

Report of: Executive Member for Housing and Development

Meeting of:	Date:	Wards:
Executive	6 February 2020	All

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SUBJECT: Housing Repairs - Response to the report of the Housing Scrutiny Committee

1 Synopsis

- 1.1 In October 2019 the Executive received a report from the Housing Scrutiny Committee regarding the Housing Repairs Service. The report provided recommendations to further improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the service as well as improving the resident experience.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To agree the Executive responses to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee as set out in section 4 of this report.
- 2.2 To agree that officers report back on progress the Housing Scrutiny Committee in 12 months' time.

3 Background

- 3.1 The Housing Scrutiny Committee collected evidence from September 2018 to May 2019 to review the Housing Repairs Service.
- 3.2 The objectives of the review were to evaluate the performance of Islington Council's responsive repairs services by holding decision makers such as staff, contractors and suppliers to account; evaluate resident satisfaction and the accuracy of satisfaction surveys. In addition to review examples of gaps and failures in service provision; consider if and how the first time fix rates could be increased; analyse if the systems and

processes supporting repair operatives are optimal or if there is scope for further improvement and evaluate how the service communicates with residents and identify opportunities for further development.

- 3.3 Witnesses included:
- Service managers
 - Residents
 - Repairs staff
 - Hackney Council
 - Camden Council.

4 Response to recommendations

4.1 The committee set out ten recommendations, reported to Executive, which have all been accepted in full. Responses to these recommendations are set out below:

4.2 **Recommendation 1: The Service needs to focus on a detailed analysis of the root causes of service failures within the population of repair jobs not completed first time to identify the reasons for failure and put in place measures such as systems thinking approach to correct these failures.**

4.3 **Response:** The service has embarked on a detailed study to analyse First Time Fix failures as part of an overall improvement plan. Findings have been implemented and the service is now meeting the First Time Fix target of 85% of all jobs. The service will continue to analyse data, including resident feedback, to ensure ongoing learning and improvement.

4.4 **Recommendations 2: Following the last scrutiny update from 2016, the panel are aware that the service has trialled Ring and Bring. This is intended to improve the rate of first time fix. The Scrutiny Panel recommend that the pilot is expanded to other sections of the repairs business.**

4.5 **Response:** The service is now embedding a Ring and Bring option in its operations and is currently reviewing the use of driver loaders to offer a more reactive service.

4.6 **Recommendation 3: The service should expand and develop its use of customer electronic notice boards and text systems to improve communication, particularly with regard to communal repairs.**

4.7 **Response:** The service is currently working with Homes & Communities to develop a procedure on how notices will be issued. Text updates are also being tested with operatives before being rolled out to residents.

4.8 **Recommendation 4: Promotion of online repairs reporting should be increased, particularly highlighting its use during peak times. The service should seek to develop a traffic light system on the webpage showing how busy the phone service is at any given time.**

- 4.9 **Response:** The service is currently identifying peak call times and the practicalities of implementing a traffic light system on the website. The service is also reviewing how online repairs is promoted. The service is also exploring ways of proactively communicating about a repairing issue that effects multiple properties – eg. Tweeting information about a communal heating repair.
- 4.10 **Recommendation 5: The service should look to implement a skills sharing programme where adults who have experience or partial qualifications can be brought on as apprentices to finish their qualifications and potentially become Operatives. This will not only address employment needs within the borough for previously unassisted groups, but also allow skill sharing with older operatives to prevent the loss of knowledge and expertise that has been acquired over a long period.**
- 4.11 **Response:** The service is currently testing the processes for delivering an improved service by offering opportunities to Islington staff who wish to train as operatives. Once the offer is finalised it will be offered to residents of the borough in conjunction with the service’s Apprenticeship Programme. The service has also delivered DIY taster sessions for local residents and is currently working with local colleges on the feasibility of offering further traineeship courses.
- 4.12 **Recommendation 6: A review should consider the process of handling leaks. A process should be in place to ensure leaks are resolved quickly and efficiently and any damage caused is rectified in a smooth process. This will minimise upset to residents, risk of legal challenge and insurance costs. The Leak Hub model in Hackney should be looked at along with other options and consideration given to a dedicated team. The use of dashboards to highlight when leaks have run for over 24 hours should be developed and implemented as swiftly as possible.**
- 4.13 **Response:** Development of IT dashboards is progressing and remains a service priority. The service is undertaking a systematic review of leak processes including diagnosis, delivery of care to residents, no access processes and making good. As part of the review other borough’s processes are being considered relating to best practice.
- 4.14 **Recommendation 7: The service should push on with the development of dashboards and ensure that the investment in these is linked to service improvements. The dashboard will be used to improve management of the repairs service, including the performance management of all staff at all levels of the service. The service should also continue to develop online options for residents. Officers to provide quarterly updates about the performance of the dashboard to the Housing Scrutiny Committee.**
- 4.15 **Response:** Development of IT dashboards is progressing but has not moved at the pace originally expected. Some dashboards are due to go live imminently. The service will provide a quarterly written update on progress to the Chair of Housing Scrutiny.

- 4.16 **Recommendation 8: With regard to future building projects, Planned Maintenance Projects and Capital Programmes, the Responsive Repairs Service should be consulted and their recommendations should be acted on.**
- 4.17 **Response:** The service is working closely with the Director of New Build to ensure compliance with the employer's requirements and improvements made to the handover process and defects service. There is regular liaison with the Capital Programme Delivery section on both the scheduling of capital works and operational delivery.
- 4.18 **Recommendation 9: The service should explore the use of a diagnostic system which would identify faults remotely for new gas boilers.**
- 4.19 **Response:** The service is investigating the availability of these systems and the practicality of their use within a social housing setting.
- 4.19 **Recommendation 10: The Service should ensure that capital, new build and repairs agree material specifications for major components and limit the variety to maximise the chance of holding stock and achieving first time fix. Managers should ensure contracts deliver materials as per the specification and any deviations from agreed materials is agreed at a senior level.**

Response: The Repairs and New Build teams continue to develop and enforce the Employers Requirement document, standardising materials, parts and assets to reduce maintenance time and costs. The Repairs and Capital Programme Delivery teams will explore setting up a parts approval forum to govern changes to parts and materials.

5 Implications

5.1 Financial Implications

At this stage there are no material financial implications identified. In addition, the expectation is that any costs arising, as a result of actions implemented that have flowed from the Housing Scrutiny Committee recommendations, will be accommodated within the existing overall repairs or wider HRA budgets. The financial implications for each area of work will be fully considered and agreement sought before any change is implemented.

If material budget pressures subsequently arise, that cannot be accommodated within existing budgets, these will be reported on in future.

5.2 Legal Implications

There are no specific legal implications arising out of this report. The council have the necessary powers to implement the actions. Legal advice and support will be provided as necessary regarding the continued implementation of the individual recommendations

6 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.

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

7 Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030:

Not applicable

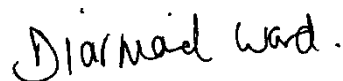
8 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

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

Background papers: None

Final report clearance:

Signed by:



23 January 2020

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Executive Member for Housing and
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