

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Response to the Tenant &amp; Resident Scrutiny Panel on responsive repairs</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>			
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Executive Director, Environment, Development and Housing</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Glyn Huelin</b>	<b>Tel: 01273 293306</b>
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<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

### FOR GENERAL RELEASE

#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 This report sets out the Housing response to the recommendations of the Tenant & Resident Scrutiny Panel in their report on responsive repairs. That report can be found at Appendix 1.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the committee notes the evidence, findings and recommendations of the Tenant & Resident Scrutiny Panel relating to the responsive repairs service.
- 2.2 That the committee agrees the actions proposed in this report in response to the Tenant & Resident Scrutiny Panel's recommendations.

#### 3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Tenant & Resident Scrutiny Panel was set up in April 2013. The scrutiny review on Responsive Repairs is the panel's third scrutiny panel and was selected after analysing responses to tenant surveys submitted to the panel, with over half of the responses suggesting this as an area for scrutiny.
- 3.2 The scope of the panel was to:
- Focus on the repairs pathway for tenants when reporting a fault, right up to completion and for the feedback process afterwards.
  - Visit the Mears Repairs Helpdesk to listen into telephone calls and find out how the service operated; how are jobs prioritised?
  - Carry out visits with operatives to see how well the repair is fixed and how the tenant found the experience.
  - See if the responsive repairs service were meeting the needs of its residents by looking at tenant satisfaction data. To see how tenant satisfaction was received, recorded and used to improve the service. The panel also wanted to find out whether the council was carrying out sufficient monitoring itself of the repairs service
  - Identify if there were any improvements that the service could make.

3.3 The Housing team would like to thank members of the panel for their hard work reviewing the service. All officers and Mears staff found the input of the panel a valuable challenge and welcome the opportunity to share how the service operates with residents.

#### 4. RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS

##### 4.1 Recommendation one

4.2 ***The panel recommends that as part of their training and induction, the Repairs Helpdesk staff should spend time with repairs operatives so that they can get a better understanding what is involved in the various repairs jobs and the average time taken. Both new and existing helpdesk staff should shadow plumbers, carpenters and electricians, and any other staff who may be regularly involved.***

4.3 This recommendation is agreed in full and work is underway to implement it commencing in October 2015.

4.4 As the panel has identified the relationship between diagnosis (carried out by Repairs Helpdesk staff) and carrying out repairs is critical to delivering a right first time service to residents.

4.5 This recommendation will support the development of Repairs Helpdesk staff as the main contact point for residents with repairs enquiries. The recommendation has been fully agreed by Mears and will be monitored by the Partnership Core Group.

##### 4.6 Recommendation two

4.7 ***The panel recommend that resident assessors are used to assess a percentage of the completed repairs, to get a fuller assessment of these repairs. The panel believes that by having another tenant visiting in person, it would lead to a more open discussion about the standard of the repair and increase the feedback for BHCC and Mears. The panel would expect that the assessors are able to choose for themselves the homes they visit to assess completed repairs and the number of assessments carried out.***

4.8 ***It might be necessary to increase the capacity of the resident assessor scheme to enable more assessments to take place. It would be sensible to use the existing expertise of tenants and leaseholders, e.g. for ex-builders to assess repairs.***

4.9 This recommendation is agreed in part and the council has been working with Resident Inspectors (previously Resident Assessors) to develop this initiative across the repairs service, however the recommendations around Resident Inspectors visiting in person and choosing which properties to visit present specific risk management concerns and it is not recommended that this is implemented.

