Property Services Update	
To:	Board
For:	Information
Date of Meeting	January 2025
Link to Business/Annual Plan	TBA
Report Author	Ali Imam, Head of Property Services

1. Summary

This report provides the Board with an update on JMB's Property Services department.

2. Recommendations

The Board should review the information provided in the update, note and agree on the priorities, and advise management of any feedback.

3. Building Safety

Building safety cases for Simla and Burwash Houses were successfully submitted to the BSR (Building Safety Regulator) in collaboration with London Borough of Southwark (LBS)'s Building Safety team. However, the process was significantly hampered by lack of sufficient time. Despite prior engagement with LBS regarding building safety matters, their response has been limited and lacked urgency towards building safety. We were not included in their initial prioritisation list, and subsequent requests for guidance and approval were met with delays. This significantly impacted our ability to prepare comprehensive safety cases within the extremely short timeframe imposed by the Building Safety Regulator (BSR).

LBS only contacted us a month after their initial notification from the BSR, leaving us with a mere two months to complete extensive investigations. This timeframe proved inadequate for conducting thorough assessments, including intrusive Type 4 surveys, digital building scans, comprehensive structural surveys, and obtaining fire engineering advice. Consequently, the submitted safety cases included an action plan to address outstanding items.

Key findings and actions included:

- **EICR Failure:** An Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) failure at Simla was noted, with an action plan for rectification by January 2025, estimated £7k
- **Communal Door Checks:** Quarterly checks of communal doors were implemented in accordance with the 2022 regulations.
- **Simla House Specifics:**
  - Safety railings were to be installed at the roof.
  - Minor cracks in parapet walls required investigation as part of a comprehensive structural assessment, scheduled for April/May 2025.

- **Scaffolding:** LBS initially requested full scaffolding around both buildings to address loose concrete. After negotiations, this was revised to include extended fencing, crash deck perimeters, and abseiling surveys to remove loose concrete. Abseiling surveys were completed in January 2025 at a cost of £13.5k.

- **Urgent Policies and Procedures:** Interim policies and procedures were issued as part of safety case, but significant gaps remain due to resource limitations and the need for independent review by an accredited professional as mandated by LBS.

The submitted action plan outlines numerous tasks, including significant updates to policies and procedures. The inclusion of Symington, Nash, and Peveril Houses in the next phase of building safety assessments may further increase the scope of work and associated costs. To address these challenges, we may need to explore the possibility of temporary resource support to expedite critical actions and ensure compliance.

4. Statutory Compliance

4.1 Gas Safety

The number of non-compliant properties remains a significant concern, with an average of 15-25 properties per month, identified this financial year. Currently, 18 properties are undergoing injunction proceedings through Devonshires, and six recently identified non-compliant properties are being referred.

Out-of-date certificates consistently feature in discussions at OCO contract meetings. A previous request for an additional £36k to enhance OCO call handling capabilities was included in the budget but not approved due to OCO's performance and code of conduct concerns. Furthermore, there is a high likelihood that OCO will utilise these funds to support other client services.

The OCO contract is in its final year with a 2.7% uplift applied. A significant gap exists in our current policies and procedures, hindering our ability to address issues promptly. We will expedite the development of these policies in Q4, alongside a critical review by an independent consultant.

4.2 Legionella

The Building Safety Regulator (BSR) review triggered a significant shift in LBS's approach to building safety. This led to LBS engaging a large number of consultants to address widespread compliance concerns across the borough.

A critical issue arising from this review was the discovery that LBS had not been charging LMJMB for Legionella testing services. LBS subsequently issued a notice ceasing their testing operations and informing us that we are now responsible for self-funding these activities.

This presents immediate challenges, particularly for properties listed in Appendix 01, where outdated testing requires scaffold access. The estimated cost for these works is £25k. To address this, we are commissioning the works to meet regulatory requirements bur will be proposing the prioritisation of the installation of safety rails and replacing existing domestic-grade ladders with commercial-grade ladders compatible with existing access hatches and storage holders in next financial year.

