



Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel Questions for Clarion Housing 10 January 2018

1. Merger/Restructure

1.1 What have residents fed back about the merger between Circle and Clarion? Is there awareness amongst residents of the merger?

Every Circle resident was consulted prior to the merger but the response was minimal. A further communication confirming the creation of Clarion Housing Association will be sent when the legal process completes in January 2018.

1.2 How does Clarion ensure that the voice of residents is heard and embedded within all decisions about its properties?

Clarion is about to launch a new Resident Involvement Strategy that will provide a range of ways for residents to be involved in issues and decision making. These will include membership of the Board, Regional Scrutiny Panels as well as traditional Resident Associations. There will also be options for those who prefer to engage digitally.

1.3 How does Clarion support and engage residents within Street properties who are often single dwellings unlike on the larger estates?

All the methods described above apply equally to those in street properties. There is also a separate consultation every year to consider how Estate Improvement funding should be spent.

2. Repairs

2.1 Since becoming Clarion, what is the rate of customer satisfaction with repairs?

The level of overall satisfaction with the repairs service was 84.6% in October 2017. This has been consistent for the last six months.

2.2 How many repairs that are unresolved after 6 months do you have ongoing?

There are currently no jobs over six months. Our oldest current 'work in progress' dates back to September. This is monitored weekly. In some cases permanent repair maybe pending planned works, but temporary works will have been undertaken.

2.3 With regard to Morden House:

2.3.1 Why communal doors (which had been working fine) were deactivated in November 2016, and since then have not been working despite resident efforts to get resolution? The property has been deprived of a security door. A number of residents have written about this several times to the management. Everyone's security is affected, drug users are using this part of the building and nobody feels safe with police officers attending regularly inside the building. There was an attempt to break into one flat, homeless people and drug takers congregate within this part of the building.

The ASB issues affecting the block are being actively addressed including patrols by the Neighbourhood warden team. The communal entrance doors to block 1-16 are currently not

working. The repairs have been completed, but this has additionally required new fobs to be produced, which is currently underway. We apologise for the delay in completing this work. The Door Entry systems to the other two entrances are fully functioning.

2.3.2 Were Delta (the contractor) paid for the work they did not carry out in relation to these doors and was that cost passed on to residents through the service charge? If so are residents going to pay again for the same works? Residents have asked this question many times over the last year and no response has been provided.

All costs are scrutinized before Service Charges are calculated. Orders over the last 12 months for door entry works will be reviewed and only costs attributable to works completed will be passed on.

2.3.3 Who is the Morden House property manager? What is the role of the property manager? What is the contact point? Why is this information not displayed in the building? How many buildings does one property manager manage? Why is there no central point of contact within Circle/Clarion to which residents can go to in the event of a problem?

The Neighbourhood Officer is currently Wayne Roberts–Read. Information on this and other important matters should be displayed in the communal areas: New Notice Boards will be provided for this purpose. The average patch size is 600 properties. In the event of a problem, residents should contact us via the Contact Centre number 0300 500 3000, through the website or in person at The Grange.

2.4 Why it is that residents/leaseholders have to go through Councillors for everything? Why have multiple emails to Wayne Roberts-Read and Dee Tyrie all been unanswered and ignored? Why, when residents make visits to the office in Central Road, are they refused a meeting? The staff take messages but nothing happens. Nobody within the administration cares about anything. Why is it that staff morale is so low?

Residents should only contact Councillors if they have been unable to get a satisfactory response from Clarion staff. It would be helpful if Members would direct constituents to Clarion for any new matter that is raised with them. Ms Tyrie left the organisation some months ago. If there are examples of issues of non-response from other officer, these will be looked in to by the relevant manager. A duty system operates at the Grange to ensure a Neighbourhood Officer is available should the reception staff not be able to deal with a query. The Neighbourhood Officers spend much of their time out on their estates so will not be available without a specific appointment. The management team at The Grange are experienced and competent professionals and care very much about the service they provide, the customers they serve and the reputation of Clarion. Staff morale, on the whole, is fine and the camaraderie amongst the teams very marked: The uncertainty that inevitably comes with any major change has had some impact but managers are all undergoing specific change management training to better enable them to support colleagues.

