

Update on progress towards ARK Report recommendations

Housing Improvement Board

07/12/2021

Background

In May 2021, Croydon Council commissioned ARK Consultancy to conduct an independent investigation into conditions at 1-87 Regina Road. The subsequent report highlighted a number of areas for improvement to the Housing directorate.

Since the publication of the report, a programme of improvement has begun across the directorate to address the recommendations listed by ARK Consultancy.

The improvement work includes the development of a Housing Improvement Plan, establishment of Housing Improvement Board, and the establishment of a Housing Improvement Plan Working Group.

Update on ARK Report Recommendations

All 11 issues identified by ARK as requiring immediate action have been addressed:

1. Resourcing of the Council's compliance function
2. Damp and mould problems at 1-87 Regina Road
3. Outmoded culture and attitude among Council staff towards tenants
4. Compromised fire safety measures
5. Stigmatisation of residents
6. Lack of effective and clear route for concerns and complaints
7. The Council is not seen as open and accessible to tenants
8. Lack of a 'mature' relationship with AXIS
9. Data and business-intelligence is not used
10. Insufficient investment in improvement planning
11. Lack of oversight of similar problems in other high-rise blocks

Update on ARK Report Recommendations

ARK Consultancy also recommended the following seven strategic recommendations:

1. Establish clear governance arrangements to provide strategic leadership to the service.
2. Undertake a forward-looking skills gap analysis.
3. Implement a development programme for all staff.
4. Strengthen the Council's capacity for tenant involvement.
5. Develop 'business intelligence' systems.
6. Conduct a review of existing performance management arrangements.
7. Improve complaints handling.

Immediate Repairs & Complaints Handling

Completed actions

- Specialist mould treatment across Regina Road blocks.
- Council repairs officer and Axis contractor at RR site to identify immediate repairs need.
- Ridge & Partners commissioned to undertake high-level assessment of all three blocks.
- Ombudsman Service Self-Assessment
- Occupancy Check Procedure
- Establishment of Housing Complaints Panel and Residents Health & Safety Panel.

In progress

- Process mapping of enquiries and complaints
- Monitoring and assessing quality of responses to complaints

Compliance & Fire Safety

Completed actions

- Recruitment of a Compliance Manager to oversee four compliance officer posts.
- Recommended additional growth to the Compliance Team to respond to additional statutory duties as a consequence of the Fire Safety Act and Building Safety Bill.
- Ridge & Partners commissioned to undertake a high-level assessment of the three blocks, including the compliance of the building with fire safety requirements.

In progress

- Survey work at Regina Road blocks to begin installation of hard-wired smoke and heat detectors to accompany existing sprinkler system.

Workforce Development & Resident Engagement

Completed actions

- Tenant & Leaseholder Workshop to determine how tenants and leaseholders would like staff attitudes to change.
- Establishment of Regina Road Residents Support Group.
- Establishment of Housing Improvement Board to understand residents' experiences and scrutinize the Council's improvement plans.
- Partial workforce skills audit.
- One Day Mental Health First Aider course delivered to seven housing managers.

In progress

- Engagement with tenants to shape the Council's response to the Charter for Social Housing White Paper.
- Further development of workforce skills audit with regards to safeguarding gaps and DSL training.

Data & Business-Intelligence

Completed actions

- Specific work-streams with regards to the use of data, and asset management planning in the Housing Improvement Plan.
- Procurement of Northgate IT system to improve stock condition data collection.

In progress

- Re-commission and accelerated completion of stock condition surveys.
- Implementation of Northgate IT system (to go live in May 2022).
- Revision of 30-year HRA Business Plan which will be informed by up-to-date stock condition data.

Strategic Governance

Completed actions

- Establishment of Housing Improvement Plan Working Group to oversee the delivery of the Housing Improvement Plan.
- Establishment of the Housing Improvement Board to scrutinize the Council's delivery of the Housing Improvement Plan.
- Formation of Housing Directorate (previously split over two directorates).

In progress

- Creation of Policy & Performance Service to oversee policy/strategy development, business intelligence, and service improvement.