

# Cottington Close Board Meeting

Thursday, February 8, 2024

Purpose:

Regular Monthly Board Meeting to discharge all relevant business of the society as practical.

Desired Outcomes:

Board awareness of operational situation of the society.

Board decisions on the following questions:

Provisional year end schedule.

Office staff re-org.

Lloyds bank resolutions

Disrepair legal fees and damages payments.

Condensation Damp and Mould Outline Strategy and Survey approval, and approval of the "long-term, really serious, recalcitrant or regular recurring register or refer scheme"

In Attendance: Craig Robinson, KV Duong, Michail Nazarenko, Mike Corney, Peter Street, Sally Seymour, Sherona Gayle

## Full Meeting Record

View this record online at <https://meet.lucidmeetings.com/meeting/351687>

### 1.0 Welcome and Roll Call (*Presenter Sherona Gayle*)

#### 1.1 Confirmation of quorum

#### 1.2 Standard Governance Checks

- Has anyone accepted any hospitality offered by any person or organisation related to Cottington Close or that has a relationship to Cottington Close?
- Has anyone's business or personal relations changes such that they might have a conflict of interest in respect of their activities as a board member of Cottington Close?
- Has anyone generated any risks to the organisation by virtue of their conduct since last meeting?

#### Notes

None declared.

### 1.3 Agree and accept the minutes of the last meeting.

### 1.4 Statement of main outcomes for this meeting

## 2.0 Unclosed actions from last meeting

View actions that have been closed in the last month (31 days).

Review actions that were due by this meeting that are still open.

**Discussed:** closed Action Items; closed on or after Jan 8, 2024; created in this meeting room

**Discussed:** open Action Items; created in this meeting room

## 3.0 REGULAR REPORTING

### 3.1 Management Accounts

### 3.2 MMA KPI Performance (*Presenter Peter Street*)

See the attached document which is the summary of our position at the last liaison meeting with Lambeth.

In summary, they are aware that we are not yet compliant and they are aware they have been advised of the trajectory of our KPI performance. So long as we continue on the right trajectory and show the steady progress on tightening our processes that we have begun the impression overall is that they understand our position and the challenges in coming back to a position of stable, reliable performance.

#### Documents

- [CCRMO Liaison Meeting Notes - 29.1.2024.docx](#)



CCRMO Liaison  
Meeting Notes - 29.

### 3.3 Statutory and serious risks and exceptions (SSRE) report

#### 3.3.1 Health and Safety (*Peninsula*)

The attached document shows the areas where the organisation has fallen into a non-compliant state with respect to various types of assessment and basic documentation.

Moving to compliance is a project that will take place over the coming months starting with the most critical items and those most easily rectified.

#### Documents

- [SafeCheck Report - 1 Opal Street, Kennington, London, London - SE11 4HZ - 11\\_01\\_2024.pdf.pdf](#)

#### 3.3.2 Fire Risk Assessment (*Residences and Community*)

We are waiting for Lambeth to come back to us with the full listing and what they believe is our responsibility as opposed to their own, so no list right now.

There are definitely items on this list that will need work to become compliant.

### *3.3.3 Fire Risk Assessment (Workplace)*

We are just exhausting the possibilities that Lambeth or the facilities company may provide this for our offices. Should that not be the case (which is most likely) we'll need to have it professionally conducted. In theory we can do this ourselves, but frankly, considering the risks involved with respect to the harm a fire can cause and prison for the person doing the assessment without sufficient skill in the view of whoever assess things after, I don't think it's worth trying to do it ourselves.

Cheaper assessments are available than the one I've uploaded here from Peninsula as an example.

#### **Documents**

- [COT034-Fire Risk Assessment Quote from Peninsula-Jan 2024.eml](#)

### *3.3.4 Lambeth "internal" compliance audit*

The attached report shows the current state.

In summary, there are a few items left on this audit with which are still not compliant. They rest primarily in the areas of finance (invoice management and bank account control)

#### **Documents**

- [4322 Follow up 2023-10-30\\_PS20240109.docx](#)

## **3.4 Disrepair Report**

### *3.4.1 CASE 1: Complex Case with multiple solicitors and overcrowding*



Still awaiting costs.

#### **Motion**

This board approves the payment of legal costs and damages as recommended by Lambeth Legal in respect of both the original case and the new disrepair case on the basis of minimum payment and that it is in line with Lambeth Legal's formal legal advice.

#### *3.4.2 CASE 2: Survey, works, legal bills*

This case involve a flat which was surveyed and for which resultant recommended works have begun and are expected to complete by the end of March.

There is no compensation sought in this case, but the legal fees will amount to £6250.

There is no practical choice but to pay.

#### **Motion**

The board approves the payment of legal fees with respect to this disrepair case at the value recommended by Lambeth Legal (currently £6250).

