

Items from the Central Area Resident Only meeting held on 09/10/14

1. Door at Warwick Mount

The main door at the entrance to Warwick Mount is the original glass door in a wooden frame. It breaks down frequently, and is heavy and noisy. The loud banging as the door shuts reverberates along the wall, and is very disruptive for residents on the south side of the block. Residents in an adjacent flat are unable to use their bedroom because of this.

Residents have asked for the door to be replaced and upgraded as part of the work being done at Warwick Mount at the moment. They have been told that the door is functioning well and doesn't need replacing – but this doesn't reflect the experience of people who live in the building.

Action: It was agreed that Carl would contact Paul Diplock, the Clerk of Works, to raise replacing the door as a matter of urgency with him.

It was also agreed to put this item on the Blue Pages for the next Area Panel meeting, and request a response from Paul Diplock.

2. Response from Theresa Youngman Contract Compliance Manager – tel:- 01273 293190

Carl met with Paul Diplock (clerk of works) to discuss the ongoing issues with main entrance doors.

Tenants and leaseholders were recently sent 'pre works surveys' so ascertain what they see as a priority for where they live. The results indicate that one of the highlighted issues was the replacement of the existing doors and door entry system.

It has been agreed that the main entrance doors to Warwick Mount should be replaced following the proposed major works next year. The proposals are that the existing door will be replaced with a 'multi steel' alternative which has automatic openers and will not bang shut.

It may be that the electronic entry system will also require replacement at the same time, but this will be looked at further along with the replacement of the stairwell door.

This will be subject to statutory leasehold consultation.

2. Estate Inspections

It was agreed that the effectiveness of estate inspections is decidedly patchy. Although these are working well in some areas, in others there are on-going problems with the inspections, reporting and follow-up.

Communication is often poor, with Resident Association representatives not kept informed. Frequent staff changes make it hard to build a relationship with the officer.

There was agreement that the response at the Area Panel did not sufficiently address tenants concerns. There needs to be significant improvement across the board.

Action: raise on Blue Pages for next Area Panel.

Response from Robert Keelan - Neighbourhoods Team Manager – tel:- 01273 294675

The Neighbourhoods Housing Team has a very large remit of which estate inspections are part of it.

We have made real progress in the last couple of years with estate inspections.

- We produce a booklet for each Ward showing the estate inspection locations and dates and this information can be downloaded on the council website under "estate inspections".
- We publish our completed inspections online in the same way.

I hear the concerns and acknowledge that estate inspections don't always run as smoothly as we would like. Occasionally a member of staff could be ill or dealing with an emergency and some inspections have had to be postponed if there isn't anybody else to cover it. We have sometimes had to catch up on these when the Officer is next on site and this hasn't always been with full resident involvement or notification.

I have met with two tenant representatives and a local Councillor in November to hear concerns about this aspect of our service. Key themes that came out of this meeting are

- We need to work in partnership with residents who don't need to wait for an estate inspection to report an issue.
- If we want a resident to check something we shouldn't be afraid to ask.
- A Neighbourhood Officer returning to an estate to display the results of an inspection isn't a great use of their time and the local Residents' Association should be able to help displaying them if they can be posted out.
- Residents see inspections as a key council service that needs to be met.

We have had some staff changes as is inevitable. Some Neighbourhood officers have left for new jobs elsewhere or promotions and we have to re-organise pending further recruitment

which can take some time. It is in everybody's interests to have an inspection done by someone who knows the estate well and preferably has memory as well as written notes on previous inspections but this is not always operationally possible. We have some administration support in the team that type up the inspections and these part time members of staff are now settled into their roles.

As mentioned, the team has a wide remit and we do much more than estate inspections.

What do we do?

- We undertake six monthly formal estate inspections with our partners to consider the upkeep and safety and look of communal areas. We are present on estates daily checking for obvious defects around visits to residents.
- We visit all of our tenants every three years. On these visits we check the condition of the property, we check compliance with the tenancy agreement and consider any support needs the tenant may have making referrals as appropriate.
- We investigate issues of concern that have been referred through the customer contact centre or partners. This includes gathering evidence for enforcement action regarding abandonment, low level anti-social behaviour and other tenancy breaches.
- We respond to enquiries and complaints including the safety of common areas, untidy gardens, fly-tipping and parking to aid the sustainability of the community and improve residents' quality of life.
- We support tenants suffering anti-social behaviour offering mediation and carrying out sanctions against perpetrators.
- We visit our most vulnerable residents regularly to give advice and support.
- We monitor the contracts of services to council housing properties and grounds. These include repairs, maintenance, estates services, city parks, city clean, and the parking enforcement contract. We report any work or action required.
- We work closely (and want to do more) with the Community Payback team bringing labour onto estates to make improvements to the communal areas at low cost.
- We deal with many office based tenancy matters e.g. successions, ending of tenancies, rights of way, moving people who are facing anti-social behaviour or major repair, right of access, right to buy sales etc.
- 12 Neighbourhood Officers cover the City of Brighton and Hove.
- There are 12,000 council properties and an additional 2,000 leasehold / sold properties.