2.5 Could tenants/residents receive information explaining the organisation's management structure: exactly who does what? Who should residents approach when staff do not do their jobs after many attempts to chase up complaints?

If any resident is unhappy about the service there is a formal complaint process whereby a specialist team will objectively review the matter.

2.6 Why does Clarion use a wrong system of procurement for refurbishment? It is too widely spread across the country and does not take into consideration local provision. This ends up much more expensive to the tenants as they have to deal

with high end bureaucracy and administrative costs, instead of appointing local workers who are usually much cheaper and approachable and care about clients.

Circle is currently bound by the procurement that took place in 2013 and will run until April 2019. Clarion is reviewing the procurement and delivery of major works with a view to starting new arrangements in 2019. Current arrangements do include local labour and apprenticeship requirements and this will continue.

2.7 Why were tenants originally quoted an amount of £4,600 per flat for recent electrical work and, when pressure was applied and the tenants lobbied a number of councillors, why was that figure was more than halved?

A Section 20 Notice was served for works on 19 November 2015, we then received observations from residents which is the normal S20 consultation process. We had due regard to the observations, which prompted the works to be re-scoped and revised estimates were issued.

2.8 Why does Clarion/Circle issue money demands that are late, quoting the wrong figures and sometimes sent to the wrong correspondent address despite having the correct address on file? Why do they chase and threaten tenants with legal action when the tenants are pointing out that Clarion is quoting the wrong sum? They need to listen instead of using computer-generated letters.

Noted. It is hard to comment further without specific details. Some short comings with the process are acknowledged and every effort will be made to minimise these in future.

2.9 It took four full days to unblock a main drain where the waste was flooding into one of the bathroom of one of the flats. The same drain has had a blockage three times in the last 18 months. The management was asked to investigate and still had no answer or confirmation that it was being handled. The last time took four days to resolve. The day team did not see it as an emergency and the night team passed it to the day team. It took at least eight phone calls, speaking to six different staff, explaining the story on every phone call before it was resolved.

This is not acceptable service and any further training needs will be identified and procedures reviewed.

2.10 With regard to Byfield Court flats:

2.10.1 On a recent inspection of Byfield Court flats, Cllr Lewis-Lavender learnt of a demand for payment of nearly £5,000 from each flat towards the cost of repairs after a fire in the electricity cupboard of Byfield Court. The Cllr believes the fire happened around 2012 and was in the cable that supplied the flats that then connected to the electric meters. He has been informed that this cable was of VIR style and was long overdue for replacement and had not been regularly inspected. Also, only a couple of weeks after the repairs were completed, cleaners washed down the electricity cupboard and shorted out the supply again. If the original problem was in the cable that fed the meters, why were leaseholders charged with the repairs and not the landlord? Also if additional repairs were necessary following the cleaners spraying water on the electric cables, was that cost also charged to leaseholders and not the maintenance team? Do leaseholders know what the facts are regarding this charge.

In July 2012 we consulted about Lateral Mains Renewal, and associated works, all of which are re-chargeable to leaseholders as per the terms of their leases. The work to individual properties was not recharged to leaseholders and the final account was sent out this summer. None of this was

anything to do with a fire or any subsequent damage caused by cleaning staff. All leaseholders are entitled to request full details of any charges that are levied.

2.10.2 Why has a request for replacing the front door, repairing the broken glass above the door and repairing the broken cill at number 22 has still not been carried out for ten years.

No.22 is a leaseholder owned property. The flat entrance door, frame, glazing above and cill have been replaced by the resident.

2.11 Concerns have been raised by residents with Cllr Moulton about Clarion Housing failing to uphold its contract for the Brickfield Road traveller site and failing to ensure that the licensees receive value for money. There are a number of problems that have been highlighted:

2.11.1 Missed appointments for repairs and upgrade works

We monitor completion of appointments, carry out an independent sample survey of completed works, and welcome feedback from residents. We are unaware of any current uncompleted works beyond their target date. The overall level of reported repairs is quite low, with a number of pitches not reporting any repairs.