#### **3.5 Resident View Report (absent - not yet started)**

### **4.0 Board and Staff Strategy Day**

Cottington Close needs a full review of it's purpose, mission, vision, goals and

A clear and unambiguous statement of where we are going with buy in from board and staff will help everyone align in their efforts.

This usually takes between 4-6 hours and is best done in several consecutive sessions on the same day, ideally with everyone in person.

However, it can be split out into four 1.5 hour sessions which can be done remotely if necessary and they can be spread out. There is a chance that an additional session may be necessary depending on how things go.

The request here is for the board to discuss this and come to an agreement on the importance of this work, and either commit to attending it or dismiss it. Dates can be set offline if there is committment to attend.

#### **Notes**

Pause until end of year process.

### **5.0 Financial Year End, Accounts, Audit and AGM (Late Addition)**

#### **5.1 Target Dates for end of year governance for FYE2024**

The following schedule has been discussed and agreed in principle with the auditor and awaits board approval.

This schedule is intended to have the outcome of wrapping up FYE2024 as efficiently as possible after the year closes with the intention to allow restructuring of our capital infrastructure improvements and upgrades programme to allow planning to begin a year ahead of time with a clear picture of minimum funding, allowing time to explore creative and grant type funding options to enhance larger projects, better time for background and detail research to give better quality solutions and more time to plan in detail to improve execution and cope with our relatively slow moving bureaucracy.

w/c Monday 25th March 2024: Aggressive efforts to close off open financial matters.

Friday 29th March 2024: Finalised list of outstanding financial matters for 2024.

31st March 2024: Last day of the financial year for Cottington Close.

w/c 1st April 2024: Any last tidying and chasing of open financial matters for FYE2024.

30th April 2024: Books closed for FTE2024. Internal draft accounts produced.

7th May 2024: Handover of financial material to accountant for preparation of year end accounts and audit.

9th May 2024: Formal notices for AGM sent out (six weeks' notice).

Friday, 31st May 2024: Draft Accounts available for review

Thursday, 6th June 2024: Board Meeting to include accountant/auditor's presentation of the books and accounts and appropriate pre-AGM business.

Wednesday, 12th June 2024: Deadline (Provisional) for receipt of nomination forms for board members.

Thursday, 20th June 2024: AGM (Provisional)

## **Motion**

This board approves for use as a working schedule the timeline of events outlined here for the delivery of end of year governance and holding of the AGM.

## **6.0 Cottington Close Board IT Services**

### **6.1 Lucid Meetings, Zoom, Otter.ai**

Board meetings are arranged through Lucid Meetings, the online system that this is typed in. The system will keep track of open actions (like the tracker used to) and will keep full records of the meetings.

The meetings themselves are enabled remotely by Zoom, and this allows video of the meeting to be kept in addition to the sound key by Lucid Meetings.

Otter.ai is a artificial intelligence transcription, note taking, summarising system that will be joining you for board meetings. This should hopefully spell the someone needing to write the minutes for board meetings manually, but it's a test and learn experience and if Otter.ai isn't up to it, we'll try another service.

Meeting records, minutes, notes, transcripts etc are all kept in Lucid. Complete record pakcs are created for each meeting representing an accurate record of events in that meeting.

## **6.2 Board email addresses, calendars, cloud drive and notes**

Every board member has a an email address of the format:

[firstname.lastname@board.cottingtonclose.org](mailto:firstname.lastname@board.cottingtonclose.org)

Officers also have access to an account of the format:

[officerrole@board.cottingtonclose.org](mailto:officerrole@board.cottingtonclose.org)

Once you have the credential for the new company accounts you shoud aim to use those accounts for board business much as you would a work account for work business.

User manuals are distriubuted separately.

## **6.3 Board and Committee Fora and collaboration area**

This is available through Zoho and logon details will go to your board email address.

## **7.0 Incidents, problems and systemic impediments,**

### **7.1 Lambeth**

## **8.0 Portfolios, projects and inflight work**

## **9.0 Office/Administrative Division Re-org Business Case**

The current roles and responsibilities setup in the office isn't fit for purpose.

Please see the attached business case document for the details.

### **Documents**

- [CottingtonCloseAdministrativeDivisionRestructure.odt](#)



## **10.0 Finance and Accountancy Overhaul: High level plan**

1. Invoice Management and payments (DD etc)
2. New banking Arrangements
3. Payroll
4. Credit cards, expense, pre-auth
5. Accountancy and Audit
6. Purchase Order and ...
7. 2024-2025 Budget

## **11.0 Lloyds Accounts Resolutions**

These are to allow the make a change forms to the account to be submitted to Lloyds if two of the current signatories cannot be persuaded to sign the form.

