

Report of: Executive Member for Housing and Development

Meeting of:	Date:	Wards:
Housing Scrutiny Committee	13 October 2020	All

Delete as appropriate	Exempt	Non-exempt
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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 agreed 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. An executive response to the report was received in February 2020. This report provides an update on progress in implementing the recommendations.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the scrutiny committee reviews the progress report and gives feedback on the progress of the service in meeting the recommendations and agreed outcomes.

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 along with relevant progress information:

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 **Update:** The service reviews all first time fix failures weekly and managers meet to discuss progress on improving performance monthly. Using this method the service has improved first time fix and continues to focus on this target. Because all jobs are included in the measure, it will not be possible to get all repairs completed in a single visit as some may need unavoidable multiple visits (roofing, plastering, decorating).

Measure	18-19	19-20	20-21 (YT August)
All jobs	86.7%	87.2%	88.2%

4.5 Introduction of the first time fix dashboard rolling out September-October 2020 will give further ability to look at the sources of failure and take appropriate action.

4.6 **Recommendation 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.**

4.7 **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.

- 4.8 **Update:** Ring and bring has proven extremely useful for our in-house voids pilot reducing turnaround times. Most improvements in day-to-day repairs have been achieved through reviewing van stocks.
- 4.9 **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.**
- 4.10 **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.
- 4.11 **Update:** The full roll out of text surveys on job completion is dependent on the development of an API Management system. The work on this is under way by Islington Digital Services, linked to several projects and system updates. Once in place the Repairs Service will trial the system with operatives and then begin phased roll out of texts. Repairs access to the electronic noticeboards has not been possible with the current system however, through close links with Homes and Communities, Repairs Teams do update the boards when there is a major event. Better integration continues to be investigated.
- 4.12 **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.**
- 4.13 **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.
- 4.14 **Update:** The service has had to shut the online ordering service to ensure that the correct Covid-19-related questions are asked and understood to protect both resident and operatives. This is being reviewed regularly. The service cannot develop a live traffic light system due to the time delay in reporting systems, further development is required and the service is exploring how it can progress this. When the online repairs system is restarted a traffic light system based on historic call volumes will come up as before.
- 4.15 **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.**

- 4.16 **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.
- 4.17 **Update:** The service has undertaken a pilot programme retraining driver loaders to be plumbers. An improvers job specification has also been developed. It is estimated that the training should complete within the next six months and it is expected the Driver will be successful in obtaining an operative position. Following this it is expected that a wider programme targeting Islington residents will be included in our September 21 intake of apprentices. The service continues to offer training courses and work experience to residents and is taking on another cohort of apprentices this year. It is using internal and external apprenticeships and training to address inequalities in the makeup of its teams so the service is more representative of the residents of the borough.
- 4.18 **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.**
- 4.19 **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.
- 4.20 **Update:** In consultation with Hackney and several other in-house Repairs teams, the service has developed a system for identifying leaks that have not been resolved quickly. The service has trialled several models of leak team testing, both dedicated operatives and preferred specialists. The pilots have now been evaluated and a dedicated leak team is being recruited and should be in place by the end of the year.
- 4.21 **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.**

- 4.22 **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.
- 4.23 **Update:** Five dashboards have been completed and work continues on further using these tools and developing new dashboards. Roll out to managers has been delayed due to the need to develop online training because of the pandemic. Training is expected to roll out in September and October 2020.
- 4.24 **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.**
- 4.25 **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.
- 4.26 **Update:** The repairs team continue to work closely with the New Build Team. Repairs will be recruiting an electrical surveyor specifically to act as a liaison between new build and repairs services. The services continue to work together to ensure new properties and renovated properties are easy to maintain.
- 4.27 **Recommendation 9: The service should explore the use of a diagnostic system which would identify faults remotely for new gas boilers.**
- 4.28 **Response:** The service is investigating the availability of these systems and the practicality of their use within a social housing setting.
- 4.29 **Update:** The Gas Service have looked into current systems on the market but none are currently suitable. The service is continuing to investigate new developments.
- 4.30 **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.**
- 4.31 **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.
- 4.32 **Update:** Repairs, Capital and New build teams continue to work closely in materials specification and design, reviewing suppliers of major parts such as kitchens and roofing materials. Feedback on materials is leading to improvements in the service such as the implementation of self-testing emergency lighting systems that can be remotely monitored.

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:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diarmaid Ward." The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a light grey rectangular background.

**Councillor Diarmaid Ward
Executive Member for Housing and
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