Furthermore, a significant gap exists in our current operations: the absence of a dedicated Legionella testing policy and procedure. The development of these critical documents is

scheduled for Q4, alongside an independent review. This shift in responsibility for Legionella testing has introduced unforeseen costs and operational complexities.

4.3 Lifts

Current Status:

- All passenger lifts are currently compliant with LOLER regulations with the exception of the Joyce Newman platform lifts, Burwash House lift, and the Greene House lift.
- Stair lifts, previously excluded from the inspection portfolio, are now being included in the inspection schedule.

Ongoing Maintenance:

- Several lifts are currently undergoing operational issues, repairs, and refurbishments, all progressing as per the standard operating procedures (BAU).

Upcoming Works:

- The Burwash House hoist requires rope replacement, estimated to cost £7.3k. This work is necessary for LOLER compliance and was not included in the initial lift maintenance budget.

Potential for Further Works:

- The upcoming 2024 Quality Audit may identify additional lift-related works.

Recent Completion:

- The lift at 1-10 Beeston House has been successfully refurbished and returned to service on Monday, 20th January 2025.

4.4 Electrical Safety

Currently, EICR compliance data is available for only one-third of our housing stock. While the overall compliance rate may be higher, a comprehensive assessment is currently impossible due to data limitations.

We are actively working to improve data exchange with our electrical contractor, Grouts, however, existing IT system limitations at both ends have presented challenges.
In the interim, we are prioritising critical electrical safety measures:

- **Addressing Known Issues:** We are proactively addressing electrical works identified through major works programs, building safety reviews, and emergency lighting inspections, particularly focusing on high-rise blocks.

- **Prioritising High-Risk Areas:** We are prioritising the remediation of known health and safety issues.

- **Improving Data Collection:** We are working to enhance data exchange with Grouts to gain a more complete understanding of EICR compliance across our entire housing stock.

The development of robust policies and procedures for EICR management, including independent review, is scheduled for Q4. This will be crucial for improving overall electrical safety compliance and mitigating future risks.

4.5 Fire Safety

There are currently 22 outstanding medium-risk fire safety actions issued to contractors that remain incomplete. These delays are attributed to several factors, including limited availability of competent contractors and the identification of unforeseen follow-up works not initially scoped within the initial visual surveys.
A significant development is Southwark Council's decision to cease conducting fire risk assessments for LMJMB, citing a potential conflict of interest in assessing their own compliance standards. Southwark has agreed to continue conducting FRAs until the end of the financial year. This shift in responsibility underscores the increased accountability and potential penalties associated with non-compliance under the evolving fire safety regulations. While fire risk assessments are currently up-to-date, our fire evacuation strategies require review and updating.
Concurrently, we are collaborating with Southwark's resident engagement team to develop individual building safety engagement strategies for each high-rise building. This collaborative effort recognizes the overlap between fire safety and broader resident engagement initiatives. Our work in this area has been commended by Southwark, demonstrating our proactive approach to resident engagement on building and fire safety matters.

4.6 Asbestos
Our asbestos management system currently exhibits several deficiencies. While the asbestos register is managed by Armstrong-York with reports accessible through a dedicated portal, there are significant gaps in the current system:

- **Data Integration**: There is limited integration between the asbestos register and other operational systems, such as job orders. This necessitates manual checks for asbestos considerations during maintenance and repair work, increasing the risk of inadvertent disturbance.
- **Lack of Audits:** Regular audits of the asbestos register and management system are currently absent.
- **Inadequate Training:** Asbestos awareness training, while recently reintroduced, has been absent for an extended period, despite the annual requirement for all relevant personnel.
- **Policy and Procedure:** A comprehensive asbestos management policy and procedure framework is currently lacking.

