

CITY WEST HOMES - GETTING WORSE, NOT BETTER

It is now nearly 4 months since Westminster Conservatives decided, belatedly, to follow Labour's pre-election promise to scrap City West Homes. We warned that this would not be a 'quick-fix', such are the deep-seated problems which have rendered City West Homes a totally failing organisation.

But we did expect some small improvements. Sadly, as the 40 cases below demonstrate, City West Homes' performance has actually got worse, not better.

On top of the usual catalogue of botched repairs, phones not answered, emails ignored and other failures, we now have a major car-parking fiasco on Council estates all across Westminster. Residents bought parking permits in the expectation that those without permits will not be able to park on their estates. The opposite has turned out to be the case, with non-residents who have paid nothing parking all over, including on double yellow lines, clogging up the estate roads and blocking the path of emergency vehicles. There is no effective parking enforcement. City West Homes has failed totally.



Westminster Conservatives appear to have no 'plan of action' to deal with the depths to which City West Homes has sunk. Senior staff have left, interim managers have been brought in an attempt to 'trouble-shoot' solutions. But there is no sense of direction to City West Homes' and the City Council's efforts.

Too many tenants and leaseholders continue to receive a third-rate service. Basic service delivery remains a serious issue. Communications continue to be sub-standard. Consultation appears to be tokenistic. And political will looks paper-thin.

Labour Councillors welcomed the Council's U-turn in scrapping City West Homes. But simply borrowing Labour's ideas will not fix the problem. The Council needs long-term political commitment to improve housing services for Westminster's 22,000 tenants and leaseholders.

Case Number 1

Longleat House

Tachbrook Ward

I am having more problems with CWH. The last issue I messaged you about was not resolved. I turned down their compensation offer. I tried several times to get a meeting to resolve this issue. I have heard nothing for 4 months.

Then this week my upstairs neighbour had problems with her shower resulting in water dripping onto my electrics. My Neighbour is a private tenant the plumber her landlord employed to fix the Problem made my leak worse. I am now am in complete darkness as the leaks have blown out my electrics. This is the second night for me with no electricity

Last night around 1.00am an electrician came to supposedly secure my electrics with a plastic bag which I gave him to prevent more water getting in! I waited 3 hours for someone

to fix my electrics this evening no one came I phoned. And then was told it was too bigger job to be fixed this evening!

I am angry frustrated and very stressed, at the end of my tether basically. I need to be seriously compensated for this! Otherwise it's legal advice and going to court. It is affecting my work.

I do not want to be put in temporary accommodation again! I literally had to go to the pub this evening to charge my iPad and iPhone. While I was there, I got a phone call from an electrician to secure my electrics.

It is impossible to communicate with higher management at CWH. It's all about emails nothing in person. Nobody seemed to know what the other is doing. Total chaos. I really would like to talk to a somebody in person a councilour/MP/Higher management in CWH. Or all three together.

Case Number 2

Luxborough Tower

Marylebone High Street Ward

We wanted to let you know about another unacceptable service delivery problem from CWH.

After several years of working together with CWH on decommissioning the communal heating system that has come to end if its useful life, including exploring options, sounding out residents, surveying leaseholders and carrying out an official 'poll' of leaseholders and leaseholders accepting a change to the leases (as provision of communal heat is in the 88 leases), then waiting months and years for Tri-Borough services to complete the legal procedures, we then had to start from scratch with a new team, a totally new agenda and completely contradictory information provided we now find that rather than set up a monitoring system and a series of checks and structures in place to deal with any failures (like the university turning off our heating by mistake), CWH have found the simplest, easiest, most piece meal approach is to install a temporary boiler.

We see this as a failure on their behalf to properly manage the supply of heat and create a workable partnership with Westminster University and have any rapid response system in place when any problems arise. It's a far from satisfactory cop out. And to make matters worse, with no consultation at all with the LTRA who represent the majority of residents in Luxborough Tower have decided to install the temporary boiler in the front garden right as you walk up the path instead of housing it on the North east side where it's out of sight.

We raised a complaint as soon as we were informed on Thursday last week and our comments were ignored and work started on Monday. This is not OK and there is no one taking any responsibility and it makes a mockery of the residents' association and the hard work we have put in on behalf of all residents on the subject of heating and resident engagement

Case Number 3

Ingrebourne House

Church Street Ward

Half of Ingrebourne House (Church Street estate) have not had any heating this winter, it's been 6 weeks now. City West Homes are failing to identify and fix the issue. People, young and old are freezing. Please help.

Case Number 4

Denholme Road

Harrow Road Ward

We have had a very unfortunate experience with that body, which I would like to draw to your attention if I may? In April this year we had an offer accepted to purchase a flat in Denholme Road from City West, via their estate agent, City West Residential. When our offer was accepted we had our mortgage agreed and were told by City West that in order to proceed we must enter into a lockout agreement and transfer the sum of £5,000, ("as a guarantee that the Purchaser will exchange in the purchase of the Property no later than 28 working days of receiving draft papers -"the Lockout Period").

The problem is that City West, having received our funds, took a full five and a half months to get to the point whereby contacts could be exchanged. They took so long that we had to apply to our lender twice to have the mortgage offer extended. At the second time of asking for an extension, our lender decided to reappraise the offer, as the market had declined substantially in the five months we waited for City West. Our lender then said that due to market conditions, they were not prepared to lend at the level of the original offer, and reduced their offer in line with current property prices in the area.

Our solicitor informed City West of our lender's decision, but City West refused to enter into any negotiations with us to take into account what the lender was prepared to offer. City West are now insisting that they keep our £5,000, choosing their own interpretation of clause C of the agreement which states that our money should be returned should a lender refuse to lend.

