

To: AUDIT, RISK AND SCRUTINY BOARD

On: 22 JANUARY 2018

Report by: LEAD OFFICER

Heading: REVIEW OF HOUSING REPAIRS BY COUNCIL AND OUTSIDE CONTRACTORS

1. Summary

- 1.1 This paper updates progress on the review of Housing repairs by Council and outside contractors as agreed as part of the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board's annual programme of activity for 2017/18.
- 1.2 The Lead Officer has met with representatives from Tenants and Residents Associations (TRA) across the Council area to gather their thoughts and opinions on the quality of repairs undertaken by Building Services and external contractors, comparing this with information from tenant satisfaction surveys undertaken during 2016/17. A comparison to benchmark other key statistics from the statutory returns with local authorities having similar numbers of housing stock to Renfrewshire has been undertaken.
- 1.3 Initial analysis of information obtained to date through this consultation, review and benchmark process appears to support the general consensus that repairs are carried out timeously and to a high standard, although some instances have been noted where this is not the case.
- 1.4 Ms Shirley McLean, Chair of the Glenburn Tenant and Residents Association has agreed to attend the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board

meeting on 22 January 2018 to provide responses to any questions Board members wish to ask.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board is asked to:

- Note the content of this report and agree its initial conclusions
 - Agree the next steps for the review process
 - Agree to invite local authorities and request the attendance of Senior Officers to the Board meeting on 19 March 2018
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3. Key Points

3.1 The key points to date in the review of housing repairs by Council and External Contractors include:

- Generally positive feedback from Tenant and Residents Associations on the standard and quality of repairs which appears to support the overall satisfaction survey data.
 - Mixed feedback received regarding the quality and standard of repairs by external contractors
 - Potential issues with effective communication of repairs between tenant, Repairs Assessors and Building Services requiring further investigation.
 - Customer satisfaction rate for 2016/17 is 91.4% (approximately 10 % sample) against a national average for local authorities of 86.2%.
 - Completed Right First Time Repairs have risen from 78% in 2013/14 to 94.8% in 2016/17
 - Large differences in volume of repairs undertaken by the Ayrshire authorities and Renfrewshire, albeit that housing stock numbers are very similar.
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4. Next Steps

4.1 A survey of several local authorities who have similar numbers of housing stock to Renfrewshire is currently being progressed which will assist in gaining an understanding of their repairs processes; providing

benchmark standards and to explore examples of best practice. Invites for Senior Officers from these local authorities (North Ayrshire, East Ayrshire and Dundee City Councils) to attend the next Board meeting on 19 March 2018 have been made.

- 4.2 The statistical information within Appendix 4 will be explored to tease out potential reasons for the significant differences between local authority data and seek to identify areas of potential improvement to repair services.
- 4.3 Work to explore the monitoring and evaluation of repairs undertaken by both Building Services and external contractors will take place to assist in informing the Board as the review progresses.
- 4.4 At the next following meeting on 29 May 2018 senior Officers of the Council will be invited to attend to discuss the repairs process within Renfrewshire which will assist the Board in reaching conclusions on the review with a draft final paper being brought to the 27 August 2018 meeting for approval, prior to being taken to the Council meeting on 27 September 2018.

5. Background

- 5.1 The Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board agreed at its last meeting that the Review of Housing Repairs by Council and Outside Contractors is progressed and approved the Lead Officer making contact with Tenant and Residents Associations and other Local Authorities to evidence the quality of repairs which are routinely undertaken on behalf of tenants.
- 5.2 The Lead Officer, with assistance from Officers in Development and Housing Services, prepared a series of questions for Tenant and Residents Association representatives for discussion at two workshops; the Council Repairs Development Group and the Council Wide Tenant Forum meeting. The Tenant and Residents Associations attending these meetings are listed in Appendix 1, with the questions used for the workshops and feedback responses received, in Appendix 2 of this report.
- 5.3 Generally, feedback from the sessions within both meetings was positive in terms of the reactive repairs service operated by the Council and the Council's commitment to getting repairs successfully completed

through the Right First Time approach. Comments were generally complimentary in terms of the response times, quality of repair and the attitude of the tradespersons in attendance.

Key Learning: General positive feedback from tenants supports customer satisfaction survey results.

