



## **MANSFORD ESTATE** **HOUSING CHOICE PRE-BALLOT CONSULTATION**

**Housing Management**  
**5<sup>th</sup> August 2004**

### **Local Housing Office**

#### **❖ Office within walking distance**

The aim of THCH is to have a housing office within walking distance of all our homes. The Mansford Estate will be managed by our Bethnal Green Local Community Housing Office, the details of which are:

**Bethnal Green Community Housing Office**  
**10 Minerva Street, London E2 9EH**  
**Telephone – 0207 749 9830**  
**Manager – Elaine De Diego**  
**Community Housing Officer – Maureen Bell**  
**Community Housing Officer – Karol Namakambo**  
**Senior Community Housing Officer – Glorin Crawford**  
**Housing Support Officer – Bilkis Khanom**

**Office Opening Times**  
**Monday to Friday – 10am to 1pm**  
**Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday – 2 to 4pm**

#### **❖ All services from one location**

You will only have to go to one office to deal with all your housing matters. Officers are fully trained and generic so are able to deal with repairs, rent arrears, lettings, service charges, cleaning, parking and right to buy.

#### **❖ Diverse work force**

THCH aim to have a workforce that reflects the community it serves. We therefore have bi-lingual staff in all our offices.

#### **❖ Decisions made locally**

Each Office has an Area Resident Board, known as the ARB. At this meeting residents are able to discuss local issues and make decisions on how services in their area are provided. In our

existing areas residents have had input into estate cleaning rotas, parking control, security grills, overcrowding and harassment policies.

## **Cleaning**

### ❖ **Dedicated cleaning operatives**

Each team of two cleaners are responsible for a specific area. The Mansford Estate will have a team of cleaners. Residents will get to know the cleaners so that a good relationship is formed. The cleaning rota that the cleaners will work to, will be discussed with residents at the Area Resident Board.

### ❖ **Fully trained staff**

All estate cleaners receive training that enables them to carry out their duties safely, efficiently and responsibly. The training includes health and safety at work, handling of sharps and needles and ground maintenance.

### ❖ **Specialist equipment**

Estate cleaners have access to equipment that enable them to keep the estates in good condition. Equipment such as mechanical sweepers and jetting machines are used regularly.

### ❖ **Bulk rubbish removal**

THCH recognises that although LBTH offer a free service to remove unwanted pieces of furniture, items are still being dumped on estates. To combat this, THCH actively seeks out perpetrators and where possible take legal action. In order to gain evidence against rubbish dumpers, the estate cleaners search dumped household rubbish for proof of the perpetrator.

## **Repairs & The Handy Person Service**

### ❖ **Service Controlled by Local Office**

Every area has its own Handy Person who carries out most of the local repairs. This worker has a van so is mobile and can transport tools and equipment easily. To access the service all residents have to do is call into the office or call by phone. Bob Hall is the Handy Person for Bethnal Green and he will be carrying out most of the repairs for THCH on the Mansford Estate should the ballot be positive.

### ❖ **Fully Trained Operatives**

All operatives are skilled plumbers, carpenters, electricians and decorators. They also receive regular refresher courses to keep them fully up to date with new ideas and practices.

### ❖ **Knowledge of the Area**

As the operatives are locally based, no time is wasted locating your home. Also the operatives know where the main services i.e. where the main stopcocks and electricity main boards are located in cases of emergencies.

### ❖ **Planned Maintenance**

THCH believes that once the refurbishment works are completed it is important to continue the maintenance of your homes. So a significant amount is set aside for each property to replace or renew items such as kitchens on a regular basis, and also to repaint all the blocks every five years. We also carry out an internal decoration programme for OAP's, through our Handy Person service.

## ❖ **Post Inspections**

To ensure the quality of our repairs THCH will enforce a vigorous post inspection regime.