They also put the property back on the market without any official termination of dealings with us, breaking the terms of the lockout agreement. Further, there was no way that we could have exchanged within 28 days of receiving the draft papers, as we didn't get the final papers for months.

We have acted in good faith throughout - we had our survey done promptly, our solicitor dealt with matters swiftly and she had to constantly chase City West. We were prepared to pay the agreed price in April when this was agreed, and never could have imagined that it would take City West until late September to get to the point of exchange. We have lost thousands of pounds in legal fees, survey etc, and do not feel that on top of this we should have to forfeit the £5,000 of the lockout agreement.

It is not our fault that the lender eventually refused to lend due to the decline in the market over the time City West spent kicking their heels. Further, it does not seem right that a body representing the citizens of Westminster and Westminster City Council should behave in a manner in which one would imagine some type of rogue landlord would.

Case Number 5

Warwick Avenue

Little Venice Ward

I'm sorry to have to write to you again regarding a flat in Warwick Avenue and City West Homes. My fellow freeholder and I have written to you about three years ago regarding Flat B and the non-occupancy by the tenant. We now have two further issues regarding this council owned lease.

The designated tenant of this property moved to a decant property in January 2018 so that

we could have repairs done from a previous small leak from the flat above and some damp repairs carried out. This work cost approximately £14000 of which £6000 was an insurance claim and the remaining £8000 shared between the freeholders and Westminster. This work was completed well before the end of March and there were several visits from our surveyor and City West Homes surveyor. This flat has still not been re-occupied by the tenant. When I last enquired in July the surveyor said that the flat was being fitted with disability aids. That was more than three months ago.

Since then, an intruder gained entry to this house and broke into Flat B on the ground floor and Flat A (leasehold property) in the basement. Although neither of the property doors was damaged, there was damage to the door frames on the inside of both flats. I rang the emergency repair team of City West and someone came out to secure the door of Flat B with two padlocks. Since then, over a month ago, I've heard nothing further from City West about this flat and no one from that organisation has been near the property. I put in an insurance claim for repair to these two flats. The insurers have finally agreed to pay for Flat A but are refusing to pay for Flat B as it has been vacant for so long.

I now have two issues with this property. Firstly, why should the freeholders have to pay to have this damage to the door frame repaired when City West have left the property vacant for so long and have not kept us informed of the situation? Our builders have quoted over £600 per flat. Secondly my other concern is that if this tenant doesn't return to the property is it eventually going to be sold off as happened with Flat A here which again was left empty for two and a half years before being sold to a property developer? If that's the case why have we all wasted £14000 on this flat which will then be ripped out again by another developer and let for some vast rent to private tenants. I believe that social housing in Westminster is at a premium. So why are flats in this house being left vacant for so long by City West? Flat B is a pretty decent flat so if the tenant doesn't want it why isn't it being let to someone else who needs a home?

The lack of named officers with direct phone lines and e mails for both leaseholders and freeholders is completely unhelpful in trying to run this property. I do hope that this issue will be addressed now that Westminster have taken back control of their housing.

Case Number 6

Blandford Estate

Bryanston & Dorset Square Ward

The Modern House parking gates have been broken again and I understand that Sodexho is the cause of the broken gates. What Blandford residents do not understand is that Sodexho park on the car park and also have constant heavy vehicles entering and leaving the car park, but they do **not** and have **not** ever contributed to the cost of the gates or indeed the maintenance of the gates.

Whilst I and other residents are happy to pay our share of estate costs, we do not understand why Sodexho which is a business does not contribute to the parking or maintenance of the car park especially when the gates are frequently broken because of heavy vehicle use! This problem is historical and goes back years however, we cannot ever get satisfactory answers.

I would be grateful if you could ask the questions below and ascertain the answers that have been asked many times but CWH's will not give an answer.

- Why does Sodexho not have a Service Agreement for car park gate maintenance?
- Do Sodexho personnel pay for car parking spaces?

- Why are large heavy vehicles allowed access to the park?

This issue is frankly unacceptable and as far as I am concerned close to extortion.

Case Number 7

Westbourne Terrace

Bayswater Ward

26th August – Downstairs neighbour reported leak in their bedroom. Invited neighbour to check under my kitchen sink. We both agreed there was no leakage. Seemingly neighbour was advised by City West Homes that because it was a Bank Holiday, there were no staff available.

27th August approx. 3.15pm – Operative from Morgan-Sindall attended property stating a leak had been reported. I showed him cupboard under sink, no leak. He then asked to see room located in Chilworth Street. On entering the room, water was pouring down from a newly formed crack in the ceiling, down the wall into the electrical socket. Everything (furniture, books, etc.) under said crack was soaked through. Morgan-Sindall operative asked if:

- (a) My flat was located on the last floor. I live on the second floor of a four storey block.
- (b) If I needed help. I declined.

He then stated he was going upstairs to check it out. He did not return.

My son came over and placed buckets under the leaking ceiling.

28th August – My son contacted CityWest Homes on my behalf about leak and requested what action had been taken.

29th August – My son spent most of the day trying to get somebody to fix leak. CityWest Homes Repairs Team advised an engineer would attend. I then received a phone call at approximately 3.30pm from CityWest Homes claiming that an operative was trying to gain access. This is not true, no operative attended my property at this time. At approximately 8.40pm, an out of hours plumber attended the property “to attend a leak”. I showed him the ceiling, which he photographed and promised to send an email to the relevant personnel.

4th September – Another CityWest Homes representative, Ramesh, attended the property. After recounting the situation (for the fourth time) he explained that his boss had requested him to assess ceiling damage and propose remedial work. He then said he would submit evidence of ceiling damage and lounge flood damage. He would also be checking external area to see whether scaffolding or a cherry picker would be required.

6th September – Visit from CityWest Homes contractor to look at ceiling. No action taken.