- 5.4 There were however, some instances described where repairs had not been undertaken to a satisfactory standard or where issues with repeat visits were required to have the repair fully completed. The feedback related to Building Services staff who undertakes the greatest number of repairs within Council stock. One element requiring further analysis relates to communication of repairs between tenants, Housing Repairs Assessors and Building Standards tradespersons which has resulted in the need for multiple visits to have the correct works undertaken.
Key Learning: Potential communication issues between tenants, Repairs Assessors and Building Services to have repairs completed Right First Time.
- 5.5 Feedback concerning external contractors for specialist repair works was more mixed. Some of the Tenant and Residents Association representatives thought that one contractor appeared to receive the bulk of these contracts and there were issues around the time taken to complete repairs with the comment that the company appeared to be over-stretched, taking on too much work. However when the work was undertaken it was generally to a good standard. Other Tenant and Residents Association representatives were of the opinion that works undertaken (by the same contractor) were poor and had caused several issues, examples mentioned included causing blocked drains and on one occasion using a piece of wire to hold up a ceiling. Further investigation of this issue is required through the review.
- 5.6 There was a general consensus that works undertaken through the Capital Investment Programme (which reached its height in 2015) had created the greatest level of dissatisfaction amongst the Tenant and Residents Association representatives. However, complaints about this aspect appeared to be historic and whilst these works continue, they are on a significantly smaller scale from those undertaken previously. Higher levels of complaint would be expected from this programme of works, given their extent and nature.
- 5.7 With in excess of 54,000 reactive repairs being undertaken last year it would be unrealistic to expect that these would all be undertaken without incident. It is important that there is a recognition that things

can, and do go wrong but that robust procedures have been put in place to address issues and to continuously improve services for tenants. Further work looking at processes to address quality and standards of repair which will avoid future repeat issues is required and will be taken forward within the review.

- 5.8 Monitoring of minor repairs is undertaken via customer satisfaction surveys and there is a reliance on tenants reporting unsatisfactory repairs which will require a re-visit to address these. More significant levels of work and those undertaken by external contractors are monitored through Housing Maintenance Officers and assessors visiting to inspect the works and ensure that these have been carried out to satisfactory/contractually agreed standards. Works are subject to recall visits to rectify any defects. Works undertaken by Building Services can be traced back to individual tradespersons and any identified issues with the quality of work can be discussed with the tradesperson to determine and address the root cause of the issue eg training/ supervision.
- 5.9 Works undertaken by external contractors are subject to penalty clauses within contract documents where the works are considered unsatisfactory or completion dates have been missed. Further work to consider whether the penalties are effective in driving improvement will be undertaken within the review.
- 5.10 During the financial year 2016/17, 54,274 (emergency and non-emergency) reactive repairs were carried out within Council stock. Customer satisfaction surveys carried out for Development and Housing Services, have recorded a satisfaction rate of 91.4% from a sample of 10% of tenants who had a repair undertaken during that financial year. This equated to 4477 tenants from a sample survey of 4898, with 402 stating they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the repair and 19 expressing dissatisfaction with the repair undertaken. If the 402 tenants who expressed neither satisfaction/dissatisfaction are removed from the figures, the satisfaction rate would rise to 99.7%. Some of the stated reasons by tenants taken from the customer satisfaction surveys for both satisfaction and dissatisfaction have been provided within Appendix 3. Completed Right First Time Repairs have risen from 78% in 2013/14 to 94.8% in 2016/17 whilst customer satisfaction has ranged from 78% in 2013/14 through to 96.6% in 2015/16 and dropped slightly to 91.4% last year.

Key Learning: Customer satisfaction rate for 2016/17 is 91.4% (approximately 10 % sample) against a national average for local authorities of 86.2%.

- 5.11 Returns from all Scottish local authorities are submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator on an annual basis. Those submitted by Renfrewshire Council have been examined and comparisons undertaken with local authorities having similar council house stock numbers including, North Ayrshire Council, East Ayrshire Council, Dundee City Council and West Dunbartonshire Council to provide the Board with relevant information to consider the performance of Renfrewshire Council against these other authorities. The comparison results are tabulated within Appendix 4 to the report and from these it can be seen that overall satisfaction rates are lower within Renfrewshire but not significantly so, other than East Ayrshire Council's rate of 98.7% (closer examination of the details of EAC 's returns shows that they have calculated their satisfaction numbers slightly differently and applying this process to Renfrewshire's numbers, would equate to a satisfaction rate of 99.7%).
- Key Learning:** Significant differences in repair numbers from the Ayrshire local authorities which require further investigation to determine the reasons for this.
- 5.12 From the statistical data, it is evident that there are large differences in the volume of repairs carried out within Renfrewshire (and Dundee) compared with the two Ayrshire authorities, notwithstanding that the housing stock numbers are very similar. The Ayrshire authorities undertook 15-20,000 fewer repairs across their properties than in Renfrewshire. It is also noted that Renfrewshire and Dundee both have a high volume of flats/tenements, being in excess of 70%, compared with 30-40% in the Ayrshire authorities and further work to determine whether this or other reasons, are contributing factors to these numbers.
- 5.13 Appendix 5 to this report offers some questions which the Board may think useful to explore with the representative from the Tenant and Residents Association.

