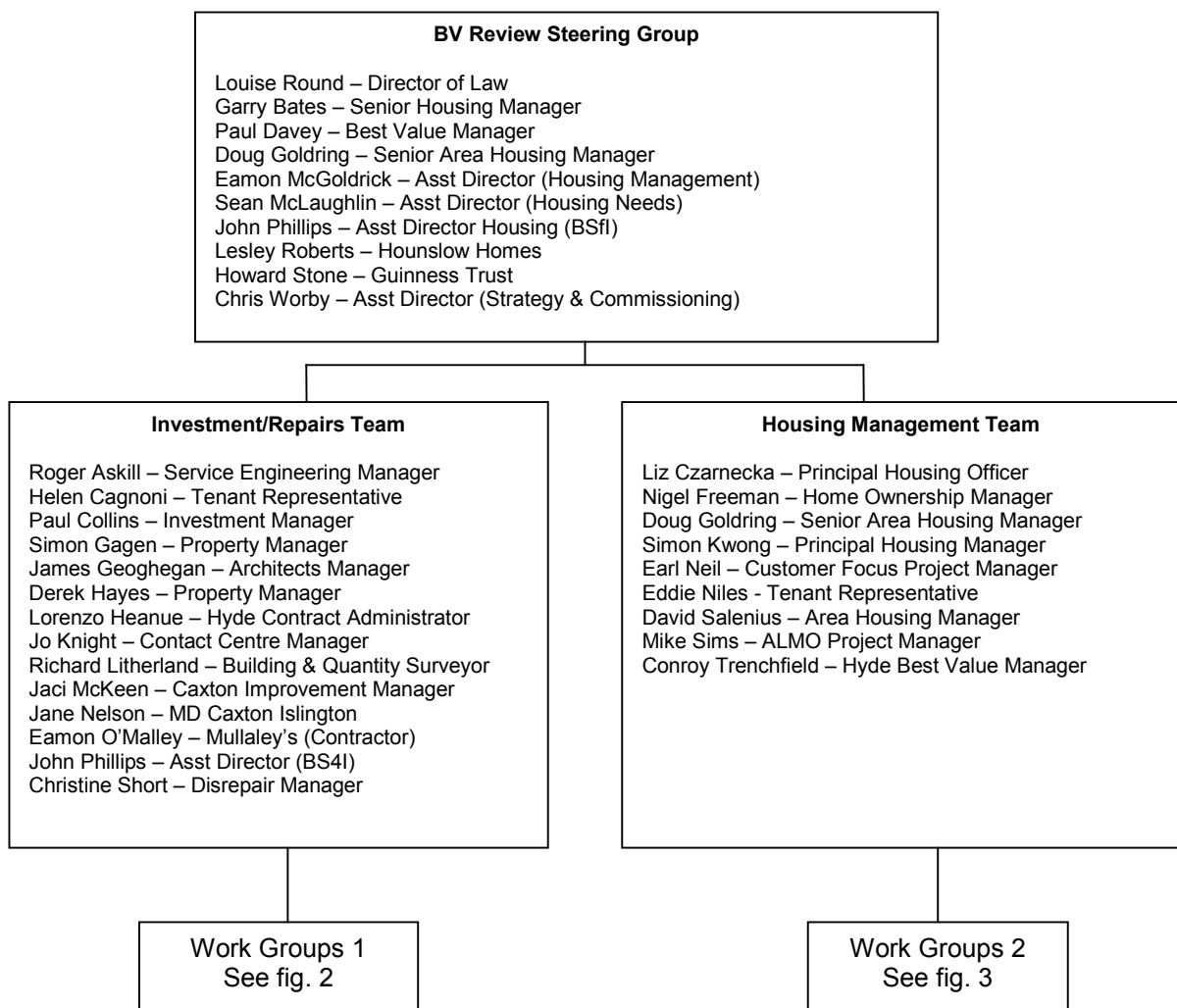


Fig. 2

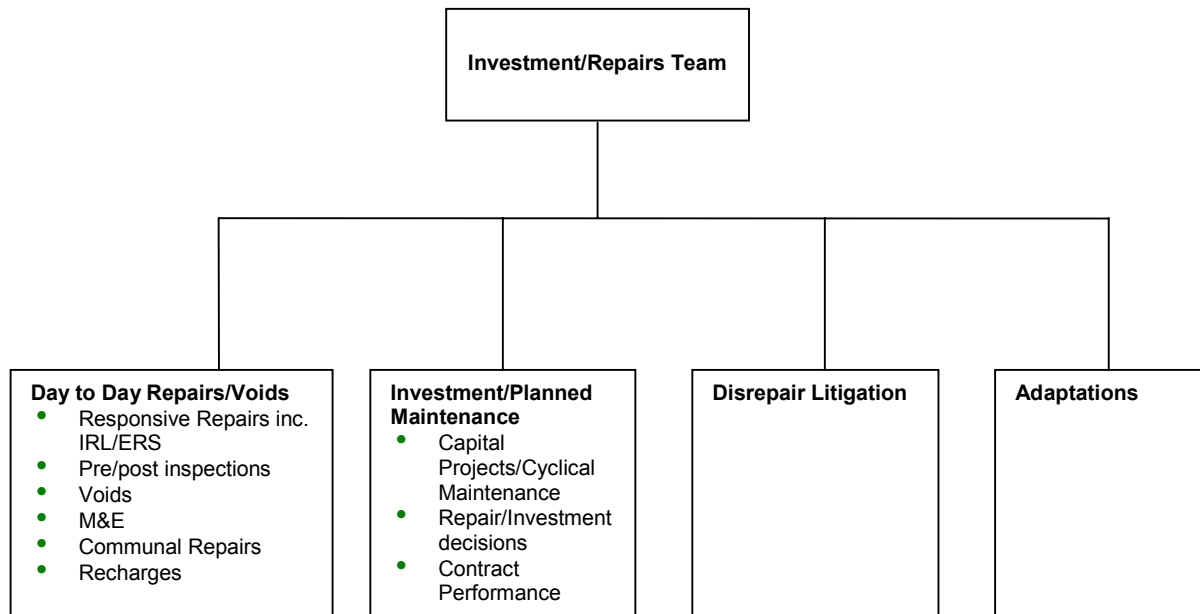
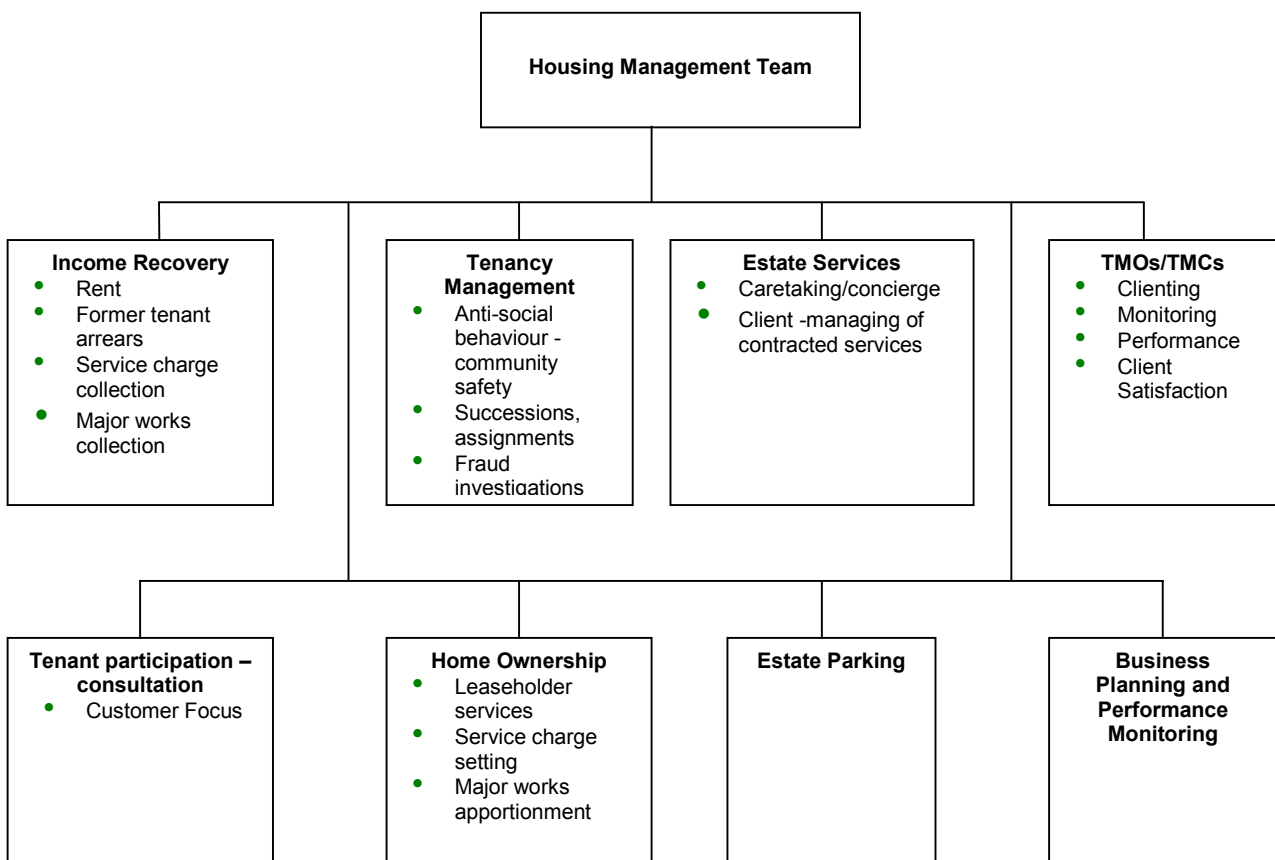


Fig. 3



10. Challenges Facing the Service

10.1 Decent homes

The Housing Green Paper, '*Quality and Choice: A decent home for all*' set out the Government's strategy to improve the quality of social housing and to bring all social housing up to a decent standard by 2010. It also announced a Public Service Agreement target to improve a third of the homes that don't meet that standard by 2004.

This is a challenging target for most local authorities, including Islington. The Council has undertaken a range of surveys, including a stock condition survey covering external parts for 100% of the stock and a representative 10% for internal parts. This assessment concluded that 61% of our stock currently fails to meet the Decent Homes Standard (DHS).

10.2 ALMO

In '*Sustainable communities: building for the future*' published in early 2003, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister reaffirmed this commitment to provide all social housing tenants with decent homes by 2010. The paper also set out three options for securing additional funding for delivering the DHS – stock transfer, setting up a high performing Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI).

Islington has taken a pragmatic mixed economy approach to meeting the DHS. This includes the completion of partial transfers, implementation of PFI schemes, the letting of management contracts to other providers (Hyde Northside and Circle 33) as well as having a large number of Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs). However these schemes alone fall far short of the investment need that the DHS implies. An option appraisal on the three investment options was conducted during 2002 and 2003. This included:

- Commissioning external assessment and advice
- Tenant and staff consultation
- Seeking Members' views on priorities
- Evaluating options against Housing Strategy objectives

This appraisal determined that the ALMO option is the one that most closely meets the aspirations of tenants and leaseholders and most clearly met the corporate and departmental objectives of the Council. A key benefit will be the separation of the authority's housing management role from its strategic housing function. It is expected that both functions will be enhanced. The benefits for the delivery of housing management services include:

- A separate organisation with a clear focus on housing management roles
- Involvement of a wider range of people, including tenants and leaseholders, in decision making through the ALMO Board and sub-Boards
- A more business-like approach to managing stock, concentrating on delivering high quality services offering value for money and responding to the needs of tenants

A bid for ALMO investment funding of £157m was delivered to the ODPM in May 2003 and Islington was accepted onto Round 3 of the programme in July 2003.

In undertaking the review of housing management, the likelihood that services would ultimately be delivered by an arms length company was fully considered when developing and appraising options for performance improvement.

10.3 eGovernment

eGovernment (eGov) is about using technology to transform the way we deliver our services using new technologies. This review seeks to use eGov to make housing management services;

- easier to reach, and generally more convenient and accessible,
- more efficient - more prompt and in line with best value guidelines, and
- more effective - understanding and being able to deliver the services our customers want from us without having to pass them from pillar to post

e-Government is an enabler for two of Islington's corporate priorities - customer focus and performance management. It underpins these organisation-wide themes.

The Government is driving all public services to get the 'UK on-line' and have set local authorities some ambitious targets for 100% electronic service delivery by the end of 2005.

This target does not just mean doing more things on-line, but actually covers all methods of customers contact - traditional channels such as telephone and face to face, as well as new ones such as internet via PCs and digital TV. It means making sure that at the point customers are served, that the information and mechanisms to resolve the query are available to staff, so that they are fully equipped to deliver excellent service there and then, without having to pass customers around the organisation.

10.4 Customer Satisfaction

A huge challenge for the authority's housing management service is the poor level of customer satisfaction with Islington as a landlord. BVPI 74 '*Satisfaction of Council house tenants with the overall service*' had been stuck at 41% for the two previous years, at a time when housing performance has measurably improved. In 2001-02 this was the worst performance in London. Islington undertakes surveys of all our tenants on an annual basis. The last such survey reported its findings in May 2003 (fig 13).

*"The findings from the 2002-03 survey are extremely positive - half of tenants express satisfaction with the service overall, compared to four in ten in the previous two years. Moreover, a lower proportion of people are dissatisfied than at the time of 2002 and 2001 projects. This finding is reflected in many positive results throughout the survey and is a clear indication that the Council's determined efforts in many different areas of service are filtering through to tenants."*³

The results to the key question are shown in the table below:

"Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall service provided by your landlord?"

³ Kwest Tenants Survey 2002-03

Response	2001	2002	2003
% satisfied	41%	41%	50%
% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	24%	23%	23%
% dissatisfied	35%	36%	26%

There is a sense in this authority that the corner has been turned in terms of customer perception. In the 2003 survey 40% of tenants said the service had improved over the previous two years. However, in order to build on this result, a key priority of the review has been to seek improvements to the housing service that will build reputation levels with tenants and leaseholders, to be measured in increasing levels of satisfaction with the Council as landlord.

10.5 Housing Demand and Supply

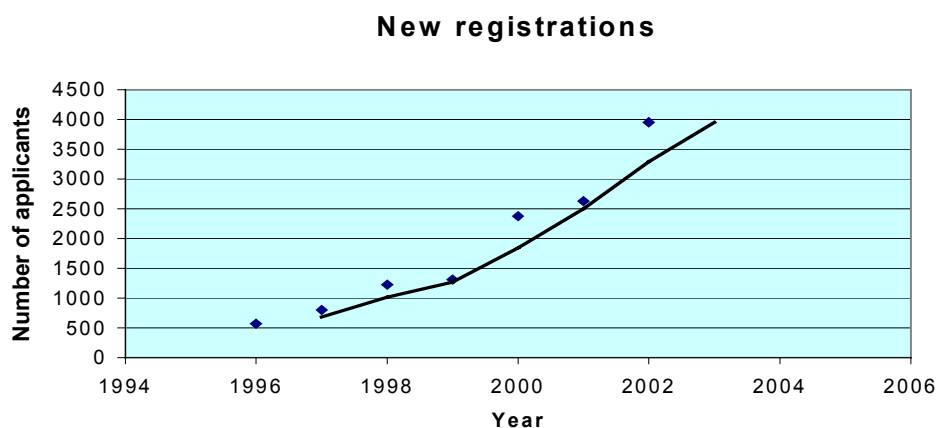
Housing supply is continuing to fall through tenant's Right to Buy (fig. 4), estate regeneration and fewer RSL new-build schemes. This is having a serious impact on the Council's ability to meet housing need. In fact more homeless households are accepted for re-housing each year than the total available supply of social housing, which must also meet the needs of key workers, transfer applicants and those inadequately housed in the private sector. The borough already has one of the highest densities of development in London, restricting new supply options. In fact the recent census confirmed that Islington is the second most densely populated area in the country (after Kensington & Chelsea) with 17k+ people per Km².

Fig. 4
2002/3 RTB applications per month

	04. 02	05. 02	06. 02	07. 02	08. 02	09. 02	10. 02	11. 02	12. 02	01. 03	02. 03	03. 03	Total
RTB Apps	171	159	123	162	322	257	300	215	115	295	519	826	3464

As supply falls, so demand continues to rise. In Islington demand is pushing prices up beyond the reach of most households, thereby increasing pressure on the rented sector. In turn, this pressure pushes private rents up, causing more people to apply for social housing (fig. 5). Numbers of homeless households in temporary accommodation continues to rise as well as applications for housing by tenants and non-tenants.

Fig. 5



10.6 Interim Best Value Inspection Report

In October 2002 Islington arranged for a simulated inspection of its housing management service by an Audit Commission affiliate Housing Inspector. The aim of the exercise was to expose the service to inspection along Audit Commission lines and to identify gaps in service provision. This gave the best value review a head start in gap analysis and provided several areas of focus for review work groups.

The report, using Audit Commission terms, scored the service as a fair 'one star' service with promising prospects for improvement. The report did not seek to evaluate the Repairs and Maintenance service or the quality of the Capital Investment programme due to a recent inspection by the Housing Inspectorate (see 10.7)

The main findings were that;

- Service access through the six area offices is good
- There is a reasonable level of consultation and resident involvement in the service with a wide variety of methods used
- There has been evident improvement in some service areas, particularly reletting empty properties and income collection.
- Significant initiatives to deal with Nuisance have been implemented

However, concerns were;

- The low level of tenant satisfaction both with the overall service and opportunities for participation
- The absence of a comprehensive Tenant Participation Strategy
- Current performance on Housing Benefits and the impact on rent collection and arrears
- Lack of evidence about the quality of estate services

10.7 Repairs & Maintenance Service Inspection

In July 2002 Housing Inspectors from the Audit Commission inspected the authority's Repairs and Maintenance service. This formed part of the judgement on Housing in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) of the Council, and did not follow an earlier Best Value Review.

Again the assessment was that the Council provides a 'fair' one-star service that has promising prospects for improvement. This conclusion was based on:

- A speedy 24-hour access to the Service through Islington Repair Line and the Emergency Repairs Service

- A reasonable level of consultation and resident involvement in the service; and
- The high level of commitment from the repairs contractor Caxton to achieving the aims of the partnership with the Council's housing service

However, concerns were that:

- The Responsive Repairs service is consistently overspending
- Survey results show that overall satisfaction with the service remains low; and
- There is inadequate response to internal audit recommendations

11. Comparison

11.1 Comparison with Other London Authorities

The Audit Commission has developed a suite of Best Value Performance Indicators against which, comparative performance can be compared and best value assessed. Best Value requires the Council to attain performance in these key areas amongst the top quartile of performances with comparative authorities. The figures and graphs shown below (pages 35-38) are based on the latest available data collected by the Audit Commission for 2001/02 (audited figures from comparator authorities for 2002/03 will not be available until December 2003).

It is also instructive to make comparison with past performance in order to monitor improvement or gaps in performance and thus end of year figures for Islington in 2002-03 are also included where available.

11.2 BVPI and Local PI Results 2002-03

11.2.1 Empty Homes (voids)

Performance in managing empty homes has improved significantly since 1997-98. That years BVPI performance was 164 days. During 2002-03, voids were re-serviced and re-let in an average of 29 days, this was almost 2 weeks ahead of our target of 42 days.

Year	97/98	98/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03
Relet Time (Days)	164	123	114	63	42	29

From April 2002 the government deleted this Best Value indicator (BVPI 68). Whilst Islington decided to retain this as a useful local measure of performance, other local authorities may not have done so. This could pose a problem in making meaningful comparisons with other local authorities for 2002-03 and beyond.

The level of performance achieved for 2002-03 of 29 days can be regarded as being amongst the top quartile performers in London. During 2001-02, Islington's performance, was in the 'lower middle quartile', this demonstrates a significant improvement in performance, (fig. 6).

Closer monitoring, improvements in empty property management following Housing Service reorganisation and a successful partnership with Caxton Islington have helped achieve this advance.

11.2.2 Repairs

With effect from April 2002, indicators BVPI 72 (urgent repairs completed in Government time limits) and BVPI 73 (non-urgent repairs completed on time in calendar days) were deleted as statutory Best Value indicators.

These have been retained as local indicators with revisions to account for our own local completion time scales. The targets we set for 2002-03 were as follows:

- LKPI 35: The percentage of urgent repairs completed within Government timescales - target = 90%
- LKPI 36: The average time taken to complete non-urgent repairs in working days - target = 16 working days

The 2001-02 BVPI 72 submission of 88% demonstrated an improvement in performance of 4.76% compared with 2000-01, but the quartile ranking was still in the lower middle quartile. The 2002-03 performance using the local measure (LKPI 35) is the one repairs indicator that shows no improvement against the previous year.

The performance against BVPI 73 in 2001-02 was 19.87 calendar days. This demonstrated an improvement in performance of 31.4% compared with 2000-01, but performance remained in the bottom quartile.

For 2002-03 using the local measure (LKPI 36) we have achieved performance of 9 working days (11 calendar days). If we apply the performance variance using calendar days as per the 2001-02 requirement, this demonstrates an improvement in performance of 44.6% compared with 2001-02 (Fig. 10). This performance places Islington in the top quartile.

From April 2002 the Government deleted ACPI D2, (the Percentage of Repair jobs for which an Appointment was both made and kept by the Authority) and replaced this with BVPI 185 with a slight change in the definition. This indicator asks for the number of appointments made and kept by the authority as a percentage of all appointments that could have been made, rather than all appointments that were made.

Since 1999-00 our position has improved quite significantly. Our performance then was 74%. This reached 94% in 2000-01 and then 98% for both 2001-02 and 2002-03. This represents an improvement in performance over the period of 28.3%. Subsequently, our ranking is in the top quartile amongst London authorities.

Overall performance on repairs suggest that we still lag behind in relation to completions of urgent jobs, although our performance since 1999/2000 does show a steady upward trend. This is particularly reflective of the hard work that has taken place since the formation of the partnership with Caxton Islington. Productivity levels have now increased in most areas of repairs management.

11.2.3 Income Collection and Rent Arrears

Our performance on rent arrears collection has improved over the last two years, however performance is still below average in comparison to other London Boroughs. The percentage of rent collected has improved from the low figure presented for 2000/1 (Fig. 8). Whilst there has been a 10% reduction in the gross arrears owed during 2001/2 and a similar reduction in 2002/3, this is partially offset by an additional rise in former tenants arrears during this period.

As would be expected, the importance of the collection of rental-income is reflected in the Government's BVPI regime. Although there are differences in the collation-methodologies between the statutory and local indicators, observation of both the BVPI's and local PI's highlights the improvements made in the collection of rental-income:

	2000/01		2001/02		2002/03	
	TARGET	ACTUAL	TARGET	ACTUAL	TARGET	ACTUAL
BVPI 66a Proportion of rent collected.	90%	91.65%	91%	91.20%	92.1%	93.00%
Local performance indicator % Debt collected	100%	98.90%*	100%	100.00%	100.5%	100.58%
Ex-BVPI 66b Rent arrears of current tenants as a proportion of the authority's rent roll	11%	11.16%*	11%	10.44%	10.3%	8.55%
Local performance indicator Current arrears per tenant	£395	£409.95*	£370	£379.48*	£361	£339.19
Local performance indicator Total Rent Arrears		£12,350,466		£11,135,737		£9,932,714

* Indicators where performance failed to meet the set target

11.2.4 Call Centres

Key Points

- Repair Line answered 84% of calls within 16 seconds during 2002-03
- Emergency Repairs Service (ERS - Out of hours) 66% of calls within 16 seconds during 2002-03
- Link Line answered 96.9% of calls within 30 seconds, and 99.0% calls within 60 seconds.

The call centre is a cornerstone of recent service improvements, especially with regard to how Islington Council handles repairs. The foremost measure of performance is the rating given to the service by its users. The level of satisfaction with the repairs service increased by 10% between surveys conducted in January

2002 and January 2003. It is no coincidence that the satisfaction level with Repair Line rose commensurately. The following table indicates that tenants are really feeling the improvements made by Repair Line:

	TENANT SATISFACTION WITH		
	REPAIRS SERVICE	REPAIRLINE – EASE OF USE	REPAIRLINE – HELPFULNESS OF STAFF REPOSE
2001/02	41%	73%	73%
2002/03	51%	82%	82%

From tenant satisfaction surveys conducted in January 2002 and January 2003

The following table indicates the progress being made in call handling:

	YEAR	NUMBER OF CALLS	% ANSWERED <16 SECONDS	AVERAGE WAITING TIME (Seconds)
Repairline	2001/02	193,941	89%	22
	2002/03	204,299	84%*	21
Emergency Repairs Service	2001/02	36,685	45.8%	60
	2002/03	20,871	66.5%	33

* This measure changed between 2001/2 and 2002/3. On the 01/02 measure the figure for 02/03 would have been 93%- an improvement of 4%. However the PI was adjusted to measure calls answered within 16 seconds.

	YEAR	NUMBER OF CALLS	% ANSWERED IN 30 SECONDS	% ANSWERED IN 60 SECONDS
Link Line	2001/02	71,861	96.9%	99.0%
	2002/03	64,975	96.8%	99.0%

The targets have been set for the year 2003-04 in order to continue the progress that has already been made in call-centre performance. The target for Repairline is 90% of calls answered inside 20 seconds, while for the Emergency Repair Service the target is now 80% of calls answered inside 20 seconds. Linkline is subject to targets in line with those set annually by the Association of Social and Community Alarm Providers (ASAP), and has met these in each of the years 2001-02 and 2003-03.

11.3 Conclusion

- Rent collection PI's are improving year by year but remain relatively poor compared to the basket of London authorities.
- Management of empty properties has improved enormously over the last five years with Islington moving from the bottom to the top quartile for 'Relet Time in Days.'

- Repairs performance is improving with speed of completing non-urgent repairs appearing to move into the top quartile and 'Appointments made and kept' remaining in the top quartile.
- However, no improvement in performance was achieved for 'Urgent repairs being completed within timescales'.
- The satisfaction with Islington as landlord has improved by 9% in one year and may reflect a turning point in the shifting of historical perceptions.
- Satisfaction with the opportunity for tenants to participate in decision making remains low, but 56% appear to be indifferent with 15% expressing dissatisfaction.