These deficiencies require action to ensure compliance with relevant regulations and mitigate the risks associated with asbestos exposure. The progress on developing a comprehensive asbestos management policy and implementing a robust training program has been slow due to limited resources but we have priotised key actions in this quarter on validating data for new system, creation of a policy and having an asbestos awareness training for key staff members.
Gas safety is monitored weekly by the Repairs Team and we work with our contractor OCO, to aim to maintain 100% compliance but it has not been the case since last financial year. We work on a 10month servicing cycle to reduce the risk of falling out of compliance. We hold monthly contract meetings with OCO to review performance and ensure the contract is delivering to expectations.

We employ Phoenix Compliance Management (PCM) to provide expert advice to JMB on gas compliance. PCM attend and minute all contract meetings, provide JMB with a monthly sample audit of LGSRs and provide JMB with technical advice on decisions to replace boilers.

4.7 Environmental Health Notices
None

5. Repairs

5.1 Current Repairs operations
The DLO workforce has been operating below full capacity due to high staff turnover and challenges in recruiting and retaining competent operatives. Significant IT issues with the current systems have been formally escalated to the highest level at Active H. Furthermore, a backlog of open jobs has accumulated, and the ability to effectively track and report on live jobs has been severely limited.

The utilisation of external contractors has been intermittently disrupted due to inconsistencies in contractor compliance with essential requirements such as DBS checks, competency assessments, and insurance coverage. While some contractor services have resumed, these challenges continue to impact service delivery.

Overall we have seen no sgnifcant adverserial impact in day to day and out of hours job and staff have been covering each other to sustain an acceptable service delivery.

5.2 Repairs Review
LMJMB has engaged Just Housing to undertake a comprehensive review of our Repairs & Maintenance service delivery model. This review in ongoing, and it aims to identify areas for significant service delivery and financial improvements.
Key areas of focus for the Just Housing team include:

- **Service Delivery Enhancement:**
  - Working closely with LMJMB to optimise service delivery processes.
  - Improving communication and collaboration between the DLO and residents.
  - Enhancing customer satisfaction through improved responsiveness and service quality.

- **Financial Controls & Cost Optimisation:**
  - Streamlining material supply management to ensure value for money and the procurement of high-quality materials at competitive prices.
  - Implementing robust financial controls within the DLO to enhance efficiency and reduce costs.
  - Conducting thorough reviews of contractor performance and costs to ensure value for money and compliance with all relevant regulations.

- **DLO Workforce Optimisation:**
  - Enhancing the skills and competencies of DLO staff through targeted training and development programmes.
  - Improving staff performance through regular performance reviews and one-to-one meetings.
  - Optimising workforce deployment to ensure efficient service delivery.

- **Data Management & Technology:**
  - Resolving IT issues related to Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) to improve data capture and service delivery efficiency.
  - Enhancing data analysis to identify trends and areas for improvement.

- **Health & Safety:**
  - Conducting thorough asbestos assessments and ensuring all staff (internal and external) are adequately trained and equipped to work safely with asbestos-containing materials.
  - Implementing robust health and safety procedures, including Risk Assessments (RAMS) and COSHH assessments.
  - Reviewing and improving the management of hazardous materials, including appropriate storage and handling procedures.

- **Other Key Areas:**
  - Reviewing and optimising the current stores system.
  - Improving the accuracy and reconciliation of open orders and invoices.
  - Developing and implementing comprehensive policies and procedures for all aspects of repairs and maintenance service delivery.

This review is addressing some of the key issues at present but will continue to provide valuable insights and recommendations towards the end of financial year, to guide the ongoing improvement of our Repairs & Maintenance services.

5.3 Voids

Voids management has demonstrated significant improvement since the appointment of the new Contracts Coordinator. Key achievements include reduced turnaround times, successful reletting of long-term voids, improved document and key management, and enhanced collaboration with multiple contractors.

