

To: **AUDIT, RISK AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

On: **6 NOVEMBER 2017**

Report by: **LEAD OFFICER**

Heading: **HOUSING REPAIRS BY COUNCIL AND OUTSIDE CONTRACTORS**

1. Summary

- 1.1 At its meeting on 28 August 2017 the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board agreed its annual programme of activity for the Board for 2017/18. The programme included a review of Housing repairs by Council and outside contractors to ensure that high standards of repairs are undertaken with appropriate monitoring and evaluation of repairs to support this.
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2. Recommendations

The Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board is asked to:

- 2.1 Approve the purpose and scope of the review
- 2.2 Approve the provisional timescale as outlined in Appendix A to this report
- 2.3 Delegate powers to the Lead Officer, in consultation with the Convener to alter the timetable having regard to the availability of evidence and witnesses throughout the course of the review
- 2.4 Authorise the Lead Officer to contact any organisations recommended by the Board who may have information useful to the Board and who may be potential witnesses.
- 2.5 Authorise the Lead Officer to make the necessary arrangements to progress the review within the agreed timescales.

3. Background

- 3.1 Renfrewshire Council currently owns 12,200 properties and completed in excess of 54,000 repairs in 2016/17.
- 3.2 The Council has a published repairs policy which is available to all tenants and sets out the role and responsibility for the Council to maintain and repair its housing stock; details the different types of maintenance and repair works; tenants' right to repair and customer satisfaction/complaints process.
- 3.3 Performance monitoring of repairs, including customer satisfaction rates and achieving target timescales are monitored at both operational and strategic levels within the Council. Annual performance returns are submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator (an independent body which is responsible for the regulation of all social landlords in terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010) against Scottish Social Housing Charter indicators. Benchmarking with other social landlords through three independent (Best Value Housing Network; Housemark and APSE) organisations is also undertaken.
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4. Council House Repairs

- 4.1 The Council currently has a housing stock of 12,200 properties and in 2016/17 completed in excess of 54,000 repairs within these, the majority being undertaken by Building Services with the remaining repairs undertaken by specialist contractors.
- 4.2 A £138M capital investment programme to ensure the Council housing stock met the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) concluded in 2015. This programme was delivered over a 5 year period, with various external contractors and Renfrewshire Council Building Services involved in carrying out the work. Post 2015, the capital investment programme is continuing, albeit on a smaller scale, but still includes multi million pound programmes of internal and external improvements works delivered by external contractors and Renfrewshire Council Building Services.
- 4.3 There are six categories of repairs, being:
- Emergency Repairs
 - Qualifying Repairs
 - Urgent and Appointable Repairs
 - Cyclical Maintenance
 - Programmed Repairs, and
 - Planned Replacement Works
- 4.4 Each category of repair has different targets for response and completion of the required works but there are common requirements: where possible, repairs will be completed in one visit; be carried out to a high standard, deliver a 'right first time' service. Where repairs are unable to be completed in one visit, appointments to return and complete the works are agreed with the tenant.

4.5 There is a commitment that where Council staff and external contractors are carrying out works they will:

- Be tidily dressed and wearing a uniform
- Introduce themselves and show identification before entering a property
- Explain the nature of the work and keep the tenant informed about progress with the repair
- Take care to minimise disruption and protect the home and belongings from damage, dust and paint
- Follow Health and Safety requirements, making sure materials and tools do not cause a danger
- Are polite and courteous at all times
- Do not smoke, play radios or use facilities within the property without the tenant's permission
- Remove all work related refuse, tidy up and make sure essential services are connected at the end of each day

4.6 Following completion of repairs, telephone surveys are carried out to ensure that the tenant is satisfied with the quality of the work and the service received. Where tenants are not satisfied on completion of the repair and remain dissatisfied with attempts to resolve this, the formal complaint process can be used to have the matter investigated and a response provided on the investigation will be issued to the tenant.

4.7 When repair works have been completed, monitoring is generally undertaken through the use of customer satisfaction surveys. Higher value works e.g. replacement of garden fencing are visited and assessed by inspectors to ensure their satisfactory quality. With regard to the use of external contractors the Council has stringent monitoring and control measures in place to ensure the quality of works.

5. Purpose of Review

5.1 The key purpose of the review is to consider whether robust procedures are in place to ensure that repairs to Council housing stock are carried out to a high standard; are completed timeously and within set targets; properties are not left in a dangerous condition; that satisfactory monitoring and evaluation of repairs is undertaken and that there are measures in place to address unsatisfactory works by both external contractors and Building Services staff.

5.2 The review will focus on existing practices and strengths and will consider examples of best practice, both within Renfrewshire and at least one neighbouring authority, taking evidence from Council officials and Residents and Tenants Associations.

6. Scope of Review

6.1 In undertaking this review, it is recommended that the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board approves that the Lead Officer:

1. Consults with Development and Housing Services and Building Services to identify the current processes in place to monitor and ensure high standards of work are applied to repairs
2. Invites responses from at least one neighbouring authority on their approach to securing a high standard of repair by external contractors and Council staff.
3. Invites responses from Residents and Tenants Associations on issues where they have concerns regarding the quality of repair works undertaken.

7. Timetable and Witnesses

- 7.1 It is proposed that the review commences at this meeting of the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board and be progressed through subsequent Board meetings with a final report being submitted for approval prior to its submission at a future meeting of the Council.
- 7.2 It is recommended that at least one neighbouring authority and representatives from a tenants and residents association are invited to provide written evidence prior to any meetings with the Board to permit members sufficient time for preparation ahead of the meeting. It is proposed that the Lead Officer takes forward the indicative timetable as set out in Appendix 1 to this report.

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
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List of Background Papers – None

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Appendix 1- Indicative Timescale for Review Process

22 January 2018- Invite representative from Residents and Tenants Associations to present evidence on issues/concerns they have regarding the quality of repair works.

19 March 2018- invite Official from neighbouring local authority to attend Board to present evidence of on their approach to securing a high standard of repair by external contractors and Council staff.

29 May 2018- Appropriate Council Officials representing Development and Housing Services and Building Services attend Board as witnesses to speak to the current position regarding repairs and monitoring/satisfaction.

27 August 2018- Draft report for Council for discussion by the Board

27 September 2018- Final report presented to Council