### **Motion**

This board wishes for the removal off all individuals from the mandate for all Lloyds bank accounts and credits cards with the addition/preservation of only:

Mike Corney

Peter Street

Sherona Gayle

Michail Nazarenko

## **12.0 PROCUREMENT, CONTRACTS, AND SERVICE DELIVERY: VALUE FOR MONEY**

Contracts under review:

1. Smyth and Byford#
2. Peninsula (health and Safety)
3. Sage (Accountancy)
4. Wix (Website)
5. Bright HR

## **13.0 Damp and Mould Stategy (Presenter Peter Street)**

## **14.0 ANTI-DISREPAIR STRATEGY**

## **15.0 REPAIR AND RESIDENT SATISFACTION STRATEGY**

## **16.0 COMMUNICATION, CLARITY AND TRANSPARACY**

1. New website | Portal and repairs, complaints and

2. Public reporting of numbers
3. Public display of project progress
4. Publishing of Board Minutes

## **17.0 PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATION**

1. Co-Operative UK
2. TMO Alliance – South London
3. London Wide

## **18.0 POLICY COMPLIANCE AND ...**

1. Timetable
2. Rate of progress, estimated end date.

## **19.0 MAJOR WORKS PROJECT LIST**

## **20.0 INFRASTRUCTURE TIMEBOMB – ROADS**

1. Opal Street Strategy

## **21.0 OFFICE REDECORATION**

1. A Fit working environment. Office is desperate for redecoration and is unfit, unhealthy and demoralising place to work.

## **22.0 EVENTS CALENDAR**

## **23.0 NEW COMMUNICATION SYSTEM**

1. Email,
2. Telephone Number,
3. IUR,
4. Hosted Forums
5. Facilities
6. Social Media Delivery

## **24.0 ESTATE MANAGEMENT DIRECT ENQUIRIES.**

1. Direct Q&A to Estate Manager.



MONTHLY LIAISON MEETING NOTES

<b>TMO</b>	Cottingham Close RMO
<b>Interim Estate Manager - Strategy and Transformation</b>	PETER STREET
<b>LIAISON OFFICER</b>	NIGEL EDWARDS
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	29 January 2024

CATEGORY	KEY ISSUE	TMO RESPONSE	AGREED ACTIONS	PROGRESS UPDATE
Performance – KPIs <b>Dec 2023</b>	<p><b>Rent collection – Target 98.5%</b></p> <p><b>Dec 2023 – 96.28%, Target not met.</b> Performance is below target by 2.22% and is on a downwards trajectory.</p> <p>The target has been missed for 7 out of the 9 months of the year and has not been on target since May 2023.</p> <p>The RMO have provided an Action Plan, which will be reviewed regularly, but at this point it is difficult to see how the target will be met at the end of the year.</p> <p><b>Service Charge Collection – Target 105%</b></p> <p><b>Dec 2023 – 92.1%, Target not met</b> Performance is below the target by 12.90%, having fallen from the previous month by over 4%.</p> <p>There are 5 accounts where no payments have been made so far this year and this equates to £6,095. There is scope to improve performance given 5 leaseholders have yet to make payment, but this in itself will not bridge the gap in the collection shortfall. CCRMO have yet to provide an Action Plan to address the shortfall in collection.</p> <p><b>% of Repairs completed within target time – Target 90%</b></p> <p><b>Dec 2023 – 100%</b> The RMO have reported 100% of repairs completed on time.</p> <p><b>% of Emergency Repairs completed within target time– Target 90%</b></p> <p><b>Dec 2023 – No information provided**</b></p>	<p>Rent Action Plan submitted on 23.1.2024 and outlines the actions and steps to be taken to improve performance.</p> <p>A key part of this is to ensure communication with residents in arrears is improved and providing support where necessary.</p> <p>The Housing Officer has now left, and tasks are being reassigned with a more focussed approach and spread amongst staff.</p> <p>The RMO will be working to address the shortfall in performance through refocussing on this area of work and increasing engagement and contact with leaseholders to improve the collection of arrears, focussing on tasks whilst taking into account individual circumstances.</p> <p>The RMO is confident future actions will lead to an improvement in performance.</p> <p>The RMO are looking at new repairs system Zoho, to improve the user experience and assist with streamlining the back-office functions.</p> <p>New systems are being put in place to ensure tis information can be captured and information provided.</p>	<p>Action Plan to reviewed at liaison meetings monthly and separately by the RMO to measure its effectiveness</p> <p>The RMO to provide an Action Plan by mid-February 2024 outlining the methods to improve performance.</p>	<p>PS met with Jose Garcia and obtained a greater understanding of the functionality of Northgate (NEC), which will be used where necessary.</p>