11th September – Roofing contractor attended property and after inspection stated he would report to his supervisor who in turn would forward report to CityWest Homes to approve scaffolding or abseilers.

18th September – My son was advised by CityWest Homes Repairs that the individual who signs off scaffolding/abseil jobs was on holiday.

It is now 12th October and I have been emptying buckets of water in my lounge since the end of August. A potentially dangerous electrical point now requires professional repair and my recently decorated lounge requires redecorating.

This has been an extremely distressing experience for me.

My son has contacted CityWest Homes repairs team on a weekly basis seeking confirmation as to when work will begin. CityWest Homes repairs staff advise somebody will call back, but evidently nobody has.

There is also the matter of internal repairs/redecorations that needs to be addressed (repair of ceiling and redecorating of ceiling, wall and fireplace). There is also the potential safety hazard of the water-logged socket.

The landlord has an obligation to keep properties dry, habitable and safe, something CityWest Homes/WCC has not delivered on in this case.

Case Number 8

Vincent House

Vincent Square Ward

As of today, I have received no formal notification of the decision taken and nor has any scaffolding been erected or work undertaken. This means that another 7 weeks has passed without action and that Councillor X has been misled/fobbed off with misinformation – now on at least two occasions!

It is **now approaching 10 months since this repair was reported** and the structure of the block continues to deteriorate through this wilful neglect. The gutters continue to leak, my kitchen wall remains stained and damp and any drying out that occurred during the hot summer weather is now being undone. Please will you get this work done immediately.

It is laughable that, in your newsletter 'City Voice', you boast of your 'Mould Busters' service when you cannot carry out the repairs and maintenance that would minimise the need for such a service. Similarly you maintain the fiction that you are doing something by trumpeting the coming of 'action days' by your repair team and contractor Morgan Sindall when residents know only 'inaction'.

Case Number 9

York Mansions, Chiltern Street

Marylebone High Street Ward

It's now 36 working days since I reminded you that York Mansions residents and absent leaseholders have not received any update on the chaos that is our major works programme. There is no resident engagement taking place.

What is going on, when are senior CWH managers and WCC councillors going to get a grip and sort out this unprofessional, low quality, mismanaged, poor value for money major works programme?

Case Number 10

Lisson Grove

Church Street Ward

As you are aware, scaffolding has been installed at the back of my flat in Lisson Grove 10 days ago and yet to date no-one has attended to carry out the downpipe repair. A contractor

was booked to attend on 15th November 2018 between 12pm and 4pm but did not turn up. I am now being emailed by the contractor to set up another date and time. I will respond to their email today but can I remind you that I am not supervising these works, CWH is, plus no access is required via my property as the scaffolding tower has been set up in the communal garden at the property in Lisson Grove to enable access to my garden. Whilst I appreciate being kept informed and would prefer to be at my property when the repairs take place, I cannot keep taking time off work to be at home and have no-one turn up.

This was followed by

On November 27th, the contractors attended to undertake the repairs to the downpipe and whilst there had occasion to look at the roof leak that I had mentioned to them as I was not aware what actual repair they had come to do. They showed me photographs that they had taken and these clearly show that the lead flashing and other repairs that were allegedly done in 2016 as part of the substantial roof repairs that were commissioned, had failed. The box guttering in the centre valley has cracked in multiple places and it most likely follows that the water ingress into 121B is coming from these points.

Given what the builders said and the evidence that they have supplied it does beg the question as to what we were charged for by the previous builders in 2016, as the work done has failed and according to those who looked at it yesterday was of extremely poor quality. It further begs the question of how the works were apparently signed off by the council who charged for the supervision of the works.

Please confirm that either you will invite the previous contractors to attend to correct their work or else that the work will be done by others but at no cost to the lessees as I have already paid for the repair to the centre valley at a cost of well over £2000 plus uplift and council supervision charges.

Case Number 11

Dufour's Place

West End Ward

Last night at about 11.40 pm the most appalling noise hit the building. I can only compare it to a jet taking off. I went to my bedroom window and saw, in Dufours Place, what looked like a huge tanker surrounded by machinery. This truly appalling noise went on and on. Earplugs were useless - nothing could shield you against it. I think it paused sometime after 12.30 am, but at 4.00 am I was woken when it started again.

This morning I telephoned the company and spoke to a very polite young man who was appalled that it had gone on so long at such a time, and promised that if it were ever necessary again the work would be done on a weekend afternoon - but he explained what it was all about, and it seems that CityWest Homes are entirely responsible.

He told me that their premises have suffered floods over and over and over again, and that CityWest Homes (their landlords) have totally failed to deal with this problem satisfactorily. Their men's changing rooms were at least four feet deep in water and they had no option but to deal with this themselves. The result was this (what I presume was some kind of pumping or suction operation) to suck the water out and into a tanker, necessitating high pressure.

I am left very angry that the company should have been left with a problem so serious that it should have been necessary to deal with it in this manner, which will not only have affected our block but the other two blocks in Dufours Place, the residents of which must have been driven as mad as I was. I'm so tired today I can barely stand up. CityWest are supposed to deal with problems in properties which they manage.

Case Number 12

Westbourne Park Road

Bayswater Ward

I've just had a visit from someone from Morgan Sindell. However, instead of a plumber to sort out the blocked pipe, they sent me an electrician who had been told that my bathroom lights were broken. There's nothing wrong with my bathroom lights, at least on this occasion.

All he could do was take a photo of the lights to prove that there was nothing wrong with them, then leave saying that he would contact Morgan Sindell to tell them that I need a plumber. I have a feeling that I will hear nothing more from anyone in CityWest or Morgan Sindell on this matter.

This is not the first time that I've been sent the wrong people for non-existent jobs. I suspect that this sort of incompetence and waste of time and resources is widespread.

I'm sorry that I've had to bother you again with this continuing catalogue of mismanagement.