Fig. 6

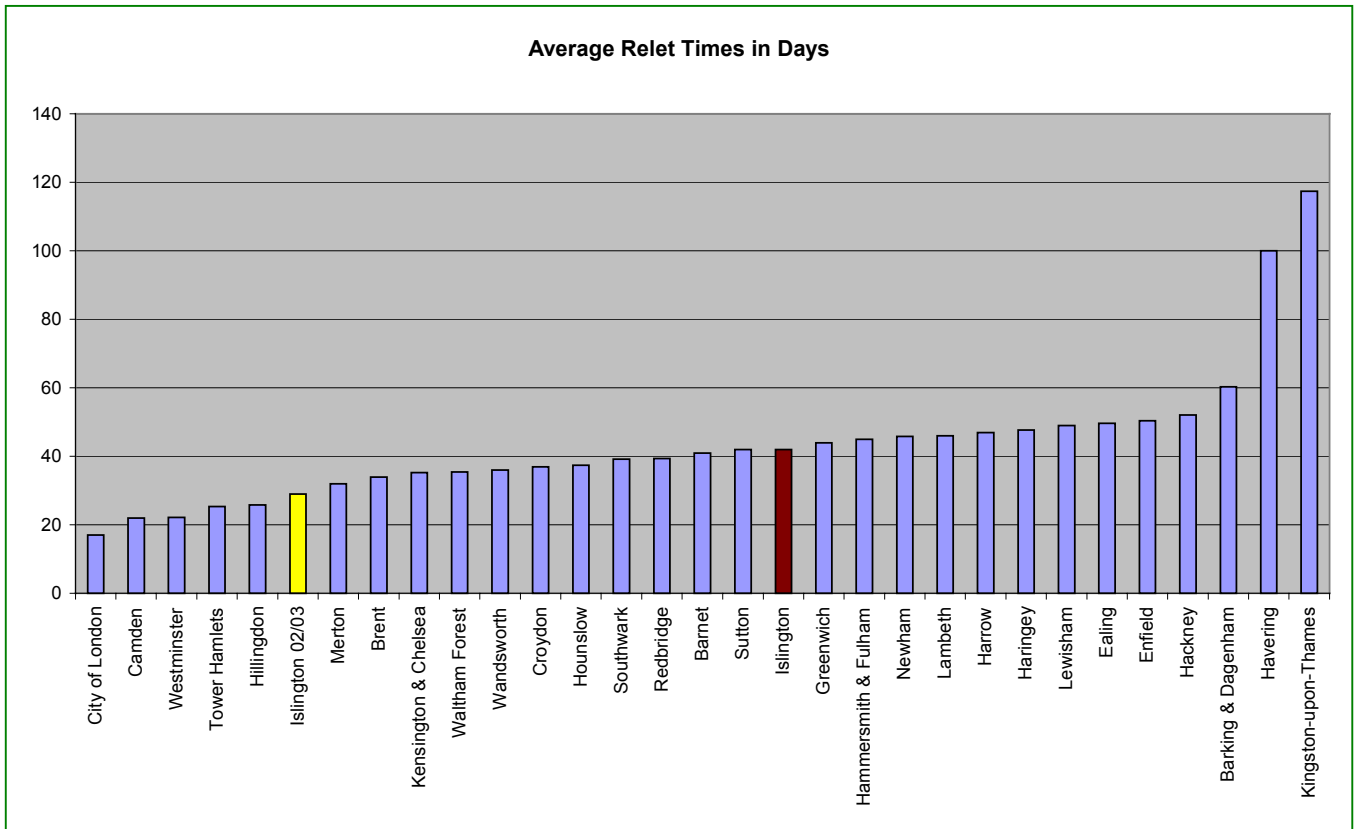


Fig. 7

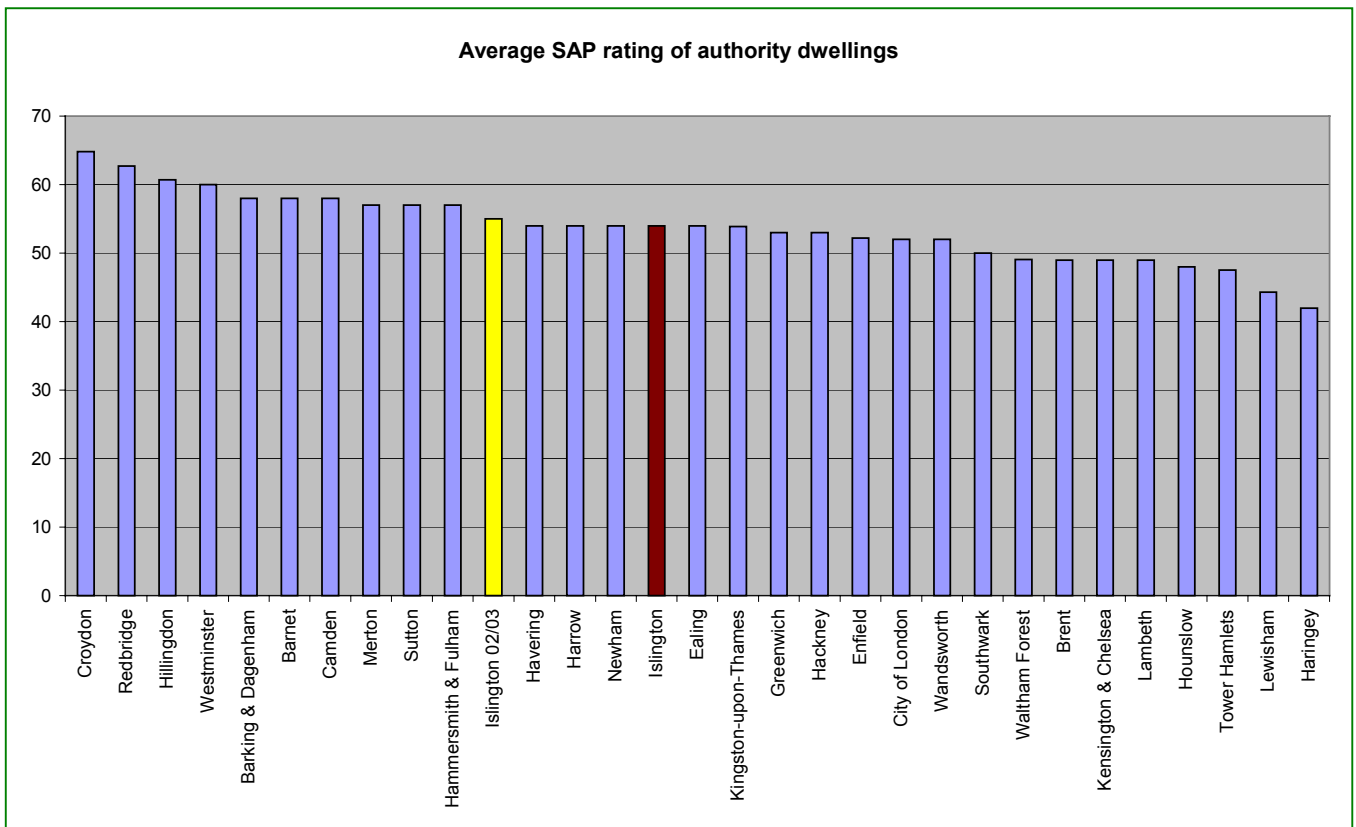


Fig. 8

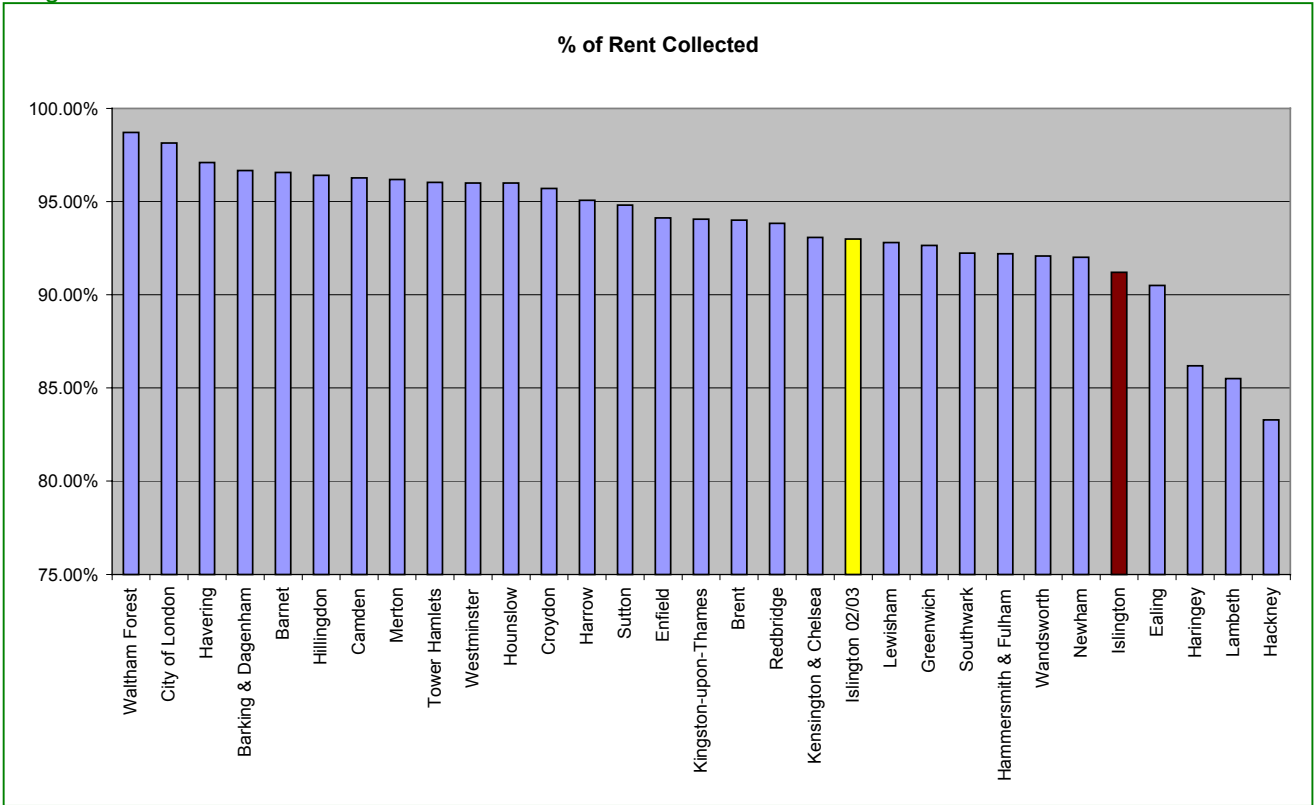


Fig. 9

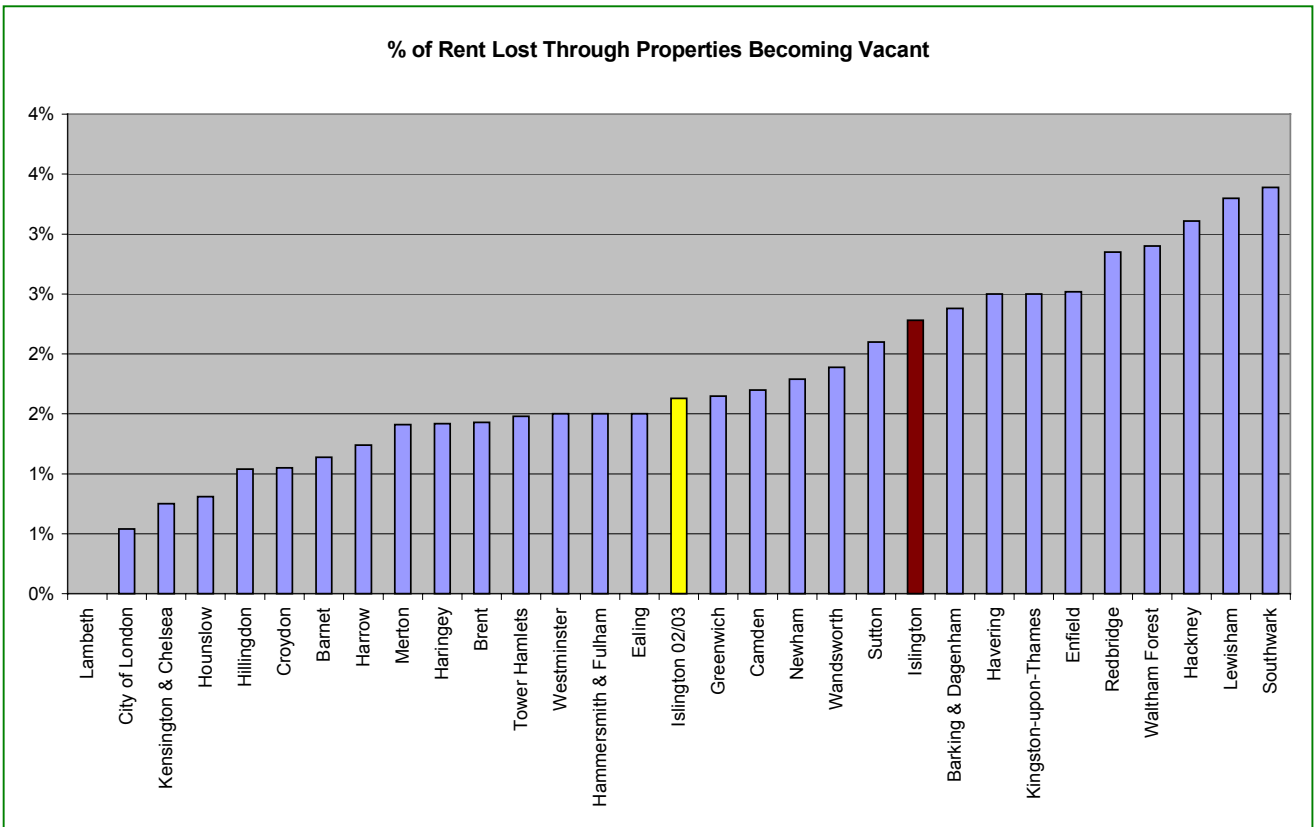


Fig. 10

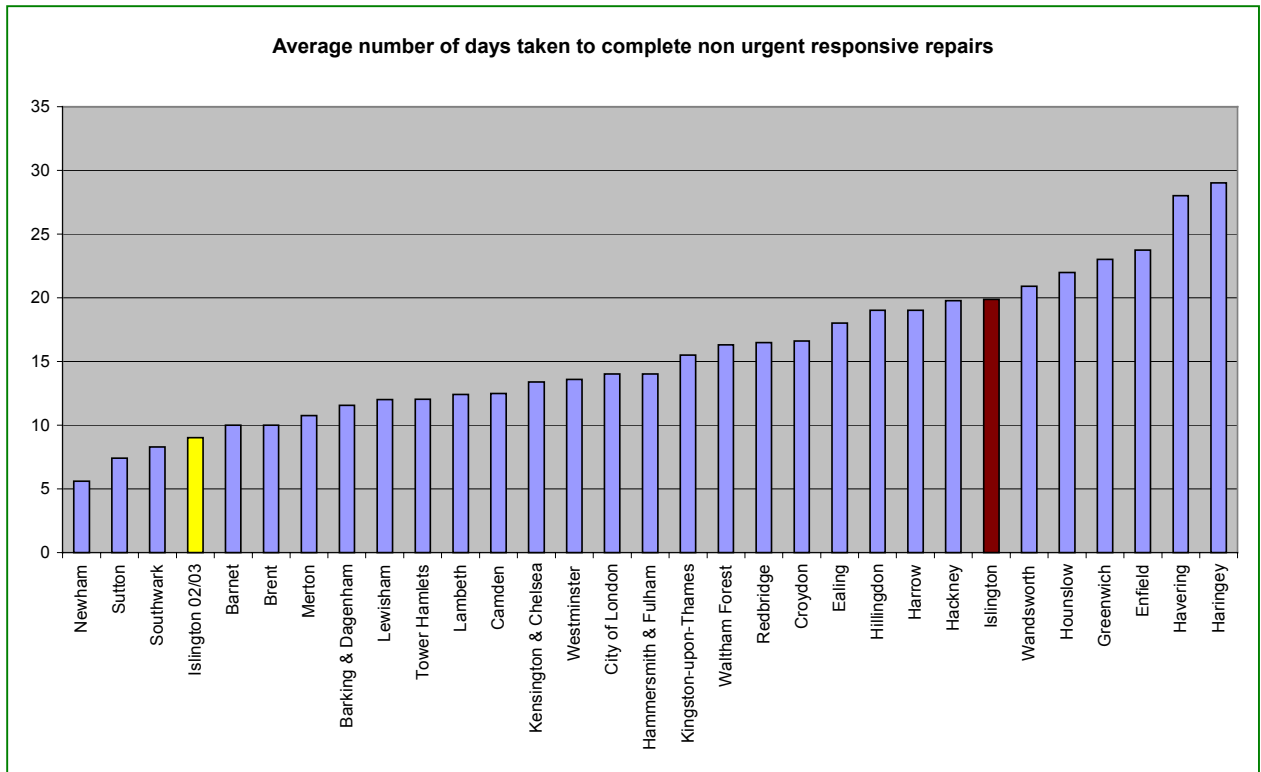


Fig. 11

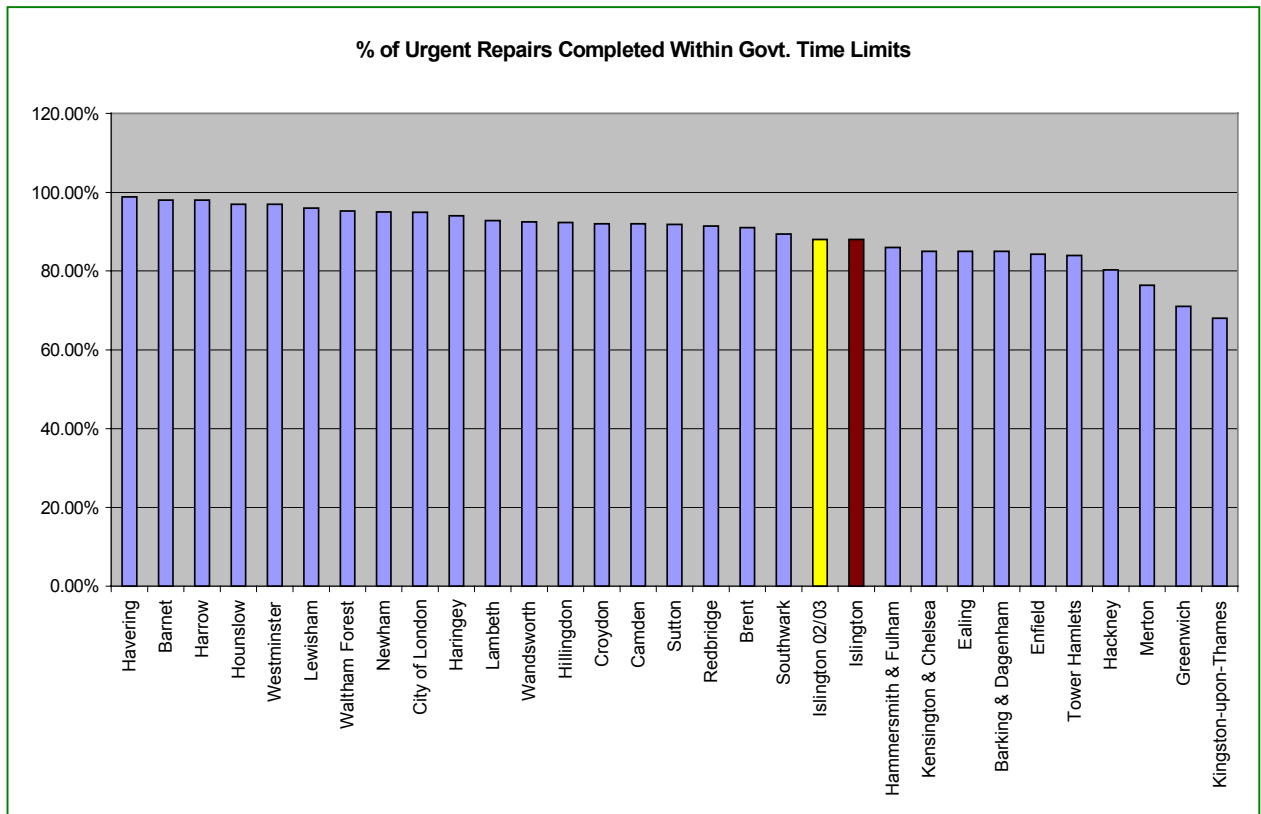


Fig. 12

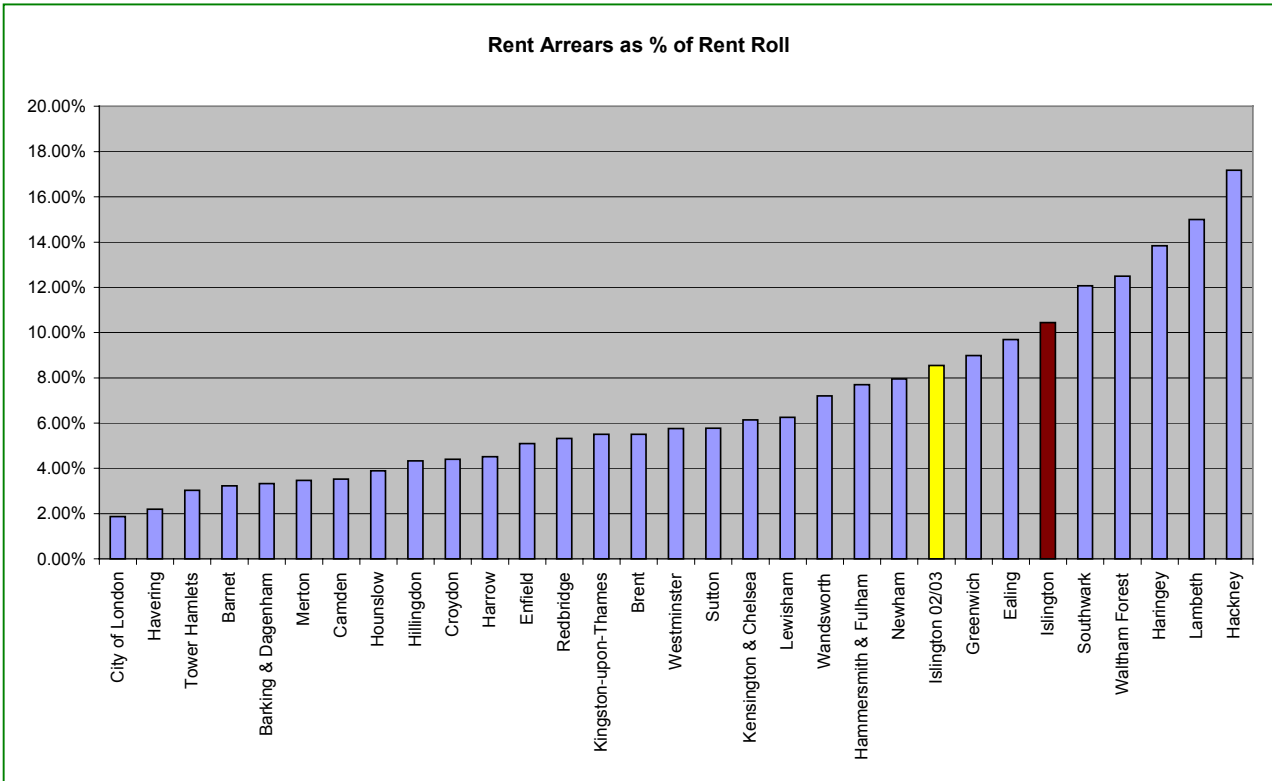
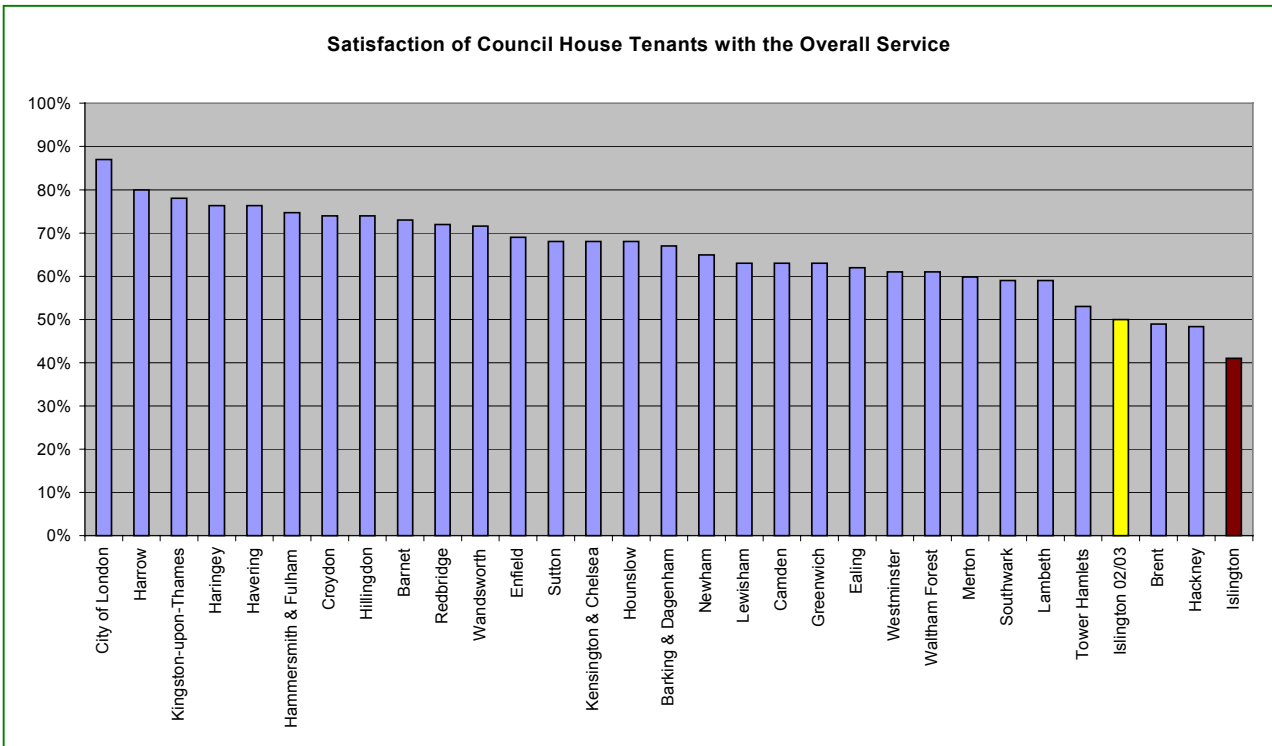


Fig. 13



12. Consultation

The Best Value process includes a general duty to consult all stakeholders on the terms of reference of the review and any proposed outcomes. This is at the very heart of best value and has resulted in the clearest cultural change in this authority. The consultation that has informed this review thus far is:

12.1 Annual Tenant's Survey undertaken by Kwest

This April 2003 survey of Islington's tenants was the third annual survey carried out by Kwest for Islington's Housing Service, the first in January 2001 and the second in January 2002. The 2003 commission was to undertake a follow up to these previous surveys with the following objectives:

- To identify levels of satisfaction with key areas of service provision
- To compare performance with the 2001 and 2002 surveys, following changes in the way the service is provided
- To see how perceptions of services may vary between areas within the Borough.

The research was conducted using a postal methodology. 28,563 of Islington's tenanted households were invited to participate, thus it was a borough-wide census survey. The same technique was used on both of the previous projects.

In order to allow people with language needs to participate, the covering letter contained text in the main local non-English languages⁴ which invited tenants to request a translated version of the questionnaire.

On completion of the research, a total of 4855 completed questionnaires had been received, a response rate of 17%, which provides an accuracy rate of +/- 1.3%.

12.2 Six tenant/leaseholder focus groups based at each of the local housing areas

In November 2002, Kwest Research was commissioned by Islington Housing Services to carry out a series of focus groups with tenants. The purpose of the groups was to provide insight into tenants' views on a wide range of services provided by Islington. The core subject areas which were discussed at the groups are summarised below:

- Homes
- Staff Service & Area Offices
- The Housing Service
- Consultation & Information
- Estate Services/Caretaking
- Neighbourhood Issues

Participants were invited from a list of people who indicated an interest in attending discussion groups in the 2002 Borough-wide Tenant Satisfaction Survey. In total, six groups were undertaken, each with tenants from the five different areas

⁴ Turkish, Greek, Bengali, French, Spanish, Chinese, Somali

managed by the Council and the one area managed on the Council's behalf by Hyde Northside.

12.3 In-depth interviews with 25 tenants

In March 2003 Kwest Research was commissioned to carry out a series of in-depth interviews with tenants who they had identified from the Tenant Survey as being dissatisfied with housing services. The aim was to ascertain the reasons why tenants express dissatisfaction with various aspects of the Housing Service and how tenants feel these elements of the service can be improved.

12.4 Three further focus groups to examine areas not previously discussed

Kwest were asked to convene three further reference groups of tenants and leaseholders to examine in more depth the groups views on:

- Rent arrears and estate parking
- Tenancy Management, and;
- Estate Services

12.5 Review reference group of stakeholders

A reference group of stakeholders was formed at the beginning of the review including staff, trade unions, leaseholders, RSLs, the Law Centre and local solicitors, in order to take views on the scope, interim findings and final outcomes.

12.6 Key Findings

The rise in overall level of satisfaction with the Council as landlord was discussed previously (10.4). A summary of findings from this consultation is set out below.

12.7 Repairs and Maintenance

One of the most noticeable areas of improvement can be seen in repairs and maintenance, a service identified as the most important to tenants. Half of tenants (51%) express satisfaction with the repairs service compared with 41% in 2001 and 2002 (Fig. 14). As with the overall satisfaction rating, people expressed much less dissatisfaction than they had done hitherto.

Generally, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way the Housing Service deals with repairs and maintenance?

Response	2001	2002	2003
% satisfied	38%	41%	51%
% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	18%	17%	20%
% dissatisfied	45%	41%	28%

The most noticeable element of this improvement is people's attitude towards the reporting of repairs. Two-thirds (65%) rate this part of the service as good or fair compared to 57% in 2002 (Fig. 15). This appears to be attributable to the popularity of Repair Line. Eight in ten (82%) feel the service is good or fair in terms of ease of use.

Tenants are also more positive about being told when the repair would start and the time taken before work starting. It is encouraging that when tenants are asked to say how the repairs service has changed during the last two years, 45% say it has improved (Fig. 16).

Fig. 14

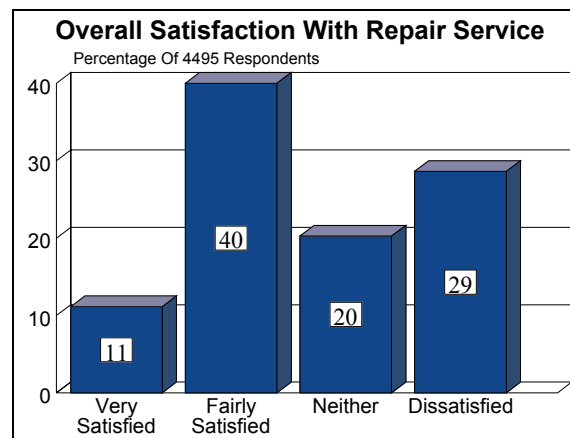


Fig. 15

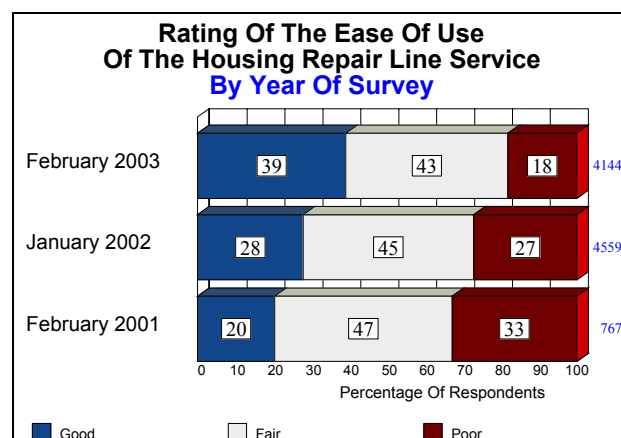
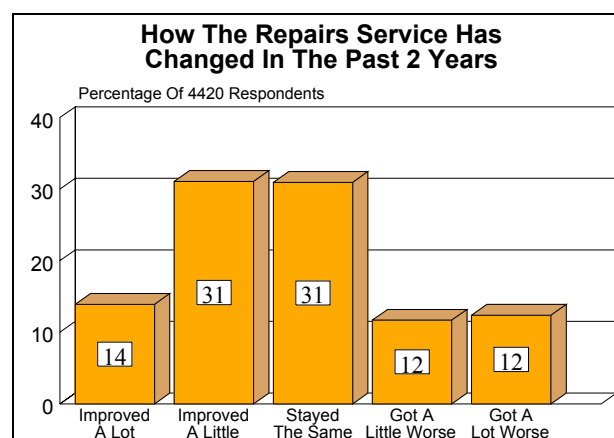


Fig. 16



12.7.1 Focus group findings also confirmed that nearly all participants were positive about the free-phone Repair Line, with a high regard for the members of staff who they speak to.

“It’s great having the free-phone number because it used to cost me a fortune, so that’s a big improvement.”

