

**Report of the Chief Executive**

**HOUSING REPAIRS REVIEW UPDATE**

1. Purpose of report

To update committee on the actions taken following the Housing Repairs review

2. Background

In January 2020, Housing Committee approved the recommendations of the Housing Repairs review that had been completed by the Council's Commercial Manager.

3. Detail

The Housing Repairs Review set out 7 aims for the service, and under the heading of those aims 88 recommendations to be reviewed. The actions were split into three categories: Short term (within 6 months of April 2020); Medium term (within 12 months of April 2020) and Long term (over 1 year from April 2020).

As can be seen from the summary in the appendix, progress has been made with many of the actions, however the impact of Covid-19 has delayed the implementation of some of the actions:

- 9 actions have been fully completed
- 48 actions are currently being progressed
- 31 actions have not yet started

4. Financial implications

The financial implications of the recommendations were outlined in the report presented to committee in January. To date, no further financial implications have been identified.

**Recommendation**

**The Committee is asked to NOTE the report.**

Background papers

Nil

## APPENDIX

***Aim 1: Develop three fully costed service delivery models which will meet business requirements and are adaptable to changes in regulation***

The delivery model was approved at Housing Committee in January 2020. This proposed retaining the existing service but identified some improvements that were required. The review confirmed that the current service meets business requirements and is adaptable to changes in regulation. The Repairs Service has demonstrated how adaptable it can be during the last nine months. The service has needed to change how work is planned and completed, ensuring that emergency repairs continued to be completed to keep tenants safe, whilst remaining compliant with frequently changing government guidance.

The Repairs Service already utilises reports generated through the Housing Management System. The review recommended that the increase use of these reports could help manage the service. Work has commenced to identify areas where reporting is underutilised and some new reports have already been developed and are in use. A full review of where system generated reports could provide further statistical information to aid performance monitoring has been undertaken and a suite of performance reports is currently being developed.

Repairs Operatives have been provided with training to improve the use of their mobile tablets and give them a better understanding of the impact of how they record information on performance monitoring.

***Aim 2: Achieve top quartile performance in customer satisfaction and value for money***

The Customer Care and Workmanship Standards have been reviewed and re-issued to Repairs employees. A reminder has been added to the agenda for the regular 'toolbox talks' meetings with Repairs operatives. A version for the Council website is being developed and will be available shortly.

The review recommended that 10% of all jobs are quality inspected. A form to complete this task has been produced, however due to restrictions this has not been fully rolled out. This links with the reporting improvements previously mentioned, as these improvements will allow different types of jobs to be identified and will provide summary reports once completed.

The recruitment of a temporary Quantity Surveyor to implement a new Schedule of Rates will be progressed in early 2021.

***Aim 3: Ensure the service is efficient, effective and can expand its scope***

Employees from Housing Repairs and the Contact Centre now meet on a monthly basis. Through these meetings a Service Level Agreement has been discussed and a template agreed. A new script for the Contact Centre, and updated training notes are also being developed. Prior to Covid-19 workshadowing between members of the two teams had begun, to develop an understanding of the work of both teams. Positive feedback was given by those who participated and this will be continue

when it is again possible. The Contact Centre have identified two 'champions' for the Repairs service. They attend the monthly meetings and provide direct training and support to new employees in the Contact Centre on repairs issues.

A number of improvements in the way that out of hours calls are dealt with were recommended in the review. Many of these have been implemented, including identifying any calls to the out of hours teams as calls from Broxtowe Borough Council. Changes to internal processes have also been implemented, for example all repairs reported via e-mail now receive an automated response providing information on how their repair request will be dealt with. The Repairs team are working with the Contact Centre champions to further explore how this can be developed to provide more information.

A number of training courses were recommended. Due to the type of training, these are often delivered best when people can complete training face-to-face or out on site, for these reasons much of the training has been delayed until this is possible.

The review recommended that a publicity campaign be launched in the first half of 2020, to remind tenants about their repair responsibilities. It was felt that this would not be the right time to promote this and both the Repairs and Communications teams have been engaged with Covid-19 related work. An appropriate time in 2021 will be identified for a publicity campaign to be undertaken.

Another recommendation was a pilot on zonal working, where operatives focus on one area of the borough over a specified time period to complete non-urgent work. Although this has not been undertaken as originally intended, this is how the backlog of work from Covid-19 was addressed. This has provided some insight into the benefits of working in this way. A full pilot as intended will hopefully be completed in early Summer 2021.

A number of recommendations regarding the use of Stores were included in the review. Many of these actions were identified as medium to long term and will be reviewed early 2021.

On 29th September 2020, Personnel Committee approved the new role of Head of Asset Management. This will bring together Housing Repairs and Capital Works into one department. This was a key recommendation of the Repairs Review.

***Aim 4: Ensure that costs can be accurately recharged to leaseholders and where necessary to tenants***

The review identified that establishment of a sinking fund may be a good solution for leaseholders. The review acknowledged that this would be a long term action, which would be challenging as it would require legal advice and changes to lease agreements. This is continuing to be considered.

***Aim 5: Have fully engaged with members of the Housing Repairs Team in the development of the models***

This was achieved during the review and there were no further actions recommended.

***Aim 6: Ensure that the Repairs Service can retain and attract a skilled workforce***

The review recommended that a skills audit was completed to identify any gaps and to support future succession planning. The review also recommended that apprenticeships be considered. Further work has identified that the range of works currently undertaken by the Housing Repairs team do not cover the full range required to complete an apprenticeship. This may be possible in the future once the Asset Management department is established.

Work regarding vans and out of hours rota has not been progressed at this time. It was acknowledged in the report that this would be a long term action and that it is challenging.

The review made some recommendations regarding operative uniforms. These have been implemented and operatives have been supplied with new uniform for summer months.

***Aim 7: Ensure effective technology underpins the Housing Repairs Service***

Meetings have been held with the software provider of the Council's Housing Management System to discuss the cost and possible implementation of the additional functionality recommended in the review. Some of features will be available as part of the next upgrade of the system. A demonstration of the Customer Portal has also been provided to enable the management team to consider if this provides an adequate solution.

System improvements have been made, such as the provision of warranty information from the Capital Works team. This is now held within the Housing Management System so that all teams can see it easily.

The review recommended an increase in the use of e-mail and text messages rather than letters. Due to the lack of office presence due to Covid-19 these methods are being used much more than before. Further work is required to ensure that a high level of service is still being maintained.