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** - none
 - (a) 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

Author: Colin Hunter
Environmental Improvements Manager, Environment & Communities

Tel: 0141 618 7598

Email: colin.hunter@renfrewshire.gov.uk

Appendix 1- List of Tenants and Residents Associations Consulted at the Repairs Development Group/Council Wide Tenant Forum

Charleston Tenant and Residents Association

Bridge of Weir Tenant and Residents Association Gallowhill Tenant and Residents Association

Glenburn Tenant and Residents Association Johnstone Castle Tenant and Residents Association

Maxwellton Court Tenant and Residents Association Provost Close TRA

Quarrelton Tenant and Residents Association

Spateston Tenant and Residents Association

Appendix 2- Housing Repair Questions Put to Tenant and Residents Associations and Responses Received

Discussion questions

1. Can you provide examples of housing repairs carried out to a satisfactory standard (either in your own property or for any member of your association)

- what was the type of repair, who carried it out (council or outside contractor), when was it completed, reasons for satisfaction?

Group 1	Group 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick • Efficient • Flooding from shower above. Attended very quickly and fixed. • Neighbour had been locked out. Job attended to quickly and very happy with the repair. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heating issue – operative out within 20 minutes • Generally fast call out response

2. Can you provide examples of housing repairs that were **not** carried out to a satisfactory standard (either in your own property or for any member of your association)

- what was the type of repair, who carried it out (council or outside contractor), when was it completed
- why were you or the tenant dissatisfied, how was this dealt with and resolved?

Group 1	Group 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue getting gutters cleared • Several visits to correctly fix water penetration near window • Issues arising from trying to repair older homes where 'fitting' is no longer manufactured. • Boiler replacement. 2 apprentices attended and fitted thermostat in wrong place. Can't get at this without removing whole water cylinder if there are any issues. • Ballcock replacement. 4 plumbers, a supervisor and three prior attempts to replace before finally the ballcock and siphon were replaced and resolved issue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue with the amount of time on phone in order repairs • Issue in trying to get lift repaired in Maxwellton Court

3. Are you aware of the Council's commitment to carry out repairs 'right first time'? Do you feel that the Council is meeting that commitment?

Group 1	Group 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes. All were aware of the policy and think that, in the main, this is being met 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible now • Marked improvement over the past 2 years

4. In general do you think that repairs carried out by Building Services are completed to a high standard?

Group 1	Group 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Services – Yes. Carried out to a good standard • Contractors – No (specifically relating to one contractor) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operatives – very polite

5. There are certain types of specialist repairs which Building Services are unable to do so we may ask an external contractor to carry them out e.g. door entry repairs, rotworks, drainage etc. In general do you think that repairs carried out by external contractors are carried out to a high standard?

Group 1	Group 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contractors – No (specifically relating to one contractor) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • poor (caused blocked drains) • Example mentioned where a piece of wire was holding up ceiling

6. Thinking of the whole repairs process from reporting your repair to repair completion, are there any areas of the process which you feel could be improved?