MONTHLY LIAISON MEETING NOTES

<p><b><u>% of Repair satisfaction – Target 90%</u></b></p> <p><u>Dec 2023 – No information provided**</u></p> <p><b><u>Gas Servicing – Target 100%</u></b></p> <p>Dec 2023 – No information provided** This is disappointing and unacceptable given the importance of ensuring annual servicing is carried out to properties.</p> <p><b><u>Short Cycle Voids – Target 30 days</u></b></p> <p>Dec 2023 – No lets so far this year</p> <p><b><u>Tenancy checks- 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter target 7.5%</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Dec 2023 – 3.75%. Target not met</u></b></p> <p>No information was provided for the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter and the current level of checks is 3.75% below the current target.</p> <p><b><u>Complaints – Target 90%</u></b></p> <p><u>Dec 2023 – No information provided**</u></p> <p><b><u>Member enquiries – Target 90%</u></b></p> <p><u>Dec 2023 – No information provided**</u></p> <p><b><u>ASB – Target 95%</u></b></p> <p><u>Dec 2023 – No information provided**</u></p> <p><b><u>ASB Hate Crime – Target 95%</u></b></p> <p><u>Dec 2023 – No information provided**</u></p> <p><b><u>Committee Meetings quarterly</u></b></p> <p><u>Oct-Dec – No information provided**</u></p>	<p>New system (Zoho) will facilitate the collection of this information and phone calls will be made to ensure satisfaction with repairs is captured.</p> <p>This will be provided in the future as the gas servicing contractor provides it.</p> <p>No voids</p> <p>Visits will be carried out to improve the target during the remainder of the year.</p> <p>Although no information was provided for the December digest - 1 ongoing complaint and 1 closed – The new system (Zoho) will cover this and ensure information is captured.</p> <p>The RMOs complaint policy is being updated.</p> <p>ASB information will be provided in future</p> <p>Ditto</p> <p>Confirmation will be provided in the future.</p>		
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MONTHLY LIAISON MEETING NOTES

Operational Issues & Points of note	<p><b>Updates on FRA actions</b> CCRMO have 55 deficiencies listed on the FRA report for Dec 2023. There are some concerns relating to the type of deficiencies raised on Rapid and CCRMO should review the listing.</p> <p><b>Estate walkabout</b> NE requested to be invited to estate walkabouts</p> <p><b>Damp and mould</b> CCRMO to ensure they have an effective plan to deal with and are responsive to reports of damp and mould by residents.</p> <p><b>Disrepair cases</b> <u>Harfleur Court</u> RMO have received communication from Legal Services</p> <p><u>Fontenoy Hse</u> RMO to confirm to solicitors whether they want to engage them to defend the case or engage their own legal representative.</p> <p><b>Residents Meeting</b> Response to the request for a residents meeting is outstanding</p>	<p>CCRMO will review the cases on Rapid and respond accordingly</p> <p>NE will be invited.</p> <p>Work is being carried out on this including asking residents to register damp and mould issues so the RMO can tackle this.</p> <p>Research has been conducted into damp and mould to enable the RMO to be better informed and able to respond and tackle issues</p> <p>RMO have received communication and reviewing the situation.</p> <p>RMO will respond to solicitors to confirm directions.</p> <p>RMO will be responding to the email received relating to a request for a residents meeting.</p>	<p>CCRMO to review the current FRA listing and identify any which are not the TMOs responsibility and ask for these to be reallocated. NE to provide PS with a copy of the listing for CCRMO.</p> <p>Peter to invite NE to next estate walkabout</p>	
Governance	<p><b>Board meetings</b> The Board meetings are held face to face and online.</p> <p><b>Board Training</b></p>	<p>The minutes of Board meetings have been provided to the Client Team.</p> <p>Mandatory training has been approved and will be undertaken by Co-operatives UK.</p> <p>This will also include the facilitation of Board officer training.</p>		
Financial Management	<p><b>Budget for 2023/24</b> Provision of 2023-24 budget</p> <p><b>Annual accounts for 2022/23</b> Received and copy forwarded to Finance.</p> <p><b>2024/25 Budget</b></p>	<p>Budget provided to the TMO Client Team.</p> <p>2024-25 budget being worked on by the Board.</p>		

MONTHLY LIAISON MEETING NOTES

Community Engagement/Development Activities	Activities for 2024/25	The Board is reviewing this		
Issues with Residual (Council) Responsibilities	<b>Office refurbishment</b>	CCRMO would like to decorate the office and make some changes to the layout in the future	NE to find out from Facilities Management if there would be any issues with the office being decorated.	
Other Externally Funded Programmes on the Estate or affecting the TMO (e.g., LEAP)	Nothing noted.			



**Cottingham Close Administrative Division (office staff)**  
**Restructure Business Case**

**Key take-aways:**

1. **Current structure means:**
  - **single points of failure**
  - **always open to abuse**
  - **never be efficient**
2. **Working as a team = twice the value**
3. **Right structure = new opportunities**
4. **Better discipline = less chance for abuse**
5. **Cost neutral to run!**
6. **It's being proven...  
In action, in the office,  
right now!**

**Executive Summary**

The current organisational structure in place in the office team is not fit for purpose. It has multiple severe weaknesses inherent to the structure itself that we should be obliged to solve. It's possible to eliminate these issues by changing the way work is divided among the team and how it is managed through execution to create a collaborative, self-organising, resilient team with each competency covered by more than one person and the ability to allocate it's skills where they needed most without external direction. It's further possible to use this to create more interesting and varied working lives for the employees in the team with more ownership and choice in the work they are doing, while also increasing the flexibility with which we can employ team members



## **Cottingham Close Administrative Division (office staff)**

### **Restructure Business Case**

and opening up recruitment markets with lower competition levels for potentially higher skilled candidates.



