



Report of: Executive Member for Housing and Development

Meeting of:	Date	Ward(s)
Executive	19 January 2017	All

Delete as appropriate	Exempt	Non-exempt
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Subject: Responsive Repairs – Response to the report of the Housing Scrutiny Committee

1 Synopsis

- 1.1 In September 2016 the Executive received a report from the Housing Scrutiny Committee regarding the Responsive Repairs Service. The report provided recommendations to further improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the service as well as improving the experience of residents.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 To agree the Executive responses to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee as set out in section 4 of this report.

3 Background

Between January and May 2016 the Housing Scrutiny Committee collected evidence to review the Housing Repairs Service. The aim of the scrutiny was to consider the experience of residents.

Witnesses included:

- Service Managers
- Residents on the Repairs Reference Group
- KWest Research
- Affinity Sutton
- One Housing Group
- Camden Council.

In addition the committee considered the following written evidence:

- An introductory report
- Details of Call Centre Accreditation

- The specification for the new Repairs IT system
- Details of the repairs apprenticeship scheme
- Satisfaction data
- Key performance indicators.

The committee concluded that the experience of residents was varied and further work was required to develop the service. The committee was satisfied that officers had a suitable plan to achieve service improvement which should increase satisfaction – See Appendix 1.

4 Response to Recommendations

4.1 The committee set out 10 recommendations. Detailed responses to these recommendations are set out below. An action plan based on these responses is attached as Appendix 1.

1. The service prioritise increasing the number of “first time fixes” in order to improve efficiency and tenant satisfaction. To achieve this it is suggested that officers further investigate the feasibility of a “ring and bring” service, to enable parts to be delivered to a repair without the operative leaving the property, and continue to invest in the multi-skilling of staff. The council should aspire for all operatives to be skilled in multiple trades as part of a “first time fix culture”.

The service is very focused on optimising first time fix rates. This year will see the introduction of additional materials delivery services as a result of our contract negotiations with Travis Perkins.

In April 2016 the service negotiated a change to all operatives being multi-skilled and is now commencing a two year training programme, evaluating and training staff in all required skills using the training facility.

Multi-trading (as opposed to multi-skilling) is a harder objective to achieve as the amount of van stock and level of training required is prohibitive. Where operatives want to develop new trades this will be investigated and a cost/benefit judgement made.

2. The Committee welcomed the improvements of the new ICT system for repairs and was keen to see the system fully utilised by the service. The recommendation is for scripts to be developed to act as aid memoires for operatives to ensure they complete repairs correctly.

The service will investigate if scripting can be added for operatives and seek if possible to develop such a function.

3. The Committee recognized that communication is a key element of the service and recommended that texts are sent to residents updating them on their repair.

As part of the new IT system due in April 2017 the service will seek to improve communications by introducing text communications with residents. Initially the service will launch with improved outbound messages and we will further investigate development of two way text communication, where residents should be able to respond to the service by text to give feedback and adjust appointments.

4. Operatives should be empowered and supported to make decisions on the front line to increase the speed of repairs. Operatives should complete additional repairs as part of a first time fix culture.

The service has already removed many of the authorisation structures used when repairs were delivered by a contractor, giving operatives more freedom to judge what work is needed.

The service is investigating training and process changes to deliver this recommendation. It is expected that the service change should be in place within the 2017-2018 financial year.

5. The committee recommends there is a clear escalation process developed for when repairs fall under the capital programme team.

Over the next six months staff from Repairs and Capital Programme Delivery will review current procedures, including pro-formas to be used.

6. The committee recognise the role of estate coordinators and caretakers in assisting with communications with residents.

The repairs team meets quarterly with its corresponding Area Housing Office teams to review contacts and make optimum use of estate services staff knowledge.

Over 2016-17 the Repairs service will review the “no access” process and communication procedure for estate-wide repairs (such as water or power failure) to ensure that use of local assets is maximised.

7. The operatives should take before and after pictures of all repairs and conduct repairs to other damaged assets or report them if outside of their trade. The service should analyse the repairs it received and feed this information in to the capital programme.

Operatives are required to take before and after photographs of all works, however the current system requires supervisors to manually check every job which is inefficient.

The new IT system will assist the service in ensuring photographs are always taken.

The development of the QlikView data management system will also enable improved data analysis to identify the most frequent repairs and the service will produce “heat maps” showing the most common estates for its top five / ten repairs each year.

The service will investigate the feasibility of conducting repairs to additional damaged assets or reporting of them by operatives and seek if possible to develop this capability.

8. The Committee would like to see an expansion of the repairs successful engagement programmes and apprenticeship schemes.

The service has taken on eleven apprentices in the year 2016-2017. This is a sizable financial commitment for up to four years. The service will require further intakes of apprentices to meet diversity aims and to ensure suitable trained staff are in place when the aging workforce retire.

The service will review the cost and success of the current cohort of eleven apprentices in September 2017 to decide on the capacity and feasibility of taking on another cohort in September 2018.

9. The committee recommended Islington and Camden explore the scope for joint working and sharing of best practice.

Islington and Camden meet regularly to share best practice. In addition both boroughs are actively trying to set up a London-wide direct works meeting to benchmark and share information between as many comparable local authority repairs services as possible.

The service will formally explore several areas including fleet and materials provision to see what opportunities are available for joint working.

10. The committee is keen to see the development of the online repairs system and recommends additional resident feedback as it is developed further.

The repairs online system is a considerable success in terms of user acceptance and functionality.

There is a programme over the next three years to increase functionality including rebooking appointments, booking TMO repairs and communal repairs. Many of these will be facilitated by the new IT system.

As each element is improved it will be shared with user groups including but not limited to the Repairs Reference Group.

The success of the online system is limited by the free access to the repairs call line Housing Direct and for the savings predicted from this development to be realised assertive channel shift will need to be considered. This may include reducing call centre operating hours, increasing waiting times, offering priority appointments to online bookings and reducing access to the Freephone number.

5 Implications

5.1 Financial Implications

Recommendations 1 to 7 & 9&10 are designed to improve the service provision whilst at the same time drive efficiencies into the repairs processes.

Whilst there is some upfront investment required in the form of training & IT development, which is being met from within existing HRA resources, it is ultimately anticipated that these initiatives will lead to reduced costs.

At this stage it is not possible to quantify the financial impact of these initiatives however they will be monitored as they progress.

Item 8 – Apprentices – the 11 apprentices currently employed cost £230k.

There would clearly be costs associated with extending this scheme and any decision to do so would need to be considered in the context of the resources available within the wider HRA.

5.2 Legal Implications

There are no specific legal implications on this report. Where required, legal advice and support will be provided to Housing Services in respect of the implementation of the recommendations.

5.3 Resident Impact Assessment

The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

Where the proposals in this report may have equalities implications and other implications for residents. Resident Impact Assessments (including assessment of equalities implications) will be undertaken as part of the process of developing and implementing policies and actions arising from this report.

5.4 Environmental Impact Assessment

Not required.

6 Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

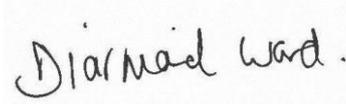
This report details the Executive's response to the recommendations of the Housing Scrutiny Committee.

Appendix 1

Repairs Service Improvement Project Plan

Final Report clearance:

Signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diarmuid Ward." The signature is written in a cursive style and is centered within a light gray rectangular box.

Executive Member for Housing and Development

Date: 20 December 2016

Report Author: Matt West – Head of Repairs & Maintenance
Tel: 020 7527 6372
Email: matthew.west@islington.gov.uk