Case Number 13

Boyton and Elgood Houses

Regent's Park Ward

The parking situation is getting increasingly worse. Although I understand, and appreciate, that you are checking the parked cars periodically, I am not sure you are entirely aware that the majority of the parked cars, showing a badge, are showing photocopied badges. They do not pay for the right to park. Hence, when the barrier is working, the volume of cars is so much lower.

As I mentioned in one of my earlier e-mails, I am concerned as to how you will ensure the parking area is emptied of such cars before the barrier is fixed. Given, if it isn't, someone will only break it again in order to get out. And, finally, could you please advise what you have decided to do to curb the tailgating, which was the cause behind the barrier being vandalised in the first place?

Three weeks later

Could you please provide an update on this? It has been outstanding since the 23rd October. The barrier was working for less than 2 weeks before it was rendered out of action a month ago. The broken part (sensor) is standard kit and should not take this long to arrive.

Case Number 14

Bravington Road

Queen's Park Ward

This is now the third winter without this being resolved. The radiator that was installed into the flat above mine, or the pipes connecting it to the hot water, are STILL clicking when the heating is turned on. This reverberates through my wall and makes it impossible to sleep. Can the issue be fixed or the radiator removed? I shouldn't have to live like this. Like I've always maintained, I think this is a relatively simple fix and from what I can see the obvious culprit of the pipe supplying the radiator is rubbing against something when it expands, has not been addressed.

A few weeks later

Just thought I'd update you on the clicking coming from upstairs new (3 years) heating. Over the Christmas break the upstairs tenant was kind enough to let me investigate it. It turned out to be exactly what I told CWH it was in that it was one of the pipes rubbing on something as it expanded with hot water. It was actually rubbing on another pipe. The fix was very simple. Just a matter of putting some clips on the pipe to separate it and stop it from rubbing. It took me less than an hour and cost apps £1.30. Heaven knows what CWH have wasted on sending people round with probes and computers. They clearly have no idea what they're doing, in spite of me explaining exactly what I thought it was on several occasions. It's stunning they let this go on for three years, and who knows how much longer if left to them? So, they clearly didn't install it properly and were clueless or just not interested when it came to solving the problem I've been left to suffer with for three years. Good riddance to them.

Case Number 15

Rogers House, Page Street

Vincent Square Ward

For your information, I am stepping away from all activities with regards to residents' association, community groups, at Rogers House. Basically, you have beaten me. There are other elements to my decision, but the total lack of respect, or care, I felt in trying to deal with your offices did it for me. For you, I'm just a pesky fly who irritates you now and then. That's how you make me feel. I've got enough to deal with and I no longer have the willingness or energy to battle City West at the same time.

I am now just worried for the future with my flat, if I need to call upon your repairs team for anything.

Personally, in all my 30+ years of working and dealing with a varied range of operations, I have never incurred such as City West. And we're talking about our homes and the way we live. Not some disgruntled customer with the wrong size cardigan.

Case Number 16

Keyham House, Brunel Estate

Westbourne Ward

Mr A has had been regularly flooded from water from flat above for many years. He is a heating engineer so he knows the source of the problem - which is the connection to the main stack. The flat above is managed by a housing association on behalf of the long leaseholder. The HA regularly send engineers to fix the problem but they can only fix the internal problem as it relates to flat. A2 The HA cannot fix the faulty connection to the main stack as that is the responsibility of CWH.

The latest flooding happened over a month ago and Mr A's flat is uninhabitable as he has no electrics and the flat is soaking wet. Yet, CWH has done absolutely nothing to fix this recurring problem. He has contacted CWH regularly but calls and emails are never returned or followed up with the necessary action.

He cannot live at the flat at Keyham House so he is living on sofas in friends' homes over 60 miles away. Yet he is still paying full rent and rates. Moreover, he has lost work because of the time has spent on making phone calls to CWH that nobody answers and chasing CWH staff about their broken promises to him.

On top of all this, the tenants at the flat above are getting very agitated at the constant attendance by HA plumbers who can only fix part of the problem. They cannot understand why this problem has not been fixed and why the flat below is still being flooded. This is affecting Mr A's relations with the tenants of the flat above him.

Case Number 17

Birch House, Avenue Gardens Estate

Queen's Park Ward

So since @CityWestHomes have been 'fixing' our related roof this has popped up over this weekend. All over my daughter's bedroom ceiling.

This has been the going on since March and @CityWestHomes still haven't put right the damage done by flooding, in my dining room, last Easter. I'm sure the dampness is unhealthy.

Reported around 5pm, was told I should pierce it to release the pressure and stop ceiling collapsing. No way - it's coming through the electric light fitting. Also told nothing could be done until tomorrow and promised an electrician would attend within 4 hrs. That didn't happen.

Being passed from @CityWestHomes to contractors since 9am and still no one can raise a job on this. Meanwhile water still coming through and electrics unsafe.

Someone was meant to come at 8am today but they were a no show. I'm none the wiser as to whether the roof has been repaired.

My heating is also broken now, too and I've been told an engineer can't attend until next Thursday! The whole repairs systems seems to be very slack. Very worrying.

Case Number 18

Maida Vale Ward

After more than two years of calls, endless waiting on hold, unanswered emails, complaints and Housing Ombudsman interventions @CityWestHomes finally paid me £100 for their incompetence. The taste of this (small) victory tastes sooo damn sweet!

Case Number 19

Churchill Gardens

Churchill Ward

Churchill Labour Councillors Andrea Mann and Shamim Talukder are calling on the Council to compensate Churchill Gardens residents who have been paying for parking permits since October 2016 – and to take action on illegal parking on Churchill Gardens Road.

