

HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD – 8 SEPTEMBER 2021

Report of the landlord services manager

ITEM 5 COMMUNAL CLEANING UPDATE REPORT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To present the board with an update on the operation of the communal cleaning service.

2. ACTION REQUESTED

The board is requested to note the report.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 In 2018 the council decided to introduce a communal cleaning service to residents who live in blocks of flats where there are internal communal areas. This arose from two STAR surveys (2016 and 2018) from which showed a significant number of tenants being dissatisfied with the cleanliness of communal areas. A decision was made, supported by HMAB and the then-lead member for housing, that a contracted service would be introduced and funded from a service charge levied on tenants and leaseholders.

3.2 There are 266 blocks serving over 1,500 tenants and leaseholders.

4. LEAD-UP TO THE INTRODUCTION OF THE SERVICE

4.1 The process of procuring a contractor resulted in just one company tendering for the contract, viz, Streetwise Environmental Ltd with its sub-contractor, Spotlight Cleaning Services.

4.2 Following the tendering process, residents were consulted in February 2019 on their preferred frequency of cleaning. As a result of this, blocks would be cleaned either on a fortnightly or a calendar monthly basis.

4.3 It was also decided to charge the annual cost of the contract (approximately £77,000) equally across the entire relevant stock, the only differentiation being the frequency of cleaning. This resulted in a weekly charge [48 weeks] of 76p for monthly cleans and £1.59 for fortnightly cleans being levied.

4.4 The specification on which the contract is based is attached as appendix 1.

4.5 The contract also specifies a number of performance indicators that must be achieved; the principal ones include:

- that the percentage of cleans carried out in accordance with a pre-agreed annual schedule equals or exceeds 95%;

- that the percentage of inspections carried out that are deemed compliant with the specification is equal to or exceeds 97%;
- that the percentage of cleans whose scheduled date is changed with 48 or more hours' notice is equal to or exceeds 97%

4.6 The contract with Streetwise Environmental began on 30 December 2019 and has an initial two-year term with an option to extend for a further two years.

5. CONTRACT MANAGEMENT AND EXPERIENCE OF THE SERVICE TO DATE

5.1 Monthly contract meetings have been taking place since the start of the contract in 2020. These were in person initially but have been carried out remotely since the coronavirus pandemic. It is expected that face-to-face meetings will resume in the autumn.

5.2 Standard items on the meeting agendas include:

- performance indicators, including an internal PI that requires the number of inspections every month to equal or exceed 10%; and
- complaints received during the previous month;
- health and safety concerns.

5.3 Compliance with performance indicators measuring cleans carried out on schedule or changes notified with 48 or more hours' notice have been consistently high. The contractor is very diligent in notifying us of changes to the published cleaning schedule. Such changes are almost always due to bank holidays or if works are taking place in a particular block such as internal decorating.

5.4 The block inspection regime has been established since the start of the contract. We recruited a number of tenant inspectors at the outset, who were trained in evaluating the standard of cleaning against the specification. Unfortunately and almost entirely because of the coronavirus restrictions, this engagement has diminished over the past eighteen months. Now that restrictions have been lifted it is an element of the customer engagement team's work programme for the coming months to revitalise this activity and recruit and train more tenant inspectors. At the moment, therefore, almost all inspections are being carried out by the tenancy team's housing assistant. Inspections are planned on a schedule that aims to inspect all blocks during the course of a year; but inspections are also carried out on a reactive basis if complaints are received.

5.5 There have been no concerns expressed on health and safety grounds.

5.6 Residents' complaints are all dealt with as stage 0 complaints, with a spreadsheet being kept that is accessible to the contractor. If a complaint is received, the contractor is notified and requested to address that complaint. This will result in the contractor's manager or supervisor re-visiting the block and, if necessary, ordering a reclean.