Group 1	Group 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues with getting through on phone to report repairs • Repair Assessors often don't listen to tenants regards what repairs are required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would like opportunity to describe repair over phone

Appendix 3- Customer Satisfaction Survey Comments on Repairs

Positive

- Lady happy with the small repairs in her property, able to open and close the windows with ease and nothing seems to be loose or insecure. All went well in the repair.
- Tenant was not in when the repair was carried out, however, she is satisfied with the reporting procedure of repairs and is happy with the quality of work carried out by electrician.
- tenant's partner confirmed plumber appeared early on previous day and that she was happy with repair carried out and no problems had arisen again.
- Tenant thought that the joiner attended for this job was very courteous and helpful. He answered any questions that the tenant had about job and she advises that work was completed very quickly, with no mess left behind.
- Tenant is happy at how quickly the repair was fixed. The gas engineer that attended was friendly and helpful and she thought that the telephone service was easy to use.
- Tenant happy with engineer's repair to small leak coming from boiler, engineer appeared in good timing and resolved problem. Tenant delighted with housing repair service.
- Tenant thought that the joiner carried out work to a great quality. He didn't experience any issues with the service at all and is very happy with how quickly the repair was carried out.
- Tenant has used the housing repair service quite a few times, and she has had no issues with each of these times. Tenant thought that the plumber that attended for this job was very polite and friendly.
- tenant advised he thought about forcing window shut but knew he may of damaged it more, happy with specialist guy who came out and fixed it, window opening and shutting again.

Negative

- Tenant thought that the housing repairs process was quite lengthy for them however, apart from this they are happy with the service received.
- Tenant has been having on going issues with this repair - it has been reported previously and the joiner was unable to repair it. The same joiner has attended again and advised the same thing. Tenant feels a bit frustrated with the service, and doesn't feel that the information he has given has been put on the system properly. He advised that the joiner carried out a good job on his other repair.
- Customer was very unhappy with the attitude of the electrician. (tnt has made complaint). Very rude with answers to questions and rude to family members in home.
- Tenant is satisfied with work completed on this occasion, however, in the past he has previously been unsatisfied with the service received and he is unhappy with the reporting process for housing repairs, as he advises that in the past his repairs have been missed or their is a long timescale for them.
- Tenant advises that the plumber attended to fit a new shower curtain, however, she is not satisfied with work carried out, as the shower curtain is still unsuitable for her needs. Tenant is going to report back over to housing repairs.

Appendix 4- Customer Satisfaction Comparison with Selected Local Authorities (2016/17 Scottish Housing Regulator Returns)

	Renfrewshire	North Ayrshire	East Ayrshire	Dundee
Housing Stock Numbers	12,220	12,986	12,529	12,582
% of Flats in Housing Stock	71%	37%	44%	74%
No. Reactive complaints completed 2016/17	54,276	32,085	38,498	54,247
Repairs by Trade*		To be confirmed	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
Electrics	5,777			
Gas	10,907			
Joiner	5,204			
Plumber	8,442			
Plaster Works	2,390			
uPVC Works	2,051			
Other	1,240			
Average Cost of Repairs (excluding Programmed Repairs)	£80.10	To be confirmed	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
Average Cost of Repairs (including Programmed Repairs)	£216.29	To be confirmed	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
Number of Tenants Surveyed	To be confirmed	To be confirmed	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
Number of Tenant Responses	4898	730	2641	428
% Repairs Completed Right First Time	94.8%	98.4%	84.6%	73.7%
% Satisfaction with Repairs	91.4%	93%	98.7%	95.3%

*Repairs by Trade from Right First Time Data

Appendix 5- Potential Questions for the Tenant and Resident Association Representative

- From your experience, how would you personally rate the Council Repairs service?
- Several comments from Tenant and Residents Associations have referred to the repairs process being lengthy. Would you agree with this comment and what would you recommend as options to improve the experience?
- Is there any specific type of repair which you consider to be the cause for most concern?
- The overall satisfaction rate for the Repairs Service is 91.4% from last year. Do you think this would reflect the general feeling amongst tenants?
- Would you agree that the Council's commitment to undertaking repairs 'Right First Time' is raising the standard and quality of repairs?
- Would you be surprised that North Ayrshire Council had 20,000 fewer repairs and East Ayrshire Council had 15,000 fewer repairs than that in Renfrewshire, despite having similar numbers of Council properties?
- Can you suggest any reasons why this could be the case?
- Is there anything which you would wish to see changed and improved regarding the Repairs Service offered?
- Equally, is there anything which you would wish not to see changed?
- Are there any particular areas of the repairs service which give you or tenants cause for concern?
- Do you have any opinion on the adequacy or, otherwise of monitoring and review of repairs?
- From our tenant's survey, 4898 responded and of those 402 tenants didn't express either being satisfied or dissatisfied with their repair. Are you surprised by this number and do you have any thoughts on why so many tenants didn't express a view?
- Are there any other comments which you would wish to make regarding the Council's Repairs Service?