- 4.10 The detail of the report from this scrutiny panel indicates that improvements can be made to how the service engages with residents and uses feedback to improve. The partnership has successfully integrated learning from complaints to change processes and improve customer service over the last few years. The council is developing the Resident Inspector programme and recognises that this programme should be effectively integrated into the responsive repairs service and also needs to operate with the existing Home Service Improvement Group.
- 4.11 Over the last six months existing Resident Inspectors, members of the Home Service Improvement Group and officers have been working to improve the Resident Inspectors project, increase the opportunities for residents to get involved and identify recommendations for where the service can improve.
- 4.12 Resident Inspectors meet together six times a year to identify what inspections they wish to carry out and to feedback to the Home Service Improvement Group. The inspectors are looking at a sample of empty properties before re-letting, reviewing sheltered scheme projects from a resident perspective, and contacting residents who have recently had a repair completed to get feedback on the service.
- 4.13 An article will be published in the autumn edition of Homing In to ask for more residents to join the Resident Inspector project and this will also be publicised through resident associations and online.
- 4.14 The recommendation includes details about visiting residents in their homes which has implications around health and safety, data protection, management of the clients of concern register and safeguarding. It would not be appropriate for resident inspectors to have access to repairs details for other residents and to select which properties to visit and further the council has specific controls and processes around safeguarding residents and staff which could not operate effectively under this model. An alternative way of enabling resident to resident discussion about the service may be to arrange a session with a number of residents that have had recent repairs to identify what went well and what could be improved.
- 4.15 Recommendation three**
- 4.16 *Panel members are aware that there are no current estate inspections such as Rate Your Estate. This scheme was a useful way of recording residents' concerns against a set of maintenance and appearance standards that were shared across the city. The panel recommends that this scheme is reintroduced with sufficient resources in order to enable residents to raise concerns about their estate. This will help to identify hotspots where there are problems such as fly-tipping, abandoned vehicles etc.***
- 4.17 The council operates a regular estate inspection programme throughout the city which residents can and do attend, therefore this recommendation is not agreed.
- 4.18 Residents on the Neighbourhood & Community Service Improvement Group are continuing to look at ways to maximise the involvement of residents in addressing issues on their estates, including using new technology to highlight

issues such as fly tipping, abandoned vehicles, and anti-social behaviour quickly so that the council can respond in a timely way.

- 4.19 The Rate Your Estate scheme was trialled as part of the Turning the Tide pilot in 2011 alongside the Housing and Estates Forum. Evaluation of the Rate Your Estate scheme identified that whilst the approach was popular with some resident representatives in the pilot area, there was a lack of response and poor engagement with local residents and resident representatives in other parts of the city, despite a proactive recruitment and training campaign. The scheme was not accessible to all communities/residents and was also a very resource-intensive model.
- 4.20 The Housing and Estates Forum brought together service providers at a neighbourhood level which residents found useful. The Council are currently looking at neighbourhood models as part of the Co-operative Council agenda and will use previous learning to determine future models.
- 4.21 The council is consulting on development of a new Asset Management Strategy which will be taken through a future committee and will include consideration of repairs and maintenance to communal areas and how this can link into the existing estate inspection programme.

## **5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 The panel sought resident input into this scrutiny through a survey and through meetings with residents at the Home Service Improvement Group.
- 5.2 This report was on the agenda for noting at the four Area Panel meetings in September 2015 before going to Housing & New Homes Committee. The Tenant & Resident Scrutiny Panel report directly to Housing & New Homes Committee. Comments were made at Area Panel meetings as follows:

### Central Area Panel – 18/09/15

- Question – How did the panel engage with the Core Group that manages the service? Answer – The panel attended a meeting of the Core Group (30/09/14), the Partnership Group (22/09/14) and the Home Service Improvement Group (10/02/15) for residents.
- Comment – There are some cases of scaffolding being left up for extended periods of time. Response – There have been changes around how scaffolding is managed by Mears with all sites now tracked by one supervisor. If residents have concerns please can they contact the repairs desk and Mears will investigate.
- Question – There are more issues with Sub-contractors than Mears operatives, how is this being managed? Answer – There is a robust process for managing sub-contractors with a regular review undertaken and a clear process in place for managing sub-contractors. If sub-contractors fall short of the standards that are required they are removed from the contract.
- Comment – More should be made of the Estate Inspections as these could be valuable in addressing repairs to communal areas. Response – This will be noted and fed in to the Estate Inspection review work that

residents on the Neighbourhood & Community Service Improvement Group are doing.

