

To: AUDIT, RISK AND SCRUTINY BOARD

On: 29 MAY 2018

Report by: LEAD OFFICER

Heading: REVIEW OF HOUSING REPAIRS BY COUNCIL AND OUTSIDE CONTRACTORS

1. Summary

- 1.1 As part of the annual programme of activity for 2017/18 the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board agreed to undertake a review of Housing repairs by Building Services and outside contractors.
- 1.2 Further scrutiny has taken place of specific areas of interest identified within the Council's repairs process, including:
- The overall customer journey from first contact with the Council to a repair being satisfactorily completed;
 - Identifying root causes of requirement of high numbers of repeat visits to property
 - Consideration of improvements to ICT systems which will reduce duplication of works in the repairs process.
- 1.3 The Housing Asset Services Manager for East Ayrshire Council will provide an overview of their Repairs Service and be available to answer questions from members of the Board.
- 1.4 Head of Facilities Management, Diane Gillies and Head of Development and Housing, Fraser Carlin will present an overview of the Council's current repairs process and how this is being redesigned to meet the future demands of tenants.

- 1.5 Findings of the review are detailed at Section 3 and these have identified that customers do not appear to have significant issues with the quality of repairs being carried out within Council stock. When benchmarked against other Councils with similar numbers of housing stock, customer satisfaction levels within Renfrewshire are not significantly lower than other Councils (with the exception of East Ayrshire Council).
- 1.6 In addition, the findings indicate that the redesign of the repairs service which is currently being undertaken through integration of Building Services and Housing Repairs is likely to have benefits for both customers and the Council, as evidenced from the experience of East Ayrshire Council.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board is asked to:
- Note the overall content of this report
 - Agree the findings of the review, as set out in Section 3 of this report, along with any additional findings arising from information presented to the Board at this meeting
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3. Findings of the Review

- 3.1 The findings of this review have been informed by information gathered from Development & Housing Services and Environment & Communities, participants from Tenant and Resident Associations; East Ayrshire Council; Development & Housing Services and Environment & Communities.
- 3.2 The findings of this review are:
- There was general consensus amongst Tenant and Resident Associations that repairs which are undertaken by both Building Services and outside contractors are completed to a high standard
 - No evidence was found to support the notion that properties are being left in a dangerous and unsafe condition
 - Customer satisfaction rating of 91.4% for 2016/17, against a national average of 86.2%, would support the view that repairs are undertaken to a high standard
 - Integration of all Facilities Management Services, including Housing Repairs is currently progressing through the Better Council Change Programme
 - Completed Right First Time Repairs have improved from 78% in 2013/14 to 94.8% in 2016/17, reflecting the benefits of the ongoing integration process

- Benchmarking against three Councils, with similar levels of housing stock, demonstrated that performance is not dissimilar, with the exception of East Ayrshire Council who report higher customer satisfaction levels
- The 'routine' customer journey at this time is under improvement through the service re-design process; however there are a large number of repeat visits to properties being recorded
- One of the main reasons for high numbers of 'repeat' repairs visits to properties relate to no access visits and boiler/heating issues (35%)
- The integrated approach will simplify procedures and improve repairs monitoring whilst new IT systems will help reduce the number of repeat visits
- East Ayrshire Council have redesigned their Repairs service, which has brought about improvements in services for their customers in addition to efficiencies within the service
- Work within Development and Housing and Environment & Communities is currently taking place to re-design how the repairs service, including Building Services is being delivered in Renfrewshire and to procure new IT systems; leading to improvements in the customer journey and realising efficiencies within the Service areas

3.3 The overall conclusions of this review are that delivery of the repairs service within Renfrewshire Council by Building Services and external contractors is operating satisfactorily, however the redesign which is currently underway will further improve the customer journey and satisfaction levels for our tenants.

4 Issue Raised by Convener Binks at the March 2018 Meeting

4.1 At the last meeting of the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board, additional information was requested in relation to the 2435 'other' repairs within the table at Appendix 1. It has been clarified that these relate to uPVC repair and replacement works on doors and windows. This was included as other works, as there was not a comparable breakdown of trades available from the other Council areas benchmarked.

4.2 Additional information was also requested in relation to the large numbers of gas and plumber related repairs. These are principally related to boiler and heating system repairs, which do account for a significant proportion of repair works undertaken by Building Services. These repairs can be anything from a boiler requiring to be re-set, a drop in pressure or where the tenant has failed to add credit to pre-pay meters. For a period, trades were attending repeat calls but there was no overview of what repair was required and often defective systems or other, related repairs were not being diagnosed. There is now close monitoring of repairs to identify if there are underlying issues which require to be resolved avoiding unnecessary repeat visits.

5. Background

5.1 The Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board agreed that the Review of Housing Repairs by both internal Building Services and outside contractors scrutinise specific areas of interest identified within the Council's repairs process:

- Investigating the overall customer journey from first contact with the Council to a repair being satisfactorily completed
- Identifying root causes of requirement for high numbers of repeat visits to properties
- Considering improvements to ICT systems which will reduce duplication of works in the repairs process.