5.7 As shown in appendix 2 attached, the majority of complaints have and continue, to be centred around the following areas of dissatisfaction:

- General quality of service;
- Contractor said not to have turned up;

- The length of time cleaners take to clean the block;
- Excessively wet floors;
- Dirty or cold water used;
- Windows not being cleaned.

There appears to be no geographical pattern to complaints.

- 5.8 In terms of our response to the type of complaints raised, the contractors use cleaning chemicals that enable cold water to be used without any loss of effectiveness. The contractors continually refute any suggestion that they use dirty water and state that they make every effort to leave floors without any excess water lying around. They state also that there is no limit on the length of time cleaners should take in each block: the cleaning has to be done in line with the specification. In respect of cleaners not turning up as scheduled, the contractor has GPS records of activity that are used to rebut such claims. Finally, communal window cleaning does not form part of the contract specification.
- 5.9 There is no doubt that to many residents the imposition of a paid-for cleaning service has not been popular; and it is likely that the unpopularity is highest among that minority of residents who, traditionally, cleaned their blocks diligently and to a very high standard. The people living in those blocks may well perceive the quality of cleaning to be inferior to the standard to which they had cleaned them previously.
- 5.10 Notwithstanding the complaints we have received, it should be borne in mind that, at 59, this represents only a 1.35% complaint rate when the number of complaints is expressed as a percentage of the number of individual block cleans that are carried out during the course of a year. What is hard to assess, however, is the amount of latent, unexpressed, dissatisfaction that might exist.
- 5.11 In order to try to assess the extent of any latent dissatisfaction, we are including in this year's STAR survey some questions about satisfaction with the cleaning service and also what enhancements to the specification tenants might be interested in pursuing, such as:
- using hot water;
 - completely dry-mopping floors;
 - using a fragrance in the cleaning fluid (we have already undertaken a trial on this on the basis that, although relatively fleeting [the smell] it could indicate to residents that the cleaning has actually taken place);
 - carrying out window cleaning on, say, a quarterly basis

Clearly any enhancements to the specification come with an additional cost; and tenants might not be enthusiastic about paying more for a service with which [some] they are not entirely happy in the first place.

6. THE FUTURE

The current contract comes to an end on 29 December 2021 but, as mentioned in 4.6 above, there is an option to extend for a further two years (with or without a change in specification). As things stand, given the difficulty we would have in terminating the contract through breach of contract [performance] and bearing in mind the difficulty we had in procuring the contract in the first place, we are likely to recommend extending it for the additional two years, subject to any agreed change in specification.

7. RECOMMENDATION

HMAB members are requested to note this report.

Andrew Staton
Landlord Services Manager

13 August 2021

Appendix 1

COMMUNAL CLEANING SPECIFICATION

Standard of clean to communal area and bin store (where present)

NB: "Wash/Clean" means remove all dirt, dust, grease, cobwebs, bodily fluids and any other foreign object or coating e.g. stickers, paint, and any other substance not normally associated with the surface or object being washed or cleaned. Scrubbing of surfaces is expected to achieve this.

Finishes are to be streak-free with no remaining residues.

- All floors, stairways and steps are to be swept, with any litter and detritus removed and disposed of. The floors stairways and steps are to be washed / mopped. All floors must be mopped with disinfectant. Surfaces may be contaminated with urine or other bodily fluids and should be cleaned to an odourless environment. The finish is to be streak/swirl free with no remaining residues;
- Where necessary all walls should be wiped or washed down up to a height of five feet to ensure they are free from grime and dirt accumulation;
- Clean all woodwork or metalwork or equivalent to stairs, including stair strings, half or quarter landings, treads, risers, newel posts, balustrades and hand rails;
- Wash down and clean all architraves, skirting boards;
- Wash down and clean all internal window frames and sills / doors and frames including latches levers and any other attached furniture, excluding the doors to individual tenant dwellings.

Additional requirements

Any hazards (including but not limited to) abandoned furniture, fire hazards and obstructions to the means of escape should be reported back to an authorised officer of the council immediately.