On parking permits, residents have continued to pay full price for them since CityWest Homes took over parking enforcement on the estate in 2016. But residents haven't been receiving a like-for-like service for their money – because CityWest Homes are unable to issue tickets and fines, just warning letters. By CityWest Homes' own admission, this new system means that people have been able to take advantage and park on the estate for free.

We think it's wrong that residents have been expected to pay full price for their permits while watching other drivers park on Churchill Gardens for free – and see the number of available spaces being reduced as a result.

What's more, the lack of traffic marshals patrolling Churchill Gardens Road means that a growing number of cars have been parking on double yellow lines on the estate (including Morgan Sindall, CWH's contractor). This, combined with the increasing number of cars parking on the estate due to the permits issue, means that we and residents are very concerned about the congestion being caused – especially in light of emergency vehicle access. On one evening in early November, for example, we know that fire engines had difficulty getting access due to cars parked on double yellow lines on Churchill Gardens Road.



We have called on the Council to ensure that traffic marshals are operating on Churchill Gardens Road in order to tackle the illegal parking occurring on that road. We have also asked the Cabinet Member for Housing for compensation for residents – whether monetary or in the form of equivalent free parking – as we don't believe it's fair or right that they have been expected to continue to pay full price for their parking permits without receiving the same service they used to.

A few weeks later.....

CityWest Homes have recently written to all parking permit holders on Churchill Gardens estate, saying they won't need to make any further payments until new parking arrangements (a 'Traffic Management Order') are put in place on the estate in the New Year.

While Churchill Labour Councillors Shamim Talukder and Andrea Mann welcome this 'payment holiday', we believe it doesn't go nearly far enough – and doesn't make up for the

two years that Churchill Gardens residents have been paying full price for permits without receiving the same service.

By their own admission, since they took over parking enforcement on Churchill Gardens in October 2016, CityWest Homes have not provided a like-for-like service. What's more, they knew that this new system could be taken advantage of.

This resulted in the unfair situation whereby residents were expected to continue paying full price for permits – while others were able to park on the estate for free and without being fined.

Cllrs Mann and Talukder have written to the Cabinet Member for Housing and CityWest Homes, reiterating our call for compensation – whether monetary or in the form of the equivalent free parking – for anyone who paid for a Churchill Gardens resident parking permit after October 2016.

Case Number 20

Gloucester Terrace

Bayswater Ward

I have been a council tenant Gloucester Terrace, W2 for more than 40 years and have seen many administrative bodies come and go. I have to say that CWH is by far the worst of these. There have been many shortcomings in their dealings with residents ranging from poorly designed systems to patently aggressive attitudes, but the major and most profound problem has been their inability, or perhaps simple unwillingness, to communicate clearly and consistently. In the past I have participated in different feedback groups created by CWH without progress or change or, indeed, copies of Minutes.

Case Number 21

Lydford Estate

Harrow Road Ward

We have long-standing problems with illegal parking on the Lydford Estate, including people coming here to do drug deals, which we have raised on many occasions with CWH. If Churchill Gardens residents are getting a holiday from parking fees then this should apply across the City given that CWH has failed to enforce its own rules across the board. Like Churchill Gardens there are no bollards or gates so the estate is open to anyone who wishes to drive in and there is nothing to prevent someone parking in a designated parking space. I did a quick survey at 11.30am today. This is a snapshot – it is usually worse in the evenings and at weekends.

Drayford Close – 18 cars, 5 with permits

Portgate Close – 13 cars, 4 with permits

Lapford Close – 9 cars, 1 with a permit

Riverton Close – 16 cars, 8 with permits

It is not fair that some estate residents pay for parking while others don't, or that people living in the neighbouring streets park on the estate to avoid paying for a street parking permit. Illegally parked cars often block or partially block access to designated parking spaces making it difficult for those with permits to get in and out. Cars are also parked on the

ramps leading into each Close narrowing the entrance which could impede access for the emergency services etc.

Case Number 22

Brunel Estate

Westbourne Ward

It is absolutely unbelievably unfair. Brunel and other Westminster Estates have been supplying free parking to all and sundry for over 2 years. Why should people on the Estates have to pay when non-residents and anyone else including residents have been parking on double yellow lines, (some double parking), parking spaces and visitors and contractors' bays for nothing. Access to designated parking spaces is often denied because people are in them or parked in such a way that access to bays are restricted often vans or taxi drivers come in for lunch or a rest taking up these spaces that have already been paid for. I think anyone with a parking permit should be refunded since Wings was removed. Also, what about the law-abiding residents who have been buying visitors parking permits. Will they be given free the first year that parking restrictions are introduced and when will that be? When I went to put something in my car this morning, out of the 6 bays there were 4 cars parked and only one (mine) had a residents parking permit!

The residents' parking on Brunel Estate is by numbered bays. I doubt any of us know how often illegal parking takes place in the bays. Many of them don't have working lockable bollards, or any bollard at all, so who knows. I know one of my neighbours complained about someone parking on their bay. It seems Churchill doesn't have bollards but it's not true to say, as Jon does, that other Estates can be more easily controlled. Maybe some bays can but certainly not all.

We have, yet again, just this evening sent photographs to our managers to show someone parked right across his garage. This isn't a one-off event. So, I know this isn't the subject you're asking about but the constant illegal parking is just a nightmare. Here the double yellow lines are just free parking and parking on box junctions is just a daily occurrence. I don't see why anyone in residents' parking bays should be charged when Tom, Dick and Harry from goodness knows where, can happily drive in and park 24/7 every day of the year.