“The new Repair Line is great and your call is answered in minutes.”

12.7.2 However, a finding that emerged from the groups is that tenants feel front line staff are not knowledgeable enough to record repairs precisely. It is felt that wrong information is often passed on to contractors because tenants are unable to describe repairs accurately, and Islington staff do not ask the right questions to find out what the problem is.

“Their interpretation of your problem is often completely different from what the problem is, so the contractor gets the wrong message.”

12.7.3 A common finding was that appointment time slots were too long, being normally am or pm. This results in tenants having to wait in for long periods, often missing work.

“I definitely think they should be more considerate towards people’s needs regarding appointments.”

12.7.4 Tenants also felt that there are unresolved issues about the quality of work, with some feeling that contractors are able to get away with providing a poor service because of lack of inspection, and others that contractors are not incentivised as they have a long term contract with the Council whatever the quality of work.

“They get the Islington Council contract and immediately they get complacent.”

“ Post repair inspections are a good idea as they make sure that the job is done correctly.”

They must think its great having a contract with the Council because they don’t have to work hard or do the job properly and they get paid anyway.”

12.7.5 However, despite such criticisms several focus group attendees had positive experience of repairs.

“The gas service has improved an awful lot.”

“I had a lady plumber once and she was absolutely fantastic, she almost made me want to be a plumber.”

“The drain people are brilliant.”

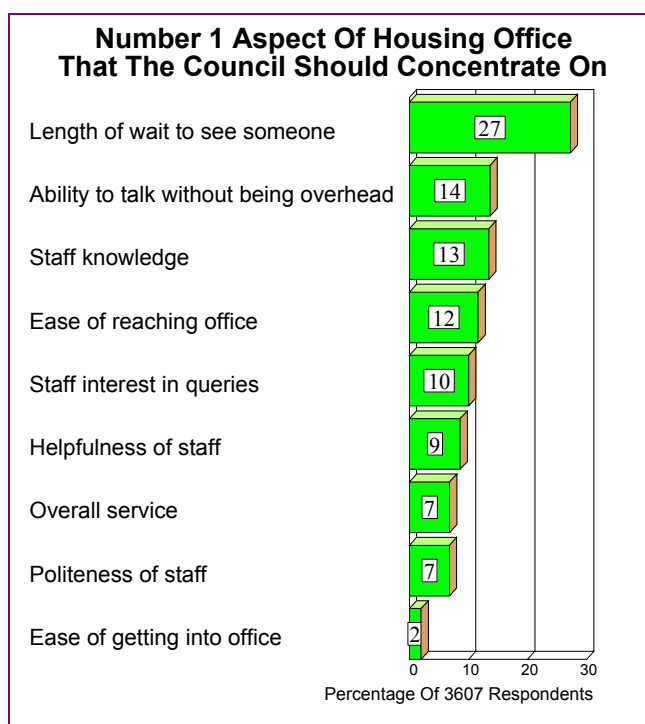
12.8 Satisfaction with level of service at local office

12.8.1 Each of the management areas within the Borough is served by its own office. The majority of tenants (85%) have contacted their office with a housing related query. About half of tenants (53%) visited the office the last time they made contact, whilst 43% used the telephone.

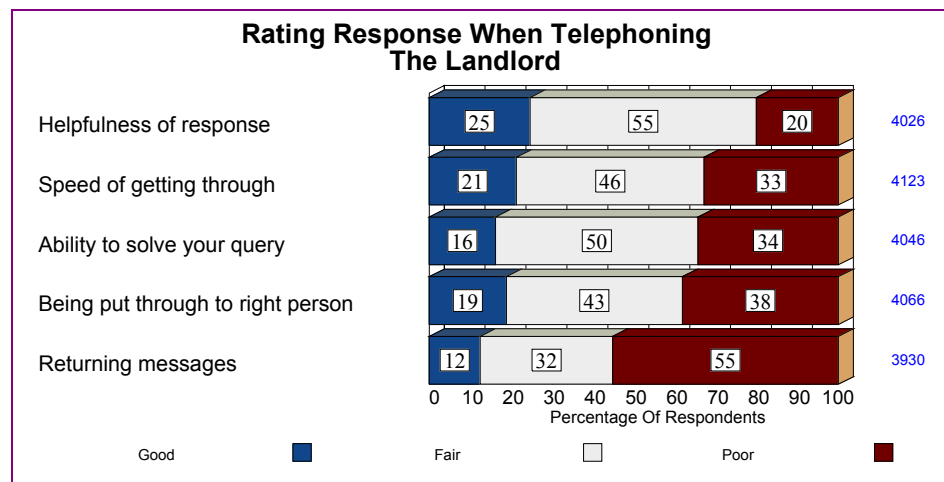
12.8.2 Given local proximity, it is not surprising that tenants are positive about ease of reaching the office. However, satisfaction levels for some aspects of service have fallen since the time of the 2002 survey. These changes look fairly dramatic in some cases (e.g. overall service and length of time waiting to see someone). This may be due to the increased demand placed on the service by increased use amongst tenants, although further analysis into these results is still ongoing.

Aspect of service	% fairly satisfied/very satisfied in 2002	% satisfied in 2003
Ease of getting into the office	76%	75%
Politeness of staff	67%	60%
Ease of reaching the office	65%	62%
Helpfulness of staff	64%	56%
Staff knowledge	54%	39%
Overall service	49%	38%
Length of wait to see someone	48%	34%
Staff interest in queries	44%	32%
Ability to talk with being overheard	43%	33%

12.8.3 When asked what Housing Services should concentrate on improving in the service offered at local offices the response was as follows:



12.8.4 The telephone service is an important means of communication for a high proportion of tenants, illustrated by the fact that 43% phoned the office last time they made contact. Further analysis reveals that the most positive aspect is the helpfulness of response (80%). Lesser proportions are positive about speed of getting through (67%), ability to solve the query (66%) and being put through to the right person (62%). Tenants are most critical about staff returning messages with 55% rating this as poor.



“I normally phone the housing office as it is quick.”

“I normally phone the office, I do not have faith in getting a satisfactory response from any other method. When you contact them by phone you get an idea of how your problem is going to be sorted out.”

12.8.5 A common finding was that Islington should provide a more caring and personal service. An example is the way the Council is perceived to deal with rent arrears;

“If someone is in arrears why can’t the Housing Officer just give them a ring and ask what is happening rather than send out the horrible standardised letter.”

12.8.6 Participants were divided as to whether the current localised service should be consolidated into a centralised service. Some interviewees preferred a localised service because they felt service would be more personal, however others preferred a centralised service arguing that all the information would be in one place, communication between departments would be improved and someone would always be available to deal with specific queries effectively.

“A centralised service would improve the quality of service. If the service was centralised, then all the information would be in one place. Staff would no longer be able to pass the buck and you know you can get the information and your problems would be solved.”

“If the service was centralised, the office would be too big and the service would not be personal.”

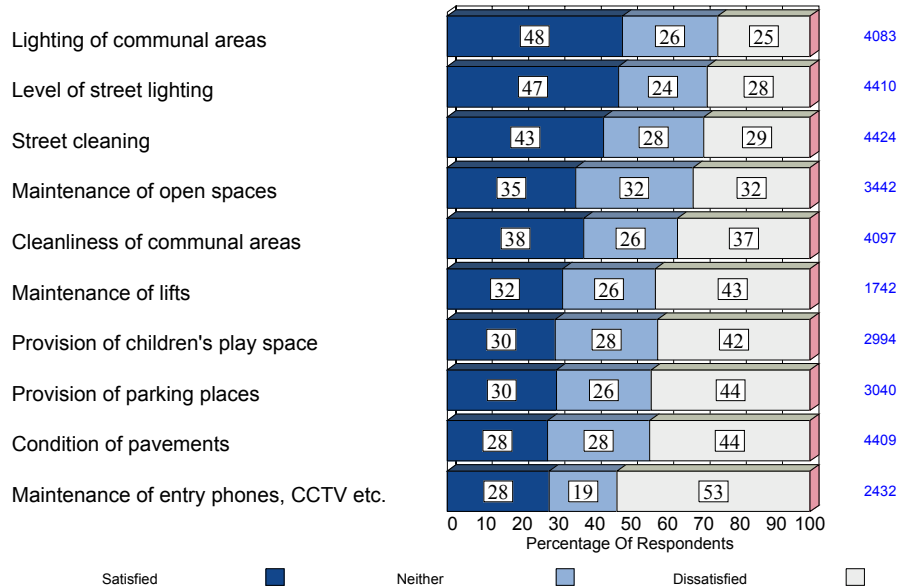
12.9 Satisfaction with Estate Services and Caretaking

12.9.1 Tenants were asked to comment on what it is like living in their area, discussing neighbourhood problems and communal facilities. The most commonly cited problems relate to the appearance of estates, such as litter and rubbish, vandalism and graffiti. It is encouraging that analysis year by year shows the percentage of people citing various problems in their neighbourhood has fallen since the time of the last survey. This is both a reflection of real service improvement on the ground and of overall increase in satisfaction. The Kwest researchers consider that this improvement may be due to the increased confidence that they found amongst tenants that Area Housing Offices can deal with problems that are brought to their attention.

<i>Neighbourhood Problem</i>	<i>% saying slight/serious problem in 2002</i>	<i>% saying slight/serious problem in 2003</i>
Litter/ Rubbish in the street	81%	75%
Vandalism	76%	70%
Graffiti	71%	64%
Dogs	59%	53%
Noise from people	60%	52%
Other crime	65%	50%
Drug dealing	50%	43%
Noise from traffic	50%	40%
Problems with neighbours	43%	34%
People damaging home	36%	26%
Racial harassment	26%	16%

12.9.2 Tenants were also asked to provide ratings for various services provided on the estate where they live. The most positive rates are lighting of communal areas, level of street lighting and street cleaning, whilst tenants were most critical of maintenance of door entry phones and condition of pavements.

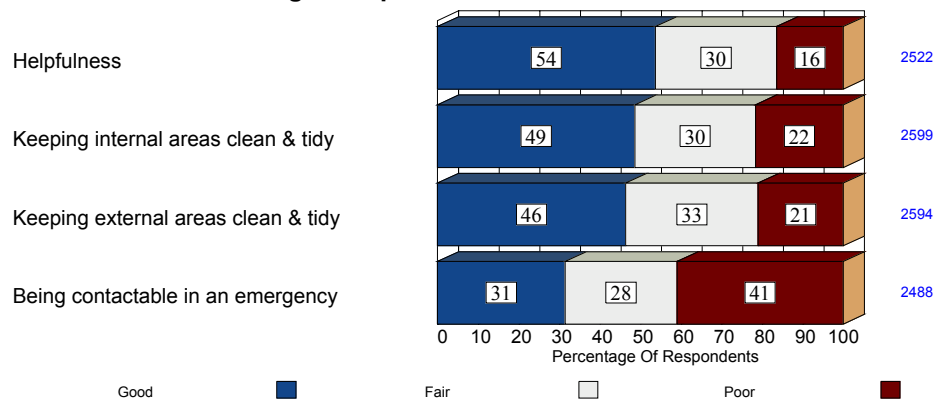
Levels Of Satisfaction With Aspects Of The Estate



12.10 Caretaking

12.10.1 Three quarters of tenants live in housing, which is served by a caretaker. Tenants are generally positive about their caretakers in terms of being helpful and keeping areas tidy, but around four in ten feel they are poor in terms of being contactable in an emergency. This however is no longer a service requirement as new rota procedures are now in place that will invalidate this question in the next Tenant's Survey.

Rating Of Aspects Of Caretaker Service



12.10.2 A common finding to emerge from the groups is that repairs and maintenance often go unreported in shared areas. Some participants commented that tenants do not take equal responsibility for reporting these problems, and others felt that this should be the responsibility of caretakers as opposed to tenants. Several group members feel that tenants should be better informed as to whom is responsible for reporting these problems.

“The caretaker service is pretty non-existent, apart from emptying bins once a week you never see them.”

“Tenants should be informed what the responsibility and duties of the caretaker are.”

“I’d like to know exactly what they are supposed to do. How often they are supposed to clean those stairs, take the rubbish out, clean the hallways etc.”

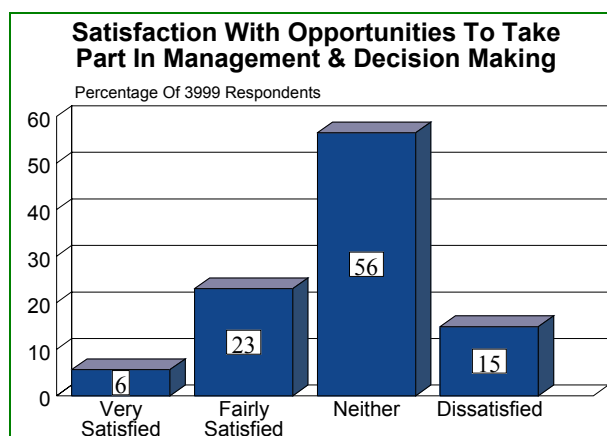
12.10.3 In improving the caretaker’s service, some people felt that tenants would benefit from caretakers with a more community focused attitude to their position.

“The caretakers should have more of a community role, and be socially responsible for the welfare of their estate and its tenants.”

12.11 Tenant participation

12.11.1 Around three in ten tenants are satisfied with the opportunities available to them to take part in management and decision making. This is a modest improvement on the previous year but this low figure appears to signify an entrenched problem in the relationship between the Council’s Housing Services and its tenants and leaseholders. The review sought to determine the cause of this problem so that actions could be put in place that would restore trust between landlord and client.

12.11.2 The first point to note is the high number of clients who are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with opportunities to take part. This may indicate a high level of non-engagement.



12.11.3 Six in ten people feel that the Council takes resident’s opinions into consideration, a slightly higher proportion than 2002. However, amongst tenants who took part in focus groups there was a perception that consultation takes place ‘for show’ and the results of any survey are not sufficiently taken into account when policies are made.

“There’s a feeling that surveys and meetings take place so Islington can say ‘oh yes, we consult our tenants. But you never see anything come of it.’”

12.11.4 Many focus group participants commented that tenants rarely receive feedback from consultation that takes place.

“They have groups like this and meetings and forums but you never hear anything about the effectiveness of them!”

“If we had some feedback then we would know that consultation systems are making a difference.”

12.11.5 80% of tenants rate the Council as either good or fair in keeping them informed of things which may effect them. The new Area Office newsletters have also proved popular, with 73% saying they receive them and 83% of recipients saying that they find them useful.

12.12 Satisfaction of BME and non-BME Tenants

12.12.1 The Tenant’s Survey findings were broken down in such a way as to demonstrate differences between people from a BME and non-BME background. Overall findings were that BME tenants are less positive about the landlord service and less inclined to consider it value for money. Thus 46% of BME tenants express satisfaction with the overall landlord service compared to 53% from a non-BME background. BME tenants are also less likely to say that the Housing Service has improved.

12.12.2 Differences in the opinions of these groups can be observed throughout the survey findings:

- BME tenants are more critical of the condition of homes and more likely to have applied for a transfer.
- BME tenants are more likely to have made a complaint to Housing Services - four in ten (42%) have made a complaint, compared to 32% of non-BME tenants.
- BME tenants are more likely to visit their local office when getting touch with Housing Services, but are less likely to express satisfaction with the service they received.
- BME tenants are less positive about the repairs and maintenance service overall, and are more critical of individual aspects such as quality of workmanship.
- BME tenants are more likely to have access to the Internet and are more likely to see that they will have access in the future. Ethnic minority tenants also express greater interest in accessing services via email.
- BME tenants are more interested in being consulted on issues such as community issues, investment in homes, housing repairs and the housing service overall.

12.12.3 However Kwest also showed that BME tenants tend to have a younger age profile than the non-BME population. Previous research carried out by Kwest shows that generally younger people have higher expectations of service and are more likely to be critical. Therefore this factor needs to be considered when drawing conclusions about the differences in opinion between BME and non-BME tenants. Indeed, as with previous projects, older tenants tend to be more satisfied with many different aspects of the service than their younger counterparts.

Figures from Housemark Benchmarking (July 2003) suggest this is a pattern throughout London (Fig. 17).



Fig. 17

12.12.4 Whilst age demography may well be an element in lower satisfaction levels with services, concern remains that other factors may be involved. Not least of these is a lower level of participation from BME tenants. To address this a Community Involvement Project Officer has been recruited in partnership with FITA (funded by the Islington Strategic Partnership), with a brief to talk to more hard to reach groups, with the aim of ascertaining their specific needs, analysing levels of satisfaction and encouraging more involvement and participation in shaping services. Currently a BME reference group is being formed, in conjunction with Caxton Islington, to tap into the views and opinions of these groups.

12.13 Conclusions

- Overall satisfaction is improving
- Repairs service improvements, especially access through a call centre, have raised satisfaction levels by 10% in one year.
- 45% of tenants perceive an improvement in the repairs service over the last two years.
- Some concern remains about the quality of repair diagnosis and the quality of work.
- Satisfaction with some services delivered through Area Housing Offices has fallen over the last year.
- Tenants want a more personalised service and to see their query or problem resolved first time.

- Tenants still regard issues on estates associated with appearance as a problem although they see improvements.
- Tenants want to know the duties and standards of work that caretakers are expected to achieve.
- Customers feel that we consult them in many forms but do not feed back any results or changes that this consultation has invoked.

13. Review Findings

The review methodology is explained in section 9.

The Best Value Review of Islington's Housing Management Service generated an enormous amount of information. In order to express this mass of detail in a way that is coherent and relevant to tenants and leaseholders, the review findings are broken up into;

The Home

The issues associated with the quality of the home and its continued maintenance

The Service

The interaction between the Housing Service and its customers

13.1 The Home

13.2 Access to the Repairs Service

13.2.1 The Repair Service is the most important aspect of the overall landlord service that Islington provides⁵, and it is therefore crucial to overall satisfaction ratings. It is clear that the improved access to the Repairs Service provided by Islington Repair Line (IRL) has proved popular and is probably the most significant factor in the increase in satisfaction with repairs and housing generally. Now 97% of first time contact on repairs issues are made through IRL.

13.2.2 IRL has a diagnostic script in place to assist call agents with repairs diagnosis. Whilst this assists call agents the Council has recognised that there is a skills gap in being able to deliver technically scoped repairs beyond those offered by a script. A technical team has been introduced to IRL to provide the relevant expertise for non-standard repair requests. They also provide call agents with guidance on policy and Right to Repair and filter pre-inspection requests from tenants.

13.2.3 In the Summer of 2000 emergency repair arrangements transferred to the Link Line Team which provides a 24-hour community alarm service. The out of hours functions provided by the team are:

- Emergency Repairs Service (ERS)
- Out of Hours homeless referrals
- Emergency duty team for Social Services
- Out of hours reception centre monitoring
- Smoke alarm monitoring in sheltered schemes
- Caretaker on call rota
- Noise Patrol

13.2.4 ERS has a target of answering 80% of calls within twenty seconds, however, in their November 2002 Inspection Report, Housing Inspectors found that staff are stretched and recommended that staffing levels be reviewed. To deal with this issue, additional funds were made available for sessional workers to be employed

⁵ Kwest Tenant's Survey

during peak periods. This has resulted in improved performance of 92.3% for March 2003 compared to a yearly average for 2002-03 of 81.1% (after abandoned calls within 20 seconds are discounted.)

13.3 The Repairs Process

13.3.1 The Responsive Repairs and Maintenance Service covers:

- Day to Day repairs
- Empty property refurbishment
- Planned and cyclical maintenance
- Gas Servicing and reactive repairs
- Communal Repairs
- Right to Repair

Islington Repair Line issue orders for:

- Day to day repairs
- Lift breakdowns
- Individual gas breakdowns
- Communal boiler breakdowns
- Estate Lighting
- Door entry breakdowns
- Pre-inspection requests

13.3.2 Staff at Islington Repair Line, call agents and technical officers currently order up to 80% of all responsive repairs issued to contractors, the remaining 20% are issued via surveyors in area office teams.

13.3.3 Islington Repair Line staff currently issue routine repair requests with an appointment attached.

13.3.4 Where a call agent is unable to directly issue a repair request to a contractor the order is placed within an 'assessment' field. Technical officers within Islington Repair Line are required to 'desk inspect' the request and make a judgement as to the scope of the work required.

Once a decision has been made the tenant is contacted by phone within 24 hours of their original request and informed whether;

- A repair has been issued
- The Council has no repairing obligation
- A Surveyor from an area office needs to carry out a home visit to assess the scope of work

13.3.5 Surveyors in Area Teams manage pre-inspections via an on-line diary facility within the client's IT repairs reporting tool. Surveyors are required to visit the property within 10 days of the original request for repair.

Surveyors are required to determine at the home visit whether:

- A repair can be issued
- The Council has no repairing obligation

13.3.6 Responsive repair requests are issued directly to Islington Council's repairs and maintenance provider Caxton Islington Ltd, via an electronic interface link between the two organisations ICT systems.

Within the responsive contract there are currently two emergency repair response times and two urgent response times:

- In Hours
- Out of Hours

13.3.7 All routine repairs are issued to the contractor with an appointment attached, there are currently two routine repair priorities.

- One stop repair – an appointment offered within 3-9 day and completed within one visit
- Larger job - an appointment offered within 3-9 day and completed within 25 days

Once a repair has been completed Caxton Islington are required to notify the Client of the charges within 28 days of completion of the order.

Each week Caxton Islington forward a charge advice file to the client, the charges inform the Client of the costs and Standard of Rates detailed within the charge.

11.3.8 All orders raised at IRL are issued with a tenant receipt and a satisfaction survey, in line with a recommendation by housing inspectors in their Repairs and Maintenance Report⁶. Staff at Islington Repair Line and Caxton Islington jointly carry out Customer Satisfaction Telephone Surveys. All repairs completed within the last seven days are placed within a report and randomly selected to receive an outbound call by either party. Each quarter these results are analysed and reported. A summary of the results is sent to every tenant who responds positively to a question on the survey.

13.4 Pre Inspection

13.4.1 In October 2000 a Joint Venture Company, formed between Islington Council and Caxton Islington Ltd. (part of the Kier Group), commenced the delivery of the repairs and maintenance functions to our tenants. Prior to this the inconsistent service provided by the Council's DLO left customers with a view of a failing service which is only now being revised.

13.4.2 Interim arrangements at the commencement of the JVC transferred responsibility for all live housing pre-inspections within the client's OHMS system to the contractor for progression. Some 7000 orders were passed over within the first few weeks of the contract going live. Caxton Islington continued to carry out the pre-inspection function under these arrangements until an internal audit advised that this function should return to the client.

⁶ Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service October 2002

13.4.3 From November 2002 a pilot was undertaken within IRL by the existing seconded technical team to desk inspect and filter requests for pre-inspection. When a repair can be specified without the need for a local pre-inspection the Technical Officer raises an order. When deemed necessary the relevant Area Office diary is populated. These hand-offs to Area Teams fall into the following categories:

- Dampness
- Condensation
- Larger joinery repairs
- Renewal works of any type

Currently the target for completing pre-inspections is ten days. The attainment figure to June 2003 is 81.7%.

13.5 Post Inspections

In-line with District Audit requirements the Client is required to carry out post – inspections to defined targets:

- a) 10% of all orders under £500.00
- b) All orders above £500.00

Caxton Islington are contractually required to carry out 5% inspection of all responsive orders.

All orders over £500.00 are automatically ‘marked’ by OHMS for post–inspection. Orders under £500.00 are manually selected by Surveyors in Area Offices.

13.6 Financial Control

13.6.1 The repairs service was criticised in the Repairs and Maintenance Inspection Report (Oct 2002) for consistently overspending the repairs budget. A number of measures were put in place following the inspection to bring about more financial control.

13.6.2 Firstly a planned investment budget of £3.25m was set aside within the main budget for non-urgent planned repairs. This is a new priority code for works that are pre-inspected by AHO technical staff and are deemed to be non-urgent and to cost over £1,000.

13.6.3 This year has seen the introduction of Face Lift repairs for estates. £3m, that is in addition to the repairs budget, has been made available for planned communal repairs.

The capital programme for mechanical (heating) works is now totally technically led, based on repairs and maintenance history, with the aim of reducing responsive repairs.

13.6.4 In the 2003/4 program there a number of schemes which are specifically targeted at reducing responsive repairs:

Girdlestone Phase 3 - renewal of systems	£250,000.00
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Replacement of Servowarm boilers Phase 2-	£300,000.00
New Orleans Estate - replacement of boilers	£305,000.00
Godfrey House – replacement of gas burners	£30,000.00
Taverner Square – renewal of tanks and cylinders	£260,000.00
Quaker Court - replacement of existing boiler plant	£40,000.00
Spa green Estate – total renewal of boiler plant	£150,000.00
Stranraer Close – replacement of boiler plant	£100,000.00
Sanders way – replacement of boiler plant	£120,000.00
Hazellville Road – replacement of boiler plant	£110,000.00
Ash Court – replacement of boiler plant	£50,000.00
 Total Value	 £1,715,000.00

In every case, this work has been commissioned based on historical data to reduce responsive repairs.

This £7.96m of planned repairs is in contrast to the approximate £7m annual spend on responsive repairs, or a planned/responsive ratio of 54:46.

13.6.5 Now that we have fully planned 7-year cyclical maintenance and replacement of key components programmes, we are in a further position to contain spend through reducing the level of responsive repairs.

13.6.6 The budget control staff in repairs has also been doubled which will allow for a suite of budgetary reports to be made available to staff in a more timely fashion.

13.6.7 Individual management responsibility for budgets has also been reviewed with Assistant Directors each having clear areas of responsibility allocated to them.

13.6.8 However we remain with the problem that the current IT system, OHMS, is not a system that is well set up to aid the control of budgets. The new SX3 system is due to be implemented in 2004 and in the meantime the OHMS system is being upgraded to make it more user friendly in this respect.

13.6.9 We have therefore increased the repairs budget and put in place a series of measures since October 2002 designed to increase financial control in repairs.

13.7 Repairs to void properties

13.7.1 Currently Void properties are processed through tenancy teams in each of the six area offices, with the technical part being co-ordinated through the four technical teams, consisting of Hyde Northside, Central Street, Upper Street (including voids at Boleyn Road), and Holland Walk (including voids at Isledon Road).

13.7.2 Works to voids are carried out exclusively by Caxton Islington using their in-house labour force and, where necessary, their domestic sub-contractors under the 10 year Joint Venture Company set up in October 2000.

13.7.3 In 2000/1 the turnaround figures were averaging 63 days with Islington being placed in the bottom quartile of London authorities. This improved to 42 days for 2001/2 and further improved to 29 days for 2002/3. Whilst comparative information from

other boroughs is not yet available, the improvement over the last year will probably bring Islington into the top quartile. This step change in performance will provide knock on effects of increased revenue to the HRA and less uncertainty and time spent in temporary accommodation for Islington's homeless households.

13.7.4 Local performance indicators for voids are reported in a basket of figures and reflect time and cost, with the incentive to keep cost (top marks for less than £2000) and time (the target for 2003/4 is 29 days, but top marks are given for less) to a minimum without looking at the overall quality of the void or satisfaction level of the new tenant.

13.7.5 The Repairs Service had a housing inspection by the Audit Commission in 2002, with the resultant comments on voids being about the standard not being consistently adhered to, and the satisfaction being low from new tenants, particularly in respect of the property condition. A new Void Standard has since been produced.

13.7.6 The Rehousing service was subject to a best value review from March 2002. The review included void management within its scope. It was noted that property condition was the primary concern of new tenants surveyed. It was also established that Islington had a comparatively high refusal rate.

“Clearly there are constraints on expenditure in housing maintenance. Indeed there is an expectation that the responsive repairs expenditure needs to be drawn in whilst planned maintenance expands. However, too tight a rein on void refurbishment, currently an average of £2,000 per unit maximum, may be contributing to levels of dissatisfaction that are damaging to the housing service generally. It is recommended that additional expenditure be provided for void refurbishment in a pilot, over a one-year period.”⁷

13.7.7 The Housing Inspection of Repairs and Maintenance, conducted as part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment of the authority, also recommended that we should;

“Agree a new standard for void repairs, communicate this to new and prospective tenants, and set up effective procedures to ensure that it is met.”

In summary the current review has established the following with regard to void management:

13.8 Positive strengths:

- Client has specific area teams dedicated to the process
- Caxton Islington is aligned to a similar, North, Central and South structure as the client.
- Long term Joint Venture Contract set up with Caxton Islington in 2000 has specific aims to simplify process and reduce duplication.

⁷ Best Value Review of Rehousing Service – Final Report

- Step change achieved in void turnaround times.
- Joint monitoring with Caxton
- Focus on seamless working started in some areas to ensure work commences as soon as possible, and variations kept to a minimum.
- Decoration vouchers now in operation
- Welcome pack for new tenants commenced in some areas

13.9 Weaknesses:

- Consistent problems in technical recruitment by client and contractor
- Large costs being spent out of budget on non-landlord responsibilities, i.e. lumber clearance of approximately £300-400 per property, and rectifying tenant damage.
- Emphasis on lowest cost only for void turnaround performance indicator
- Policy and procedures for voids needs to be refined to ensure consistency
- Low customer satisfaction rating on the product achieved and communication in the first months of tenancy.
- M & E team separate from the area technical/tenancy function.

14. Mechanical and Electrical Maintenance

14.1 Door Entry, Security and Concierge Systems

This years Tenant's Survey found that *the top problem the council should concentrate most on solving is the maintenance of door entry phones and CCTV*. A fifth chose this option. This confirms views identified in further research undertaken as part of the Option Appraisal for accessing additional housing investment. The Decent Homes for Tomorrow (DH4T) survey found that, when investment elements outside of the DHS are introduced, 48% cited security improvement as a repair or improvement required in their own home or environment.⁸

14.1.1 The review has highlighted some problems, which in some cases are already subject to improvement planning, and others, which need to be addressed. In summary, performance in the maintenance of these systems is found to be high cost with insufficient protection for the capital investment as the maintenance is inadequately specialised.