# Cottington Close Administrative Division (office staff)

## Restructure Business Case

### The Problem: Current Structure and Weaknesses

The staff in the office are responsible for almost all of the administrative processing and communication necessary for the operation of the organisation.

The organisation was formed through a transfer of responsibilities and functions from Lambeth. This transfer was almost a 'copy and paste' operation. The Modular Management Agreement, which specifies these responsibilities, has supported this approach. However, this has resulted in a shoehorned version of a large organisation's service delivery approach being used where it isn't effective. This situation is similar to an independent clockmaker trying to use an assembly line to make his clocks.

The council is organised in a functional way, with teams delivering specific functions (say rent collection) which work together with other functional teams (like ASB handling, tenancy enforcement, and void management as examples) to provide the services for their residents. This model can be very effective and is more efficient if you have a large pool of workers and teams with plenty of redundancy built in. Another advantage of this is that it is similar to how many similar organisations (other councils and housing associations) deliver their services, which means recruitment can be simple as you are part of industry with similar if not standardised roles.

If you look at the current structure of the RMO office staff you see that something similar to this functional arrangement is sort of happening, except that due to the staff numbers being much smaller, those functional capabilities are consolidated into a small number of people, and all the benefits of the organisational approach vanish and instead we are left with weaknesses and inevitable issues.

Small organisations need a different approach. They need to focus on service delivery crafted to the customer and deliver value through customised quality. This allows the team to reliably deliver all the needed services in a more cottage-

like fashion. Returning to our clockmaker analogy, he needs to build a clock to meet his customer's needs from start to finish. He should do this one at a time, rather than building a dozen identical ones using a 'function' at a time. At his scale, it's more efficient to work on one clock at a time. This approach plays to his strengths, allowing him to provide more personalised and attentive service to his customers. A simple look at the functions of the housing officer will tell you that clearly there are issues going on

Let's look at a sample of the functions falling within each role:

#### *Housing Officer*

- Collections
- Tenancy management
  - sign-up
  - succession
  - termination
  - transfer
- Care and Support (shared)
- Legal notices and ASB
- Void Management
- Tenancy checks
- Reporting

This list is not exhaustive, but it's clear to see that this is a big job. It covers the range of potentially seven or eight separate teams in Lambeth. Let's compare with the resident engagement officer.

#### *Resident Engagement Officer*

- Events planning
- Parking, sheds income reconciliation
- Office general administrative duties
- Administration of rentals (parking and sheds)

As you can see the list is much shorter. Whilst this role has an element of soft skills impact, it isn't balanced with the scope and importance of the responsibilities of the Housing Officer Role. (Note that I refer here to the scope and importance not the level of effort required to do the job).

This imbalance is not reflected in the differences in pay of the two roles. Whilst they differ, they do not differ to the same degree as is proportionate to the impact of the role.

This structure has a few other very significant weaknesses to it:

#### 1. **No fault tolerance.**

If any member of staff is rendered unable to do

## Restructure Business Case

their job for more than a few days the organisation begins to fail operationally. There is no practical way for the other members of staff to step in and deliver the functions/services of the other. They are not trained in how to do so and there is no expectation to do so. It's not part of the job. Remember, a two week holiday means half the month's work not done, which is shown in the contract KPIs. Finding replacement staff on departure could in theory break the business altogether.

### 2. **One Speed Setting**

The organisation has one speed, and that is go. There is no capability to flex capabilities up or down to cope with changes in circumstances. Members of staff aren't working as a team, they are silos doing different and effectively independent jobs. Exceptional work flowing to one of the team has a direct impact of work of the functions that person holds with no way to choose which work suffers.

### 3. **Staff profiles are non-standard -Difficult Recruitment**

The titles of the roles are misleading. While they may sound standard, there are very few organisations in the country that run social housing at the scale of the RMO. You are reduced to a handful of smaller housing associations and other TMOs. The reason for this is the breadth of responsibility of the posts and the overload of housing officer role with all housing functions from the council from which they were inherited. This type of recruitment leads to an incestuous industry, where the same employees circulate around the same organisations. This means that these organisations rarely benefit from new, outside perspectives, fresh energy or innovation in how they operate. It means that hiring people who are already experienced in the role is very difficult, since candidates are either able to specialise more in larger organisations (often for better money) and so go there, are missing chunks of experience in the role anyway, or are only experienced in the public sector which has a reputation for lacklustre performance being the accepted norm.