2.11.2 Not keeping the site clean and failing to ensure regular cleaning occurs

A mobile cleaning team sweep the site but there is an expectation that residents will co-operate with this

2.11.3 Failing to maintain the property to a liveable standard

The living accommodation on the pitches is provided by the residents. On each pitch there is a separate day room with washing & toilet facilities, and another room for utility equipment. Under the management agreement, Circle undertake responsive repairs and discussions are on-going with the Council regarding re-investment options in the day rooms and shower facilities which were last upgraded before the stock transfer.

2.11.4 Failing to maintain fire hoses in accordance with the law

These installations are maintained on a service contract every six months. They were last serviced in November 2017 and all four hoses were left in full working order. Unfortunately these hoses are subject to regular vandalism/unauthorised use.

2.11.5 Not placing new licensees on empty pitches in good time leading to potential issues with ASB and fly tipping

It is the Council's responsibility to maintain a waiting list and identify new tenants.

2.11.6 Not keeping the site to a good standard for people to live in

Regular estate inspections are carried out and this includes residents. Three residents attended the last inspection. The Neighbourhood Officer and Estate Services Team will deal with any issues that are reported.

2.11.7 Failing to remove rubbish from the site left in piles in the roadway.

We work closely with the Council and other agencies in managing the site but rubbish left on the highway is the responsibility of the Local Authority.

2.11.8 Failing to meet residents and update them on works and repairs meaning residents are not updated and are waiting months for vital works to be completed

We are always happy to meet with residents when this is requested.

2.11.9 Failing to ensure Clarion Housing has a housing officer that has experience of working with the traveller community.

The previous Neighbourhood Officer was highly experienced in traveller site management and also a government advisor on this matter, which was fortuitous. The Housing Services Manager for this area has extensive experience and prior to the stock transfer worked for London Borough of Merton so is very familiar with the site.

3. Regeneration

3.1 What experience does Clarion have of delivering three estate regenerations of the scale proposed in Merton?

Clarion already builds over 1700 new homes every year. We have completed or are currently delivering over £2bn worth of regeneration projects, the majority here in London and the South East, with large scale projects (i.e. over 250 homes) in Ealing, Sutton, Havering and Kensington and Chelsea.

Our current regeneration and development plans allow for almost trebling that to 5,000 per annum, making us one of the largest housebuilders in the UK.

At its peak (i.e. with all three estates under development simultaneously) the Merton Regeneration Project will generate circa 500 new homes – a considerable number and a sizable proportion of the Borough's housing targets, but well within the organisation's delivery capacity.

3.2 Why is there not an up-lift in affordable properties in the High Path when the proposal for the regeneration is to more than double the density?

There is an up-lift in affordable properties. The proposed affordable housing provision on the estate has been developed following a detailed analysis of current and future housing need. The proposals for High Path (inclusive of Phase 1) will provide between 23% to 24% affordable housing on a habitable room basis. This includes a net uplift of 71 affordable habitable rooms compared with existing in response to current levels of overcrowding – no family will be rehoused in overcrowded conditions. All the affordable homes will be social rented or affordable rent (the great majority social rented).

Clarion have committed to replacing every socially or affordable rented property with a socially or affordable rented property across all three neighbourhoods. The term "affordable" has been consistently degraded in recent years where many homes classified as "affordable" are in reality well out of the reach of even average income families and individuals. In other instances socially rented properties have been replaced with shared ownership units.

In London over 50,000 socially rented properties have been lost as part of regeneration programmes in the past ten years, replaced with shared ownership and other intermediate and sale products. That will not be the case here. In the whole of England last year just 1,102 homes

for social rent were completed. The Merton Regeneration Project alone will deliver 717 such homes.

3.3 **What assurances can Clarion provide that within the proposed estates regeneration they will ensure that improving health outcomes for all residents is embedded?**

A commitment to build on the strengths of the existing communities and create new places where people can live long, healthy and happy lives has been a cornerstone of Clarion's regeneration plans for High Path from their earliest iteration. This is reflected not only in the design of new homes and public spaces but also in the approach to regeneration and support packages available to both existing and new residents.