14.1.2 In order to tackle both the maintenance concerns and those of our tenants and leaseholders, a full stock condition survey of all existing door entry systems was conducted. This led to the secondment of a Senior Electrical Engineer to Caxton

⁸ 2002 Decent Homes for Tomorrow Postal survey

Islington with a brief to develop a comprehensive door entry system strategy. £800K has now been allocated to implement the short term strategy to bring approximately 20% of stock to a good standard and this is due for completion by October 2003. For the longer term strategy we have let a specialist maintenance contract to provide a planned preventative maintenance (PPM) programme and repair service for CCTV and concierge systems. The contract has been in place since 2003 with two contractors appointed.

14.2 Individual Gas Servicing

14.2.1 The annual servicing of gas installations is a legal requirement and vital to the health and safety of tenants. The gas servicing contract for the north of the borough was awarded to Caxton in October 2000 as part of the 10-year joint venture agreement. Caxton was also awarded the contract for the south of the borough from April 2002.

14.2.2 Although performance on gas servicing is improving it is clearly an area that needs more urgent progress. Last years performance was 100% of boilers that provide communal heating and 88% of individual gas boilers. We are ahead of this level of performance in the current year. This best value review will be the means by which our target of 100% servicing will begin to be met.

14.2.3 Islington has, since 1999, had a “no access” policy. This policy is designed to gain access to all those homes resistant to providing access to perform the annual servicing of gas appliances. However this operated as an annual program of servicing and “no access”, which meant that when the new servicing year started in April, those properties which had not been accessed, were placed at the top of the servicing list, but the “no access” procedure started over again.

14.2.4 For the 2002/3 servicing year our policy was revised, in two areas, to improve the process, these were: -

1. Only three letters (the last by recorded delivery) are sent to the tenant, prior to passing to our legal team, but these letters are sent jointly from LBI + Contractor.
2. The legal process continues regardless of the new servicing year and the only way it can be stopped is by the contractor confirming the issue of a CP12 for that particular property.

14.2.5 As a result of these changes we gained court injunctions against all seven non-access tenants on one Islington estate on the 6th August 2003. This is a pilot, which will be rolled out borough-wide. At the time of writing, the number of ‘hard-core’ no access properties has reduced from 700+ last year to 278.

14.2.6 The best value review has recommended options to improve performance in gas servicing. These include:

- Introducing incentives to the contractor to prioritise and gain access to those properties that were not accessed in the previous financial year.

- Make the process the responsibility of Housing Management who have more experience in dealing with tenant issues than the 'technical' Building Solutions for Islington staff.
- Link process with Islington Repair Line so that properties where gas servicing has not been completed are flagged up when a repair is requested. The operative would arrange a gas installation service with the repair.
- All gas records to be entered onto OHMS so that these records are migrated onto SX3 when OHMS is replaced in 2004.
- Instigate a publicity campaign (Access 2004) to raise public awareness with this issue, to include posters, van posters, newsletters, the local press and a 'Battle Bus'.

14.2.7 A Gas Service Improvement Project Team has been formed to co-ordinate this project. Membership of the team comprises representatives from Islington Housing Management, Building Solutions for Islington, Caxton Islington and Islington Legal Services. The target for this team is 100% servicing access.

However, the review has not been sufficiently rigorous in terms of benchmarking performance with better performing boroughs. Therefore opportunities to introduce best practice may have been missed. It is proposed that this benchmarking now takes place and any further proposals that arise from this research be implemented as a matter of urgency.

14.3 Lifts

14.3.1 Lift Maintenance

The DH4T Survey, cited in 14.1 above, also made clear that of those tenants who have lifts, virtually all regarded lift maintenance investment as a priority.

The reasons for this concern are very clear;

- Islington has a large lift stock (440 lifts in housing blocks)
- The lift stock is old and has received little investment over a long period (the current level of investment would require 25 years to renew the lift stock)
- Poor performance causes frustration, which encourages vandalism, which completes the circle of deteriorating lift performance.
- There are many young families and elderly residents who cannot access their homes other than by use of lifts.
- The basic repair contracts, which were in place for lifts, were inadequate and outdated, used a single contractor for the whole of the borough and did not incentivise the contractor to improve performance.

Islington has therefore developed new lift contracts, which were tendered and came into operation on 1st April 2003. These provide for the appointment of three contractors for different geographical areas of the borough. The contracts are let on partnering terms for a period of 5 years. A new comprehensive schedule of rates is contained within the contract.

One of the geographical areas, Finsbury & Clerkenwell has 25% of the total lift stock and the majority of high rise blocks. Clearly this area would benefit from a more innovative approach to the problems associated with lifts. We have therefore put in place a pilot contract for this area, to access the improvements which will flow from such a contract. The pilot contract is currently running through the set up year, before it converts to an output based asset management contract, employing both capital and revenue funding.

The contract transfers risk to the contractor from the Council, limits breakdowns and incentivises the contractor to raise the overall level of performance. Permanent staffing within the lift section of the Services Group will improve monitoring and control of contractors, which will also reflect in service delivery improvements.

14.3.2 Lifts Capital Investment

The methodology of Capital investment has also come under review, because we were only able to improve a very small number of lifts each year, utilising the “total replacement” approach. Lifts are now classified as “at the end of their useful working life” or “requiring updating” and the capital funding available is split over both classifications. This has the effect of raising overall performance and enabling a greater number of residents to benefit from capital investment.

15. The Capital Programme

15.1 The annual capital programme is around £45m per year. Priority for investment is given to:

- Cyclical maintenance
- Structural repairs
- Renewal of key components (windows, roofs, heating, electrics, lifts)

Investment is also made in:

- Providing adaptations for the disabled
- Community Safety (Concierge/ security to vulnerable households)
- Tenant compact priorities (established by tenants at a local level)
- Energy efficiency
- LASHG (grants to RSL's to deliver affordable homes)

15.1.1 There is insufficient money available to do everything that our clients want. We have therefore prioritised investment in the external fabric of our homes and key internal services (heating and rewiring), in order to deliver homes that are structurally sound, wind/ weather tight and safe and warm (heating and rewiring). Our cyclical maintenance programme delivers investment to all our homes over 7 years with a key target of keeping homes currently in a reasonable state of repair from falling into disrepair, which will then require a higher level of investment.

15.1.2 The key government target is for all social housing to achieve the decent homes standard (DHS) by December 2010. The DHS specifies that housing:

- Meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing
- Is in a reasonable state of repair
- Has reasonably modern facilities and services
- Provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

15.1.3 In June 2002, a representative sample of 1500 tenants were asked to take part in a postal survey in relation to 'Decent Homes for Tomorrow' (see also 14.1), this survey included questions regarding the current investment priorities. In answer to the question, 'How much tenants agree or disagree with work the Council intends to start in 2002', the following response was received:

• Double glazing/ structure/ roofs	-	96% agree
• Basic repairs to external fabric	-	96% agree
• Heating renewal/ energy conservation	-	95% agree
• Tenant priorities	-	93% agree
• Security (concierge)	-	90% agree
• Rewiring	-	93% agree
• Adaptations for disabled	-	94% agree
• Providing additional homes	-	89% agree
• Lift renewal	-	84% agree

15.1.4 Though the above would demonstrate that there is general agreement in how we intended to spend the money in 2002, the survey also highlighted areas where tenants would like investment made. When asked the question, 'Home improvements the Council should concentrate on most', the following was the outcome:

- | | | |
|--|---|-----|
| • Replacing windows/ doors in poor condition | - | 65% |
|--|---|-----|

- Replacing hazardous wiring - 63%
- Ensuring properties structurally sound - 63%
- Replacing heating - 62%
- Replacing roofs - 54%
- Improved security - 42%
- Kitchen/ bathroom renewal - 39%
- Lift renewal/ maintenance - 33%
- Adaptations for disabled - 31%
- Double glazing where a noise nuisance - 27%
- Improved play areas/lighting/ boundary walls - 25%

15.1.5 Improved security (42%) and kitchen/ bathroom renewal (39%) are therefore areas supported by a large minority. However, the current strategy in relation to concentrating on the external fabric and heating/ wiring would seem to be supported from the results of this question.

15.1.6 Security is therefore considered a relatively high priority. We are addressing this in the capital programme through our community safety programme, mainly through the provision of concierge/ CCTV security and the Tenants Compact should the Area Panels agree this as a high priority.

15.1.7 Security as an issue was also highlighted from the results included in the February 2003 'Survey of tenants':

- 47% of respondents considered security as poor
- 36% of residents considered the condition of their home was poor

In relation to levels of satisfaction with the 'estate', the top 3 areas were:

- 53% were dissatisfied with the maintenance of entry phones/ CCTV.
- 44% were dissatisfied with the condition of pavements
- 44% were dissatisfied with the provision of parking spaces

15.1.8 When asked the question 'The top 1 estate problem the Council should concentrate on' the top 3 answers were:

- Maintenance of entry phones/ CCTV - 22%
- Condition of pavements - 14%
- Level of street lighting - 14%

15.1.9 Where we undertake external repairs/ improvements there is no provision to undertake specific security measures, or areas deemed as a priority by tenants (e.g. lighting) unless 'other' work is prioritised from the Community Safety budget or the Tenants compact. The work we currently undertake is 'technically' led in terms of the building.

15.1.10 In order to address tenant priorities outside of the 'external fabric', we could look at utilising some or all of the budgets allocated for the Tenant Compact programme and Community Safety programme, to provide 'tenant' priorities as part of the scheme. This would not necessarily be focused on security, though it is considered that tenants would see this as a priority, but could also include the wider environment such as paving, lighting etc. This would, therefore, not be 'adding' to

the priorities but realigning current resources and programmes with the aim of meeting tenant priority areas in a more cohesive manner, which should increase tenant satisfaction.

- 15.1.11 The issue regarding the maintenance of door entry systems, and tenants low satisfaction levels, is being examined (see 14.3) but clearly there is a need to reach a conclusion in relation to what works/ what doesn't, the systems to be used and how they will be maintained in the future. Door entry systems are not the answer in a number of cases and should not be seen as the only answer to security problems. Where security is an issue we should look (with the Police) at what the problems are and how they are best resolved.
- 15.1.12 Kitchens and bathroom renewal is another area where a large minority would like to see money invested. However, if we were to address this then we would need to reduce the levels of investment we are making elsewhere on fabric improvements etc. The results from the tenants survey on decent homes would seem to support our current priorities and the provision of kitchen/ bathroom renewal is a lower priority than security and would therefore need the resources generated from an ALMO.
- 15.1.13 There is, at present no formal consultation structure to discuss and get the views of tenants in relation to investment priorities apart from the Area Housing Panels. It is considered that a capital programme consultation forum would be useful, not only in relation to the investment strategy but also other areas such as consultation, procurement and asset management.

15.2 Asset Management

- 15.2.1 LBI undertook a stock condition survey in 1999 through Hunter and Partners. The survey comprised 100% external visual survey and a sample 10% internal survey. The survey that was undertaken was in line with 'best practice' at the time and has enabled priority areas for investment to be decided at a strategic level (e.g. overall priorities for windows, roofs etc). The SCS is updated annually to reflect improvements undertaken to the council's stock. This has formed the basis of our assessment of 'decent/ non decent' homes in the Borough.
- 15.2.2 However, although the SCS provides information at a high strategic level, the information becomes less accurate the further you drill down to individual property level.
- 15.2.3 In 2002, Islington decided to move to a fully integrated data management solution and subsequently entered into a contract with First Software to purchase the IWorld suite of Housing Management software. As well as providing rent accounting etc., this will eventually provide an asset register, accessed and automatically updated by various modules including responsive and planned maintenance.
- 15.2.4 However, there have been some problems with the development of this product and so full implementation of IWorld is some way off. It is unlikely that IWorld Repairs will be implemented before mid-2004 with IWorld Contracts (the planned maintenance module) following on.

15.2.5 In the interim, asset data management continues to be problematic. This may have arisen due to the fact that responsibility for asset related data management is spread over a number of divisions. As a result there is no single point of ownership of responsibility for the collection and management of asset related data in Islington Housing Services.

Interim arrangements are that the OHMS system is continued through next year alongside the main SX3 database and the DHS database.

15.2.6 Performance Comparison

In 2001 Islington took the decision to outsource the management of approximately 6700 dwellings to Hyde Northside, (HN). Their responsibility extends to the management of both responsive and planned repairs.

15.2.7 In May 2001 HN entered into an innovative partnership with a firm of surveying consultants (Faithorn Farrell Timms - FFT) to provide a range of integrated consultancy services for the duration of HN's contract with Islington Housing Services. Consultancy services include requirements to:

- procure an initial sample (25%) stock condition survey
- develop of an outline plan of future maintenance works to all 6700 dwellings
- procure planned maintenance (CREP & ROLEC) works
- update, append, and audit existing survey data
- update future maintenance works plan

15.2.8 This is likely to be because their asset data is more accurate and up to date. This is almost certainly as a result of the partnering arrangements that place ownership of responsibility for data maintenance with FFT, whose responsibility also extends to procuring works based on a programme derived from survey data and in line with their own predicted costs.

15.2.9 All survey data has been coded and held in an open systems format. There is therefore no undue reliance on FFT for software support and report generation as has been the case with Islington's Stock Condition survey conducted by another consultant. Whatever the future relationship between HN and FFT, HN's data will still be accessible and maintainable.

15.2.10 HN use the OHMS system for raising responsive repair orders so they are in the same position as Islington's Housing Management division in that there is no direct link between planned and responsive maintenance computer systems. In common with Housing Management, this deficiency will be overcome by the move to Iworld's fully integrated suite of software

15.2.11 This partnering model would appear to have advantages in that it eliminates the key problem inherent in the conventional procurement of stock condition surveys, that of data ownership. Where consultants have been used to collect data, but have had little expectation of receiving commissions for work arising from their recommendations, there has been little incentive for ownership of the data on the part of those charged with collecting it.

15.2.12 As there has often been a significant time lag between presentation of the data and the execution of the works arising from it, actual works costs have often had little relation to those predicted at condition survey stage.

15.2.13 It would also appear to eliminate the problem of the client to being 'locked in' to consultant's software with resultant difficulties in update and reporting without consultant support.

15.3 Procurement

15.3.1 Islington Housing Services has a clear vision for the delivery of its capital programme. An important mechanism for delivering our priorities has been the development of partnerships with the private sector, which was a key finding and recommendation of the Best Value Review of Architects and Surveyors in 2001. Our strategy for construction procurement fits closely with this overall framework.

We have:

- Established long-term strategic partnering arrangements for the delivery of day to day repairs. This has been widely recognised as best practice in its field and led to an LGC award in 2001.
- Established partnering arrangements for both the maintenance and installation of heating systems. The unique partnership approach to the management of gas safety led to an NHIC Award for innovation in 2002.
- Procured pilot partnering arrangements for delivery of external envelope repairs and renewals
- Established pilot partnering arrangements for the maintenance and renewal of lift installations.
- Procured and established one of the first HRA PFI contractors in May 2003 for the management, maintenance and refurbishment of our street properties.

15.3.2 Comparison of the delivery of the Capital Programme was made with the London Boroughs of Tower Hamlets and a visit to Westminster (ALMO) is planned. In the LBTH the main attributes of their system were seen to be:

- Whole Capital programme approved at same time
- Delegated authority to client group managers
- Professionally managed approved list – readily available
- Selection of contractors is simple and objective
- Simple process for inviting tenders
- Contracts Unit manage the process in a professional manner
- Simple process for opening & recording tenders
- Tender reports produced by Contracts Unit, requiring the CA to enter only the recommended contractor & sign and client manager to sign his agreement, to the recommendation.
- Works can start on site quickly
- Contracts Unit know their workload and can plan accordingly
- Only one methodology – simplicity

In comparison to our current methodology, the LBTH process is simpler to administer and use.

15.3.4 In terms of what our customers expect, from a 'focus' group of tenants and leaseholders held to look at the current processes and delivery, the following key areas were raised:

- No consistent standard of workmanship. Some contractors very good, some very bad
- Need for contractor appointments to be kept
- Need to be kept informed
- Need to know hours of work and how long the work was going to take
- Who is responsible?

The current procedure where we tender most of our work does not lead to the consistently high standard our customers expect.

15.3.5 Contractors are our main partners in delivery of the capital programme. If the contractors do not provide the quality our customers require then customer satisfaction levels will be low. Clearly, the contractors view in the current processes and the issues they feel limit the 'consistent' quality desired is important. The following is a 'contractors' perspective:

'From a tendering contractors view point this system:

- *Divorces the process of pricing a job from that of undertaking a job – the period between each is prolonged and therefore market forces at the time of pricing are not optimised.*
- *Whatever good practice and intentions were considered or specified for adoption on the project, they are generally deferred, if not abandoned, due to the need to start a job quickly.*
- *Successful tenders are 1 or 2 in 10, and therefore considerable effort is expended in seeking to secure a work load.*
- *Armed with the annual programme of proposed projects, little comfort can be gained in being selective on what tenders to undertake, as programmed schemes are not guaranteed to be brought forward..*
- *Insufficient information is available when being invited to tender- eg. work content etc, resulting in unsuitable tenders being requested (and priced accordingly)*
- *Due to the delays in the process, Contractors have to juggle limited resources whilst awaiting the outcome of bids. Commitment may have been made elsewhere during the 'tender open' period.*

15.4 Framework Contracts

15.4.1 The current practice of tendering does not deliver, at a consistent level, what the Council, customers and contractors want.

15.4.2 Following on from initiatives first proposed in the best value review of Architectural and Surveying Services (now Building Solutions for Islington), we are undertaking a pilot framework contract in 2003/4. The second stage of the strategy is to establish a 10-year Borough-wide Framework Contract with a number of contractors that adopts the Partnering principles now being adopted more widely by the Council and nationally across all public sector construction procurement.

15.4.3 This Framework Contract will be performance driven adopting not only the Audit Commissions BVPI's (Best Value Performance Indicators), and Islington's LPI's (Local Performance Indicators), but also the "Rethinking Construction" targets for overall improvement in the broader delivery of construction works, such as health & safety, cost reduction, supply chain management, standardisation, elimination of defects etc.

The objectives of the 'framework' contract are:

- To reduce duplication – particularly in respect of the multiple annual tendering process;
- Substantially reduce tender costs both for the Council and contractors;
- Provide the framework within which the contractor contributes at a technical level on the works required to provide for continually improving whole life costs;
- To show significant improvement in customer care, customer liaison and a reduction in customer complaints and claims;
- Introduction of a new and more efficient method of cost control, financial cost certainty and contractor payment;
- Reduce costs and improve effectiveness of stock condition data updating;
- The introduction of a scheme of incentivisation and default, linked to performance indicators that will lead to measurable continuous improvement throughout the life of the contract;
- Transfer of those risks to contractors where that risk is best managed by them;
- Substantial reduction in defects on materials and workmanship;
- Ability for the Council to add or reduce the volume of required works without penalty and without the normal long lead in times for traditional procurement of extra works;
- Introduction of the partnering ethos and the associated proactive management processes encompassing teambuilding, risk management, value engineering, problem solving, dispute resolution methods and shared objectives that all help to build honesty and trust within longer term relationships;
- Identify areas of waste and seek to reduce the environmental impact of construction.

Tenders will be evaluated using a weighting between quality and price where the greater emphasis is on the qualitative aspects (60% quality : 40% price).

15.5 Structure

15.5.1 The tendering process described earlier has to be undertaken for every job that is tendered and is clearly time consuming and repetitive.

There are a number of different sections involved in the process:

- Housing Investment Team
- Area Housing Offices
- Building Solutions for Islington

- Contracts Admin Unit
- Home Ownership Unit
- Legal
- Corporate Finance

15.5.2 Each section, particularly the Housing Investment Team [HIT] (who bid for capital allocation from Government, and commission and monitor capital and planned maintenance schemes), BSfl and AHO's maintain records of schemes for their own specific use. This is again duplicating recording information. HIT, BSI and AHO's are all part of Housing Services but report to three different Assistant Directors:

HIT	-	Strategy and Commissioning	-	Chris Worby
BSI	-	Building Solutions for Islington	-	John Phillips
AHO's	-	Housing Management	-	Eamon McGoldrick

15.5.3 Clearly the current process for delivering a capital scheme is time consuming, repetitive and involves a number of people and sections each with their own requirements and targets.

15.5.4 It is considered that the delivery of capital schemes would be better served by having one division that has responsibility for delivery of the capital programme covering all the different requirements needed to deliver the programme.

15.5.5 The structure would need to accord with delivery proposals under the framework contract. The framework contract will be delivered on an area basis, the establishment of capital programme 'teams' under any new structure will need to reflect this area delivery.

15.5.6 Repairs and capital investment are inter-linked, each should inform the other. The audit commission have set a 60:40 planned : responsive target. Consideration should therefore be given to the placement of repairs investment to also be within this division.

15.6 Adaptations

15.6.1 The following parts of the council are involved in service delivery of the Adaptations service:

Occupational Therapists	Carry out assessments
Building Surveyors	Prepare designs and specifications from assessments to suit building layouts etc; inspect works
Housing Investment Team.	Make budget allocation – agree financial approval on a scheme by scheme basis
Caxton	Arrange and supervise the works to be carried out

15.6.2 The budget for the adaptation programme for 2002-03 was £1m. In this year 316 adaptations were completed, of these 282 were major works, i.e. costing over £500.

15.6.3 The OT service arranges for assessments of cases referred. During 2002-03 there was an average waiting list of 76 cases awaiting assessment. The working target for this is 70 cases. An in-house team handles the caseload, but agencies are used to cope with peaks in demand.

15.6.4 The building surveyors have a dedicated team of 3 surveyors, with an administrative assistant. Of the 214 schemes completed in 2002-03 the average time from receipt of OT assessment to actual completion of the works was 28.7 weeks.

15.6.5 From May 2003 responsibility for the delivery of adaptations in some street property was passed from building surveyors and Caxton to the PFI contractor. The remaining street properties will become the responsibility of the Phase 2 PFI contractor over the next 18 months.

15.6.6 The review of the Adaptations service has drawn on the Islington Adaptations Improvement Project undertaken in 2001. This used resources from Occupational Therapists, Building Surveyors, Caxton Islington and the Housing Improvement Team. The main issues that the project tackled were:

- Development of standardised solutions for the common installations: level access showers and over bath showers. This involved OT's preferred products, technical input from building surveyors and Caxton, development of a composite schedule of rate items. It was intended that Caxton would bulk buy equipment to save costs and maintain stock levels.
- The use of standardised solutions allowed an options template to be developed. This was to be used by the OT at the time of their assessment and sent to surveyors with the commission.
- The standardised solutions were also intended to introduce greater cost certainty in to the process to enable speedier financial approvals. The financial (and tenancy check) approval process was reviewed as a final piece of work from the improvement project but did not seek to streamline the process.
- The development of a shared information database was initiated. The separate parties identified their information needs, and Caxton's developed a prototype. The project did demonstrate that such a solution would be both possible and desirable. The problems in fully developing the database included the need to set up an IT project to place the database on an Internet with restricted access, and to fully test functionality etc.

15.6.7 The review of the Adaptations function was conducted with assistance of representatives of Social Services. Findings include:

- There is a lack of policy or procedure guidelines for dealing with adaptation equipment found in dwellings units at change of tenancy stage. Furthermore there are concerns generally about the provision of information across the council IT systems to identify when adaptation equipment has been installed. It was noted that pockets of good practice exist, and remnants of previous guidance is still being followed. This is a matter on which the review team wished to see new guidance and operational practice.
- Caxton's use sub-contractors to undertake the building work involved in adaptation works. The current standard and performance of the contractors is

perceived to be good, especially since the current personnel have been involved. It was noted that sub-contractors are replaced from time to time, and was thought that an induction process for new sub-contractors would be beneficial. This would cover customers' needs and care, standards of work, preferred products, OT requirements, and joint inspections upon completion.

- There is organisational uncertainty as to who is the client for the Adaptation programme. The Housing Investment Team sees its role as banker, issuing financial approval to individual adaptations. It has also issued instructions and guidance to the Building Surveyors on the scope of works (e.g. inclusion of energy efficiency measures and limitation of decoration works). The lack of an effective client had also effected the way responsibilities for street properties transferred to the new PFI contractor. This was done before the contractor or the PFI client team had developed procedures for dealing with adaptations, and the change over had not been satisfactorily planned in terms of dealing with current work in listed properties. Interestingly in the ALMO inspection of First Choice Homes Oldham, June 2003, it was also noted that the service suffered from responsibility being split between different departments. It concludes that *“the service does not have any overall co-ordination and responsibility to ensure both the quality and cost effectiveness of the service.”*
- The process of undertaking an adaptation should be re-engineered to look at opportunities to reduce the time required, and the number of separate visits to customers. The current process emphasis is on tenancy checks.
- Information is held separately by the different sections of the council involved in delivering the adaptation service. Information is issued between these sections on regular reports or upon request, Information is not currently shared with housing allocations, nor posted on the councils main frame repair or property IT systems.
- Material issued to customers, e.g. the satisfaction survey and explanatory leaflets should be accompanied by guidance on the council's translation services.

15.6.8 The service was benchmarked against the performance of four other London authorities; Greenwich, Camden, Waltham Forest and Hammersmith and Fulham. In addition a visit to Camden was very helpful. The full record and sample documents gathered at the visit can be found in the full Adaptations Report⁹

15.6.9 Budget provision varies widely between authorities, from £72.47 per tenancy in Greenwich to £28.00 in Camden. In comparison Islington's figure is £31.45, which is 75% of the average (£41.12). Further consideration should be given to the exact date to check for instance if this includes surveyors' fees (Islington's does) and any other on-costs (e.g. OT costs).

15.6.10 The average cost of major adaptation works varies from £5000 to £2867, with Islington's figure of £4000 almost the exact average of all authorities.

⁹ BV Review of Housing Management – Repairs & Improvements: Adaptations

15.6.11 The time taken for an adaptation to be installed from date of OT assessment also was inconsistent at between 5-6 months for Hammersmith & Fulham, 28 weeks at Islington (6½ months), and 9 months for Waltham Forest. Greenwich did not report on their time taken. It seems clear that (with the exception of Islington) from the range of figures and lack of precision that this is not something that is measured, more a view of what the periods are. Secondly there is inconsistency in what period is being reported.

15.6.12 Finally in respect of how adapted flats are dealt with at change of tenancy stage, three authorities (Waltham Forest, Greenwich & Camden) have policies in place for allocation to disabled people from the waiting lists.

15.6.13 From April 2002 Building Surveyors have routinely been sending out satisfaction surveys to customers shortly after adaptations have been completed. The questionnaire covers the service provided by OT's, building surveyors, and contractor. There has been a 53% return rate. The following points of interest arise:

- Overall level of satisfaction is 87%
- The poorest satisfaction is with services provided by the contractor (14% dissatisfied)
- The greatest satisfaction is with services provided by the OT (95% satisfied)

15.7 Legal Disrepair

15.7.1 In May 2001 Disrepair Lawyers from the Council's Legal Services Department were joined with disrepair surveyors from the Council's Housing Department to work together as one team. The close working relationship between the surveyors and solicitors has been encouraged and has led to the formation of a very successful team.

15.7.2 The team deals with cases where a tenant has instigated the services of a solicitor to sue the Council for disrepair. Solicitor's letters are generally referred to the disrepair team by the Area Offices or in some cases tenant's solicitors write directly to the team.

15.7.3 The disrepair team's performance indicator statistics for the last financial year are set out below. The team's main goal has been to reduce the numbers of live cases, and this has been achieved with some success. Furthermore, the numbers of court orders has been reduced dramatically over the last year from 89 in April 2002 to 26 in March 2003.

Month & Year	Cases open at beginning of month	Wholly new cases opened during month	Cases closed during month	Duplicated cases deleted during month	Cases open at month end	Low risk 1 cases	Medium risk 2 cases	High risk 3 cases	Cases awaiting P closure
Apr-02	1135	13	279	54	815	196	386	89	144
May-02	815	26	25	10	806	191	382	90	143
Jun-02	806	12	17	11	790	175	381	88	146
Jul-02	790	20	23	0	787	162	393	95	137
Aug-02	787	15	115	8	679	131	336	74	137

Sep-02	679	10	30	0	659	114	323	64	158
Oct-02	659	16	35	3	637	114	310	61	152
Nov-02	637	17	43	0	611	111	295	53	151
Dec-02	611	14	18	3	604	108	296	50	150
Jan-03	604	36	25	2	613	106	309	44	154
Feb-03	613	20	43	5	585	101	290	43	151
Mar-03	585	22	20	0	587	97	310	26	154
Totals 02-3 FY		221	673	96					

15.7.4 In May 2002 the disrepair team organised and hosted a disrepair seminar attended by approximately 100 delegates representing various social landlords, mainly from London, who had been affected by disrepair claims from tenants. As a result of this meeting a much smaller group of individuals formed London's Disrepair Steering Group to benchmark, discuss issues concerning disrepair and develop group tactics for dealing with conditional fee agreements.

15.7.5 In May 2003 the Council's PFI 1 scheme commenced. As a result 17 on-going cases were passed to their technical team to complete a variety of repairs. Legal work associated with disrepair claims will remain with the disrepair lawyers for the next 3 years, but the burden of actually attending to repairs has been passed to the PFI partners. PFI 2 is scheduled to commence in 2004 and will include the remainder of the street properties.

15.7.6 Estimates from the disrepair teams live cases spreadsheet suggests that a total of 245 cases are probably street properties, 36 are already included in PFI 1. It is hoped that if the remainder are picked up in PFI 2 a considerable disrepair burden will be removed from the Council and the evidence of this will be obvious by 2006/7.