## ❖ **Repair Timescales**

THCH has prioritised repairs in partnership with the Area resident Boards in the following order and commits to respond and complete the work in the following timescale:

### **Emergencies Respond within 2 hours and complete work with 24 hours**

Examples include

- Securing premises following break-ins, vandalism, racial attacks or domestic violence
- Blocked drains or soil pipes
- Total loss of water
- Total loss of space or water heating
- Toilet not flushing where there is no other working toilet in the property
- Total loss of electric power
- Storm, accident or flood damage to the structure
- Lifts not working

### **Urgent repairs Respond with 2 working days and complete works within 3 working days**

Examples include:

- Partial loss of electrical power
- Partial loss of water supply
- Blocked sink, bath or wash hand basin
- Toilet not flushing where there is another working toilet
- Communal TV aerials

### **Priority repairs Respond within 5 working days and complete work within 7 working days**

Examples include:

- Minor leaks to internal water services
- Defective individual power points
- Roof leaks
- Broken extractor fan in kitchen or bathroom

### **Normal repairs Respond within 10 working days and complete within 20 working days**

Examples include:

- Repairs to blocked and leaking gutters and rainwater pipes
- Minor repairs to external doors, windows and roofs
- Repairs to external rendering, pointing and air vents etc.
- Repairs to garages, store sheds, locking posts and fences.

# **Anti-social Behaviour**

## ❖ **Vigorous policy and procedure**

THCH takes anti social behaviour seriously and makes every effort to resolve issues quickly. Officers are trained on the appropriate action that can be taken and enforce our policy rigorously.

## ❖ **Mediation Service**

Disputes between neighbours are not uncommon. The most common reason for disputes is noise nuisance. THCH is able to use trained mediators to bring about a resolution to such disputes.

## ❖ **Redesign communal areas**

THCH's experience has shown that some communal areas are more likely to attract anti social behaviour. Together with residents, THCH will redesign areas to reduce such behaviour.

## ❖ **Youth groups**

In order to divert youths away from 'hanging around' with little to do, THCH have formed links with various groups that offer youths activities and guidance.

## ❖ **Patrols on all estates**

THCH, in partnership with the Borough, have estate patrols that start at 4pm and end at 11pm. The Wardens travel between estates in a vehicle provided by THCH. There is also a help line number available in case of emergencies.

# **Complaints**

The THCH Complaints procedure is very simple, it is advertised in all THCH Offices in our annual report, and articles on the complaints procedure frequently appear in our monthly newsletter "Update". The following sets out the current complaints procedure

## ❖ **Stage 1**

Formal Complaint made by Resident, former Resident or Applicant on the official form or simply in writing. The complaint is acknowledged and the appropriate Director seeks to respond within 15 working days. So far this year all complaints have been responded to within target.

## ❖ **Stage 2**

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response given, he or she can appeal in writing within 15 working days. This is then handled by the Chief Executive (or appointed deputy in the absence of the Chief Executive) personally and he checks facts/action taken and decides whether or not to uphold the complaint or not. So far this year, we have had only one stage 2 complaint, which the Chief Executive upheld.

## ❖ **Stage 3**

If the Chief Executive, or appointed deputy, does not resolve the issue to the complainants satisfaction, she or he will be able to ask within 15 working days for the complaint to be considered by a Sub Committee of the THCH Board. This Sub Committee will be convened once

a month to ensure all complaints are heard in a timely manner. The complainant will have a right to present their case to the Sub Committee. The Sub Committee will be minuted and the decision of this Sub Committee will be notified to the complainant within 3 working days of the meeting. If the Sub Committee is unable to make a decision and requires additional information the complainant will be advised of this.

#### ❖ **Stage 4**

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the Formal Complaints Procedure, they may take the complaint to: - The Independent Housing Ombudsman Service, Norman House, 105 - 109 Strand, London WC2R OAA. (Tel. 020 7836 3630).