While the number of voids fluctuates, a positive example is the recent reduction from eight voids before Christmas to the current two. This includes the successful reletting of one property that presented significant long-term metering challenges.

The current void properties are:

- **60 Whites Ground Estate:** Void works have been recently completed. A post-inspection revealed no issues, and the property is ready for immediate reletting within the next week.
- **103 Elim Estate:** This void has been impacted by a prolonged drying-out period due to a previous leak from the property above. The installation of a dehumidifier over the holiday period has successfully resolved the issue. Works are expected to be completed and the property made ready for marketing by the end of next week.

5.4 Disrepair

While the current number of live disrepair cases stands at 32, these cases are being actively managed through weekly meetings and ongoing legal support.

A positive trend is observed with a reduction in overall settlement amounts and an increase in instances where residents are willing to settle for works only, without seeking financial compensation.

However, we are experiencing an increase in unsolicited approaches from solicitors and surveyors. These individuals often attempt to gain access to properties by falsely claiming to be from LMJMB or Southwark Council, encouraging residents to appoint them for disrepair claims. We have also observed evidence of leaflets distributed around notice boards and doors promoting these services.

To address this issue, we will be including a warning about these deceptive practices in our upcoming newsletter.

6. Asset Management

The Stock Condition Survey programme has encountered challenges due to IT system limitations, necessitating the use of a temporary digital file system. Once resolved, these surveys will be integrated into Active H. To date, 550 surveys have been completed.

Gaining access to properties for surveys remains a significant obstacle, with 3 attempts made to access some properties without success. To address this, letters are being sent to residents offering them the opportunity to schedule convenient appointment times.

While access issues are common in the housing sector, we are implementing strategies to maximise survey completion rates. This includes:

- **Prioritising access:** Exhausting all available options to gain access to properties.
- **Ensuring representative data:** Collecting data from a reasonable sample of each property archetype to enable accurate extrapolation for the remaining properties.

This approach aims to ensure that the Stock Condition Survey programme progresses effectively, despite the challenges presented by access restrictions.

7. Major Works

Major works update summary can be found in Appendix 02.

14. Conclusion

Resident safety is a key area for housing providers since the Grenfell incident in 2017. Members should note that although actions are being taken to achieve compliance in all the key areas, there is still a lot of room for improvement. JMB must work together with the Council to have a robust system in place to improve compliance despite the challenges it faces.

Appendix 01, Legionella tests overdue, require scaffolding

To: Carry out the installation of temporary scaffolding access to each of the below sites to enable safe means of access to carry out legionella risk assessment site surveys:

For the lump sum cost of £25,072.50

Quotation Breakdown:

#	Site Name	Address	Value
1	Decima Street 46-66	Bermondsey, Leathermarket, SE1 4DA	£1,890.00
2	Middleton House 1-25	Burbage Close, Leathermarket, SE1 4EP	£1,890.00
3	Rothsay Street 1-23	Bermondsey, Leathermarket, SE1 4QN	£1,890.00
4	Rothsay Street 24-51	Bermondsey, Leathermarket, SE1 4QN	£1,890.00
5	Rothsay Street 67-78	Bermondsey, Leathermarket, SE1 4QN	£1,890.00
6	Rothsay Street 90-107	Bermondsey, Leathermarket, SE1 4QN	£1,890.00
7	Rothsay Street 108-123	Bermondsey, Leathermarket, SE1 4QN	£1,890.00
8	Weston Street 42-72	Bermondsey, Leathermarket, SE1 4DA	£1,890.00
9	Weston Street 88-101	Bermondsey, Leathermarket, SE1 4DA	£1,890.00
10	White Grounds 23-57	Bermondsey, Leathermarket, SE1 3JZ	£1,890.00
11	White Grounds 58-64	Bermondsey, Leathermarket, SE1 3JZ	£1,890.00
12	Tanner House	Bermondsey, Leathermarket, SE1 3LL	£1,890.00
13	Prelims/Project Management	N/A	£2,392.50
		TOTAL	**£25,072.50**