15.7.7 As a direct result of contacts made through setting up the London Disrepair Steering Committee the London Boroughs of Camden, Tower Hamlets, Hackney, Lewisham and Southwark were contacted and provided with a copy of Islington's bench marking questionnaire. Completed questionnaires were received from Lewisham, Camden and Tower Hamlets. In an attempt to begin the conversion of the London disrepair forum into a National Disrepair Forum, contact was established with a senior solicitor at Leeds City Council. Data from Leeds was included in the benchmarking exercise.

15.7.8 A number of important statistics taken directly from the completed questionnaire, relating to cases settled last year, are compared below:

Authority	No. of live cases	No. of claims settled last year	Ave. damages per case	Ave. costs per case	Fines paid	Ave. cost of repairs per case	Ave. no. of new cases per month
Islington	636 ¹⁰	179	£5252	£5924		£2000	18-20

¹⁰ This figure includes counterclaims

					£ 1 0 0 0		
Leeds	915	357	£1500	£3000	0	£700- £800	60
Lewisham	253	120	£6000	£7000	0	£2583	24
Tower Hamlets	360	Not known	£323,338 (total)	£304,340 (total)	-	£398,000 (total)	20
Camden	124	76	£3949	£2014	0	-	6

15.7.9 In terms of the number of live cases Islington has the second highest number of disrepair cases, Leeds having the most. Leeds is also paying out on average considerably less than Islington in terms of compensation and costs per case. What these statistics do not show is that the majority of Leeds' 915 claims are conditional fee agreements (CFA), which are claims, generated by insurance companies targeting estates and tenants in a quite prolific fashion. By contrast, only 45 of Islington's 636 disrepair claims are CFA's. By far the great majority of Islington's live claims are genuine legally aided disrepair claims where the disrepair may be quite substantial and in most cases has caused sufficient inconvenience to motivate the tenant to seek the attention and assistance of a solicitor.

15.7.10 More than half of the live cases at Tower Hamlets are CFA's. Tower Hamlets is unable to provide details for the number of cases that their total compensation and costs expenditure relates to. It has therefore not been possible to provide an average figure per case for comparison.

15.7.11 Lewisham and Camden's disrepair cases appear to have a more similar profile to Islington's. The fact that both carry a much smaller live caseload and receive far fewer new cases per month may make the problem more manageable. More comparative work needs to be undertaken to understand why Camden has far fewer disrepair cases. However, the 2002-03 figures for average expenditure on repairs per unit, identifies Camden as the highest spender in London at £28.00/unit. Islington's expenditure is £16.00/unit. For Islington to emulate Camden's expenditure on 30,000 units would cost an additional £18.7m pa. This suggests that Camden have been able to nearly double Islington's spend and this is reflected in a smaller legacy of disrepair.

15.7.12 In 2000 the disrepair team successfully defended a significant statutory nuisance claim concerning ordinary household noise transferring from an upper flat to a lower flat. The tenant's expert concluded that the Council was required to install sound insulation. The Court found in our favour and concluded that a nuisance did not actually exist, the claimant had been unable to prove beyond reasonable doubt that the conditions at the flat had or were likely to cause illness or disease. Furthermore that from a human rights aspect a decision to require the Council to sound proof the accommodation would most likely have an economic impact on the local community in terms of setting a precedent.

15.7.13 In June 2002 the disrepair team successfully defended nuisance action concerning a flat affected by condensation. The court found that the flat was prejudicial to health but was not satisfied that the Council had caused the conditions; our evidence concluded that the conditions had been brought about by

the tenant's lifestyle habits. This case was a significant victory for the Council as it allows us generally to refrain from re-decorating mould affected flats, installing mechanical extractor fans and dry lining in similar circumstances. Staff from the disrepair team who were directly involved in this case have given training sessions to technical staff at the Area Offices to advise on condensation and how best to diagnose it and deal with it, in light of this case.

15.7.14 Part of the review of legal disrepair focused on the possibility of outsourcing the service. However, there is no evidence that contractors with the multi-disciplinary skills available in Islington's disrepair team are currently in the marketplace. Due to the performance of the team the authority is reluctant to lose the inter-locking solution that the team represents. However this issue remains under constant review as the number of disrepair cases decreases with PFI.

15.7.15 A random sample of 100 cases from the total that were closed last year were selected and a letter and questionnaire sent to the tenants, asking them primarily for feedback on why they felt it was necessary to take legal action against the Council, to enquire whether the problem was swiftly resolved once legal action had been instigated and whether they had exhausted all other Council procedures for dealing with an unacceptable service (i.e. the internal complaints procedure).

15.7.16 From the returned questionnaires and the telephone contact, the following themes were frequently mentioned by tenants:

- Islington Council staff not listening to tenants.
- Islington Council staff saying that they would "get back" and never actually doing so.
- Missed and broken appointments by Islington staff and contractors
- Constantly being "fobbed off" constantly reporting a problem and nothing ever happening to resolve/rectify it. Generally not being taken seriously by Islington Council staff.
- Some tenants received endless visits from a variety of surveyors, all to no avail, no works were carried out.
- A number of tenants complained about the poor quality of repairs that are often carried out requiring a series of further visits to re-do the job.
- Many tenants did not know of the Council's internal complaints procedure and had they known say they would have used it rather than using a solicitor.
- Only by appointing solicitors did the Council take the problem seriously.

15.7.17 From verbal discussions with tenants, as part of this exercise, it became apparent that many of them have difficulty communicating and this leads them to become quite frustrated. Council staff with limited time will probably have difficulty understanding the nature of the repair problem, or even the nature of the enquiry.

15.7.18 There was also evidence that technical officers working at the Area Offices mis-diagnose problems, usually dampness. Mis-diagnosis leads to time being wasted, fruitless repairs being carried out and ultimately can lead to legal action being initiated.

15.7.19 The amount we are spending in terms of compensation and costs may be high in comparison with other authorities and certainly there is plenty of work to be done to rectify this, but the main reason for this appears to be the consequence of a historical lack of investment in the stock. To meet the spending power of Camden on responsive repairs would require an additional spend of £18.7m per year.

16. The Home - Conclusions

- The performance of the responsive repairs service has improved considerably over the last few years. Two of the main PIs, 'Appointments made and kept' and 'Average no. of days to complete non-urgent repairs' are likely to be in the top quartile performance for London. More work is needed on performance of 'urgent repairs completed within government timescales'.
- Satisfaction with the repairs service appears to have turned the corner with a 10% rise in one year. However at 51% satisfaction (with 29% dissatisfied) more work is needed to improve the service in the eyes of the customer. It is reassuring that 45% of tenants feel that the repairs service has improved over the last two years.
- Access to the service through Repair Line has proved popular with 82% satisfied with ease of use (compared with 75% in 2002).
- We conclude that further services, currently accessed through Area Housing Offices, should be made available through a Contact Centre. This would comply with the wishes of our customers who want their queries dealt with first time in the most convenient way, the Corporate Policy of 'One Islington' and the Government's eGov agenda.
- There are process bottlenecks in the repairs procedure which if unblocked would make the system simpler and would make it easier to comply with our customer's aspiration to have a repair tracking system.
- There is no consistent approach to the ordering of pre-inspections prior to repair, which leads to a fragmented and duplicated process.
- Void turnaround performance has improved sufficiently to put this PI into the top quartile. However this may have been at the cost of some quality in the process. There may also be too much emphasis on low cost, which could be contributing to dissatisfaction with the property condition and possibly overall dissatisfaction levels.
- Gas servicing, whilst getting better, now needs a step change in improvement. Whilst there are recommendations for improvement contained within this report, benchmarking with other boroughs is now scheduled to ensure that we import best practice from better performing authorities. In addition, the Gas Service Improvement Project Team, formed to co-ordinate these improvements, have

recommended that a publicity drive be initiated, along the lines of neighbouring borough Hackney, to increase public awareness of this issue.

- Our customers broadly agree with our capital investment strategy but have aspirations, especially on security matters that fall outside of the Government's Decent Homes Strategy. We may need to review our Capital Programme to address this need especially on door entry systems.
- We are piloting a framework contract to address the lack of consistency and duplication currently inherent in our procurement strategy. This is essential to meet the requirements of a Capital Programme enhanced by joining the ALMO programme.
- The current process for delivering the capital programme is time consuming and repetitive and involves staff from across several divisions each with their own requirements. It is considered that delivery of capital schemes would be better served by having one division formed with the responsibility for delivering the capital programme.
- The level of legal disrepair in the borough appears to be the consequence of a historical lack of investment in the stock. To meet the spending power of Camden on responsive repairs would require an additional spend of £18.7m per year.

17. Review Findings

17.1 The Service

17.2 Rent Collection and Arrears Recovery

17.2.1 Rent arrears and rent collection involves a significant amount of money and is the major contributor to the HRA. There has been a growth nationally in the level of rent arrears linked to a growth in the levels of personal debt in society. Local authorities have had to deal with changing attitudes from their tenants to debt as well as a higher dependency on Housing Benefit. The audit commission makes a link between those authorities that are performing badly on debt collection to the problems those authorities have experienced with their Housing benefit administration.

17.2.2 The following section outlines the current baseline position of the authority. It highlights how we have used the best value process to establish a list of considerations to move the service forward. It demonstrates the links we have with Housing Benefit (which effects two thirds of our tenants) and the overall strategy we have in place to build on the improvements we have achieved over the last two financial years.

17.3 Current Structure

17.3.1 Arrears collection in the borough is currently organised into six area housing offices. Former tenant's arrears are collected from a centrally based team. The structure in each area office (other than Lyon Street where the management is outsourced to Hyde Housing Association) is broadly similar with Housing officer teams being

headed up by a Team Leader with assistance being provided from Housing Assistants. The current role of the Housing Officer is broadly speaking tenancy enforcement. They will deal with all issues concerning rent arrears and anti social behaviour. They will also deal with letting properties, mutual exchanges, assignments and successions. An outcome of the last major restructuring implemented in 2000 was to set up separate teams to deal with caretaking, cleaning, estate inspections and maintenance of the communal areas and the services to the estate.

17.3.2 The area offices provide services to around 26,500 tenants although there are some differences in their sizes.

17.3.3 Hyde Housing association as the managing agent manages one of the area offices Lyon Street.

17.3.4 Rent setting and the maintenance of the rent accounts is provided from three centrally based teams - rent accounts, cash control and reconciliation.

17.4 Current Performance

Our performance on rent arrears collection has improved over the last two years however performance is still below average in comparison to other London Boroughs. The percentage of rent collected has improved from the low figure presented for 2000/1. However there are significant differences in performance across the area offices. Whilst there has been a 10% reduction in the gross arrears owed during 2001/2 and a similar reduction in 2002/3 this has to be set against an additional rise in former tenants arrears during this period.

The overall gross figures for arrears have reduced from £12,350,466 in 2000/1 to £11,135,737 in 2001/2 to £9,932,713 in 2002/3.

17.5 Methods of Payment

17.5.1 The borough currently operates a number of different methods of payment. Five of the six area housing offices have cash offices where tenants can pay their rent. Tenants can also pay their rent in the post office by standing order, by direct debit and in some shops and pay points. In Spring 2003 a new payment service was introduced for tenants who can now pay their rent over the telephone by debit/credit card using the Islington Repair Line contact centre.

17.5.2 There has been a trend in recent years towards payment in the post office and away from payment in the area housing offices.

Year	Post Office	Area Cash Office	Main Central Cash Office	Paypoints	S/O & D/D
2000/1	51.7%	29.8%	5.7%	4.4%	8.4%
2001/2	58.9%	22.7%	5.5%	4.4%	8.6%
2002/3	58.9%	21.9%	5.5%	4.7%	9.0%
Estimated Costs per transaction	£0.68p	£1.50	£1.58	£0.63p	£0.37p DD/ £0.47p S/O

- 17.5.3 There are about 12,000 transactions in cash offices each month. Unit cost analysis indicates that each transaction costs nearly one pound more than payment in post offices or paypoints. There is serious concern about best value for money. If the trend continues downwards then the average cost will increase as overheads are fixed. On the main cash office the costs are subject to negotiation between ourselves and the finance department who administer this service. In 2003 there were 37,305 transactions and the recharge to the Finance Dept. was £59,000.
- 17.5.4 By and large our customers are happy with the opportunities available to them to pay. We do not provide on line payments, however this is planned for 2005. We do provide cashiering services at five local area housing offices. The amount of transactions has been decreasing as other alternatives have been developed. In addition the costs of this service are significantly higher than other methods. There are already a significant number of authorities that do not have local cash collection facilities and we felt we should challenge the long term provision of these facilities. Whilst tenants are happy with these arrangements at present it is difficult to gauge whether the removal of these services would directly cause an increase in dissatisfaction levels. The DWP agenda for claimants bank accounts to be set up for recipients of welfare benefits should accelerate the use of payment by debit card, standing order and direct debit.
- 17.6 Housing Benefit Liaison
To collect rent arrears effectively it is paramount to have an efficient Housing Benefit service. We recently terminated the contract of the outsourced contractor for this service, effective from the 1st May 2003. The contract commenced in October 1998. During this time the poor performance of the contractor had a direct link to the level of arrears. Overall arrears figures increased until the financial year 2001/2 when the level of arrears began to reduce in part because of the changed emphasis from the area offices in dealing with arrears and an improved level (albeit still poor) of service from the HB contractor. At present there are regular liaison meetings between Housing Benefit staff and area office staff. There is an agreed protocol for referring cases to the HB front shop and obtaining information regarding cases that have been adjourned at Court because of Housing Benefit.
- 17.7 Former Tenant's Arrears
There has been a significant increase in the level of evictions from 203 in 2001/2 to 284 in 2002/3. Debt passed to former tenants from the areas in 2002/3 was £3,156,267.88 an increase of £1,079,841 from the previous years total of £2,076,426.46. (52% increase).
- 17.7.1 Former tenant arrears collection is dealt with from a centrally based team comprising of 7 staff including a team leader. This team deals with not only HRA debt but former debts owed on temporary accommodation. The full debt level at the end of 2002/3 was £13,811,847 of which HRA debt made up £8,673,976.
- 17.7.2 In the last year £4,793,626 in debt was written off which included £2,121,382 of HRA debt.
- 17.7.3 In 2002/3 £304,356 was received in payment and backdated housing benefit of £2,330,362 was obtained. Currently the former tenant section uses a debt collection agency if there is no response to letters. The structure of this team has recently been altered in order to make more resources available for performance monitoring.

There is a written procedure for staff to follow and formal links have been established with Housing Benefit, as this is an area where a significant amount of money can be clawed back.

17.7.4 Consideration of outsourcing this section has been made. There is a market for outsourcing the collection of FTA's. Our research shows that there is widespread use of debt collection agencies mainly for part of the process but in some cases for the whole service. A typical commission rate is around 30%. There are however some disadvantages to outsourcing the whole of the former tenants section. Last year the in house section recovered over £2m in unpaid housing benefit. The link between having an in house section and housing benefits is of great value. Indeed to pay an agency commission on collecting unpaid housing benefit at 30% would mean that it would not be cost effective given that it costs in the region of £250,000 per annum to run the former tenants team at present.

17.8 Comparative Performance

In order to inform the review about the relative performance of our arrears recovery service, comparison with other authorities was undertaken both on site and verbally. It is clear that by contacting other known performers, a degree of good practice could be supplied. We have been in contact with Camden, Newham, Barnet, Circle 33, Metropolitan Housing Trust, Bolton and Manchester as well as our partners Hyde Housing association.

17.8.1 Our overall collection rate although improved compares poorly with other London boroughs. Under BVPI 66a our collection rate was 93% for 2002/3. This is in the bottom quartile.

17.8.2 The collection rate only measures one aspect of rent control and arrears. We approached the visits from a view point of establishing what could work in the borough on areas where we had identified a weakness. Particular focus was placed on getting more from our arrears actions and linking this in with preventative work. It was acknowledged that we should be obtaining information to address the gaps we had identified.

17.8.3 We looked at the way other service providers organised themselves and what added benefits they provided. We looked at various structures and models of providing the arrears collection service (Circle 33, Manchester, Camden). We identified a need to look at the support role we offered to tenants when they fell into arrears (Hyde, MHT, Manchester) with the onus being on preventative actions. We looked at the use of dedicated court officers in order to make our actions more productive (Camden, Hyde, Newham). We looked at the various alternatives for the collection of former tenants arrears (Camden, Barnet and Bolton).

17.8.4 The provision of a front line arrears service from a customer contact centre such as at Circle 33 or Manchester was of particular interest. It is clear that significant inconsistencies between levels of service provided to our customers are apparent between offices. One benefit from service provision such as this is that it can be easily standardised.

17.9 Tenant's Satisfaction

In the Tenant's Survey 2003 there were no specific questions related to arrears recovery. In order to ascertain tenant's views a focus group was convened to

discuss the issue. The overriding concern expressed by tenants was the link between ourselves and Housing Benefits.

17.9.1 There was some concern expressed about the contents of the arrears letters sent as some residents felt this to be inappropriate and did not take into account tenants needs such as the elderly. “The council should start off by telling tenants how they can help instead of threatening to evict people”.

17.10 Specialisation

At present housing officers deal with tenancy enforcement issues as well as the letting of properties and tenancy changes. There is often a conflict between priorities concerning tenancy enforcement for anti social behaviour and arrears collection. This means that sometimes these services are provided at the expense of others. We looked at various other providers who have specialised rent arrears teams. Whilst evidence of their performance was difficult to obtain in some cases, from the evidence acquired it appears that these systems are working effectively. Although there is also evidence from Camden to suggest that the current structure which is similar to our own can work effectively as well.

17.10.1 One of the issues that needs to be addressed is ensuring that ownership of the performance remains unfettered. The Housing Officers at present are accountable for a range of activities, which often conflict. We felt that there was merit in exploring the use of specialist arrears, welfare and court officers. We should be mindful of not creating a system, which compromises the ownership of the process. We need to be careful we do not replace one set of management issues with another set of problems.

17.10.2 In the County Court, where we undertake our own advocacy, we have an issue with the inconsistency of staff presentations. There is also a need to build a relationship with the court following the problems generated with housing benefits. This could be resolved by training specialist officers.

18. Tenancy Management

The review of the tenancy management service focused on the following areas:

- Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) and Harassment and the general enforcement of tenancy conditions
- How we deal with changes in tenancy i.e. successions, assignments, mutual exchanges, joint tenancies etc
- Housing Investigations – How we identify and deal with instances of unauthorised occupation, subletting,
- Support for vulnerable tenants
- Looking at how complaints information is used to inform service improvement and develop policies and procedures.

18.1 Current Performance

18.2 ASB/Harassment

Housing Officers as part of a generic tenancy management role currently undertake this area of work. A centralised joint housing and police anti social behaviour team provide support. This team provides advice and guidance to staff and is responsible for promoting best practice.

18.2.1 Dealing with ASB is one area where considerable improvement has been made. There is a sound strategy, numerous examples of established good and innovative practice and Islington now has a national reputation for its innovative approach.

18.2.2 In particular the introduction of acceptable behaviour contracts (ABC's) initially brought in to tackle ASB involving young people, has brought national interest and has been adopted as good practice by the Home Office.

18.2.3 Use has been made of funding available to introduce Neighbourhood Wardens to the Lyon Street Area. Following its success this has recently been extended with a pilot of the scheme in the Elthorne locality of the Holland Walk Area.

18.2.4 A joint housing/police ASB Team was established to provide advice and promote and disseminate good practice and partnership working across the borough. The service now has a well-developed information sharing protocol, effective liaison with the police service and a multi agency approach to problem solving. It is currently piloting Multi Agency Geographical Panels (MAGPI's) to assist in dealing with youth disorder.

18.2.5 There are two Best Value performance indicators (BVPI's) that relate to harassment, but no BVPI's in respect of ASB, although service performance in both areas is monitored through local key PI's.

1	Performance Indicator	01/02	02/03
	No of racial incidents recorded by Hsg Dept	32	46
2	% of racial incidents resulting in further action	94%	70%
3	Sexuality Harassment analysis – total of HH1's	8	6
4	% of sexuality harassment incidents actioned	N/AV	83%
5	Homophobic Harassment analysis – total of HH1's	4	N/AP
6	% of Homophobic Harassment incidents actioned	N/AV	N/AP
7	Other harassment analysis – Total of HH1's	23	121
8	% of (Other) incidents actioned	N/AV	66%
9	% of racial harassment cases resulting in designated further action against perpetrator	N/AP	37%
10	% of sexuality cases resulting in designated further action against perpetrator	N/AP	33%
11	% of other harassment cases resulting in designated further action against perpetrator	N/AP	36%
12	No of ABC's signed	37	46
	No of NSP's served	46	55
	No of Injunctions obtained	6	12
	No of Possession Orders granted	7	1
	No of evictions	7	6
	No of ASBO's obtained	0	0

* The Performance measure for 2000-2001 was number of visits in one day for reported incidents of racial harassment.

N/AP = Not applicable that year
N/AV = Not available

18.2.6 However, the review has identified some gaps and weaknesses in service provision and delivery.

- There is insufficient use made of mediation in resolving nuisance cases particularly in neighbour nuisance disputes.
- Provision for witness support is poor, which may be affecting the success when enforcement action is used.
- Although the professional witness scheme is used, it would be more effective if available resources were targeted at hotspot or recognised problem areas in a proactive manner.
- The neighbourhood warden scheme proved effective in the Lyon Street area but currently a strategy does not exist to extend a similar patrolling function to wider parts of the borough.
- Levels of action against alleged perpetrators of harassment are low.
- The tenancy conditions are not available as standard in key community languages at present. This is relevant in respect of assisting with the enforcement of breaches in the tenancy conditions.
- Residents still have a poor perception of the service.

18.3 Housing Investigations

18.3.1 Housing Officers (HO) initially deal with this area of work. Where they identify a problem that cannot be resolved through their initial enquires, they will refer the case to the Housing Investigations Team (H.I.T). On completion of their investigations the H.I.T will complete a report with recommendations for action and refer back to the Area Housing Office (AHO). The decision to pursue the recommendations rests with the AHO and if legal action is required the HO will serve the notice seeking possession and pursue the case to court. As problems have been identified with the quality of notices a six-month pilot has been undertaken where Housing Investigations Officers have prepared any required notices.

18.3.2 The Housing Investigations Team has had very positive results. There are no Best Value performance indicators in this area of work, but local key and divisional PI's demonstrate their results.

Performance Indicator	00/01	01/02	02/03
No of Cases received for investigation	225	378	245
No of cases closed	233	391	239
No of properties reposessed	N/AV	69	80

18.3.3 The performance information shows a clear improvement in the performance of the team and the number of property reposessions increasing. The team brings the benefits of effective enforcement of key tenancy conditions, bringing properties back

to the authority for re allocation to those in need and assisting in the reduction of temporary accommodation costs. Savings of approximately £10k per annum are achieved in these costs for each property repossessed.

18.3.4 The Housing Management division has also introduced photographs on tenancy agreements to assist in the identification of bona fide tenants and has a tenancy audit programme. Audits of 10% of housing stock are carried out each year by Housing Officers. Audits are targeted at specific blocks. The aim of the programme is to identify any instances of unauthorised occupation.

18.3.5 The review has however identified gaps or weaknesses in this area.

The average time taken between legal department and court to conclude non-defended possession proceedings was 77 weeks in 01/02 and 49 weeks in 02/03. The average time taken between legal department and court to conclude defended possession proceedings was 146 weeks in 01/02 and 101 weeks on 02/03.

These are substantial times to conclude possession cases. An analysis of available information shows that there are frequently substantial/ unnecessary delays in HO's serving notices or referring cases to legal. Greater consideration and analysis needs to be given to the delays in the legal department in getting cases to court.

There is evidence to suggest that the number of parties involved in progressing these cases contributes to the delays.

Examination of the tenancy audit figures and information indicates that follow up action can be patchy and there is an inconsistent approach to referring unsatisfactory audits to the H.I.T for further investigation.

18.4 Changes in Tenancy

18.4.1 Housing Officers (HO) deal with this area of work as part of their generic tenancy management role. This area forms a small proportion of the overall tasks they undertake. It is largely a process driven task, with decisions made in line with legislative and policy requirements.

The review has identified the following gaps/ weaknesses:

- Inconsistency in the application of procedures.
- Lack of clarity in current processes and procedures.
- Lack of good quality information available for tenants.

18.5 Support for Vulnerable Tenants

There is one Housing Support Officer (HSO) located in each of the 5 in-house Area Housing Offices. The aim of the Housing Support Function is to provide short-term support for vulnerable clients in danger of losing their tenancy. The focus is on securing the support and services that person requires to remain in the community and to maintain their tenancy.

18.5.1 In 2002/03 274 tenants were referred to Housing Support Officers. Through that financial year the HSOs were able to secure £224,074 in backdated housing benefit for 150 of their clients.

18.5.2 From 1st April 2003 changes were made to the funding for the provision of housing related support services to people who need them. This is not new funding; the Supporting People pot is made up from several different sources of funding transferred to the new single budget.

18.5.3 As the aims of the Housing Support function are consistent with aims of the Supporting People Service the funding for HSO's is no longer provided from the Housing Revenue Account but from the Supporting People pot.

18.5.4 The Supporting People service has been operational since April 2003. There is a clear shadow supporting people strategy, which has been approved as 'excellent' by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

18.5.5 The review concludes that the aims of the HSO function and role of the HSO need to be clearer to show that they are aligned with Supporting People objectives.

16.5.6 As the Supporting People service has only been operational since 1st April 2003 a BV review of the service has not yet been undertaken. An option provided in the interim report recommended that a review is undertaken within the first three years of the initiative, under the arrangements for Supporting People. However, in order to provide improvement to the service in the short term, we have developed a support plan template that will provide for individual plans for each of our clients. These will be drawn up in line with the supporting people framework, and in consultation and with the agreement of each client. This will offer an improved and more consistent service and one where outcomes can be more easily measured and evaluated.

18.6 Consultation

The forms of consultation undertaken by Housing Services are listed in section 10.

Findings on Tenancy Management show that:

18.6.1 Poor communication is an underlying factor in contributing to dissatisfaction with various areas of the service including Housing Officers (HO's), staff service and the complaints procedure.

18.6.2 Awareness of HO's is low and many tenants do not know the name of their HO and are not clear on their role. Many tenants would like to see HO's doing more home visits and are of the opinion that they should remain the main contact point for housing-related queries.

18.6.3 Residents have indicated that they prefer to contact the council via telephone because of the speed and efficiency of this contact method. Although several tenants said they prefer to visit the office as they feel face to face contact is more effective. There was a general lack of interest in contact via e-mail or Internet,

(although 20% more BME residents were likely to cite this as a preferred method of contact¹¹).

- 18.6.4 Tenants are divided on the question of a centralised service versus local service. The positives for a localised service included a more personalised approach and staff familiarity with the area they are covering. However, some tenants said they would prefer a centralised service, as all information would be in one place, communication would be improved and someone would always be available to deal with queries effectively
- 18.6.5 Many residents have experienced some form of ASB and findings show that tackling ASB and crime in the area remains a high priority for residents. Although there have been improvements in levels of satisfaction in this area, residents are still more likely to be dissatisfied than satisfied when reporting problems of nuisance. Residents feel that processes for reporting and resolving problems are lengthy and require a lot of time and effort.
- 18.6.6 They would also like to see the authority publicise the tenancy conditions regularly so that all tenants are aware of their responsibilities and the consequences of breaching these. They are keen to see the authority more effectively enforcing tenancy conditions.
- 18.6.7 Residents would like to see more support for victims of and witnesses to ASB/Harassment, however, there is little support for the use of mediation, as residents are reluctant to enter into dialogue with those they identify as perpetrators of the nuisance.
- 18.6.8 Residents have mixed ideas about the idea of a scheme for rewarding tenants for compliance with their tenancy conditions. Whilst some felt this a good idea, others felt the council would be better placed focusing its efforts on tackling poor behaviour.
- 18.6.9 In the main residents were positive about the use of neighbourhood warden schemes. They thought that they would provide a much-needed Council presence on estates and this would act as a visible deterrent to physical problems effecting the area.
- 18.6.10 Residents are also concerned that when community initiatives are introduced there is insufficient communication with and involvement of residents.
- 18.7 Comparative Performance
To inform the review about the comparative performance of Islington Tenancy Management service, comparison was made with other authorities, mainly through on-site visits.
- 18.7.1 These visits were made for the purpose of comparison, challenge and identification of best practice and included:
- Manchester – Housing Inspectorate gave a rating of a good (2 star) service with excellent prospects for improvement. They have developed a national reputation

¹¹ Tenant's Survey 2003

for their pioneering work on tackling ASB. It has been instrumental in making the case for stronger powers for authorities.

- Camden – Housing Inspectorate gave a rating of an excellent (3 star) service with excellent prospects for improvement. Their Housing Management Service was also recognised for their creative and broad approach to tackling anti social behaviour and harassment.
- Middlesbrough – To allow greater comparison with authorities outside of the London Boroughs. Middlesbrough has received recent positive press coverage on its approach to tackling crime and ASB. Crime rates have fallen considerably in relation to the rest of the area covered by that police force.
- Circle 33 - A local RSL provider, Circle 33 has developed a contact centre approach to provision of tenancy management services.
- Hyde Northside – Hyde currently manages Lyon Street, one of the six area housing offices, for the council. One of the purposes of contracting out an area was to allow for comparison and benchmarking with an external provider and to introduce innovation to service development.

18.7.2 Visits were also undertaken to Hammersmith and Fulham, Lewisham and Hackney to look specifically at how they provided the Housing Investigations service. These authorities were chosen as they have a similar Housing Investigation team, which has allowed for proper comparison. Hammersmith and Fulham have also been assessed as an excellent (3 star) service with excellent prospects for improvement.