Case Number 23

Wessex Gardens Estate

Westbourne Ward

The issues on Wessex are we have gone from being regulated to a complete free for all. In the last year I have sent countless pictures of unauthorised vehicles parked across the front of garages and walkway access routes 24 hrs a day. We have commercial vehicles and dangerously full house clearance vans regularly parked in Dartmouth Close which means emergency vehicles such as Ambulance & Fire engine access is compromised. I have sent pictures of these to Customer Services and all I get is an auto response which btw is meaningless as no one follows up. As a result of these overfilled rubbish trucks which are a hazard as contents easily fall out I have sent in pictures of the rats that congregate by the verges outside residents' properties that are attracted to the smell. Once upon a time people knew not to risk parking without authorisation -now everyone knows there will be no repercussions day or night.

The night time parking and idling of cars leads to outbreaks of ASB any one knows that. Why don't they find a system that works well for residents and put it to us. Most reasonable people want this smartly managed – it does not take a sledgehammer to crack a nut, they don't need to confiscate bollards that have been knocked over by vehicles whilst they take months prevaricating and announce, with no consultation, they intend to build an expensive gate on Talbot Rd – there is a better more effective way – we can show them the way if only they would ask.

Case Number 24

Henry Wise House

Tachbrook Ward

Once again, the only thing consistent about dealing with CityWest Homes is its detestable and ignorant customer service that seems to be its culture from the management down. My flat was flooded Sunday evening due to burst water pipes. I was eventually put in temporary accommodation. It's as usual just hard work. I attended the office Monday morning as did two of my neighbours who were affected by the same leak, as told by the out of hours officer that we should. Once again, it's the tenants who have to do all the work when it should be the relevant staff at CityWest Homes ensuring they contact tenants affected and offering to help. This never happens.

As I was in temporary accommodation and with an hour left to check out requiring an extended stay and being unable to contact any CityWest Homes staff via the call centre who said they would forward an urgent email one and a half hours later I once again attended the office after waiting with no sign of a response.

Once having explained my situation and requesting that someone from management come out and talk to me face to face I was met with two receptionists whispering to each other then one of them repeatedly refusing to address my request to speak to someone as though I was a nobody, a nuisance who was expected to walk away. It was obvious nobody in the office could make the effort and that the receptionist had been told to get rid of me at least that is how it appeared to me and I cannot think of one customer service situation when that should be the case. It's just the same attitude every time from CityWest Homes. It adds to and causes most of the stress in an already stressful situation.

Case Number 25

Langdale House

Churchill Ward

I would like to make a formal complaint about the service from CWH relating specifically to the service/maintenance of my skylight windows. Not long after buying the property I spent thousands of pounds (my memory is £12k) for the major works done, including window repairs and maintenance. The first report I made of leaking skylights was in 2013. I remember both the East & West facing windows were letting water in in huge quantities. My hall wall was repainted. But the East facing window was not fixed. My insurance would not cover the damage as it was caused by lack of building maintenance, and CWH's building insurance (which I pay for) would not cover the damage because it's an absolutely rubbish policy. Yesterday that same window was leaking!

CWH have recently signed a new maintenance contract and there is talk of more major works. As a leaseholder I will again be expected to shell out thousands of pounds.

Yet it's obvious that CWH employed substandard contractors that didn't carry out their duties. Why should I have to pay again to cover for your mismanagement and negligence? I can't remember how many times in total someone has had to come to fix this issue but since major works were carried out there should not have been an issue with the windows at all. I have raised a new job for someone to fix the window asap by way of a precaution. Like I say, I have no faith that the job will be carried out properly.

Case Number 26

Wilkins House

Churchill Ward

We are the leaseholders of our flat in Wilkins House. In September last year our flat was badly flooded due to a blocked communal stack pipe that runs past our flat. (It has twice flooded before but not to the same degree.) It is especially vulnerable because there is a bend or joint in the pipe just adjacent to our flat that is prone to becoming easily blocked. As a result, the whole flat had to be stripped out, dried and refurbished.

However, it is clearly our wish that this should never happen again! We pressed CityWest Homes to address the source of the problem but to no avail. Indeed, their attitude throughout has been complacent and unhelpful, even non-existent. In September it happened again, admittedly for different reasons. A drainage company had been called in to clear the pipe but by rather ineptly applying massive pressure to remove the debris in the pipes, the pipework in our kitchen completely blew out. Now the whole process is being repeated. The irony is that this must be very costly to someone, presumably CWH, but certainly it has caused us no end of misery, practically, financially and psychologically.

My concern now is even more that the stack pipe should be exposed and corrected, now being an ideal time whilst the flat is empty. But Morgan Sindall, contractors to CWH, are insisting that a regular programme of cleaning will suffice to prevent any future flooding. We are somewhat sceptical, not least because we fear such a proposal will be quietly forgotten in the future and/or be, frankly, ineffective anyway. What we would like is someone to investigate the stack pipe. I forgot to mention all the other flats on our end of the building were also flooded but not nearly so badly.

Case Number 27

De Quincy House

Churchill Ward

The stack pipe outside Dequincy House has corroded, leaving a hole in the pipe. Therefore, when the tenant uses washing machine, sink etc the shop below is flooded. CityWest Homes attended on Thursday but they broke the access lock and then had to wait for a locksmith - the drain repair contractor then left and said they'll be back tomorrow. The tenant called CWH Friday to be told someone was coming and they were sending the correct person as the drain repair operative was not the right contractor anyway. On Friday, no one arrived although the tenant had been told all day someone was attending. At 16:45, CWH said they would rebook it for the following Monday 24th December.

Out of hours have told the resident they can only attend to do maintenance and as the job has already been raised it cannot be raised as an emergency as it is a big repair. Monday is

Christmas Eve and the residents may not be able to have Christmas at home as they cannot use any water in their property.

We contacted CWH who told us that "the contractor is on site now enacting a temporary repair to get this issue resolved over the Christmas period".

Case Number 28

Lowther House

Churchill Ward

I am writing to you about a leak of water onto the communal walkway in Lowther House. This is my eighth written and telephone complaint on this matter and the situation represents a systematic failure on the part of Citywest Homes.