Appendix 02 - Major works summary

Programme/Block	Programme	Status	Update
Estate Amenity and block lighting	Estate lighting	Works on Site	The new estate lighting is almost complete, we're just waiting for the new LED lighting for the block name signs which are made to order.
BEESTON HOUSE 1-20 (CONS)	Lift refurbishment x 2no	Works on Site	Progress at Beeston House(1-10) is moving forward. The test engineer has visited the site and provided the engineers with a list of snagging items to address over the next couple of days. Additionally, a component for the door running gear is scheduled to be delivered to the site to resolve an issue encountered during the setup process. If all goes well the lift should be in service early/mid next week.
Lawson Estate High Rise	Electrical Testing in dwellings	Works on Site	Grouts is currently engaged in the process of electrical testing and executing Category 1 repairs in the rented units.
	Smoke Detection Upgrades	Works on Site	Grouts will be in contact with Nashe and Symington rented residents to schedule in their smoke detection upgrade
	Lift refurbishment (Jonson, Green, Lyle)	Consultation	All six tenders were received in December, and we subsequently received the tender report from the consultant. We are currently finalising leasehold consultant, with a planned on-site start date of April 2025. Please note that the Green House lift has not experienced any recent breakdowns.
SYMINGTON HOUSE 1-105 (CONS)	Electrical Testing in Dwellings (Rented units only 78no)	Works on Site	Grouts is currently engaged in the process of electrical testing and executing Category 1 repairs in the rented units.
	Lateral mains renewal/relocation	Planned to start onsite 2025-26	We are currently targeting a project start date between July and September 2025
	Smoke Detection Upgrades	Works on Site	Grouts will be in contact with Nashe and Symington rented residents to schedule in their smoke detection upgrade

	Major Works- Symington Security - Door entry	Planned to start onsite Qtr4	The project team met on Thursday, November 28th. The consultant is currently finalising the procurement documents. However, due to the size and scope of Symington, it may be necessary to obtain building safety approval via a building safety case. If this approval is required, it could potentially delay the planned on-site start date of between March and May 2025.
Kipling Low Rise	Smoke Detection Upgrades	Planned to start onsite February 2025	Grouts will commence the new smoke detection work on the low-rise blocks at Lawson in February. The JMB will send a letter to residents confirming this next week commencing 13 Jan
	FairHeat Communal Heating Optimization Study (Funded)	Applying for funding	Bartholomew/Cardinla Bourne: Applications have been submitted and all clarification requests have been addressed. We are currently awaiting a decision from GEMSERV regarding the outcome of our funding bid.
	Lift refurbishment (Jonson, Green, Lyle)	Consultation	All six tenders were received in December, and we subsequently received the tender report from the consultant. We are currently finalising leasehold consultant, with a planned on-site start date of April 2025. Please note that the Green House lift has not experienced any recent breakdowns.
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Simla & Burwash	Programme	Planned to start onsite Janaury 2026	Martech recently completed an external safety survey of the building, including hammer tapping of the façades to identify and remove any loose or spalling concrete. This proactive measure was taken to mitigate the risk of falling debris and ensure the safety of pedestrians
	Roof Replacement Programme		

	Fire Doors and compartmentation Structural Works Cyclical Decorations Structural Works		and occupants until the Joint Management Body (JMB) is able to commission and undertake the necessary extensive remedial works. This project will be expedited once the consultant framework has been procured.
Peverill House	EICR remedial LD2 (Hard wired smoke detection) DEICR (Domestic Electrical Installation Condition Report) External Decs Bathroom Renewal Kitchen Renewal Lift Refurbishment	Planned to start onsite July 2026	hile the Peverill project also presents significant challenges and risk, JMB's current resource constraints necessitate a projected commencement date of mid-to-late 2026. The project's timeline will be accelerated upon the successful procurement of a suitable consultant framework.