The team also spoke to the Community Safety Partnership Unit and police.

Some of these authorities assisted in the provision of comparative data where this was available.

BVPI's results for 2001/2002

Performance Indicator	Islington	Camden	Manchester	Hammersmith & Fulham
No of recorded racial incidents per 100,000 population	143.08	30.65	119.67	26.5
% of racial incidents that resulted in further action	94%	87%	94.11%	100%

Key Local performance indicators

Housing Investigations

Performance Indicator	Islington	Lewisham	Hackney	Hammersmith & Fulham
No of properties repossessed	80	61	N/A*	4

* Not available for 2002/2003 though 2001/2002 figure was 97

ASB

Performance Indicator	Islington	Manchester	Camden
No of ABC's	46	N/A	N/A**
No of ASBO's	0	38	12
No of injunctions	12	424	N/A
No of Possession orders	1	51	N/A
No of Evictions	6	N/A	19

* Relates to no of court applications

** Camden has 150 ABC's but are to advise later how many relate to 02/03 year

18.7.2 Elements of best practice were found in all of the providers visited in relation to Anti Social Behaviour and Harassment. However, the team found that Manchester's approach and practice particularly in relation to enforcement action to be the most rigorous and productive. Best practice elements are included in the options; in particular Hyde and other authority's use of neighbourhood wardens or patrolling schemes are something Islington has learnt from.

18.7.3 We found no one authority to have significantly better results in relation to Housing Investigations work; Islington has well-developed practices in this area. Though the team has recommended option for improvements to current organisation and practice.

18.7.4 In other areas of tenancy management information from Camden has been used to inform the revision of practice and procedures particularly in respect of information available to tenants.

19 Estate Services

19.1 The review of estate services has focused on the following functions in the five Area offices managed directly by Islington Housing Management (this report excludes how services are delivered by Hyde Northside in the Lyon Street area).

- Caretaking and concierge services
- Refuse management on estates
- The estate inspection process
- Grounds maintenance
- Cyclical drainage on estates
- Working with public utilities

19.2 Current structure

- Estate services are delivered through a dedicated team at area office level. The team both deliver some of the services directly and are involved in the client function of other services that come onto an estate.
- A Team Leader manages two or three Estate Services Officers (ESOs) and a Caretaking Manager. The Caretaking Manager manages two assistant managers who, in turn, manage a mixed group of residential & non-residential

caretakers (between 25-40 dependent on Area Office). There is administrative support provided through an assistant.

- The dedicated teams have been in place since 2000 when Housing Management Services last restructured.

19.3 Summary of current performance

19.3.1 Caretaking

The existing caretaking service has undergone rapid modernisation within the last two years and specifically following the conclusion of a long standing review of the service:

- Introduction of £200k of equipment and mechanisation (lumber trolleys and steam cleaning crews), together with provision of adequate water provision and on-site storage
- Introduction of two mobile response teams
- Reviewed training plans including a nationally recognised cleaning qualification, Customer Care and Health and Safety.
- Introduction of mobile phones and uniforms for all staff
- The introduction of new contracts and more flexible working approaches.
- New out of hours emergency call-out rota.

Additionally the service is in the process of expanding into undertaking minor repairs and chute cleaning.

A summary of performance is that the 'secondary' caretaking services (group-working to clear lumber, graffiti removal, steam cleaning) work well and compare favourably with other providers. The performance of the 'primary' function of estate cleaning (sweeping, clearing grassed areas, washing down common parts of blocks) remains mixed. Performance is inconsistent across the areas. There are no performance indicators for this function, but tenant satisfaction levels with this element of the service remain poor, with a third of tenants dissatisfied.

19.3.2 Concierge

There are seven concierge schemes in operation at present. Duties of concierge officers vary depending on when schemes came on line. There is still a policy commitment to introduce three new concierge schemes a year with a budget of £1.5m including technical and design fees. Value for money is variable since bigger schemes attract economies of scale, even where only two blocks are linked in a scheme.

2002 saw a unification of job descriptions and duties, which has addressed some of the discrepancies of the earlier schemes.

CCTV is used in all the concierge schemes to assist with combating nuisance and crime. CCTV is also employed in the professional witness scheme and has been successfully used to identify perpetrators and lead to convictions in court.

19.3.3 Refuse management on estates

Refuse management currently involves three providers for five services:

1. Caretakers who clean the estates
2. ICSL who are responsible for refuse collection, bin cleansing and the provision of scheduled bulk-waste collection service (both funded by the general fund rather than the HRA)
3. Greenspace who currently respond to ad-hoc bulk refuse orders that might be requested by the Area Offices

Housing neither manages nor directly clients ICSL who, (as partners with Islington), provide bin collection and scheduled bulk collections on estates. Bin collections are generally satisfactory, causing relatively few complaints from the public. However, bin cleansing is unsatisfactory and the level of service is in dispute.

Scheduled bulk waste collections by ICSL have been the subject of much negotiation and performance in terms of communication and performance to target times, is below average. It is arguable that even if performance times for collections were met that this may not resolve all bulk waste issues.

Green Space ad hoc orders perform well. Areas place orders with the nominated contractor, which are paid for out of the HRA, and the items are removed from the estate. Housing has negotiated a price for this service and agreed a procedure to make this work. Two years ago this function was performed by ICSL and Housing was not clear if it was receiving value for money, and generally was not satisfied with the performance. Housing therefore agreed with ICSL to remove the function from the partnering arrangement.

Of note, however, is that housing is still occasionally using the ad hoc service to cover the failings of the current scheduled service. Issues remain for the Department both in terms of performance and value for money concerning the collection of bulky waste.

19.3.4 Bin Cleansing

The bin cleansing service is carried out by ICSL who undertake two bin washes a year and is funded through the HRA. In the last financial year Housing Services have refused to pay as ICSL could not provide evidence that the service had been delivered. For the two prior financial years Housing Services agreed to make only partial payment for these services. Performance evaluation is hampered by the ongoing failure to obtain records of tasks completed.

19.3.5 The Estate Inspection process

Estates are guaranteed regular, (at least monthly), inspections with resident association inspections taking place quarterly. Management systems are in place to ensure the inspections take place, and these are also the subject of one of the early Customer Commitments (or service standards). There is a lot of duplication in estate visits between ESOs and assistant caretaking managers. This is positive in terms of a “presence”, but can be deemed inefficient.

Emergency communal repairs can be reported by any officer, including caretakers, direct to Islington Repair Line. In practice this means such emergencies can be addressed immediately rather than only being picked up at monthly inspections.

Inspections feed into an ‘Estate Profile’. This should be a master copy of different component parts of common areas and can be used to inform future decisions about the needs or “vision” of the estate in the future.

A possible criticism of the inspection process is that it may be viewed as output based in terms of carrying out the inspections, rather than result based (allowing time to ensure the issues picked up are actually resolved).

19.3.6 Grounds maintenance, arborcultural services and management of play areas

Grounds maintenance and arborcultural services, have proved successful, both in terms of value for money and the performance. Robust service level agreements and operational meetings have meant that performance has been driven forward.

The general grounds maintenance work is performed to a good standard and complaints about the service are minimal. Housing has, in 2002, re-measured all the areas it wanted within the scope of the contract and reorganised the schedules into housing management owned land and “other” housing owned land so clienting can be made more accurate.

Area teams have small budgets to supplement the work of the main contract. Arrangements now exist to dovetail into the contract any new landscaping projects, which were often overlooked in the past.

2001 saw the introduction of programmed leaf clearance in winter.

Investment in a tree database has been made by Housing in order to better inform priorities for the future of trees on estates. Programmed schedules for tree work are agreed in advance for all estates with budgets and processes in place for areas to place day-to-day orders.

19.3.7 Play Area management

Repairs or improvements to existing play areas are carried out through the Environment and Conservation department. Housing pays for these services and generally performance is adequate although value for money has not been stringently tested. The issue that remains outstanding relates to ensuring, through revising service level agreements, precisely what should be expected for the management fees being paid.

19.3.8 Cyclical drainage

Cyclical drainage work is carried out on estates and estate streets by the internal Highways Division. The Housing Department has failed in recent years to evaluate what level of performance has been provided or whether value for money was being achieved. This has been rectified with service level agreement meetings taking place since late 2002. Negotiations continue to develop a more consistent programme, which does not operate in isolation from our other estate operations or capital investment programmes. This is linked to a clearer costing and budgeting regime.

19.3.9 Public Utilities

Performance is difficult to evaluate. The review has established, however, that both Estate Service Teams and the Mechanical and Electrical Section of Architects & Surveying, both think they are responsible for “clienting” issues with utility companies such as waste water notices. This has led to replication of duties and a lack of clarity.

19.3.10 Consultation

Historically there has been insufficient current consultation with residents on shaping, delivering or reviewing estate services. Although following the result of the recent Tenant’s Survey more attention has been paid to funding communal works on estates, including approximately £800,000 being made available for door entry systems.

Estate inspections do allow existing TRAs the opportunity to express opinions about issues on their estate. Area Housing Panels allow TRAs to decide how up to £250,000 of environmental and security improvements/repairs should be allocated each financial year.

19.4 Comparison

There are no BVPI’s that easily relate to estate services. Visits to other authorities have therefore been undertaken to facilitate comparison. Authorities were selected due to favourable Audit Commission Inspection reports as well as where tenant satisfaction ratings have been high.

19.4.1 Pinnacle in Hackney

- Very high satisfaction ratings on cleaning to the extent that two TMOs have purchased their services back in.
- A non-residential cleaning service with team of cleaners.
- Possibly challengeable on cost. Have group working in small teams that cover each other (leave/sickness) but have very high levels of supervision, linked to clear audit trail of inspection paperwork of cleaners. Believe in a “stay on their back” approach to successful cleaning.
- Cleaning contract encompasses bulk waste removal direct from site
- Cleaning contract encompasses a specialist graffiti and jet washing teams

19.4.2 Wandsworth

- Moved cleaning function from residential caretakers to contract and developed caretakers as estate patrollers in a 24 hr service with duties ranging from formal checks of lifts, lights, boiler rooms, tank rooms to emergencies and minor repairs.
- Patrollers involved in nuisance management, even in-house surveillance and decision making to call out emergency contractor out of hours.
- Carry out the estate inspections and order the minor repairs
- Cleaning contract encompasses bulk waste removal direct from site
- Cleaning contract encompasses a specialist graffiti team
- Use a reference group of 1000 tenants to sample services.
- Concierge systems – a cheaper service model since it relies on CCTV with a remote monitor.

19.4.3 Hounslow

- Success built on highly trained in-house work force with in-house provision of that training.
- High levels of supervision.
- Encompasses bulk waste removal direct from site
- The ALMO has taken back in house the client management of the grounds maintenance contract and has re-awarded it. It is likely to be too early to evaluate whether this approach is better than paying a management fee to a specialist provider to client it direct. Certainly some teething problems at present.

19.4.4 Brent

- Evidence of clear and published standards of what services can be expected on all block staircases

19.4.5 Manchester

- Developed internal environmental officers at area level to focus exclusively on anti-social behaviour to common parts of estates

19.4.6 Greenspace in Islington (for parks & open spaces)

- The “Park Ranger” model offers some alternatives for comparison with ESOs. Park Rangers are exclusive “champions” for a particular common area. Essentially the ranger is not responsible for actually ordering any services (as ESOs are with repairs) but only in co-ordinating the appropriate services to come into a park as necessary.

19.5 Gap analysis

19.5.1 Caretaking

Delivery of cleaning services as the primary function has poor satisfaction ratings. Internally these are associated with motivation, image and issues around cover for annual leave. Standards of service customers can expect are unclear, and this is an issue that customers tell us they want resolved. Moderate satisfaction and lack of service standards are likely to be linked.

There is duplication in some of the functions of assistant caretaker managers and ESOs. In some areas it is not clear where the inspection function lies between caretakers, ESOs (e.g. roof spaces).

19.5.2 Concierge

There is a lack of vision about the service. It is unclear whether a commitment exists to continue to fund new schemes. Specifically costing three schemes a year at £1.5m is likely to be unrealistic.

19.5.3 Refuse management

The most successful authorities do not attempt to store bulk on estates, they remove it straight away.

The thinking behind this element of the service seems to start from the premise that this is a general fund service, and since house to house collection is not possible on estates (as it is in the rest of the borough) then this is the best that can be offered. Other authorities do not take this view and arrange immediate collection, be it funded from the HRA or GF.

19.5.4 Bin Cleansing

Lack of evidence of service provided. It is unclear whether one or two cleans are required during a year.

19.5.5 Estate Inspection role

Concern that estate inspection focuses effort only on inspection rather than results. Too much time is spent ordering and chasing individual job orders which limits a more proactive, “head-up” approach to co-ordinating services on estates. There is little focus on the anti-social role that was envisaged for the post.

The inspection role is not part of a joined up thinking process with other planned investment on the estate. This is best seen in their dislocation from their technical colleagues in repair teams. Ultimately this should be the key to generating creative thinking about the estate profile and the future of the estate. Again, the “head-up” role is not as developed as it could be.

19.5.6 Grounds maintenance

On issues of value for money both arboricultural and grounds maintenance services stand up to comparison. Certainly tree services have just undergone a competitive tendering process with contractors. With play areas this may not be the case and challenging how this service is provided and whether it offers value for money needs further study.

Operationally, grounds maintenance and tree services compare favourably with other providers. The gap relates to both Housing Management and the provider being absolutely clear what is being paid for in the management fees which will help drive improvement in the service when resolved.

In terms of business planning the department needs to take a more robust approach to decisions about yearly spend. Presently the emphasis seems to be on a ‘no growth’ approach to spend on trees and the ad hoc grounds maintenance budgets. This may be the legitimate conclusion to reach, but it is not founded on any options analysis about the costs or benefits increased, or reduced expenditure, might bring.

19.5.7 Cyclical drainage and utilities

Whether the current cyclical service offers value for money must be studied. Currently no evaluation can be made.

19.5.8 **Consultation**

Customers are engaged only at the level of TRAs. It is arguable that barring a provision for emergency repair funding then all choices about what to repair or improve, given limited resources, can be delegated to resident choice.

Arguably the same could be said of the small pockets of money available to officers for ad hoc grounds maintenance work.

19.5.9 **Better self-publicity**

Residents remain largely unaware of the successes and improvements made in estate services. For example, the majority of residents remain unaware of the role of the ESO. There is a role for better public relations, publicity and influencing at the estate level to increase tenant satisfaction.

20. **Estate Parking**

20.1 The services included in the review were:

- Allocation of garages, parking spaces, cages and management of waiting lists – currently undertaken by AHOs, different staff at different offices.
- Lineage, signage, security (lighting, gates, perimeter fencing, etc.), maintenance of surfaces – AHO responsibilities except signage – Estate Parking Team hold budget and responsibility.
- Enforcement – currently 12 month contract with Wing Security with two possible 6 month extensions.
- Visitor parking arrangements – two trials running, further one just started. Model 1 creates specific visitor bays for use on a first come first served basis. Model 2 has every bayholder issued with an additional permit for use by their visitors in their own bays.
- Abandoned vehicles – Operating arrangements with Redcorn, who remove and destroy batches of 10 vehicles on day rate. Identification and stickering work undertaken by ESOs.
- Potential new activities – various enquiries received regarding enforcement of parking restrictions.

LBI currently has in excess of 11,000 parking facilities (garages, cages and bays combined). It enforces parking restrictions on 184 estates and this number is likely to rise as demand for land in central London rises and with the spread of Controlled Parking Zones on public highways in Islington.

Customer feedback indicates that there is support for an enforcement service but that residents are concerned about the lack of provision of parking for their visitors.

20.2 Current Performance

Housing providers do not all have to provide estate parking services on the scale delivered by LBI. Comparable services are only found in other London boroughs or large metropolitan authorities. There are no BVPIs applicable to those services reviewed but benchmarking information, through contact with other authorities, is available¹².

Benchmarking findings:

- Second highest enforcement activity rate
- Lowest percentage of lost clamps
- Percentage of vehicles released without charge in line with other authorities
- Percentage of enforcement activities subject to appeal in line with other authorities
- De-clamp performance in line with other authorities.

Customer feedback on estate parking services is available from the Best Value review focus group. Group members agreed that the system currently in place is needed and that it generally works. There was some concern about lack of provision for visitors' parking.

20.3 Allocations and Waiting List Management

The service is currently decentralised to Area Housing Offices who hold six separate sets of records. This provides an immediate face to face service with local knowledge. It also benefits from an easy tie in to estate inspections for repairs and capital improvement programmes, however;

This can produce a lack of consistency with duplication of administrative functions. There is further inconsistency in the information transfer between the six Area Housing Offices and the Estate Parking Team.

20.4 Lignage, signage, surfaces and security

Currently all the responsibility of Area Housing Offices except signage. The Estate Parking team are budget holders for these services.

The team considered that environmental works should be considered for inclusion in the ROLECS programme which would introduce a more planned approach with proper specification and site supervision. Conversely, inclusion in a centrally managed investment programme would bring consistency of standards but could struggle to obtain external funding purely for parking improvements.

20.5 Enforcement

Although this is not a statutory requirement, there is considerable environmental and customer pressure for this service. It is however an important consideration for income generation as higher letting rates for bays, garages and cages are achieved because of enforcement activity. The service is currently provided through an

¹² Report of Estate Parking Working Group App. 1

activity based, income-generating contract. This provides contractor motivation and ensures that activity levels are high, however;

There is a risk of over-zealousness which means enhanced clienting responsibility.

There is, however, demand from other social landlords and private sector organisations within Islington for an enforcement service, as many do not have sufficient scale of parking to make it viable for them to provide their own. This has the potential to generate funds to provide an enhanced service.

20.6 Visitor Parking Arrangements

Feedback from focus groups has confirmed that there is a customer requirement for this service. Housing Services are currently running trials of two different models for visitor parking and are to consider rolling these out further following consultation.

20.7 Abandoned Vehicles

This service is provided by a contractor on day rates (£250 for 10 vehicles removed each day) with identification and stickering undertaken by Estate Services Officers (ESOs) and Estate Parking Co-ordinators. This has the benefit of control of what action and when being in the hands of the authority, however;

There may be an over reliance on ESOs and there can be reduced value for money, or delays, if there are not 10 vehicles for removal.

21. Tenant Participation and Consultation

21.1 An interim Best Value inspection of housing services was conducted in October 2002. The report¹³ cited the following as areas of concern pertaining to tenant satisfaction and resident participation:

- The low level of tenant satisfaction both with the overall service and opportunities for participation
- The absence of a comprehensive Tenant Participation Strategy

The report went on to highlight the perceived reasons for the low levels of satisfaction with the overall service and opportunities for participation.

- “the Islington Factor” of poor historical performance
- high expectations from tenants which were not being satisfied
- a conflictual relationship between some tenants and the Council
- It was also evident that there was essentially a conflictual relationship between the service and the Federation of Islington Tenants Associations.

21.2 Current Structures for Involving Tenants

21.2.1 Currently there are well-established mechanisms for local involvement with tenants and leaseholders through a variety of forums. These include;

¹³ L.B.of Islington Housing Management Service Interim Best Value Report (Nov 2002)

- Area Housing Panels
- The Leaseholder Forum
- Tenant Management Organisation/Tenant Management Co-op (TMO/TMC) Review Group
- Housing Consultative Panel
- Housing Association Working Group
- Area Committees
- Repairs Service Improvement Group
- Annual Tenants Conference
- Housing Network
- The Tenant Participation Compact
- The Federation of Islington Tenant's Associations (FITA).

21.2.2 The Federation of Islington Tenants Associations is the umbrella organisation run by members of recognised Tenants Associations on behalf of residents. FITA is the recognised body for the setting up of Tenants & Residents Associations (TRAs) in the borough. They provide on-going support and advice over a range of housing issues and assist with printing notices, correspondence for meetings, newsletters, posters, agendas, venues for meetings etc.

21.2.3 FITA meet Housing Officers to represent borough-wide concerns, and to discuss issues in relation to TRA recognition, other borough-wide strategy and policy issues and borough-wide tenant consultation arrangements.

21.2.4 The six geographically based Area Housing Panels have decision making powers on spend of the £1.5m devolved local capital, and environmental budgets, along with part of the caretaking, cleaning and security budgets. The Panel consists of TRA and TMO resident representatives and Ward Members and is chaired by a tenant or leaseholder, who is elected each year. Officers provide all the administrative support.

21.2.5 Area Housing Panels (AHPs) facilitate consultation through membership by TRA's, TMO's, and other representative local bodies, taking into account views expressed in local meetings set up by each AHP, and feeding into the Housing Consultative Panel. A framework for Local Compacts was to be developed in 2002 as part of the development of the Borough Wide Compact to assist AHPs in developing their local compacts. This work is not yet complete.

21.2.6 In 2000 Islington set up the Islington Leaseholder Forum to represent the collective views of Islington Council leaseholders. Leaseholders elect representatives to sit on the forum for a period of 2 years. The main aims of the forum are:

- To ensure leaseholders are consulted about issues and procedures that effect them
- To co-ordinate leaseholders' concerns and present them to the Council's senior management
- To advise on and make decisions on proposals to change leasehold policies and practices
- To improve communications between the Council and leaseholders

21.2.7 There are two leaseholder representatives for each of the six Housing Areas, and one representative for each statutorily recognised Residents' Association.

The Forum has elected one of their members to sit on the Housing Consultative Panel. This Panel consists of representatives from the 6 Area Housing Panels, which act as a forum for local consultation with residents. The Housing Consultative Panel, which includes housing association and TMO representation, meets with senior management of the council to monitor and discuss service issues across the borough, and the views and concerns of leaseholders can be put across through the Leaseholder Forum's member of this Panel.

21.2.8 Area Committees have decision-making powers for local planning and licensing applications. Each committee is made up of twelve local ward Councillors (three from each of the four wards). The meetings provide residents with the opportunity to hear decisions about improvements and changes in their area and to add views into the decision making process.

21.3 Gap Analysis

The following observations were made in November 2002 in the Interim Best Value Inspection Report.

- No formal Tenant Participation or Consultation strategy
- Concern as to whether the new governance structures in the form of a Leader/Executive arrangement were assisting tenant development, as they had involved the closure of the Housing Committee and the establishment of a system where tenants views were fed to the Executive by third parties after development through the Area Housing Panels and the Housing Consultative Panel. This was considered by some to decrease the involvement of tenants in decision making and had the potential to be a more cumbersome approach¹⁴.
- Tenant Participation has been undertaken by a team who also hold responsibility for TMOs, TMCs and Community Centres.
- Tenant Compact document not user friendly.

21.4 Tenant Consultation and Involvement

21.4.1 The details of tenant consultation to guide policy, both in the annual Tenant's Survey and in focus groups and tenant/leaseholder interviews is set out in section 9. In addition there have been focus groups convened to look at specific housing issues. These include a Housing Benefit Focus Group, the Repairs Service Improvement Group and Capital Programme focus groups.

21.4.2 For the purpose of ascertaining views on the preferred means of securing additional investment funding to reach the Decent Homes Standard there has also been a series of surveys and conferences.¹⁵

21.4.3 In preparation for the possible commencement of an arms length management organisation (ALMO) from April 2004, a Shadow Board has been created which is made up of 7 tenant leaseholder representatives, 5 Council representatives and 5 independent members. This Board will be responsible for the delivery of the

¹⁴ L.B.of Islington Housing Management Service Interim Best Value Report (Nov 2002)

¹⁵ Decent Homes for Islington – Proposal for an arms length management organisation in Islington

housing management service and puts real power into the hands of tenants and leaseholders of the borough.

21.5 Leaseholder Consultation

In addition to the Leaseholder Forum, a number of other methods exist for communicating and obtaining feedback with leaseholders. The Forum has its own website and there are leaseholder mailboxes in all of the Area Housing Offices, where associated correspondence can be handed in. There is also a leaseholder's newsletter - Islington Home Owner - which is sent to all leaseholders twice a year.

21.6 Using feedback to improve services

21.6.1 In order to achieve a coherent approach to service improvement, with tenants and leaseholders at the centre of planning, tenants must have evidence that their views carry weight and are taken up in planning services.

21.6.2 A clear message from Area Focus Groups was that participants felt that the Council either did not use the information it was receiving from its customers or was not feeding back how it did so.

"They have groups like this and meetings and forums but you never hear anything about the effectiveness of them!"

"If we had some feedback then we would know that consultation systems are making a difference."

21.6.3 There is clearly a crucial gap here that needs to be urgently addressed as part of a wider improvement of the consultation and involvement strategy. A process needs to be put in place that continuously takes the results from surveys, consultation and inspection results and feeds them through to an action plan whose outcomes are tangible improvement. A framework procedure is in the early stages of development.

22. TMOs and TMCs

22.1 Context

Tenant Management has a very long history in the borough. In 1976, the Charteris Housing Co-operative, one of the first Tenant Management Co-operatives (TMCs) anywhere in the country, was established in Islington. A further 10 TMCs were set up in the borough during the late 1970s and early 1980s and, in the late 1980s, 13 very small "homesteading" co-ops were established to act as the Council's development agent in bringing a number of run down street properties up to a habitable standard. Once the properties were habitable, the "homesteading" co-ops acted as the Council's managing agent on management agreements very similar to the larger TMCs. In the late 1980s, a new tenant management model, the Estate Management Board (EMB), was introduced by PEP, which enabled Council representatives to sit on the management committee alongside tenant representatives. Islington has an EMB established on the Hornsey Lane estate in 1991. With the advent of the Right to Manage in 1994, tenant management has continued to flourish in Islington and a further 14 Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) have since been set up on the Modular Management

Agreement (MMA) prescribed by the DoE (now the ODPM). There are currently a further 5 TMOs in the latter stages of development.

22.1.1 As a result of this historical development, Islington now has a number of different types of TMO operating in the borough. The TMCs (including the homesteads) typically undertake a wide range of housing management functions including caretaking and cleaning, responsive repairs, grounds maintenance, cyclical external redecoration, tenancy management, allocations, rent collection and arrears control. They operate to almost identical management agreements that are soon to be renewed with an additional responsibility for major repairs.

22.1.2 The TMOs, established under the Right to Manage, have a very different foundation and almost without exception, have taken on a more limited range of functions including only caretaking and cleaning, responsive repairs, grounds maintenance and cyclical external redecoration. However, some Right to Manage TMOs have taken on concierge and security systems. Dixon Clark Court initially took on heating although this has subsequently been handed back to the Council. This function is also included in the Weston Rise agreement although they get no allowances for it. At least one TMO, Spa Green, has expressed an interest in taking on the full range of functions and this may set a trend for TMOs in future. The Hornsey Lane EMB falls in between the TMCs and the newer TMOs.

22.1.3 With 37 established tenant managed organisations including 11 homesteading co-ops (two were wound up) and a further 5 in development, Islington has substantially more TMOs than any other local authority in the country and remains committed to their further development.

22.2 The Review

In scoping the review of housing management it was noted that many of the functions under review are also delivered either by Tenants Management Organisations (TMOs) or Tenant Management Co-operatives (TMCs) themselves or by the Council to TMO/TMC managed properties. It was therefore important to set an achievable scope for the TMO/TMC review workgroup at an early stage. It was decided that as this was a Best Value review of Housing Management rather than of the TMOs and TMCs themselves, the focus should be on the Council's role in working with TMOs and TMCs. The four key elements of this role are:

- Working with developing TMOs,
- Supporting and monitoring established TMOs and TMCs
- Delivering Council retained services to TMO/TMC managed properties.

22.2.1 Islington was one of 12 local authorities that participated in a TMO Benchmarking project lead by Westminster City Council (CityWest Homes) in 2001/2. The final report of this project (CWH-BP), published in December 2002, was used as the primary basis for comparative performance data with other local authorities.

22.2.2 It was also agreed to approach the Peabody Trust and Newlon HA with a view to using the TMOs stock transferred to them in 1999 as potential comparisons. As the possibility of extracting TMO/TMC data from the annual customer satisfaction survey was not viable, it was also decided to undertake a questionnaire survey with TMO/TMC managers and committee members.

22.2.3 At the same time that the City West Homes TMO Benchmarking Project was running, the ODPM commissioned Oxford Brookes University (in conjunction with HACAS Chapman Handy) to carry out an evaluation of TMOs. Two Islington TMOs (Dixon Clark Court and Kerridge Court) were included among the 18 case studies included in this evaluation. There was a good deal of communication between the people involved in the two projects and, as a result, they compliment rather than duplicate each other. Comparison between the two projects is therefore useful and, in addition to considering the CWH-BP report, the work group also used the ODPM report, "Tenants Managing: An evaluation of Tenant Management Organisations in England" (November 2002) as a source for both comparison and challenge.

22.3 Current Arrangements

A central team of 4 staff, in Tenant Management Commissioning is responsible for clienting and commissioning established TMOs and working with developing TMOs. This includes developing a TMO commissioning structure; negotiating performance protocols with TMOs; monitoring TMO governance and service provision; providing advice, support and training to TMOs and area housing staff on the operation of TMO management agreements; processing (Section 16) TMO development grants; leading on the negotiation of new TMO management agreements and variations to existing agreements; co-ordinating TMO start up arrangements; provision of TMO start up costs; and liaison with external agencies, e.g. Section 16 agencies, ODPM.

22.3.1 Retained Council responsibilities in tenant-managed stock are delivered through the Area Housing Offices (AHOs) and a number of centrally based sections. At the AHOs, Housing Officers and Estate Services Officers are likely to be the front-line staff most frequently in contact with TMOs in connection with tenancy management issues and repairs and improvements to communal areas. However, TMOs may also have occasional contact with Team Leaders, Housing Services Managers, and Area Housing Managers. Each TMO also has a local liaison officer to resolve any difficulties with the working arrangements between the TMO and the AHO. Centrally, TMOs will also have occasional contact with the Islington Repair Line (IRL), Technical Officers, Home Ownership, Housing Benefits, Housing Allocations, and Health and Safety.