Any additional work items identified or variations to the requested works should be reported back to an authorised officer of the council.

The contractor shall monitor, supervise and control the works thoroughly at all times and shall nominate a project manager/supervisor during the contract period.

The contractor is to make provisions for hot water, electricity, washing and toilet facilities.

Site rules

The rules listed below are the minimum expected under the contract and should be allowed for within the tendered prices:

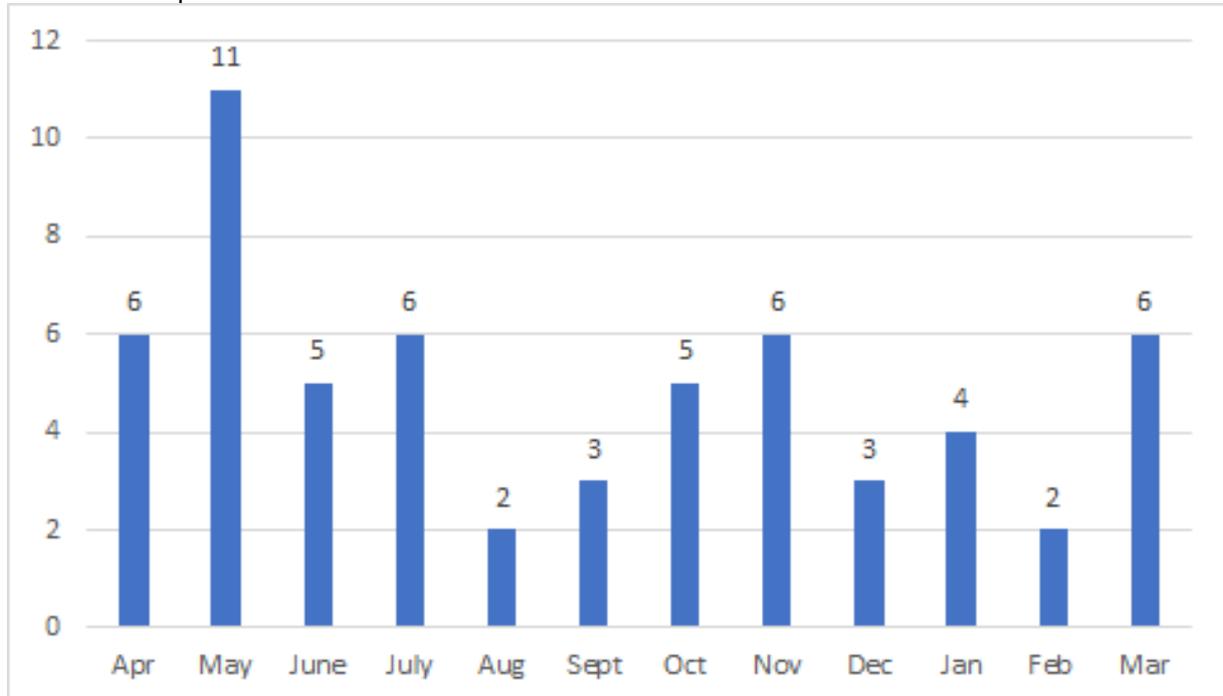
- All site personnel are expected to behave in a courteous manner towards residents and members of the public during the works;
- The posting of personal messages or photographs relating to the works is prohibited by site personnel;
- Relevant personal protective equipment is mandatory for all site personnel;
- All site personnel are expected to display the contractor's logo on clothing or high visibility jackets or have other acceptable means of identification at all times during the works;
- Smoking is prohibited in all properties by all site personnel;
- Radios, CD players etc. must not be played on site during the works;

- Access for emergency vehicles must be maintained at all times;
- All necessary precautions should be taken to ensure the safety of residents, members of the public and site personnel;
- All site accident reports, RIDDOR reports and accident investigations should be reported to the council's authorised officer immediately.