## **Rents**

#### ❖ **Collecting Rent**

THCH is committed to collecting all the rent due from all its tenants. We believe that prevention is better than cure. If the rent is not collected the repairs, maintenance and other services THCH is responsible for will be affected. THCH is aware that many of our tenants are on low incomes and may, from time to time, have difficulty in making regular rent payments. In these circumstances THCH will offer every possible assistance in overcoming these difficulties to ensure the rent due is paid. This assistance will include advice on benefits and arranging for arrears to be paid off in regular weekly sums. Only when this assistance has been offered and failed will THCH consider taking legal action.

#### ❖ **Rent Advice**

THCH aims to offer its tenants every possible assistance in ensuring that their rent is paid when it is due, to this end THCH will:

- Advise tenants, when they sign up for their tenancies, of the importance of paying rents on time
- Provide tenants with regular, accurate information about their rent accounts
- Provide tenants with advice on whether they can claim Housing Benefit and encourage people in receipt of Housing Benefit to pay this directly to THCH
- Make available a number of convenient ways to pay rent

#### ❖ **Rent Payments**

Currently THCH has introduced swipe cards that are acceptable at Pay Point outlets and the Post Office free of charge. Rent can also be paid by standing order, direct debit or by cheque. Soon tenants will be able to pay by debit/credit card and also via the new THCH website. This will be [www.thch.org](http://www.thch.org), and a preview is available at <http://thch.jamkit.com/>.

## **Lettings**

#### ❖ **Tower Hamlets Common Housing Register**

THCH is part of what is called the "Tower Hamlets Common Housing Register". This means that the Council, Bethnal Green & Victoria Park HA, Poplar HARCA, Spitalfields HA and THCH have one system for dealing with those tenants who want a transfer. For THCH tenants it means that

they are not restricted to being only rehoused in areas where THCH has property, but they can be considered for rehousing in all areas of Tower Hamlets, under the “choice-based lettings system”.

### ❖ **What about my current transfer application?**

All existing transfers applications will be dealt with by THCH and the application dates will remain the same.

### ❖ **How does the Choice Based Lettings System work?**

Since 29th July 2002 the way homes are let under the Tower Hamlets Common Housing Register changed. Most homes that are available to let are advertised weekly in East End Life, the Council's free newspaper that is delivered to every home in the Borough. The details of each property are also available to be viewed at each of THCH's Community Housing Offices and the Council's One-Stop Shops. If you are interested in a vacant property, please use the coupon in East End Life, which can then be returned to THCH or the council. As well as this method, you can also bid on-line at:

[Www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/data/housing/data/choice-email/web\\_coupon.html](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/data/housing/data/choice-email/web_coupon.html)

### ❖ **Overcrowding**

THCH will negotiate with Tower Hamlets Council to allow THCH to operate an overcrowding strategy for all those Mansford Estate tenants on the transfer list as at the date of the ballot. Like the existing THCH overcrowding strategies (we have three, one for those who were overcrowded with the Council, and two more we have adopted in the last three years for those who have become overcrowded since) the new strategy for the Mansford Estate will operate in the same way i.e.:

- One offer of accommodation will be made regardless of property types and floor levels chosen (except where a medical assessment advises otherwise)
- Offers will be made in group and date order
- Offers will be withdrawn if rent accounts are not cleared by the time of the viewing
- A refusal of an offer or a knockthrough will count as a refusal of an offer
- Offers will have regard to areas of preference however offers may be made in any of the three THCH areas, as this is the only stock the scheme applies to
- If an offer is made through the Common Housing Register, this will also count as an offer under this strategy

At the time of the ballot THCH's commitment on the Overcrowding Strategy will be firmed up to state something like “THCH will make an offer to all overcrowded tenants on the transfer list within five years of the transfer”. In practice we know that most residents will receive their offer within the first year. If an offer is refused, then applications will just remain on the ordinary transfer list to await an offer, and applicants will not lose out on their current rights.