22.3.2 From 1st October 2002, the former Residents Initiatives Unit was restructured into two separate teams with responsibility for tenant management and tenant participation respectively. The new Tenant Management Commissioning team is based centrally with a remit to introduce robust Performance Measurement and Performance Management. This will involve establishing a commissioning and clienting regime for TMOs, negotiating and administering a performance protocol with each TMO, holding regular service review meetings with TMOs and carrying out a programme of TMO service audits. A number of pilots have been established to develop this regime.

22.3.3 Performance indicators are collected on each of the following areas:

- a) Governance and accountability
- b) Policies and Procedures
- c) Service Delivery (BVPs)
 - Allocations
 - Tenancy Management

- Estate Services
- Rent Collection/Arrears Control
- Repairs and Maintenance
- Voids
- d) Employment
- e) Finance
- f) Staff/Committee Training
- g) Equal Opportunities
- h) Complaints
- i) Council Responsibilities

22.3.4 As mentioned in the CityWest Homes TMO benchmarking report, the growth of TMOs has outstripped the establishment of management structures to monitor and support them. This is certainly the case in Islington where the large number (37) of often relatively small TMOs is a significant resource issue for the Council. Islington has by a huge margin, the largest number of TMOs in the country and each of these has its own committee and unique staffing arrangements (paid or voluntary) which all should be supported and monitored.

"The growth of TMOs has outstripped the establishment of management structures to monitor and support those organisations. The pace with which TMOs have been established has meant many authorities have not had the opportunity to reorganise the sections that provide Housing Management Services and provide the performance monitoring and support services. Where this exists, it is a weakness that should be addressed".

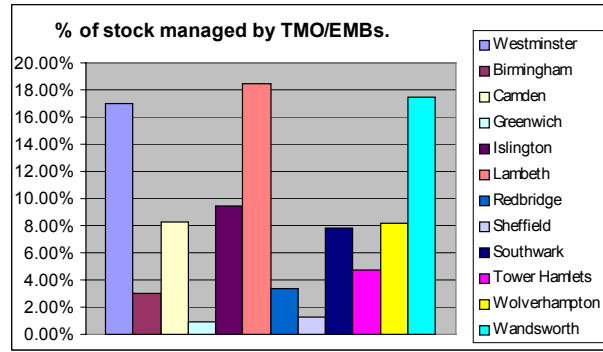
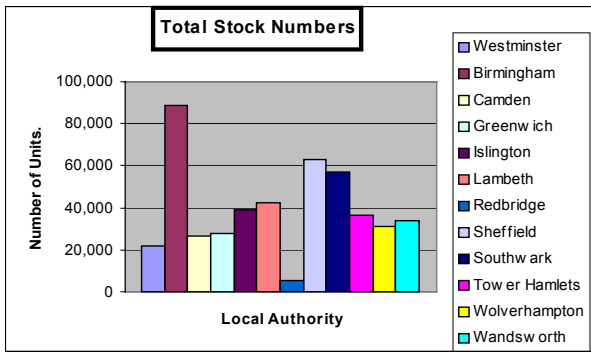
"Tenant/Resident Participation sections, particularly those who also undertake the monitoring regime as well as promoting and supporting TMOs, have not generally grown in line with the increase in the number of TMOs. This means that, almost universally, that they are struggling to cope with the demands made of them".

Source: CityWest Homes, TMO Benchmarking Project - Final Report (December 2002)

22.4 Comparison

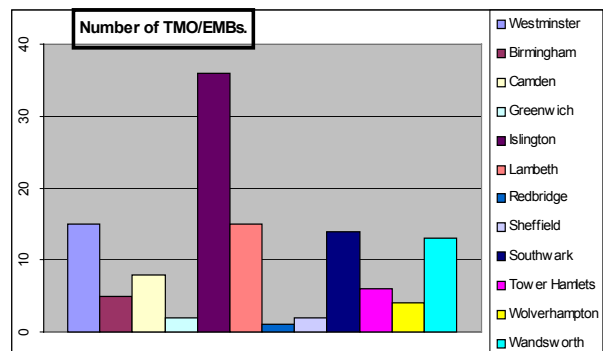
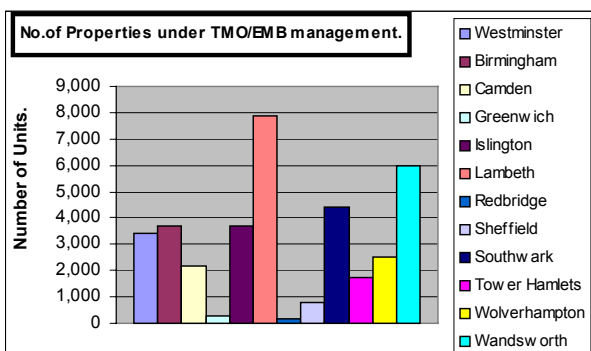
During the early stages of the CityWest Homes TMO benchmarking project, it became apparent that no other local authority, either in London or outside, had previously undertaken a Best Value Review of TMOs. This benchmarking exercise is therefore the best available source of comparative performance data on TMOs involving a mixture of London Boroughs (including Islington) and Metropolitan Authorities outside of London. It also became apparent during this benchmarking exercise that there was a lack of basic information with which to make comparisons and recognition of this fact was the start point for this review.

22.4.1 The stock profiles of the 12 local authorities participating in the CityWest Homes TMO benchmarking project are set out in the charts below:



Total Housing Stock Numbers and the percentage of stock managed by TMOs

20.4.2 The chart above reveals that Islington is about mid-range in terms of housing stock. Birmingham has over twice Islington's housing stock whereas both Sheffield and Southwark have about 50% more. Islington is roughly on a par with Lambeth, Tower Hamlets and Wandsworth.



Numbers of properties under TMO management and number of TMOs/EMBs

Islington stands out from all the other authorities in respect of the number of TMOs relative to the number of properties under tenant management.

22.4.3 The comparative financial information collected for the CityWest Homes TMO benchmarking projects are shown in the table below. In addition, the financial information for Islington for the current financial year has been added.

TMO Allowances								
	No.'s of TMOs TMCs	Total no.'s of properties	Total Hsg Mangmt	Rent Collection £	Repairs & Maintn £	Other Allowances £	Total Allowances £	Cost per Property £
Islington (2003)	37	3,871	509,960		2,362,215	876,700	3,748,875	968
Islington	36	3,693	781,229		1,780,584	937,114	3,498,927	947
City West Homes	15	3,748	778,767		1,475,723	787,454	3,069,083	819
Camden	9	2,021	662,072	16,162	374,153	0	1,052,387	521
Wandsworth	13	5,833	1,239,048	99,823	2,497,161	287,924	4,123,956	707
Southwark	14	4,427	2,557,185		3,640,759		6,222,221	1,405
Sheffield	1	151	0				55,686	369
Redbridge	1	180	10,470		92,174	30,132	132,776	738
Lambeth	15	7,642	3,301,317				9,968,163	1,304
Greenwich	2	269	81,700		129,580		211,280	785
Tower Hamlets	6	1,206	655,815		301,169		956,984	794
Wolverhampton	4	2,532	1,258,708		1,557,377		2,816,085	1,112
Birmingham	2	2,751	1,689,594	180,662	1,972,846	188,007	4,031,110	1,465

Notes:
The **Repairs and Maintenance Costs** include Ground Maintenance, Responsive Repairs, Decoration Allowances, Cyclical Maintenance and Committee Administration for TMOs and the total costs for the Housing Coops.
The Housing **Management Costs** includes Management and Support Costs for TMOs.
The **Other Allowances Costs** includes Caretakers, Concierge, Sheltered costs for TMOs.

22.4.4 As the TMOs in each local authority will provide a different range of services, it is difficult to draw conclusions from this data. In Islington itself, these figures include both TMCs and Right to Manage TMOs who undertake a different range of functions and are funded under a completely different allowance regime.

22.5 Customer Satisfaction

The CityWest Homes TMO Benchmarking Project included a customer satisfaction survey in order to establish whether the services TMOs manage for their residents are provided either more efficiently than traditional methods of housing management or with greater degrees of customer satisfaction.

22.5.1 All Islington TMOs and TMCs were approached but the TMCs (apart from ICHC) made a collective decision not to participate. The participating TMOs selected the residents to be surveyed and, in the event, only about 60 residents responded. The customer satisfaction data should therefore be treated with caution as the participating TMOs were self-selecting.

22.5.2 The comparative results for the eight local authorities participating in this part of the exercise are set out in full in the work group report¹⁶, but they include:

¹⁶ TMO/TMC Interim Report July 2003

- 98% of Islington respondents were aware that their property was managed by a TMO. This compares with Wandsworth (97%), Lambeth (95%), Camden (90%), Westminster (87%), Birmingham (86%), Southwark (85%), and Redbridge (77%). The average across all 8 authorities was 91%.
- 88% of Islington respondents said they had received information about the responsibilities of the TMO and the Council. This compares with Wandsworth (77%), Camden (76%), Southwark (74%), Westminster (61%), Birmingham (48%), Lambeth (47%), and Redbridge (38%). The average across all 8 authorities was 66%.
- 91% of Islington respondents said they had received information about who is on the TMO Management Committee and what they do. This compares with Wandsworth (82%), Camden (81%), Southwark (72%), Birmingham (52%), Westminster (51%), Lambeth (44%), and Redbridge (43%). The average across all 8 authorities was 66%.
- 93% of Islington respondents said they had received information about what the TMO is. This compares with Wandsworth (88%), Camden (81%), Southwark (81%), Westminster (78%), Birmingham (77%), Lambeth (74%), and Redbridge (70%). The average across all 8 authorities was 81%.
- 91% of Islington respondents said they had never experienced communication difficulties with the TMO. This compares with Lambeth (89%), Southwark (82%), Birmingham (81%), Westminster (74%), Wandsworth (74%), and Redbridge (69%). The average across all 7 authorities was 80%.
- 90% of Islington respondents said the TMO communicated either very well or adequately. This compares with Camden (95%), Wandsworth (93%), Westminster (87%), Lambeth (86%), Southwark (85%), Redbridge (63%) and Birmingham (35%). The average across all 8 authorities was 84%.

22.6 Challenge

The conclusions of the challenge process were as follows:

- This is a statutory service required to meet the Council's obligations under the 1994 Right to Manage regulations. The Modular Management Agreements, prescribed by the ODPM establish a contractual relationship between the Council and the TMO and legal advice should be obtained on the extent to which the Council's powers and obligations set out in these agreements can be delegated to a third party. However, in principle the role of working with developing TMOs, supporting and monitoring established TMOs, and delivering Council retained services in TMO managed stock could be provided by an external organisation.
- The tenants and leaseholders continue to value the service, as evidenced by the number of established and developing TMOs and the results of the recent tenant satisfaction survey, and wish the council to continue to provide it.
- Consideration should be given to whether the performance-management and TMO development/support roles should be separated or combined.
- Consideration will need to be given as to how the retained Council responsibilities in TMO managed stock will be delivered in the context of the

ALMO. This will obviously need to be determined by the option appraisal of the Housing Management Best Value Review as a whole.

22.7 Conclusion

Despite the fact that TMOs are widely seen in a positive light and viewed as being vehicles for empowering tenants and delivering high quality, responsive services much of this opinion is based on anecdotal evidence. The Westminster (City West Homes) TMO Benchmarking Project revealed that no other local authority, either in London or outside, had previously undertaken a Best Value Review of TMOs. Most authorities involved in the exercise also had difficulty in obtaining information from TMOs, particularly in relation to costs and PIs. The recent ODPM TMO evaluation exercise, conducted by Oxford Brookes University (in conjunction with HACAS Chapman Handy), was also the first such evaluation of TMOs since the Right to Manage was introduced in 1994. In many instances, TMOs may be delivering better services than the Council, and they certainly tend to have higher levels of customer satisfaction, but there is little or no quantitative evidence to support this. Islington has undertaken the establishing and developing of performance measurement and performance management for TMOs through the Tenant Management Commissioning Team.

23. Home Ownership Services

Home Ownership Services in Islington undertake four main areas of work:

Right to Buy

- RTB processing
- Rent to Mortgage processing
- Processing payments
- Calculating and reporting performance indicators

Annual Service Charges

- Service charge calculation
- Arrears recovery and collection

Leasehold Management

- Assignments
- Sub-letting
- Deeds of variation
- Lease extension
- Leasehold Forum facilitation

Major Works

- Section 20 consultation
- Calculation of leaseholder charges
- Invoicing & collection of charges

- 23.1 In the latter half of 2002, a scrutiny review of Home Ownership Services was undertaken by the Performance Review Committee led by Councillor Graham Baker. The Performance Review Committee agreed a series of recommendations for consideration by the Director of Housing and these form an improvement plan

for the service that is the subject of regular review by the Housing Management Team

23.2 Although there are no BVPIs that apply to Home Ownership services (HOS), there are statutory deadlines for several processes. The Association of London Government's (ALG) Leasehold Officers forum have established a set of benchmarking statistics for member authorities in Right to Buy and leasehold management. The dataset¹⁷ is the most comprehensive set of comparisons available.

23.2.1 Of all London boroughs Islington has the 4th highest number of service charge payers, behind Wandsworth, Westminster and Tower Hamlets. Other key results for Islington from the dataset:

- Total service charge billed 2002/3 : 2nd highest
- No. leasehold sales completed : 3rd highest
- Percentage stock leasehold : 4th Highest
- Average revenue service charge : 3rd lowest
- Cash collected as % of total raised : 2nd highest (out of 10 reported)
- Percentage of RTB2s served within deadline : Bottom
- Debt at year end : 2nd highest (behind Camden)

23.2.2 To benchmark the service we set out the positive features extracted from the 'Scoring the Service' section of the BV Inspection report on Westminster Lessee Services, which received a 3 star 'excellent' rating from the Housing Inspectorate. This exercise was also completed with the London Boroughs of Croydon and Camden who both received 2 star 'good' judgements for their lessee services.

Westminster	13 Islington: current performance/achievements	14 Islington : gaps/weaknesses
Professional staff and high level of customer satisfaction with staff contact	Overall positive response from customers to direct contact with HOS staff. 66% of leaseholders are positive about the staff helpfulness and 58% find it easy to contact the right person.	Overall customer satisfaction poor (on basis of satisfaction survey). Only 25% of leaseholders are happy with the overall service provided. Only 36% of leaseholders feel they are a valued customer.
Queries dealt with efficiently and accurately through tailored IT systems	IT system tried and tested and training /enhancements to reports and bill layout etc improving. Plan to move over to integrated departmental IT system which should resolve a considerable number of the issues concerning responsive repairs and major works.	Standalone system is not very user friendly and there are some inherent restrictions in flexibility of system which limit capacity to improve layout/clarity of output
Information to leaseholders – handbook, leaflets and financial advice pack	Leaseholders Handbook and bi-annual Newsletter to be published 2003/4 Web site: copies of all documents routinely	Nothing specific on financial advice available Lack of in-house leaflets on specific issues.

¹⁷ Home Ownership Services Appendix 1

	published to web site	No service standard currently available although this is in early stages of consultation.
High levels of customer care – including home visits and links with other agencies	Flexible attitude of staff (eg home visits) Leaseholder surgeries outside normal hours Developing links with other agencies	Need better communication/publicity for services available Need to set up training plan for staff in HOS and sections where services provided Need to address poor customer satisfaction levels in areas identified from leaseholder satisfaction survey.
Efficient RTB processing	Improvements in error detection rate Improved procedure for tenancy checking at RTB stage to eliminate ineligible /fraudulent applications New PI for response time for tenancy checks	Overall performance is poor. Action plan developed to address this. As level of applications reduces following recent rush before reduction of discount levels.
Variety of other “home ownership” schemes available reflecting needs of local community	Freehold sale initiative – proactive scheme as “simpler” procedure than enfranchisement	No buy-back, or exchange schemes or opportunities outside RTB scheme
Speedy and effective billing process	Billing cycle up to date	Delays in issuing MW bills, estimates and final accounts. Action PIn to bring leaseholder issues to the forefront of the major works process being developed.
Clear procedures for determining service charges	Written procedures in place; training and support for Area Offices, TMO’s etc Checking of block repairs delegated to Area offices encourages “ownership of” and speeds resolution of disputes	Still some problems with consistency of charges, anomalies and cost collection/aggregation. Arbitration system for dispute resolution needs developing.
Flexible payment options and schemes for assistance for payment of service charge/major works bills	Interest free scheme for mw; voluntary charge for mw for elderly Telephone payments introduced summer 2003	Little options outside statutory; no use of discretionary powers
Strong performance management information which is monitored against team plans	Departmental PI’s and individual/ team targets closely allied to these -	Management info and communication could be improved. Clear more work needed on achieving service charge targets especially around major works. Further PI’s required especially around

		activity and outcomes
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Areas for improvement – again extracted from Best Value Inspectorate report for City of Westminster (p 9); Islington’s current performance compared and gaps identified.

Westminster	Islington – current performance/achievements	Islington – gaps/weaknesses
No ethnic monitoring	Basic ethnicity questions included in Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey	Nothing done for RTB applicants
Lack of formal channel for Council to hear leaseholder-specific issues	Leaseholder Forum is dedicated channel and part of overall consultation mechanism via Housing Consultative Panel Dedicated page for Forum in Newsletter to feedback on role/decision of Leaseholder Forum	Leaseholders have poor levels of awareness of the Leaseholder Forum. Leaseholders have low level of satisfaction that their views are taken into account for planning major works
Leaseholder concerns that some housing management staff do not understand leaseholder rights/responsibilities	Training/support for by HOS other depts. /area offices and more regular liaison being developed. Development of training plan for all involved staff.	Poor level of customer understanding of who does what. Publicity in newsletters planned.

23.2.3 From the baseline review and benchmarking process the gaps identified can be summarised as follows:

- Customer care – poor customer satisfaction levels
- Arrears recovery – weak for major works - service charges improving
- RTB performance – increased backlog to worst in London following changes in maximum discount
- Limited availability of leaflets and other information to customers
- Lack of feedback on Leaseholder Forum
- Limited range of payment options

23.3 Service Areas

Right to Buy is a statutory function and a core landlord activity so it is not an optional service. The service outcomes and performance standards are largely defined by statute, so the service should

- Comply with legal requirements
- Be customer-focused
- Be cost effective
- Have sound procedures to eliminate fraudulent applications

23.3.1 Once backlog of pre-discount change cases have completed, staffing levels in HOS may need to be reviewed as volume of new cases declines. Longer-term RTB processing may become a residual activity.

23.4 Valuation and Conveyancing

The current service from the in-house Valuers and Legal Services is not sufficiently client focused. Turnaround times remain poor and management information and reports are difficult to obtain. A number of London authorities have successfully outsourced one or both of these services.

23.5 Service Charges and Leasehold Management

Contractual obligation as landlord to provide on-going services to leaseholders is set out in the lease. Cost recouped direct from leaseholders through service charge. So provision of services is mandatory, but landlord need not provide services directly.

23.5.1 Most services (e.g. block repairs, caretaking) are provided to residents as a whole across mixed tenure stock, so not possible to separate leaseholders, and are provided from/managed by the Area Housing Offices.

23.5.2 Service charge calculation and collection is the main activity in HOS in this area. Leasehold management (sell-ons, purchase of additional land) are additional landlord services provided "on request"

23.5.3 Current situation – HOS carry out both calculation and collection. In terms of current performance on annual service charges, HOS exceeded target last year, is ahead of target in current year, and performance compared with the other boroughs in the ALG dataset is good. However, we will review targets and consider implementation of additional PIs to monitor performance more effectively.

23.6 Major Works

Major works are a type of service charge for larger scale non-routine repairs or improvements, which take place on a programmed or cyclical basis. Where the charge to leaseholders exceeds a ceiling, a statutory consultation ("Section 20") procedure has to take place in order for the landlord to recover its costs.

23.6.1 The consultation procedure, the size of leaseholder's contributions and the particular problems associated with major works in terms of duration of the works, quality and reasonableness, make major works in practice sufficiently different to justify the setting up within HOS of a central team to carry out the S20 consultation, calculation and collection of major works charges.

23.6.2 Evidence of weaknesses in the major works process as whole come from

- Level of leaseholder queries
- Poor level of satisfaction from leaseholders in terms of quality /cost of works
- Impact on arrears levels of above points
- Increase in capital programme leads to more leaseholder charges

- Delays in getting final accounts from BS4I (impacts on ability to recover charges)
- Number of disputed cases (especially “old” contracts)
- Increase in number of LVT cases and
- Limited payments options especially for “vulnerable” leaseholders

23.6.3 Major works charges are particularly vulnerable to challenge by leaseholders on the basis of “reasonableness” – a combination of inter-linked issues of cost and quality. Potential income from major works is very significant so investment in management of contracts and in aspects of collection (eg. additional resources in HOS) would be repaid.

23.6.4 The challenge is to close the circle in the major works process to emphasise the importance of “recycling” leaseholder contributions. Leaseholders are sometimes seen from the perspective of the commissioning and delivery side of major works as peripheral/marginal, and should be seen as integral. Capital programmes should not be seen as successfully delivered if there are large levels of leaseholder dissatisfaction and consequent large levels of arrears.

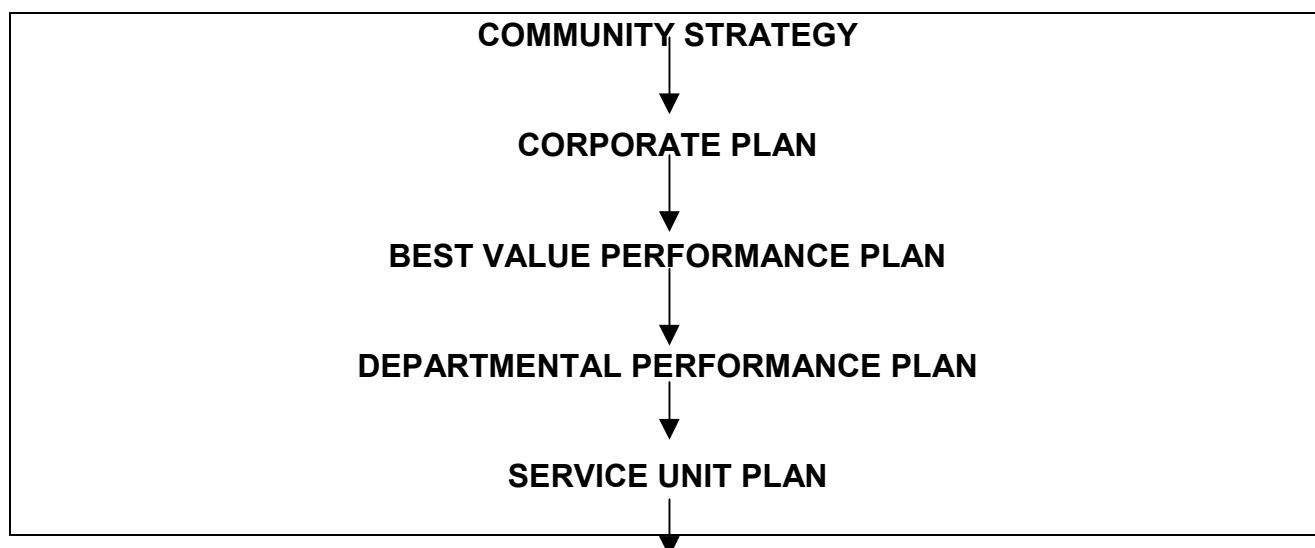
23.6.5 Mainstreaming or incorporating leaseholder aspects of major works within sections(s) responsible for commissioning or delivering major works could address this.

24. Performance Management and Business Planning

24.1 In determining how it will deliver its services, the Council produces many different plans each year. This includes statutory plans and those that address local priorities and issues.

24.1.1 To ensure that Islington is delivering its community, national and local priorities the council has implemented a planning framework to provide direction for the council, department, sections and individual staff members.

24.1.2 This is shown below and outlines the main strategies and plans that drive the authorities performance.



INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

- 24.1.3 Housing produces a Departmental Performance Plan, which sets out how it intends to accomplish the Council's priorities. This incorporates a series of actions, targets and projected outcomes for the year. It also identifies the challenges to be faced over that year, the resources available and it outlines how well the department has performed over the previous year.
- 24.1.4 This is underpinned by specific service and section plans, which identify the actions for individual services to help achieve departmental aims and objectives. This is then translated through the appraisal and development process into individual objectives and targets for each staff member, which support their service/section aims.
- 24.1.5 At each stage of the process, the aims, objectives and targets seek to link back to the aims of the Community Strategy.
- 24.1.6 In addition the Housing Department produces a business plan every year in July which is submitted to the Government Office for London (GOL).
- 24.1.7 The Business Plan is produced by Business planning project officers with major input from the Housing Investment and Housing Finance Teams.
- 24.1.8 The business planning work group takes responsibility for reviewing progress, allocating work and ensuring the plan is delivered on time and is chaired by the Assistant Director for Housing Finance.
- 24.1.9 Consultation with residents is conducted on the plan and a draft of the plan goes to each Area Housing Panel in July for their comments. The plan has to be approved by full Council and is submitted with the housing strategy.

24.3 Current Performance

The department has an established performance management system with the Performance Monitoring Unit responsible for reviewing and improving the performance management framework. It has already carried out a comprehensive review of our performance monitoring regime and consolidated and simplified reporting procedures. The improvements made to the quality and auditability of departmental Best Value performance indicators (BVPI's) to district audit standards, have resulted in a significant reduction in the number of BVPI qualifications from fourteen in 2000/01 to just one in 2001/02.

- 24.3.1 The quality and accuracy of local key performance indicators (KPI's) has improved, as has internal co-ordination and reporting procedures.

Other important developments have included:

- The introduction of a "performance basket" analysis system, which compares the performance of area housing offices.

- Establishment of a year end performance comparison/analysis report focusing on:
 - Internal comparisons of the 6 area housing offices.
 - Comparison of our performance against the best that is available elsewhere, including our competitiveness against others.
- The linking of performance management to departmental business planning and management processes by strengthening the accountability of departmental KPI's and BVPI's with other key planning processes to improve cohesion and transparency.
- Implementation of new performance reporting procedures on customer care PI's within the department.
- Completion of quality audits on departmental void activity and customer care activities.
- Completion of a TMO/TMC benchmarking project with Westminster LBC
- Introduced new departmental performance reporting standards focused on achievements and outcomes.
- Reviewed the departmental monthly performance report with the needs of wider stakeholders in mind - the report is now simpler and more user friendly.
- Established a framework for distributing performance information to stakeholders.
- All performance indicators are called over at Senior Management Teams on a monthly basis

24.3.2 The department also carries out a year on year Annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey (now in its third consecutive year).

However, although there is a performance culture with a clear performance framework in place, the review has identified some gaps or weaknesses that will need to be addressed. The review has used the CIPFA CPA model to complete a gap analysis. The full analysis is available but key areas are identified below.

- Limited involvement of residents in setting objectives & targets in divisional plan.
- The absence of clear service standards.
- Departmental and Divisional local KPI's do not adequately cover all key areas of service i.e. Estate Services.
- Lack of a quality management system underpinning performance management.
- Weak performance culture in TMO's and TMC's.

- Performance management and service improvements need to address inequalities issues and reflect overall community needs.
- Approach to performance planning and improvement is largely driven from the top down.
- Insufficient evidence of performance management being used as a learning tool in the development of policy and procedures.

24.4 Business Planning

The business plan is a driver for all our key activities. In particular it is the main driver for our ALMO bid, option appraisal and our DH4T activities. It supports the housing strategy and is an important part of CPA assessment. Therefore it is recognised that business planning is a process that needs to be given a high profile. There are a number of criteria that we use to judge our success in this area. Two key criteria are meeting the decent homes standard and the business plan being fit for purpose.

24.4.1 The analysis of the process has shown that we have a fairly robust approach to delivering the plan. The gaps identified are:

- Need for a more timely process, as some of our activities in this area are last minute despite our plans
- There are some data shortcomings in stock condition information, which can not be easily updated or managed.

24.5 Service Aims and Standards

Housing Inspectors have a plain expectation that local authorities should have a set of service standards that enable customers to clearly understand what they can expect from the Council. The review also confirmed that customers did not always know what duties and standards they should expect from, for instance, their caretaker. After three months of consultation through Area Housing Panels, tenant focus groups and staff groups, the first service standards, or Customer Commitments (CCs), are about to be published. These cover the following services:

- Estate Services
- Housing Aid Centre
- Islington Repair Line
- Planned Maintenance
- Communication
- Empty homes and new lettings
- Estate parking
- Front desk reception
- Re-decorations for elderly
- Aids and adaptations
- Repair maintenance response

24.5.1 These are to be followed by other CCs, which will cover the range of housing functions that we hope will add to the satisfaction levels of our customers.

Aims & Targets associated with the business plan are:

- Meeting decent homes standard by 2010
- Third of decent homes by 2004
- Plan Fit for Purpose by September 2003
- Approved Option Appraisal in place by 2005

24.5.2 In assessing the current service baseline position and the strengths, weaknesses and gaps in current performance the team has completed its analysis using the CIPFA CPA model¹⁸. Attention has also been paid to the principles outlined in the Audit Commission's management paper "Aiming to improve the principles of performance measurement".

24.5.3 An analysis of performance management at the operational level (i.e. area housing level) and of the Hyde Northside system has also been carried out.

24.5.4 Ownership by all parts of the organisation is crucial to the success of the system it is therefore not appropriate to consider challenging the service in terms of competition.

24.5.5 So we have focused on its remaining in-house and looked at how best we can improve our system and processes.

24.5.6 Regard has also been given to the findings of the independent interim Best Value inspection carried out in October 2002. This found that performance management systems are in place across the service and that performance has already shown signs of improvement in a number of key areas. Although it determined that systems were robust it did give a number of recommendations for improvement which are being addressed.