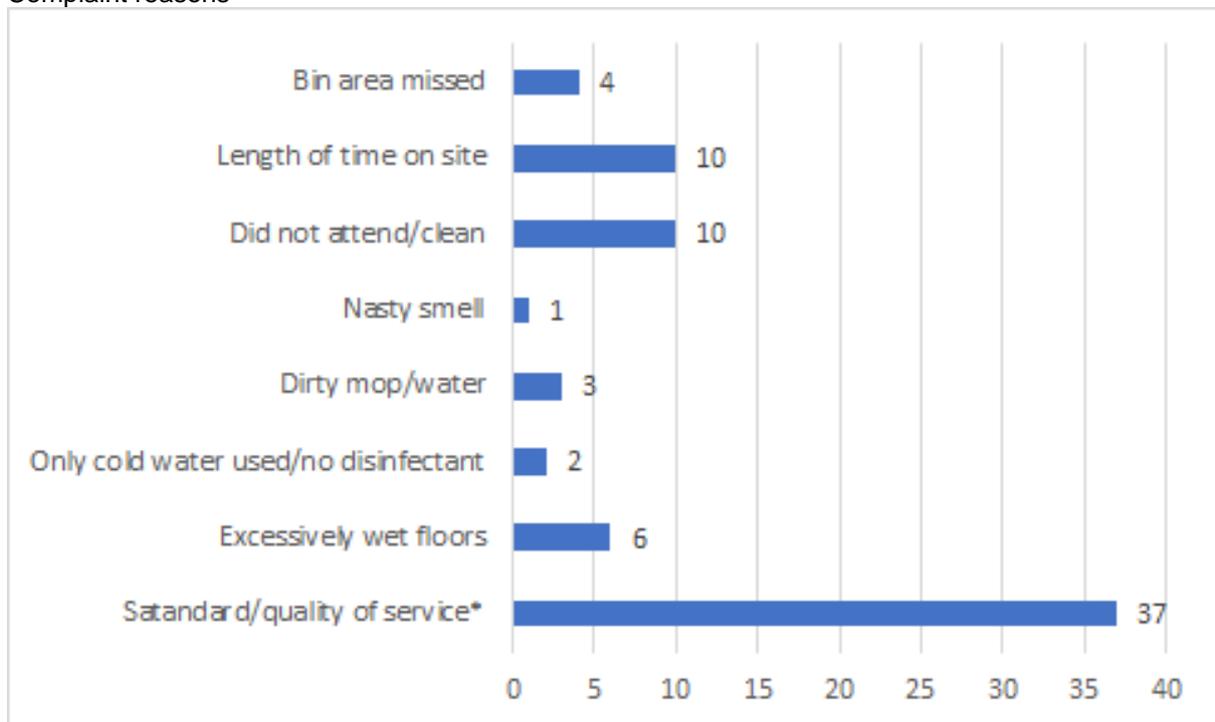
Appendix 2

Communal cleaning complaints April 2020 to March 2021

A total 59 complaints were received:



Complaint reasons



*cobwebs left/do not sweep before mopping/stains and footprints not cleaned/dusty/parts of communal area missed/not cleaning handrails/sticky handles.

Locations

The Mills	6
Pevensey Rd	5
Pinfold Gardens	4

Freehold St	4
Staveley Court	3
Chapman St	3
Great Central Rd	3
Offranville Close	2
School St	2
Durham Rd	2
George Toon Court	2
Papermill Close	2
Oxford Court	2
Derby Rd	2
King Edward	2
North St	1
Toothill Rd	1
Waterside Cl	1
Fleury Court	1
Oakham Rd	1
Lacey Court	1
Russell St	1
Rockingham Rd	1
Sarson St	1
Walter Hull Court	1
Tuckers Rd	1
Peel Dr	1
Queen St	1
Longcliffe Rd	1
Moor Lane	1