Retaining and supporting existing communities

In the early stages of consultation about regeneration many residents expressed a desire to stay in High Path. In response Clarion has developed a Residents Offer to support them in doing so. This package of housing and financial support was developed off the back of extensive community consultation. It means that any resident who wishes to stay can do so in a home of a suitable size (for Clarion tenants) or comparable size (for resident homeowners and at no cost to them). Accommodating this clearly expressed desire by residents within the Business Plan has been challenging – there is no equivalent offer anywhere else in London at this scale – but seen as critical to Clarion's place making objectives.

Rehousing residents during regeneration

The regeneration of the three neighbourhoods will require multiple phases of development. The Phasing Plan has been constructed to minimise disruption to existing residents and their earliest possible rehousing. We acknowledge this period of rehousing will be stressful so we will support residents as much as possible in advance and through the rehousing process itself. The will include:

- Regular face to face contact with the Regeneration Manager to confirm exact housing need (size, accessibility issues, location) at least one full phase (i.e. at least two years) in advance
- Regular follow ups to check for changes in circumstances
- Advance written confirmation of what home will be offered, in what phase and in what location
- Managed removals for Clarion tenants with a free packing and removals service paid for by Clarion

Clarion will employ staff specifically to support residents through this rehousing irrespective of tenure. Their role will be to offer help where required to arrange removals and move dates, support residents to get power and their utilities in place, deal with any unexpected difficulties on the day.

Provision for Vulnerable Residents

In recognition that the rehousing process may affect vulnerable families and individuals more, Clarion have commissioned Merton Centre for Independent Living (MCIL) to help establish how to best contact, support and accommodate disabled people and other vulnerable groups. This research will inform not only our rehousing processes but the continued engagement of this section of the population throughout the regeneration work and beyond.

In addition to handyperson support to help older and vulnerable residents establish their new homes Clarion will also offer individual support to all households through CLARION FUTURES. This will involve bespoke money and digital advice to all residents as part of the package of support when they move to their new home.

Stewardship and Ongoing Involvement

In parallel with the regeneration plans Clarion have been working with residents to explore new ways of managing the neighbourhood when regeneration is underway and completed. This reflects the change the regeneration represents which will see a significant growth in population, a change in the tenure mix across the neighbourhoods and many new facilities and public spaces to be maintained and looked after. Consequently we are **developing** new models of estate management which would see local residents play a much more prominent role in the ongoing management of their neighbourhood.

As part of the preparation for those changes Clarion have already undertaken a series of workshops and site visits with residents run by OPEN CITY. A further initiative to work with existing residents to establish what they see as the best things about their community, and would like to see retained in the new neighbourhood, is scheduled to run through the winter 2017 and spring 2018.

Building Design Public Realm and Greenspace

All new homes will meet London Housing Design Guide space standards. In most cases these exceed those of the existing home and Clarion have confirmed no new home will be smaller than the home it replaces. Every home will have private outdoor space (e.g. currently only one third of homes on High Path have this). 100% of homes will meet the Lifetime Homes standard.

The regeneration plans allow for 10% of all properties to be fully accessible. The regular face to face contact with the Regeneration Manager will ensure that the individual needs of disabled residents will be addressed in terms of location, layout, car parking access and adaptations. Effectively this allows for a bespoke response to particular requirements.

The replacement for Wile Miles Court (High Path) which currently houses a number of particularly vulnerable residents, will be designed to HAPPI standard, reflecting the particular needs of this community.

The public spaces are being designed to help encourage activity and reduce social exclusion. This involves the creation of streets, with front doors and active, overlooked spaces. New public and semi-public green spaces will be created including a 4,500 sqm public park at High Path and a much larger community hall at Ravensbury. Unusually the lighting design forms part of this very early stages of planning, reflecting the desire to create spaces which work well by day and by night, where residents feel safe and streets are legible and easily moved through.

The street patterns which underpin the regeneration plans have been designed to help connect neighbourhoods back into the surrounding area.