### 4. **Nowhere to go (professional development very limited)**

Employees come onboard and once working for the company have nowhere to go but out again. The roles are unchanging and once the routine is

learnt there is little to nothing more that can be done. This leads to boredom and disinterest which would only become worse as we automate away the most time consuming activities and manage processes with constrained workflows. Whilst it must be acknowledged that all employees are on a journey out of the business within few years of joining, our employees will leave bored and potentially unnecessarily early. Employees happy with the organisation but bored will be forced to leave to find something new to keep their workday stimulating.

### 5. **Wide Open to Abuse**

The current system is wide open to abuse. We need go no further than our own company archives to find an unhealthy level of corruption and power-mongering for such a small organisation. It seems to have run in all rungs from corrupt chairs, abusive board members, malicious estate directors to even regular members of staff accused of bullying. The siloed structure affords individuals the temptation and potential cover to do harm before it's seen, and the power structure collects authority at the top which led to a culture where staff don't question senior decision making, and mistrust is the main currency between different parts of the organisation. The only way for this to change is for there to be transparency of decision making, demonstrating it to be data and policy driven, not personality driven.

## Options

These problems are fundamental to the nature of the organisational structure. They cannot be solved without changing it.

### Option 1: Leave things unchanged

The RMO is thirty years old and the structure has been largely the same since the start. It's a fair argument that the system has managed to work all this time and that the weaknesses are just to be accepted and part of the nature of the organisation. So far it has survived, even if there were probably costs and limitations associated with this structure.

The argument to leave things the same calls to a perception of stability and familiarity, and removes the need to explain more widely to those who may not understand or want to understand the difficulties it creates in operation.

### Option 2: Distribute the work more evenly





# Cottingham Close Administrative Division (office staff)

## Restructure Business Case

This would see us redefine the roles in the office to be more even in weight while still retaining the clear distinction between each role. This addresses the issues around disproportionate impact of the roles, and perhaps makes things a bit fairer, but it doesn't really help many of the other points. It would also increase costs since the two roles would require a similar pay (without really offering much more in output).

It doesn't really change the recruitment position.

### **Option 3: Abandon the current roles altogether for something more flexible, collaborative and accessible**

If we start with an analysis of the services delivered by the office team as a whole it's possible to see that, for the most part, they are administrative in nature, and mostly follow prescribed processes with little deviation necessary. They breakdown into a core set of capabilities for all staff and then a bunch of modular units of capability built on top of that. Even the manager's position, for the most part, can be seen in this way.

#### *Core Capability:*

Administration and process execution to detail.  
Customer Service Management  
Communication Delivery

#### *Modular Capabilities (non-exhaustive):*

Events Management and Planning  
Tenancy Management.  
Tenancy Enforcement  
Rental Administration  
Resident Welfare Support  
Vulnerable Resident Support  
Etc, Etc, Etc.

Many of these modular capabilities require an awareness of the associated regulations/laws and sensitivities in their execution, but are pretty much all simple processes which can be readily documented and further supported by robust digital implementation (much of which is already expected as part of modernisation).

Whether we choose to recognise it or not, in the current situation we already need to train new starters on most of the competencies in those roles as few new candidates would have experience in the breadth of the current roles. We also need to acknowledge that we currently have no framework for this training at all. A legally dubious and ethically irresponsible situation to say the least. Both of the most recent occupants of the current roles had no meaningful training upon joining, and in the housing officer case had very limited direct experience. Contrary to what

you might assume, this role training is not provided by the Council (they are unable and unwilling to provide such training, and will only signpost us to organisations that we can contract for it or ask for as kindness). This means that we have a task ahead to design and implement suitable training in most of these functions anyway. (Even borrowing some elements of training from another RMO, should they be prepared to give it to us without charging considerably, and should we trust it given the previous experience with using other RMOs as service providers, we are still left with the same basic premise of organising it for our case and delivering it.

### **Reorganisation Proposal**

I propose that we setup the roles to deliberately eliminate the weaknesses outlined above, and we do so as follows:

We create a single new role:

Housing and Community Bureau Officer

This post would look for the following skills as their core competencies:

- Administrative capabilities (organisation, scheduling, documentation, logistics, excellent literacy and numeracy).
- Customer Service (either directly or in the delivery of services to customers where they are exposed and impacted by customer response).
- Flexibility, a background of varied employment and enthusiasm for delivering quality and value.

We would obviously provide training on our version of these core skills, but the focus when hiring this role would be candidates experience in these areas.

The roles have a base salary level set somewhere around or at the London Living Wage Minimum.

The rest of the roles are all modular with the training and assessment for each module given that person certified competency in that area. Employees would share the modules out with the expectation that the work is shared out between the employees. However, can have some flexibility in what they are doing on an ongoing basis with the expectation that every module would end up shared and covered by at least two people.

