

Housing and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission

Preliminary draft recommendations - Estate cleaning services and anti-social behaviour on Southwark Estates

Recommendation 1: The Housing and Modernisation Department (H&M) is the client department for the estate cleaning and estates grounds maintenance services. A service level agreement provides the standards for performance management, including KPIs. The service is entirely council run. Recent experience in the housing repairs service has shown us that internal client/provider models are not always the best way of managing services and driving up performance. In fact, these artificial client/provider models can create inefficiency and unclear lines of management responsibility. Unifying services can improve communication and provide a more clearly understood management structure. The Cabinet should ask for a review to be carried out of this model, comparing it with possible alternatives, and then decide if these arrangements should be changed for the estate cleaning service.

Recommendation 2: Our estate cleaning staff are not as well supported by council IT as they might be. Staff are not provided with council smart phones and have no access to data which would help them to see where cleaning activities might be focussed. They also do not have easy access to online tools to report issues they see during their work, such as fly-tipping. A review of the IT support for estate cleaning staff should be carried out, and additional support put in place where appropriate.

Recommendation 3: Adequate resources are in place to respond to urgent cleaning issues on estates, but widely understood and easy to use routes to report issues to the council are not. The council should develop an online tool for housing estate residents to use which enables them to report issues quickly and easily.

Recommendation 4: Key performance indicators in estate cleaning are a concern for the commission. Over a period of years, KPIs show almost 100% compliance with acceptable standards. KPIs routinely show very high levels of performance, even on estates that are not well-cleaned. KPIs are not accurately reflecting the reality experienced by residents of estates and they are not driving service improvement. Two actions should be put in place to help remedy this:

- a) There should be a complete review of KPIs currently being used as part of the service level agreement and only KPIs that can be used to drive service improvements should be continued.
- b) Residents should be given a direct role in assessing the quality of cleaning on their estate. Monthly online surveys should be sent to all residents on an estate, so that they can quickly and easily give their feedback.

Recommendation 5: Many incidents of anti-social behaviour on Southwark estates are the result of individuals suffering mental health problems or crises. The council does a good job of linking up medical support or alcohol and drug abuse support for those individuals through the MARAC process. However, other sources of support are equally important. For example, employment and training support services for those

wishing to restart or change their working life. The Cabinet should review support arrangements to ensure a full range of support is being offered in these circumstances.

Recommendation 6: Officers described challenges during each new lockdown, created by a surge in domestic violence. People being isolated in a property with an abuser create a much higher risk of abuse. There have been significant increases in demand for domestic violence support services, and officers trained to deal with these situations. Cabinet should put in place protocols and plans to ensure that any future surges created by further lockdowns, mean the council is always able to match the surge in demand with additional resources. Similar arrangements should be considered to support those who become the victims of 'Cuckooing' (vulnerable individuals having their homes taken over by organised criminals). This is also an issue which has increased during lockdowns.