#### East Area Panel – 21/09/15

- Comment - Repairs desk is really good but out of hours there are sometimes issues with job numbers being given to residents. Response – This was noted and is in the business plan for the Core Group to review this year.
- Comment - Tenant involvement is really important for this contract and how it is managed. Response – Residents sit on the main Core Group that manages the contract and the Home Service Improvement Group keeps the service under review.
- Comment – Contract has lots of added value and needs to be an approach of enhancing what is in the contract as a baseline. Response – Agreed, commitments such as apprenticeships and resident involvement are key parts of the contract.

#### West Area Panel – 22/09/15

- Comment – Feedback that there are issues with sub-contractors and communication on particular schemes. Response – Feedback will go direct to project managers. There is a robust process for managing sub-contractors with a regular review undertaken and a clear process is in place for managing sub-contractors. If sub-contractors fall short of the standards that are required they are removed from the contract. Mears are reducing their reliance on sub-contractors wherever possible and have increased the number of directly employed operatives in a number of areas.
- Question – How many levels of sub-contracting are allowed? Answer – The contract is very clear that only one level of sub-contracting is allowed.
- Question – How do the panel decide which areas of the service to review? Answer – Feedback of residents is important, can give comments direct to the scrutiny panel.
- Comment - Role of estate inspections is important and should pick up issues such as blocked guttering and gullies. Response – Agreed, very important way of quickly addressing concerns and issues. This will be noted and fed in to the review work that residents on the Neighbourhood & Community Service Improvement Group are doing.

#### North Area Panel – 28/09/15

- Comment – Concerns around the effectiveness of estate inspections and issues don't appear to be addressed in the area. Response – Take this seriously and should be being dealt with, visit being arranged to see issues on the estate with the Head of Service.
- Question – Did the scope of this scrutiny panel work cover the Estates Service and Neighbourhood Response Team. Answer – No, the panel focused on the Responsive Repair service delivered by Mears.

## 6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 This report sets out the actions proposed by Housing alongside the recommendations in the Tenant & Resident Scrutiny Panel's report on the responsive repairs service.

## 7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

### 7.1 Financial Implications:

There are no direct financial implications to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget from the actions recommended in this report. The actions proposed can be met within existing HRA budgets.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Susie Allen*

*Date: 9/10/15*

### 7.2 Legal Implications:

The approved ways of working for the Tenant Scrutiny Panel provide for the Panel's recommendations to be presented to the Housing and New Homes Committee. That Committee has to agree a response to the report/recommendations.

*Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley*

*Date: 07/10/15*

### 7.3 Equalities Implications:

There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report.

### 7.4 Sustainability Implications:

There are no direct sustainability implications arising from this report.

### 7.5 Crime & Disorder Implications:

There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

### 7.6 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

There are significant risks around residents visiting other residents independently in their homes which are detailed in 4.14 and below and as result this element of the recommendation from the scrutiny panel is not recommended for implementation.

In particular the council operates a range of controls around resident information to comply with data protection responsibilities and it would not be appropriate to share information on clients of concern, recent repairs, tenure and address with other residents. In addition the council has a duty of care to ensure the safety of both staff and residents which is supported by detailed processes, risk management controls and working arrangements. A client of concern register is in operation to manage safety and access to this register could not be given to residents. Independent resident visits into the home to inspect repairs would not

be covered by these controls and would present significant risk to residents involved.

7.7 Public Health Implications:

There are no direct public health implications arising from this report.

7.8 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

There are no direct Corporate or Citywide implications arising from this report.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

**Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Tenant & Resident Scrutiny Panel Report

**Documents in Members' Rooms**

None

**Background Documents**

None