Whilst it's not possible to be certain at this stage, it's reasonable to suggest that the manager's role may shrink with good process implementation supported by good IT which might allow some combination of either that role

# Cottingham Close Administrative Division (office staff)

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becoming part time, or of the management responsibilities becoming part of the modular arrangement and being something one of officers can take on in parts or whole (perhaps introducing a senior version of the grade for accountability) which would allow the recruitment budget to extend to another third officer, or at least a part time third officer, increasing our forces at the front line. Should this leave a gap in the project management side of the organisation (traditionally a huge weakness in the organisation), we could look to augment that with part time project management expertise in a similar manner to how we bring in bookkeeping (projects in the RMO are very simple affairs) in a role I'll call "estate co-ordinator" but the title is irrelevant. However, given the simplicity of the projects at work here, I tend to think that again with good systems support it's likely that grooming of the projects managed in a well setup system could be handled by the staff. It's just another form of administration.

Note a distinct advantage of this model is the huge increase in flexibility it allows the administrative team / housing and community bureau team. Its possible to make up the staff from a sensible combination of part time and full time roles which can be flexibly engaged and organised, which has the effect of opening the recruitment panel to a large number of potential backgrounds as the main foundation skills for the role are no longer tied to experience in a local authority or in the use of a particular IT system.

I am thinking particularly of the following types of scenarios:

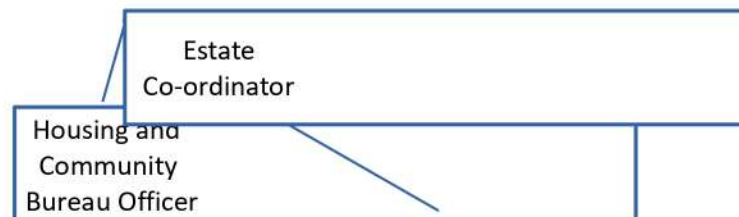
- mothers/fathers (maybe professional, highly skilled) returning to work now children are all at school after taking a break who can't operate a full day in their family arrangement.
- Older members of the workforce of retirees with significant experience and skill who aren't looking to work full time but want challenge in work.
- Capable younger people who's relative lack of experience prevents them breaking into the job market and gaining experience.
- Those with disabilities or other challenges for whom a full time role is not viable.

These types of individuals could lead to us "punching above our weight" in terms of professional capability if we recruit the right individuals.

Here is one example of a *possible* structure inspired by the current makeup of staff in the office. This incarnation of the structure sees a reduced Estate Director role being split

between the Senior Housing and Community Bureau Officer role for day to day responsibility (the Senior designation recognising the responsibility taken on), and part-time estate co-ordinator that takes care of overseeing and keeping tidy the project management within the organisation. There is one other additional full time Housing and Community Bureau Officer, and a part time officer taking up the slack.

Sn Housing and Community Bureau Officer



Variations depend on circumstance, but this model results in the complete removal of single points of failure for every competency (against the current guaranteed single point of failure for every competency), allows the delivery of at least 100% more effort (more depending on the part-timer's arrangements) to any given competency at any one time if needed and means each officer has, in principle, the opportunity to do diverse and varied work each week compared to last, and each year compared to last.

This is just one possible arrangement and there would be flexibility for things to change (probably managed on an annual basis) so that employees could take on fresh challenges, drop or de-emphasis tasks they have become bored with, and keep from becoming stale in their role. This organisational structure is resilient to incidents that remove a member of staff from the organisation unexpectedly as there is redundancy of all areas of responsibility (ensured each year at change around time) and allows the flexing of

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resources to where emphasis is needed should circumstances or demand change. In short, these people would be working together as a high performing, mostly self-organising team to deliver services to residents and customers.

### Financial Evaluation

The aim is for this to be **largely cost neutral** excluding the cost of transformation. The principle upon which it's based is the redistribution of the additional compensation that would have been going to the Housing Officer (and potentially the Estate Director/Manager) being split among the officers who are now all sharing the workload equally.

### Big Picture: implementation and challenges

Fundamentally employees of the RMO need to be one two basic types: *infrastructure facilitation* (broadly speaking – the grounds team) or *administrative facilitation* (broadly speaking the office team). The role of all RMO employees is ultimately to facilitate service delivery to our residents and customers. Some do that by working with infrastructure and some through administration.

The source of truth for the bare minimum services that must be delivered is the Modular Management Agreement with Lambeth Council. Here is the basic structure of the agreement:

1. Corporate Governance
2. Repairs, Maintenance and Service Delivery
3. Rents (including Tenant Service Charges)
4. Leaseholder and Freeholder Service Charges
5. Financial Management
6. Tenancy Management
7. Relationship with the Landlord (Client team and wider Lambeth)
8. Performance, Monitoring and Reviewing of Standards

Colours have been used to break the elements down:

Items in this colour are common to both infrastructure and administrative facilitation (although it's likely the balance will be weighted differently for different item).