Employment and training

The social contact and physical and mental activity that come from employment and training are well established as contributors to health and wellbeing. The regeneration plans for High Path for example allow for a new bespoke employment building on Merton High Street to support small businesses and start-ups; new retail units along both Morden Road and Merton High Street; a secondary street running parallel to the High Street which includes several small business units offering "move on" space and room for small business growth

All the main procurement contracts will include training and local employment requirements, in line with Clarion's well established practices. Clarion Futures supported 1,800 into work last year with a target of 4,000 set for future years.

We will be applying Circular Economy principles at High Path and throughout the Merton Regeneration Project with work already underway to establish the added value such an approach

can bring to the local community and local businesses. High Path has been identified as a test case of Circular Economy in the built environment.

Monitoring Impacts

Clarion will be commissioning baseline research as part of a longitudinal study tracking and measuring the impacts of the regeneration programme. These will include health and wellbeing outcomes and we would welcome the opportunity to work with Public Health colleagues in the design and implementation of that research.

3.4 As part of the regeneration project, will there be any reflection of the fact that the High Path estate is located on the site of Lord Nelson's former home i.e. through house/street names, history boards, plaques etc.?

We are fortunate in that all three neighbourhoods have interesting and rich histories. High Path has the well-known links with Lord Nelson and William Morris; Eastfields its farming and fireworks connections; and Ravensbury as a site of industrial heritage with its adjacent mill and industrial artefacts. These elements have an important part to play in the place-making objectives underpinning the regeneration project, building on the positives and history of the neighbourhoods.

Given almost all the early occupants of High Path already live there, it will be local people who take the lead on the naming of their own streets and key buildings. However there is a clear desire to see Lord Nelson and William Morris both recognised locally and there are early plans for marking key locations with connections to Lord Nelson in the fabric of buildings and in the footpath. The process of developing a cultural and arts strategy to underpin the regeneration work is already underway with meetings with arts organisation and Wimbledon College of Art arranged for January.

4. Fire Safety

4.1 Does the Staying Put policy apply in any Clarion residencies in Merton? If so, how is this adequately explained to residents?

The Stay Put policy applies to all purpose built blocks including the ten storey plus blocks in Merton (Hudson Court, May Court, Marsh Court and Frensham Court). These blocks are designed with one hour fire separation between flats. Following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, further inspections were undertaken to ensure none of the fire safety measures had been compromised. The Stay Put policy does not apply to converted street properties. Briefings were issued to all affected residents after Grenfell and new notices and signage has been provided in all blocks.

This is a common evacuation policy which is nationally accepted as the normal arrangement for purpose built blocks of flats. The procedure is explained to residents at sign up as part of the welcome information pack, it is contained within the fire action notices displayed within the blocks (we are currently reviewing and reinstating fire action notices across all out property portfolio). We also write to residents following an incident or fire to remind them of the fire arrangements in a block. Following Grenfell we sent every resident in blocks over six storeys a comprehensive fire safety advice including information on the stay put arrangement and what to do in the event of a fire.

4.3 What is Clarion doing to encourage the safety of electrical appliances in its housing?

We have information on our external website regarding fire safety and this includes electrical appliances. We contained some advice on the leaflets sent out to residents which included some advice around electrical safety.

4.3. Does Clarion, as landlord, have plans in place for the fire evacuation of vulnerable residents? The London Fire Brigade is campaigning on this issue and is trying to get legislation changed to put this responsibility onto landlords.

We have sought legal advice regarding this aspect and are currently reviewing our internal procedure and process for the fire safety arrangements in relation to vulnerable residents. Evacuation arrangements for vulnerable persons differ depending on the type of accommodation they live in. We are also working with the London Fire Brigade and other Fire Authorities in relation to the arrangements for vulnerable persons.

4.4 What evidence can Clarion provide of how it is ensuring the safety of its residents?

Clarion holds FRA reports for all properties that require one in accordance with the Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order 2005. Currently 24 hour patrols are being undertaken in the four blocks of ten storeys in the Borough.

We have robust procedures and arrangements in place for the safety of our residents which complies with the relevant legislation for both Health and Safety and Fire Safety. We have a competent team of Health and Safety and Fire Safety Managers and Officers who are reviewing and checking the processes and procedures in place. We have comprehensive testing and maintenance regimes in place for equipment together with a comprehensive process for fire risk assessments of our property in place.

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