There has been a large amount of water leaking onto the communal walkway from a standing pipe since last August. Residents have granted access to their houses to Citywest surveyors and plumbers from Housing Options but the problem has not been fixed.

There is a pool of water 3 metres wide and around half a centimeter deep at all times. The weather is now getting cold and this water will freeze in the winter temperatures causing it to become ice. Someone will be seriously injured or break their necks. That is in the words of the latest Citywest customer services representative that I spoke to last week on the telephone.

Please do not treat this problem as if it does not exist by not replying or simply ignoring multiple communications

A few days later.....

I am writing again with respect to the continuing leak in front of this property. This leak is continuing. We received a visit today from an inspector for Morgan Sindall who said that the job had been completed on December 28 according to Morgan Sindall records. There was significant water on the ground January 5, 6 and 7 and so this claim is wrong. No one visited our property 28 December, we were home all day.

The problem has not been solved and with the cold weather large puddles of water on the ground will lead to ice, falls and serious injuries. I am convinced Citywest does not care at all as demonstrated by this continuous correspondence and the level of arrogance demonstrated. By your own records this has been going on for over a year!

Case Number 29

Gilbert House

Churchill Ward

The radiator is still having problems and at times it just doesn't heat up all the way, as before. The biggest issue I have is the heating coming on a few hours a day. Today I had heating from 5-7 and then 2 hours in the afternoon and then from 7-8 pm. Needless to say that it is middle of December and with single glazed windows and being on the top floor with the coldest of winds the timings are unacceptable. I have repeatedly told you that my chronic health issues make this cold unbearable and my health seriously deteriorates.

Also attached is the picture of my radiator cover being damaged by the leak from the valve, which took 4 engineer visits recently (excluding prior visits) to change.

Case Number 30

Chaucer House

Churchill Ward

I have received some below par customer service in the past 2 – 3 months. Having informed City West Homes about a small crack in the bathroom Sink/Wash Basin, it took 2-3 months for City West Homes to come and replace it. In doing so they have removed the bathroom sink cabinet & the tiles around the sink whilst saying they will be back within 2/3 Hours to install a new Bathroom Sink Cabinet! It has been over 1 month now that I have been left with-out a Bathroom Sink Cabinet.

Case Number 31

Lenthall House

Churchill Ward

I have reported a damaged wall in my flat for over 2 years and nothing has been done. I have reported it on several occasions. I have had it inspected, several phone calls and correspondence via emails including sending photographs and no conclusive action taken. I am very frustrated and feel that no one is listening.

Case Number 32

Birch House

Queen's Park Ward

The resident reported water penetration in early December. To date nothing has been done. We reported it on 21/12/18 and was told it would be followed up immediately. She lives with her ailing housebound Father. This is so very sad. CWH do not seem to grasp the human suffering because of their lack of action and compassion.



Case Number 33

Falkirk House

Maida Vale Ward

The communal TV aerial has not been working since 3rd December with the result that, as far as I'm aware, no channels can be received by anyone in the block relying on the aerial

for transmission. Unfortunately, this continues to remain the case. I'd therefore be glad if you could look further into this with a view to getting normal service restored hopefully before the Christmas shutdown. For your information, I also believe that various residents in our neighbouring block ie Edinburgh House were also experiencing problems with their communal aerial the other day?

You should also know that the main entrance door to Falkirk House at the Maida Vale end still needs further work following a temporary repair after someone forced their way in some three weeks ago. The door now remains open for longer than it should which makes it possible for anyone to come in behind a resident before the door recloses.

One other matter re. the main entrance doors: before the entryphone system was renewed, it was possible for the concierge to operate a button from their work station to let residents in who were carrying heavy shopping or using mobility scooters and so unable to easily use their fob for those reasons. However, it's now the case that residents have to nevertheless find a way of using their fobs in those circumstances or to try and ring the concierge via the entrance panel in order to gain access. Obviously the concierges aren't available on a 24/7 basis but it would be nice to have that additional option available when they are there.

Finally, I understand that the camera in the left-hand lift at Falkirk has not been working for over a year which means that it's not been possible for the concierge to monitor any serious incident occurring in that lift nor would there be any CCTV recording of such an incident. I know that this and the other repairs mentioned above have been regularly reported to the Estate Office/CityWest and that your office has obviously done your best to expedite these repairs but there would appear to be some problem in getting such repairs completed within reasonable timeframes which may indicate some serious underlying issues re.contractors and/or the repairs set-up within CityWest?

Case Number 34

Verney House, Lisson Green

Church Street Ward

Leaseholders at Verney House in Lisson Grove are furious at a string of problems with communal areas in the CityWest Homes building. One entrance door has not been working for eight weeks, another security door doesn't open, while broken lifts are leaving elderly people "almost stranded". The angry residents said the broken entrance door had made them feel unsafe.

Bernadette McCarthy, 87, told the *Wood&Vale*; "*The main entrance doors haven't been working for weeks. I've complained, CityWest just say they are waiting for a part.*" The door which has not been shutting for weeks was temporarily repaired on Monday, after this newspaper had contacted CityWest Homes. However, one resident says the fix doesn't solve the problem.



Darren Smith explained: "*The door's been slamming so hard it has broken the frame. Kids have been getting their fingers jammed. It's been eight weeks now, it's not been shutting properly so people have been getting in. You can see it's not opening as far as it should now, and the frame's damaged.*"

Another leaseholder, Mrs Yard, spoke of security concerns: *"It's the most used entrance, and while it's been broken the seventh floor has been used as a toilet."* The electric door to the corridor on which Bernadette and several other elderly people – including Len Brooks, 95, live – has broken so that it is no longer automatic or power-assisted. *"This makes entering and exiting incredibly difficult – especially if you use a trolley."* Bernadette said.