24.5.7 Work has been done in relation to the business plan to look at the plans of other boroughs who have been recognised as good performers e.g. Westminster and Croydon. Best Practice from these authorities has been incorporated with regard to improving our plan. Work is also ongoing with Government Office with London, to use their expertise in achieving a Fit for Purpose Plan.

25. The Service - Conclusions

- The low level of customer satisfaction with the overall housing service presents a huge challenge to Housing Services. However there is some evidence that historical perceptions may now be changing and that satisfaction levels are beginning to catch up with service improvement.
- Arrears collection performance has improved considerably over the last three years, with gross arrears reducing by approximately 10% a year. However, this is partly offset by increases in former tenants arrears.
- Tenants can choose from several methods of payment. Local post offices are the most popular access point, accounting for nearly two thirds of transactions.

¹⁸ Housing Management BV Review – Performance Management & Business Planning Appendix A

However, payment at Area Housing Office cash desks is almost three times more expensive to the Council than other payment methods, and this review concludes that this no longer represents value for money and that, therefore, these payment points should be phased out.

- A finding of the review is that there is merit in consideration of more specialist service provision, moving away from the familiar generic housing officer service, in areas such as arrears recovery, court officers, caretaker's out of hours service and anti-social behaviour/harassment. It is recommended that this be in the form of back room teams supporting a front-end contact centre.
- Many residents have experienced some form of anti-social behaviour and findings show that tackling ASB and crime in the area remains a high priority for residents.
- Some dissatisfaction is highlighted with our estate services. This report proposes changes to the caretaker function to increase the range of their role alongside the creation of a 'head-up' Estate Champion who will ensure joined up thinking about delivery of services and capital investment decisions and lead on estate publicity, and consultation and feedback to tenants
- A clear message from our tenants and leaseholders is that they feel the Council does not use the information it receives in consultation with these groups or it is not feeding back how it is using this information. Steps have been put in place to address this and a series of improvements are recommended to correct this view as a matter of urgency.

26 Challenge

26.1 Best Value Review Steering Group

In order to introduce the element of challenge to the Best Value Review Steering Group, the authority chose a Project Sponsor from outside the Housing Service – Louise Round, Head of Law and Public Services. The team also included Lesley Roberts, Director of Housing for the ALMO Hounslow Homes and Howard Stone, Business Support Manager for the Guinness Trust. Throughout the review the Steering Group and review teams have sought to ensure that all the functions of housing management were subject to challenge. This has led to a fundamental reassessment of how we should deliver housing services in the future, within the very challenging new environment of an ALMO.

26.2 Other authorities and RSLs

During the review of Housing Management there was an unprecedented number of visits to other local authorities and Housing Associations. This challenged the way we worked, and introduced ideas, new innovations and examples of good practice. Visits during this review included:

Voids	Haringey
Adaptations	Camden
Legal disrepair	Leeds
	Local solicitors
Tenancy Management	Manchester
	Camden

	Middlesborough
	Hammersmith & Fulham
	Lewisham
	Hackney
Estate Services	Pinnacle (RSL)
	Wandsworth
	Hounslow
	Brent
	Greenwich
Call Centres	Circle 33 (RSL)
	Manchester

26.3 Challenge Day

A Challenge Day event for the review took place in September 2003. Attendees included the Chair of FITA, the Executive Member for Housing and Community Safety, Shadow Board members, the Independent tenant Advisor from First Call, tenants from review focus groups, partners such as Caxton Islington, community stakeholders like Age Concern and key senior housing managers.

Presentations on the Tenant Survey, review methodology and main interim findings were received well and questions and comments from the floor were generally positive.

Stalls for the main housing management functions were available with literature, posters etc. and these had staff in attendance who were able to answer questions and take questions, comments and suggestions from the attendees.

27 Compete

27.1 Hyde Northside

In 1999 a review of housing management services led to a decision to outsource housing management in the Copenhagen and Clocktower Neighbourhoods (now known as the Lyon Street Housing Area) to introduce competition and drive up performance in all the housing areas. Performance in the Copenhagen Neighbourhood was particularly poor and needed drastic action to secure improvements. Following a competitive tendering exercise Hyde Northside was selected and the contract began in July 2000 for a term of five years with an option to extend for a further two years.

27.2 Since the contract began, Hyde Northside has initiated a number of new developments in managing the stock in the Lyon Street Housing Area. Islington's Housing Management Service has learned from these initiatives and where practicable and financially viable has imported this good practice. These developments include:

- The production and distribution of quality quarterly newsletters to tenants and residents with information on activities, advice, customer services and success stories. Islington Housing Management Services later adopted this idea.

- In 2001 a Neighbourhood Wardens Service was introduced in part of the management area. There was much resident support for the introduction of this service and it has led to dramatic reductions in reported crime and fear of crime. For example in 2002, 74 named youths were reported to estate managers for formal action on anti social behaviour and 17 youths were subject to legal action. Wardens also attended some 106 emergency called outs and assisted in the reduction of and deterrence of organised squatting the area. In 2002 the scheme was extended to the whole housing area and to part of the Holland Walk Housing Area. At the National Wardens conference held in 2001, Hyde Northside was awarded two National Achievement awards in recognition of the quality of work carried out by the wardens with local youth in deterring crime and the elderly in reducing the fear of crime.
- For capital or revenue investment schemes Hyde Northside have produced information brochures tailored to each scheme, for distribution to leaseholders and tenants. All Islington Area Housing Offices have since adopted this. The information in the brochures covers costs, programme dates, names and telephone numbers of contractor and administrators and legal background and payment mechanisms for leaseholders.
- A leaseholders workshop/forum was established in 2001, so that leaseholders affected by specific capital and revenue funded schemes could be offered face to face advice, talks on programmed works, the costs, contract administration and billing arrangements. There was also opportunity for leaseholders to comment on the proposals and to discuss them with Hyde's officers.
- Partnership with Rydons (Building Construction Company) for a partnering approach to external repairs and painting contracts. This type of partnering arrangement has been adopted for external repair painting contracts in the Central Street Housing Area.

Other developments that are being noted with interest are set out below:

- Under the auspices of First Start Programme and working in partnership with Caxton Islington (the Council's repairs contractor) a training scheme was set up involving the re-servicing of a void property on the Market Estate. Trainees, aged between 13 and 19 were taught basic skills in plumbing, electrics and carpentry. The scheme was part funded by the London Central Learning and Skills Council and generated a lot of interest in Construction Industry newspapers and local media.
- Hyde Northside negotiated with the Council's repairs contractor Caxtons, to set up a rapid repairs response team on the Market Estate where there has been problems of vandalism. A weekly list of repairs was ordered by Hyde Northside and a committed team of repair staff undertook to carry out quick repairs and make safe, health and safety hazards.
- Hyde Northside in 2003 set up arrangements for the training of local disaffected youths (16 to 17 years old) in painting skills. A building contractor donated materials and equipment and a Clerk of Works from Hyde's private surveyors, FFT, provided training. Sixteen youths worked on the painting of fences and garage doors on Islington estates and were paid a wage by Hyde Northside. So far three trainees

have been offered full time jobs with local employers. Local residents have welcomed the scheme.

- Working with local residents and community groups, a neighbourhood regeneration plan has been produced to build a sustainable future for local socially excluded people. An expression of interest has been made to Government Office for London, to bid for Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder 2 status in order to secure funding to implement the Neighbourhood Plan.

27.3 Comparison of Performance of Hyde Northside with Islington Housing Management Services

Performance Indicator	2002-3			August 2003 (month only)			2002-3
	Hyde	Best LBI Office	Average all LBI Offices	Hyde	Best LBI Office	Average LBI Offices	Top Quartile London LAs
Minot void turnaround time	4.86 weeks	3.17 weeks	3.81 weeks	4.52 weeks	2.52 weeks	3.26 weeks	4,65 weeks
percentage rent collected of rent due.	100.73	102.25	99.99	96.4	99	96.3	Not available
% public correspondence replied to in target time. *	94	100	90.1	100	100	100	Not available
% complaints replied to in target time. *	93.9	100	94.9	100	100	100	Not available
% members' enquiries replied to in target time. *	93.8	100	97.1	100	100	100	Not available
% post Inspections completed in target time	73	66	65	99.3%	100%	98.7	Not available
tenant satisfaction with overall service provided by landlord.	55%	54%	50.0%				72.5%
tenant satisfaction with overall service from local office.	39%	41%	38%				
tenant satisfaction with overall caretaking service	59%	55%	48.0%				

*Reconciled figures for 2002/3 including late responses.

27.4 A formal evaluation of the Hyde Northside contract under best value principles is to be conducted in the next twelve months so that the ALMO can make an informed decision on the future of the contract during 2004. It will take into account the reduction of council owned dwellings in the contract area as result of:

- transfer of street properties to a second PFI contract in 2004

- transfer of some 400 homes on the Surr Street /Corporation Street and the Grove Estate under a voluntary stock transfer. (Tenants on these estates are negotiating with Hyde Northside).
- The transfer of the Market Estate under a stock transfer to Southern Housing Group in 2004.

Some of the options open to the ALMO to consider are:

- Extend the contract with Hyde Northside for two more years after June 2005 as provided for in the contract;
- Bring the service back in house;
- Re-tender the contract;
- Set up alternative arrangements for management support with another external organisation.

27.5 Circle 33 Housing Trust

As part of the first phase of the Council's sheltered housing strategy, following consultation with tenants, carers and families, the Council took the decision to enter into a partnering contract with Circle 33 Housing Trust for the management, maintenance and refurbishment of the sheltered housing service. This will involve the remodelling of a number of existing sheltered schemes increasing the provision of one bedroom flats from the current high number of bedsits. Phase two of this initiative would see the transfer of the sheltered housing stock to Circle 33 subject to agreement of the tenants through a ballot.

27.6 Housing Management functions

In keeping with the best value process, the housing management functions under review were considered for delivery by companies or agencies outside of the Council. The result of these deliberations by the review work groups is to;

- Recommend the phasing out of the cash office facilities in Area Housing Offices on value for money grounds.
- The piloting of immediate bulk waste removal from our estates.
- Market testing for another provider of a valuation service for Home Ownership.
- Further consideration will be given to the outsourcing of the estate cleaning service when the current recommendations involving estate services have been completed.
- A proposal that we pass the repair ordering function to our partner Caxton Islington has been left for assessment by the contractual review of Caxton due to commence in 2004.
- The ALMO will review the support services it receives from the Council in the first twelve month of the ALMO's existence

28. Equalities

28.1 Equality Standard

In March 2002, the council achieved level 3 of the Commission for Race Equality (CRE) Standard, which is about using the results of ethnic monitoring and consultation to improve policy and service delivery. From April 2002 a new Equality Standard for local authorities was introduced which replaced the CRE standard. The new standard covers three aspects of equality – race, gender and disability. The purpose of the Equality Standard is to enable local authorities to mainstream these aspects into council policy and practice. The council has taken the decision to anticipate forthcoming legislation covering sexuality, religion, and age by also including these in the implementation of the new standard.

The council has formally adopted the new standard and achieved Level 1 in April 2003. Level 1 is about having in place a comprehensive equality policy and planning process that contains a commitment to action and developing good practice in race, gender and disability equality. The authority is currently working to achieve Level 2.

28.2 Race Equality Scheme

Following the introduction of the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000, the Council has written its Race Equality Scheme. This is the tool to help us improve the delivery of services to the borough's black and minority ethnic communities. This scheme explains how we:

- will meet the duties set out in the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- have taken forward race equality so far; and
- intend to ensure our services are accessible, appropriate and effective for all communities.

We will therefore be reviewing all our housing management services to ensure race equality is mainstreamed. The first year of impact assessments of housing services and policies has been completed and the programme for year two is due to start in September 2003. All major changes in service delivery that arise from this review, will be subject to impact assessment.

28.3 Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities Mapping Exercise

There is a concern that we have no baseline data for our tenants. For instance we cannot always determine the ethnicity of our tenants. We can and do identify issues that arise with tenants that do not have English as a first language, are housebound, elderly, disabled, or have other support needs. We are though at present unable to determine the impact of policies on our tenants broken down by various sub-groups of ethnicity.

To correct this the Council is currently undertaking an in-house study of the housing and related requirements of the black and minority ethnic communities in Islington.

Phase 1 will be research to provide an overview of the demographic make up of the Borough's population, resulting in a profile (current and projected) of BME communities in Islington. The second phase will be to detail the housing needs and

aspirations of these communities. This exercise will be used to identify gaps and barriers to housing services for BME communities and will be used to inform any changes in policy or practice.

28.4 Telephone Interpreting Services

Islington Housing Management has contracts with two interpretation providers; Newham Language Shop and Tongue Tied. These provide an instant interpretation service over the telephone in unexpected front desk situations or for the explanation of simple and specific information. Planned translation in face to face interviews or the translation of documents are made by appointment. Where the need for a sign language interpreter is identified, arrangements are made with Islington's Sensory Disability team.

28.5 Dealing with harassment

Harassment is defined as:

“behaviour that is abusive to individuals or groups and which is deliberate depriving people of their right to live, learn and work free from fear. It is often motivated by prejudice against the characteristics of the individual or group.”

The most commonly reported types of harassment dealt with by the Housing Department are race, sexuality and gender related.

The Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy sets out number of areas where anti social behaviour is addressed in tandem with harassment, for instance, domestic violence

As part of the Best Value regime a number of Performance Indicators have been in place to report on harassment such as the number of cases and the type of harassment

Key achievements 2000-03

- Arranged training programmes to reinforce commitment to and effectiveness of the equalities and harassment policy.
- Established harassment monitoring system for dealing with complaints of racial harassment.
- Harassment procedure tied into overall anti social behaviour guidelines.
- Corporate procurement guidance revised to ensure more robust equalities guidance.
- Improved partnership working with Corporate Equalities and joint service initiatives e.g. RR(A)A 2000, implementation of the Equalities Standard.
- Islington Housing Services is an integral part of newly established cross London Equalities Group, which shares good practice.
- Multi agency approach provided through case conference with call over of difficult cases. Exchange general information about the incidences of crime in the area and particular 'hotspots' that require a joint strategy.

28.6 Supporting People

The Supporting People programme has a key role to play in reducing social exclusion within the borough, by for instance helping vulnerable people to remain in their own home with the help of Housing Support Officers funded by the SP programme. The SP strategy's primary aim is to set out the current range and type of provision of housing related support services within the borough and highlight any gaps. Preparation work undertaken by Supporting People indicates that Islington has a lack of supported accommodation for some key groups, including;

- Women fleeing violence
- Offenders and those at risk of offending
- Those with complex mental health needs
- Those with higher levels of learning disabilities
- Young people at risk

In addition, they have found a significant supply of low level support available for single homeless people but very little support services developed specifically for BME groups.

28.7 Tenant Satisfaction

As was noted in 12.12 of this report, satisfaction with the service is lower amongst tenants from a BME background¹⁹. However Kwest also provided analysis which shows that BME tenants tend to have a younger age profile than the non-BME population. Previous research carried out by Kwest tends to show that younger people have higher expectations of service and are more likely to be critical. Therefore this factor needs to be considered when drawing conclusions about the differences in opinion between BME and non-BME tenants. Examples of this can be found throughout the survey when examining findings by household composition. Indeed, as with previous projects, older tenants tend to be more satisfied with many different aspects of the service than their younger counterparts.

However, whilst age demography may well be an element in lower satisfaction levels with services, concern remains that other factors may be involved. Not least of these is a lower level of participation from BME tenants. To address this a Community Involvement Project Officer has been recruited with a brief to talk to more hard to reach groups, with the aim of ascertaining their specific needs, analysing levels of satisfaction and encouraging more involvement and participation in shaping services. Currently a BME reference group is being formed, in conjunction with Caxton Islington, to tap into the views and opinions of these groups.

28.8 Tenant and leaseholder access

All of the Area Housing Offices have undergone an independent access audit and works are being commissioned to ensure we comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) standards.

29. Environment and Regeneration

¹⁹ Kwest Tenant's Survey 2002-03

- 29.1 In February 2002 the Islington Strategic Partnership (ISP) was set up after consultation with local organisations. The ISP has worked with a large number of providers of local services, voluntary sector members and community representatives to develop a community and neighbourhood renewal strategy, which has a housing specific theme group.
- 29.2 This sets out a long-term vision, which aims to target efforts on improving neighbourhoods with the greatest problems. The strategy has eight themes of which the following four relate to this review:
- Crime and safety
 - Health and wellbeing
 - Housing
 - Environment and sustainability
- 29.3 Over the last few months, the ISP has agreed how to spend more than £6.2m from the neighbourhood Renewal Fund awarded to the area. More than 100 projects developed by local organisations will benefit from the fund. These projects include:
- Improvements to Paradise and Elthorne Parks
 - Schemes to improve the cleanliness of the borough
 - Improving the security of the homes of older people
 - A new neighbourhood wardens scheme to tackle 'hotspots'
- 29.4 In Islington there is a correlation between those who occupy housing in poorer condition and other deprivation indicators including poor health, educational achievements as well as crime and disorder. In fact the CNRS uses social housing as a proxy for deprivation. This directly relates to the Council's main estates and social housing. Many of the concentrations of social housing are also seen by the wider Islington community as places to avoid, this is often due to a combination of factors, not least the physical appearance and reputation of the localities.
- 29.5 Many estates suffer from physical misuse, problems of petty vandalism, through to serious crime sometimes linked with the social ills of drug abuse. The Council's inability to deliver adequate resources for the repair, maintenance and passive policing has meant that some estates have become the target for misconduct, as they appear uncared for and neglected.
- 29.6 A £2.2m repairs programme for communal areas on estates across the borough is taking place between July and October 2003. Approximately £800,000 will also be spent on improvements to security door systems. This £3m improvement programme is additional to the £250,000 each area spends through the Tenants Compact and other planned maintenance or capital schemes. All affected residents have been written to asking for their views on the schemes and they will receive further notification when the work is about to start.
- 29.7 Whilst the Council considers that it has turned the corner in now addressing many of these problems, both single-mindedly and in partnership with others (Police through Acceptable Behaviour Contracts; Hyde Housing Association Neighbourhood Wardens; Crime Partnership strategically with the Police, Probation Service and Community), there are genuine resource issues which can only be met

by additional finance, particularly given the physical investment backlog in the borough.

- 29.8 As part of preparing the 2002/3 Business Plan, it was clear that the Decent Homes Standard (DHS) had been developed by Government in the context of the 'home', as distinct from the complexities of home and its local environment. In the Islington context 90% of Council's housing is in flatted accommodation, 60% in medium rise and 20% in high rise blocks. The issue of security, not only of the home but of common parts, the effectiveness of lifts, and the provision of outdoor play and recreation facilities, are obviously seen as of very high priority by residents and crucial to their lives, as much as the issues contained within the DHS.
- 29.9 For this reason, Islington has set its own standards, the 'Islington Homes Standard' that it wishes to see met by 2015. This will include ensuring that all lifts are in good order and less than 25 years old; that estates play equipment, and environmental areas are to proper safety standards; and that a programme of security renewals (door entry systems) and concierge provision (for high rise flats and complex estates) has been implemented.
- 29.10 Islington's bid for resources in connection with establishing an ALMO is focused on achieving the Decent Homes Standard, however, we have also bid for the 5% additional resources of ALMO funding to support initiatives to deliver the broader sustainability the community and Council seeks.

30. Quick Wins

- 30.1 The review identified a number of actions, which have, or can be, put into effect immediately. These will be included in the Improvement Plan so that all improvements flowing from the best value review are seen in the round. They include;
- 30.2 The expansion of housing functions delivered through the Repair Line contact centre is now in progress. In early October 2003 two staff from the Rehousing section were transferred to the contact centre to deal with telephone enquiries on Rehousing issues. Over the first two weeks of this initiative, these officers dealt with approximately 1000 calls.
- 30.3 We have commenced the operation of a specialist Court Officer role at our Boleyn Road Area Housing Office (AHO). This officer, with an administrative assistant, takes responsibility for arrears cases once they reach court and until the arrears are cleared or the tenant is evicted. Their functions include attending and representing the Council at court, obtaining the appropriate order and pre-eviction interviews.
- 30.4 Local Service Improvement Plans are designed to take results from survey results and complaints analysis and feed these through formalised action plans. This initiative is part of the response to tenant and leaseholder views that we did not sufficiently use their comments to shape policy and procedures. This is currently being piloted and we are on target for a start date across the borough of 1st December 2003.

- 30.5 The Housing Investigations Team are now preparing notices seeking possession where applicable to their investigations and their remit will shortly be increased to pursuance of these cases to court rather than these cases being referred back to the original AHO.
- 30.6 Estate Service Agreements have been consulted on and developed through the course of this review and these will be completed by the end of October 2003. These will provide agreement at a local level with individual estates about the services they can expect detailing the responsibilities of estate staff, any works that are due and contact details.

31. Implications

31.1 Finance Implications

This best value review financial target is for service changes to be funded from within overall housing management budgeted resources within the Housing Revenue Account (£25.5 million in 2003/04). The current assessment is that this review is on course to achieve this financial target.

When full details on new service delivery on each housing management function head have been finalised and new service commencement arrangements confirmed, further costing and budgetary assessments will be prepared for inclusion in service changes implementation reports.

31.2 Legal Implications

Some of the options recommended in this report will require consultation under section 105 of the Housing Act 1985 before they are implemented. That section states that where secure tenants or a specific group of them are likely to be substantially affected by a matter of housing management, they must be informed of the authority's proposals and given the opportunity to make representations in respect of them. The recommendations most likely to come into this category are the cessation of cash collection and, in the longer term the move to a wide ranging contact centre for most housing enquiries. If, in the future, estate services are likely to be revisited, this too, may require a consultation exercise. Most of the other matters relate to back office functions and do not therefore fall within section 105."

31.3 Equality Implications

See section 28 on equality issues

31.4 Environmental Implications

See section 29 on environmental issues

Final Report Clearance

Signed by

Executive Member for Housing and Community
Safety

Date

Received by

Head of Scrutiny and Democratic Services

Date

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Annexe 1

Housing Management Service

Improvement Plan

No	Action	Target Date	Lead Officer	Measurable Outcomes	Resources	Review date
	Islington Repair Line					
1	Extend the housing services that IRL provides so that IRL evolves into Housing Services (or ALMO) contact centre	June 2004	E. McGoldrick J. Knight	No. of services accessible through contact centre. No. of call agents. No. of contacts through contact centre	I.T. Office accommodation From within existing budgets	(1) October 2004 (2) February 2005
	The Repairs Process					
2	Set up team under one manager that delivers all repairs	April 2004	J. Phillips	All repairs functions reporting through a Property Services Division. Appointment of Repairs Service Manager	To be met from existing budgets	October 2004
3	Expand the remit of void teams with process managed from notice of end of tenancy to two months into new tenancy.	(1) April 2004 (2) October	E. McGoldrick J. Phillips	Higher recorded satisfaction with lettings process.	To be met from existing budgets	April 2005

No	Action	Target Date	Lead Officer	Measurable Outcomes	Resources	Review date
		2004		Faster void turnaround. (1) Reporting lines re-wired. (2) Expanded services in operation		
	Door Entry Systems					
4	Establish Door/Security Team responsible for consultation, commissioning and maintenance.	June 2004	J. Phillips J. D'Souza	Identified team in place at Caxton (or lead sub-contractor)	Within Caxton's existing budgets.	April 2005
5	Work with existing partner to improve skills of workforce on door entry systems	April 2004	J. Phillips J. D'Souza	Training programme in place.	Caxton's existing seconded project officer. Within Caxton's budgets.	April 2005
	Individual Gas Servicing					
6	Make 'no-access' gas servicing process responsibility of Housing Management and improve processes to attain 100% servicing	Jan 2004	E. McGoldrick J. Phillips	(1) IT systems in place (2) New procedures in place to achieve 100% gas servicing	To be met from existing budgets	January 2005
	Capital Programme Delivery					
7	Create one housing division with responsibility for delivery of Capital Programme and Repairs Team	April 2004	John Phillips	All elements of capital programme delivery in one	To be met from existing budgets	April 2005

No	Action	Target Date	Lead Officer	Measurable Outcomes	Resources	Review date
	Adaptations Programme			division. More efficient spend of capital investment.		
8	Transfer Adaptations budget to Social Services to ensure budget spend to priority of need.	July 2004	Chris Worby John Phillips	Full spend on Adaptations budget according to need as assessed by SS.	To be met from existing budgets	October 2004
9	Expose Adaptations process to SQD to improve timescale.	December 2003	P. Davey	Improved average time from identification of property to adaptations completed.	Input from eGov section of Customer Focus Directorate	May 2004
	Legal Disrepair					
10	Create post of Principal Surveyor in each Housing Area to ensure skills available to avoid cases slipping into disrepair claims.	April 2004	E. McGoldrick J. Phillips	Principal Surveyors appointed and in post.	Minor additional resources for upgrade. To be met from current budgets.	October 2004
	Rent Collection & Arrears Recovery					
11	Create specialist arrears officers to provide fairer and more consistent arrears recovery service.	December 2004	E. McGoldrick D. Goldring	Reduction in arrears Consistent application of arrears procedures.	Training resource. To be met from existing budgets.	December 2005
12	Centralise arrears collection function to form back room support for Contact Centre	March 2005	E. McGoldrick D. Goldring	Reduction in arrears Consistent application of	To be met from existing budgets	March 2006

No	Action	Target Date	Lead Officer	Measurable Outcomes	Resources	Review date
13	Create specialist Court Officers to provide more consistent and professional service in court	April 2004	E. McGoldrick D. Goldring	arrears procedures Reduction in arrears Consistent application of arrears procedures	Training resource. To be met from existing budgets.	September 2004
14	Phase out Cash Points in Area Housing Offices and continue to develop additional cost effective methods of payment	April 2004	E. McGoldrick D. Goldring	All rental payments made via alternative methods.	To be met from existing budgets.	July 2005
	Tenancy Management					
15	Create specialist ASB Officers to provide consistent and professional approach	June 2004	E. McGoldrick A. Blackburn	Improved tenant satisfaction. Consistent application of procedures.	Training resource. To be met from existing budgets.	December 2004
16	Centralise ASB Officers to form ASB back room support to Contact Centre	December 2004	E. McGoldrick A. Blackburn	Improved tenant satisfaction. Consistent application of procedures.	To be met from existing budgets.	March 2005
17	Increase Housing Investigations Team responsibility for investigations process from referral to closure including court action.	December 2003	E. McGoldrick S. Kwong	Shorter average time-scale for repossessions. Fewer cases dismissed.	Training resource. To be met from existing budgets.	March 2004
18	Increase Housing Investigations Team remit to include all functions that reside in ALMO.	December 2004	E. McGoldrick S. Kwong	Measurable increase in successfully prosecuted cases	To be met from existing budgets.	June 2005

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19	Introduce individual care plans for all Housing Support Officer clients.	December 2003	E. McGoldrick J. Eustace	All clients taken on from 01.11.03 to have individual care plans.	Supporting People Budget.	March 2004
20	Establish assessment of survey and complaints information to be fed into policy/procedure process via Local Service Improvement Plans (LSIPs)	January 2004	E. McGoldrick E. Neil	Increased customer confidence in consultation processes	Quarterly complaints analysis. To be met from existing budgets.	March 2005
	Estate Services					
21	Develop Caretaker role as Estate Wardens to carry out; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Lift, lights, boiler room, tank room checks □ H&S repairs inspection checks □ Minor repairs □ Graffiti and steam cleaning co-ordination □ Input on anti-social issues 	December 2004	E. McGoldrick G. Bates	Increased customer satisfaction with caretaking function	Training resource. To be met from existing budgets.	March 2005
22	Combine the elements of the Caretaker Management roles and that of Estate Service Officers	April 2005	E. McGoldrick G. Bates	Increased customer satisfaction with caretaking function	Training resource. To be met from existing budgets.	October 2005
23	Develop an Estate Champion role co-ordinating estate services and being focal point on estate issues for tenants.	April 2005	E. McGoldrick G. Bates	Increased customer satisfaction with caretaking function.	Additional minor upgrade. Training requirement. To be met from	October 2005

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24	Pilot the immediate collection of bulk waste in one Housing Area Estate Parking	January 2004	E. McGoldrick G. Bates	Cleaner estates. Improved customer satisfaction.	existing budgets. Cost of £50k to be met from existing budgets	April 2004
25	Centralise allocation of parking facilities and management of waiting lists	August 2004	E. McGoldrick S. Kwong	AHO parking functions centralised to one location. Improved service consistency.	To be met from existing budgets.	December 2004
26	Develop a single database for all parking facilities	August 2004	E. McGoldrick S. Kwong	Improved service consistency.	SX3 reports. To be met from existing budgets.	December 2004
27	Introduce specialist TMO officers in the Holland Walk and Central Street AHOs to act as liaison point with TMOs/TMCs	June 2004	E. McGoldrick D. Goldring G. Bates	TMO Housing Officers in place and directly liaising with TMOs.	Training resource. To be met from existing budgets.	October 2004
28	Make available IT connections between TMOs/TMCs and Islington Housing Management to facilitate improved communication and performance management	June 2004	E. McGoldrick J. Saul	Email facilities available to all TMOs with separate office facilities.	Training resource. To be met from existing budgets.	October 2004
31	Home Ownership Services Market test for outsourcing of the	October	E. McGoldrick	Council procurement	Procurement	August 2005

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	valuation function	2004	N. Freeman	of Valuation service completed.	section resources.	
32	Separate the charge calculation and collection functions within Home Ownership Services	October 2004	E. McGoldrick N. Freeman	Increased % of charges collected.	Training resource. To be met from existing budgets.	June 2005

No	Action	Target Date	Lead Officer	Measurable Outcomes	Resources	Review date
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