



Report of: Service Director - Housing Property Services

Meeting of:	Date	Ward(s)
Housing Scrutiny Committee		All
Delete as appropriate	Exempt	Non-exempt

Report Title: Repairs Update for Housing Scrutiny Panel

1. Synopsis
<p>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.</p> <p>Subsequently, on 19th January 2017 the Executive agreed its response to the recommendations set out in the scrutiny report to further improve the effective and efficient delivery of this service for the benefit of all Council residents (tenants and leaseholders). This report updates the Housing Scrutiny Committee on progress with the recommendations agreed by the Executive.</p>
2. Recommendations
<p>2.1 To note the progress made against the recommendations, as set out in section 4 of this report.</p>
3. Background
<p>3.1 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.</p>
<p>3.2 Witnesses included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Service Managers• Residents on the Repairs Reference Group• KWest Research• Affinity Sutton• One Housing Group• Camden Council. <p>In addition, the committee considered the following written evidence:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An introductory report • Details of Call Centre Accreditation <p>The committee concluded that the experience of residents was varied and further work was required to develop the service.</p>
4.	<h2>Recommendations and Service Update</h2> <p>4.1 In this section each of the recommendations (Bold) and <i>responses</i> (italics) from the Scrutiny are listed followed by the update from the service</p> <p>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”.</p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p>The “ring and bring” pilot is still running. However early indications are it is a success. More developed detailed ring and bring proposals have been written into the new repairs materials tender which is currently out to tender.</p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p>Multi skill training is rolling out and other services such as Estate Maintenance and Non-Housing are adding their staff to the waiting list. 1st Batch operatives are still undergoing some shadowing to build confidence in their new abilities.</p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p>Operatives are currently exploring using the Apprenticeship Levy and Fuse Project to train as gas fitters and electricians. There have also been considerable improvements in workforce development allowing operatives the opportunity to gain management roles. We have supported this through the structure of the service, training courses and mentoring.</p>
4.2	<p>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.</p> <p><i>The service will investigate if scripting can be added for operatives and seek if possible to develop such a function.</i></p> <p>The Oneserve Repairs and Synthesys systems were deployed in August 2017 and has resulted in several improvements including:- Better scheduling of operatives, allowing operatives to book follow on appointments on site, allowing operatives to conduct surveys on site.</p> <p>Scripting for operatives is not currently possible with this system. However, the stages progressed by the operative through their PDA (Personal Digital Assistant) device do offer some guidance. For instance, the job cannot be completed without a photo being taken or risk assessment completed.</p> <p>Phase two of the implementation of the new systems is underway which will offer improvements to the</p>

	online offer, better reporting on how the service is operating and improvements across the system. This project is one of Shared Digital's top priorities and is due to compete winter 2019.
4.3	<p>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.</p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p>The new system sends text message reminders to the resident to confirm when a job is raised. There is also the ability to have two-way text conversations. The service is developing the ability to send a text satisfaction survey at the end of a repair.</p>
4.4	<p>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.</p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p>Operatives are empowered to undertake works and collect information as part of their job. For instance, completing asbestos surveys on site rather than requiring a further visit. Training on customer care, which has already been rolled out, and the Multi Skill training which is now in progress, will further add to the success in this area.</p>
4.5	<p>5. The committee recommends there is a clear escalation process developed for when repairs fall under the capital programme team.</p> <p><i>Over the next six months' staff from Repairs and Capital Programme Delivery will review current procedures, including pro-formas to be used.</i></p> <p>Following a review of the processes for High Value Repairs and Insurance works the Capital and Repairs teams continue to work closely together deciding jointly how to deal with high scale emergency works as they occur.</p>
4.6	<p>6. The committee recognise the role of estate coordinators and caretakers in assisting with communications with residents.</p> <p><i>The repairs team meets quarterly with its corresponding Area Housing Office teams to review contacts and make optimum use of estate services staff knowledge.</i></p> <p>Over 2017-2018 the Repairs service reviewed 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. The Repairs Policy has recently been updated and work to review the No Access Process has started and is due to complete in Spring 2018. The Repairs team has also increased its store of torches and water for use in emergencies.</p>
4.7	<p>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.</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>

	<p><i>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.</i></p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p>These recommendations are in place with the exception of the dashboards which are in development. Shared Digital are currently deciding on the corporate dashboard solution. This has delayed delivery of dashboard functionality for repairs.</p>
4.8	<p>8. The Committee would like to see an expansion of the repairs successful engagement programmes and apprenticeship schemes.</p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p>Currently the service is on target to complete eight apprenticeships in 2019 and work has begun selecting a cohort of six new apprentices. In addition, two surveying apprenticeships are underway using apprenticeship levy funding for their training.</p>
4.9	<p>9. The committee recommended Islington and Camden explore the scope for joint working and sharing of best practice.</p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p><i>The service will formally explore several areas including fleet and materials provision to see what opportunities are available for joint working.</i></p> <p>Opportunities to joint work are limited by differing service standards and operational practices between Islington and Camden. Considerable service redesign would be required to align the services to make many cross working opportunities viable. However, we are currently exploring the opportunity to jointly manage out of hours works and remain in talks about possible joint working on materials and fleet. Camden and Islington continue to share best practice on a range of service areas.</p>
4.10	<p>10. The committee is keen to see the development of the online repairs system and recommends additional resident feedback as it is developed further.</p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p><i>As each element is improved it will be shared with user groups including but not limited to the Repairs Reference Group.</i></p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p>The functionality of online repairs continues to be developed. Uptake and usage remains low as there are other access channels preferred by residents. The maintenance of the system has been problematic but the service is seeking to improve matters working in conjunction with Shared Digital.</p>

	5. Implications
5.1	<p>Financial Implications: Recommendations 1-7 & 9-10 are designed to improve the service provision whilst at the same time drive efficiencies into the repairs processes.</p> <p>IT development is ongoing in relation to recommendation 7 (Qlik view data management) and costs to date in terms of recommendation 10 repairs online are not significant and have been accommodated within the HRA.</p> <p>Recommendation 1 includes the use of the apprenticeship levy & fuse project to fund relevant training.</p> <p>The above recommendations 1-7 & 9-10 are not anticipated to generate significant increased costs.</p> <p>Recommendation 8 – Apprentices – the 11 apprentices currently employed cost £250k.</p> <p>There would clearly be staffing 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.</p>
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. No adverse impacts are anticipated linked to this update report
5.4	Environmental Impact Assessment: No applicable to this update report

6. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

6.1 The Committee is asked to note progress made with implementation of the recommendations.

Background papers: None

Appendices: None

Final report clearance:

Signed by:

Simon Kwong

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Date:

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