<https://www.hamhigh.co.uk/news/citywest-homes-lisson-grove-pensioners-furious-broken-doors-verney-house-1-5845995>

Case Number 35

Queen's Park Court

Queen's Park Ward

I have not been communicating with CWH as I am hopefully in the process of selling my flat as I can't afford the bills - I can't take the stress of all this injustice. We have been billed thousands in roof repairs that I have not seen done and no proof was provided as I requested. I also asked about the cost of TV aerials that don't exist. Pavement repairs etc. Of course, my questions were not answered in their response as usual, requiring us to do the run around yet again to get anywhere.

As far as the major works bill goes: the point they did not satisfy is providing an estimate at the time of the section 20 notice. I was repeatedly told I could not complain about the costing after the event- but we were not given any estimate at the time we were given to make any complaints!!

Case Number 36

Erskine House

Churchill Ward

Brrrrr it's freezing without heating in Erskine House, Churchill Gardens

It's going to be below zero tonight @CityWestHomes @CityWestminster any update on whether the heating will be fixed today please?

Day 2 of no heating in Erskine House, Churchill Gardens @CityWestHomes @CityWestminster I can cope but the resident on the ground floor is disabled limiting his movement. I know you've given heaters but it's still cold. Fingers X its fixed before the weekend.

At last a letter through the door. Heating hopefully back on by Friday. Do I need to have a bet at the bookies it won't be fixed when I get home from work Friday?

Case Number 37

Dufour's Place

West End Ward

I am just wondering how much worse CWH can get. This morning I received a telephone call asking why my rent payment which should have been received yesterday morning had

not been made. To clarify, this was a payment for only a fortnight, since I pay fortnightly, and in fact I had made the payment in a Post Office yesterday morning!!! I pay fortnightly and the man who called me was not citing any arrears beyond the fact that the payment had been due yesterday.

I find it absolutely incredible that a tenant who has lived in this property for at least 30 years and never ever been in rent arrears should have a phone call on a Tuesday morning because a two week rent payment due on the previous day has not been received. When I insisted that I had made the payment yesterday morning, the anonymous man telephoning me said, oh it took about three days for payments made at Post Offices to get through. Are CWH so lacking in tasks needing to be attended to that they have personnel allocated to chase rent payments for a fortnight only 24 hours after they should have been received, when the tenant concerned is of over 30 standing and has never been in arrears? I simply can't get over this, and I feel sick.

Case Number 38

Gilbert House

Churchill Ward

Ms A of Gilbert House, Churchill Gardens has contacted me about the leak she had at her flat in August 2018, the service she received, and the ongoing issues resulting from it. The leak lasted two weeks and resulted in black mould. Contractors did replace the panel in the cupboards where the mould seemed to be; but she believes there may be some remaining on the wall behind the cupboards. In addition, she was told by CWH she would receive a dehumidifier, but never got one.

She has been offered money to cover costs of repainting, but due to health reasons is unable to do this herself. She is very unhappy about the service she received from CWH, including a lack of communication. The leak was not stopped for two weeks, during which time she had to use buckets to collect the water; she received no dehumidifier, and she was told by CWH not to turn her lights on due to safety reasons. After two weeks of no lighting, she spoke to her neighbour upstairs (the source of the leak) who told her that it had been fixed. So, she was safe to put her lights back on again - but nobody at CWH informed her of this. She also said that a surveyor would come around at one point, and never did.

Case Number 39

Bravington Road

Queen's Park Ward

I have just spoken to a lady who lives in Bravington Road who says that CityWest Homes have not repaired her property since 2012. She says that she has reported a number of issues but jobs have been half done or not at all. I have copied this to CityWest Homes so they can advise on what information they have on repairs at this property.

Case Number 40

Vale Royal House

St James's Ward

An open and "out of control" drug market at Cambridge Circus is spilling into housing estates, according to residents who are looking to hire 24/7 security guards. Tenants of Vale Royal House in Charing Cross Road have warned of a massive increase in trouble and reported a knife brawl on the council estate this week. Residents told the *Extra* that drug-taking and seedy sexual activity in the stairwells was now common and there had been three major fires, including one that forced the evacuation of the whole 170-flat estate late last year. They say police, council and the "failing" and soon-to-be-axed management company CityWest Homes appear powerless to stop the problem.

Ljubisa Boskovic, who set up a residents' group at the Vale Royal, said his residents' association was looking at hiring a round-the-clock security guard, funded by a rooftop phone mast. He said:

"Cambridge Circus has become infamous now for the open drug dealing. It's always been a problem, but now it is hardcore. It's spice and the all the nasty stuff. They are off their heads and causing havoc." He added: "And there's been a big increase of people coming into the estate. You see all kinds of paraphernalia now. It's very unpleasant, they are off their heads and you never know how people are going to react. There have been three fires, the whole block has been evacuated. There was a fight with knives this week."

He said: "We have a concierge two days a week. It costs £21,000 and it comes from the money we get from having a phone mast. It seems like a lot of money. We are looking at whether we can get someone in every day, that is what we need."

Mr Boskovic said complaints to CityWest Homes had fallen on deaf ears and pre-election promises from politicians had not been fulfilled.

"They were enthusiastic before the election," he said. "On the bigger issue, stakeholders aren't willing to deal with it."

Nina Anderson, who has an elderly relative on the estate, said there were daily queues of people outside the entrances trying to get into the block. Many were sleeping in the upper floor corridors.

She said: "There has been constant dialogue between the tenants and local councillors, CityWest Homes [Westminster Council's housing management company] and the police; and yet nothing is being done to tackle the issue. They have a guard on Friday and Saturday nights, but we need one every day of the week. We need 24/7 patrolling."

<http://westendextra.com/article/cambridge-circus-drug-market-out-of-control>