5.2 Each of these are further discussed in the following sections.

Customer Journey

5.3 Renfrewshire Council has 12,220 properties within its current stock and approximately 70% of these are tenements or flatted properties. The Council's repairs service is delivered by both Building Services, within Environment & Communities and external contractors, on behalf of Development and Housing Services.

5.4 Work is currently ongoing within Building Services and Housing Repairs to improve the mapping process for repairs and IT systems which will improve the process for Council operatives, assist to remove inefficiencies and improve the customer journey.

5.5 Most repairs will continue to be notified via the Council's dedicated Repairs Line within the Customer Contact Centre. On receipt of a call the operative will, using algorithm software, aim to diagnose the likely fault which is being reported. This will allow the repair to be categorised both in terms of stock required at the time of visit and the priority for the repair, in accordance with the published Repairs Policy. The correct diagnosis of repair is dependent on the tenant being able to effectively communicate what the issue is to allow the appropriate trade to attend the call. The contact centre currently receives a high volume of calls (approximately 120,000 per year) regarding repairs and it is considered that there will be a significant reduction in these with the improvements in IT and triaging systems which are being proposed. It is considered that around 30%, or 40,000 calls could be removed, which are often the result of customers phoning for repairs updates or rescheduling repairs that were issued due to access issues.

Repeat Visits to Property

- 5.6 During 2016/17 it was identified that 231 Council properties had more than fifteen repairs carried out during that year and further assessment of the repairs data has identified that there are a number of reasons for some properties requiring such numbers of visits, with multiple factors being involved.
- 5.7 It has been noted that a significant number of properties (42% of the 231) had issues with no access for the tradesperson being obtained, with some requiring up to twelve visits to gain access, which impacts on the repairs numbers as a new job is raised after each visit. In addition it has been noted that a number of return visits are generated where the original job does not properly reflect the work required to be carried out.
- 5.8 Of a total of 4751 repairs undertaken within the 231 properties 30% were gas central heating related. The number of gas related repairs is significant overall and this is closely monitored by Development and Housing Services, taking decisions on if and when to replace boilers. Processes have now been introduced to record the cause of failure and what work any engineer carries out. Most of the properties with identified significant heating system issues have either had the boiler fully repaired, replaced or programmed for replacement. This will reduce the number of repeat visits required in future.
- 5.9 There are also some types of repairs which require multiple trades, with each one requiring a separate job line eg a leak through a ceiling will require a plumber, joiner, electrician and plasterer to address the one repair. This appears as four repairs but is only, in fact, one repair. This issue could be resolved either by training tradespersons to enable minor multi skill tasks to be carried out by one operative or could be addressed through the creation of one job line but this may not be feasible with current IT systems.
- 5.10 Previously the integration of FM work has focussed on soft services and compliance. This further work on housing repairs will create a one stop shop approach and improve the customer journey.

IT Systems

- 5.11 Currently housing repairs are managed through three separate systems which allows the work to flow from receipt of the repair notification to Building Services operatives who then undertake the repairs.
- 5.12 The Customer Contact Centre utilise a repairs diagnostics tool to identify, as far as is possible from the tenant, what the nature of any repair is and this information is the starting point for tasks being created on the systems and the repairs being successfully completed.

- 5.13 The hand-held devices are no longer supported by the developer and are becoming obsolete, with only 80 units currently in use. There are 200 operatives who could make use of these systems and currently the majority of tasks are performed through the use of manually generated run sheets.
- 5.14 There is currently a procurement exercise taking place to provide a mobile platform which will enable all 200 current Building Services operatives the ability to receive tasks in real time. The proposed system will allow operatives the ability to update tasks on site, without the current requirement to return to base to complete forms. Combined with other ongoing projects relating to stocked vans and improved stores operations, the system will provide greater productivity amongst operatives and will ultimately lead to a better customer journey. The new system is proposed to be in place by the end of 2018.
- 5.15 New IT systems will permit some immediate benefits such as the use of reminder texting/emails for customers who have appointable repairs and longer term this is expected to significantly reduce the number of visits which result in no access being gained by operatives, requiring repeat visits.

Customer Satisfaction Results for 2017/18

- 5.16 Repairs performance information was provided in the previous report on 19 March 2018 covering the number of reactive repairs undertaken during 2016/17; a breakdown in the types of repairs; the percentage of repairs completed Right First Time and the overall customer satisfaction level for 2016/17. While results for customer satisfaction levels have yet to be reported to the Scottish Housing Regulator for 2017/18, preliminary indications are that this will be 98.3%, demonstrating a significant improvement on the previous year's result of 91.4%.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** - none
2. **HR & Organisational Development** - none
3. **Community Planning** - none
4. **Legal** - none
5. **Property/Assets** - none
6. **Information Technology** - none
7. **Equality & Human Rights** - The recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human

rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

- 8. **Health & Safety** - none
- 9. **Procurement** - none
- 10. **Risk** - none
- 11. **Privacy Impact** - none
- 12. **Cosla Policy Position** - none

List of Background Papers - none

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