Items in this colour are for administrative facilitation.

Items in this colour are for infrastructure facilitation.

In addition to the services defined within the MMA are the value add services that are provided above MMA minimum to support the community and residents in ways that make sense to do and are practical to deliver (things such as community gardening, community events and care and support activities to vulnerable residents).

It is from this set and the job descriptions that we can pull information to create the list of modules that make up the running of our RMO.

**Challenge:** Defining the modules, ensuring they are workable together in various combinations, the constraints on combining them and putting that into a workable system. This is a fair bit of analysis and administration work.

**Answer:** This would normally be very difficult, but the staff are having to learn and share most of their skills with each other at the moment to keep the RMO running. It's going very well, and it places them in a position of having all this information fresh in their minds and perfectly placed to say how it should be organised.

**Challenge:** We need to create training packages with tests for each module. These packages need to be loaded onto a Learning Management System (LMS). This would allow staff members to train themselves as much as possible, with support from others. There would also be a need for ongoing maintenance of this learning resource.

**Answer:** Again, the staff are going through a variation on this process as we speak, and it's all new and interesting to them. Rahatul left us with an excellent embryonic set of training packages with instructional videos and guides, showing how much one person can generate in a short time. Again, now is the time to set this in motion with a good chance of success.

**Challenge:** Persuading staff that this approach is correct, in some cases given it's going to be harder than their previous role.

**Answer:** Due to the weaknesses of the old way of doing things, the staff have all had to adapt, muck in and learn how to do bits of each other's roles. So far this has been very successful, and we have improved our ability to track and manage our workload as well as interoperability in the team.

**Challenge:** Communicating this to the residents, Lambeth and the wider public in ways they can understand, and facilitate a clear understanding of how things work at any time going forward.

**Answer:** Residents need confidence in the processes and the systems and IT we use to underpin them, such they do not

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fear issues going missing or complaints being lost. So long as those systems clearly identify who has competence to discharge the request they have made confidence will be better than it is now. Through clear and transparent information given on our website about who can do what and when we will be able to provide people with better clarity on the situation in the office and therefore better confidence.

### Modules:

Each module should have a common structure defining the outcomes it creates in the services delivered to residents, customers or to the society (for corporate governance items)

We should be able to create a manifest for each module that is a list of the tasks in all the processes that let you achieve all the outcomes that you would want to do in the world of that module.

For example: a module might be void management. This module would provide a list of the outcomes that someone competent in it can create for the estate. In this case that might be:

- Ensure that properties on the estate are always let in a good and serviceable condition to new tenants.

It would contain definitions of the processes that can be used in that aim:

- Void assessment process
- Long cycle void process
- Short cycle void process

It would contain for each process a breakdown of the tasks and incidental knowledge and considerations necessary for that task and guidance on how to perform it.

These processes are matched by workflows held on the IT system and manage the execution of the processes and support the officer in their decisions, record-keeping, and actions.

### What might the modules be?

The exact list will be determined by the staff in currently working on them cross referenced against the MMA, and checked by management, the board, and ultimately the residents. However, for example here is a list of what some of the modules might be.

#### *Collections (Rent and Service Charges)*

- Check monthly arrears report

- Identify those in arrears
- Communicate and request payment
- Monitor
- Payment plans

#### *Tenancy Management*

- Refunds
- Rent Statement
- Sign up
- Termination
- Succession
- Transfer / Application
- Joint Tenancies/ Additions
- Advice, support & referrals
- Notice
- Legal

#### *Responsive Maintenance*

- Queries
- Repairs
- Disrepair
- Gas Safety
- Communal Repairs

#### *Major Works*

#### *Replacement Repairs*

- Checks and Inspection
- Tenancy checks
- Welfare checks
- Preliminary maintenance checks

#### *Void Management*

- Void allocation
- Repairs
- Allocation

#### *Breaches*

- ASB
- Noise
- Damage
- Fly-tipping

#### *Invoices*

- Collect
- Check
- Send for authorisation

#### *Parking*

- Exemption List



## Cottington Close Administrative Division (office staff)

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- Verifying new vehicles / new space rental

#### **Creating a Resident/Customer Centric Organisation**

The overall result of this reorganisation, combined with a focus on residents' and customers' needs, will help the RMO become a more customer-centric organisation, with the end result being better outcomes for our residents and customers and so the organisation being better able to achieve it's purpose.

#### **Can this be done in real life?**

It's basically being done now in the office without the bureaucracy to support it. The staff are working collaboratively as a self-organising team taking on the work that was channelled only through Rahatul. Not only that, they are operating a more accountable system of work tracking. This was made possible by the comprehensive training given by Rahatul before he left and the large set of training videos and guides he made before his departure. So far, no task has been beyond the ability of the team to discharge. This could be seen a miniature trial, forced upon us by circumstance, of the model I outline above. The starting point has been marked for us and we have been given a head start should be choose to take it.