

Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 20 February 2024

Housing Repairs Right First Time (PL2306) – Service Area Response

Executive/routine
Wards

All

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee is asked to:
 - 1.1.1 Note the service area response and actions taken to date to address the risks raised in the Internal Audit report on Housing Repairs Right First Time; and
 - 1.1.2 Refer this report, with the associated Internal Audit report, to Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee for information.

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Executive Director of Place

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Housing Repairs Right First Time (PL2306) – Service Area Response

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report accompanies the Internal Audit report on Housing Repairs Right First Time (PL2306) and provides a summary of the actions taken by the Housing and Homelessness service in response to the audit findings.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council is responsible for the maintenance of all homes owned by the Council and let out to Council tenants.
- 3.2 There are three categories of repairs which the Council carries out:
- 3.2.1 Responsive repairs – these are reactive repairs which can be planned or emergency;
 - 3.2.2 Planned maintenance – these are generally upgrades and improvements to existing homes; and
 - 3.2.3 Maintenance and Electrical – this includes gas and fire safety works, adaptations and lift repairs.
- 3.3 The Council is required to report performance to the Scottish Housing Regulatory (SHR) annually. Within the Scottish Social Housing Charter, indicator 10 considers the performance of the Council in respect of completion of reactive repairs and requires landlords to report on the percentage of reactive repairs carried out in the last year which were completed right first time.
- 3.4 Internal Audit has assessed the adequacy of design and operating effectiveness of the key controls established to ensure the Council's approach and performance are in line with the criteria for indicator 10 of the Scottish Social Housing Charter.
- 3.5 The overall assessment of Internal Audit is that Limited Assurance was provided, with significant design and operating effectiveness gaps identified in the procedures and controls around performance management and reporting and contract management.

- 3.6 While the overall assessment found Limited Assurance, Internal Audit did identify some areas of good practice, including:
- 3.6.1 The numerous accessible ways for tenants to report repairs;
 - 3.6.2 Total Mobile provides an easy and efficient process for allocating and updating jobs;
 - 3.6.3 Regular monitoring and reporting of repair targets and communication to officers; and
 - 3.6.4 Significant reduction in operative appointment waiting times.

4. Main report

Service Area Response to Internal Audit Findings

- 4.1 The service area is concerned by the findings of the audit and has committed to early action to address the findings and provide an appropriate level of assurance for the working practices which were subject to the audit. Accordingly, a range of management actions are identified in the audit report.
- 4.2 The audit findings also support proposed changes to the organisational structure of the Housing and Homelessness Service. An organisational review consultation is currently underway, with consultation closing on 28 March 2024. The draft structure proposes four Heads of Service, including a Head of Housing Services and Head of Strategy, Commissioning and Service Improvement.
- 4.3 In Housing Services, the proposed structure includes four Locality Housing Managers, a Tenant Safety Manager and a Senior Repairs Manager all reporting to the Head of Service. The proposal deliberately aligns responsibility for repairs alongside local housing teams.
- 4.4 The proposed Head of Strategy, Commissioning and Service Improvement will manage a consolidated Commissioning and Contracts team, responsible for effective strategic management and commissioning of internal and external services across the Housing and Homelessness service. The postholder will work alongside a proposed Service Improvement Manager to ensure effective implementation of operational improvements where required.
- 4.5 Following receipt of the audit findings, the Service Director for Housing and Homelessness commissioned an internal review of how repairs are identified, commissioned, managed and reported to ensure robust processes and procedures are put in place moving forward.
- 4.6 The Service Director has also agreed with the Chief Internal Auditor that a Value for Money review on housing repairs will be progressed as part of the internal audit programme for 2024/25 to ensure best value is being achieved within the service area.

Progress with Management Actions

4.7 There are 14 audit findings, across five audit areas arising from this review. In response, the service has agreed the following management actions. A short summary of progress so far is also provided.

Action Title	Summary of Action	Status Update
1.1 Procedure note aligned to SHR Technical Guidance	A procedure note will be produced to ensure the data provided to the Scottish Housing Regulator is accurate	Procedure note is currently being drafted.
1.2 Defined procedure to be established to accurately identify recalls	A manual workaround will be implemented while an automated process is developed	Process currently being developed.
1.3 Data quality and completeness checks to be introduced	These will now be implemented.	Data quality checks to be introduced.
1.4 Notify the Scottish Housing Regulator about the inaccuracy of historical data	The Scottish Housing Regulator will be contacted and informed	Officers met with the Scottish Housing Regulator on 25.01.2024 and followed up with email confirmation. Officers have committed to keeping the Regulator updated at regular monthly meetings.
2.1 Contractor Performance Monitoring	This will be addressed through the organisational review of the Housing and Homelessness Service and the proposed creation of a commissioning and contract management team.	An organisational review consultation is currently underway, with consultation closing on 28.03.2024. Once a new structure is in place, the remaining actions will be progressed.
2.2 Process to monitor operative and contractor performance	A process will be established.	An internal review of processes and practices has been commissioned. This will support the development of processes to monitor performance.

2.3 Contractor meeting arrangements	This will be addressed through the organisational review of the Housing and Homelessness Service and the proposed creation of a commissioning and contract management team.	Monthly contract management meetings are already in place and performance is discussed. Arrangements to record these meetings have now been introduced, in advance of any changes arising from the organisational review.
3.1 Documented quality assurance and post inspection programme	This will be addressed through the organisational review of the Housing and Homelessness Service.	An organisational review consultation is currently underway, with consultation closing on 28.03.2024.
3.2 Documented procedure for approvals/verification of repairs	Documented procedure to be developed.	Defined tolerance thresholds are in place. Guidance and training will be developed to ensure consistency of review/approval.
3.3 Stock monitoring procedures	Documented procedure to be developed.	Development of this procedure is underway.
3.4 Review of sample of invoices	A process to sample check invoices for recalled jobs will be introduced.	This process will be developed.
4.1 Review of risks	A review of risks will be undertaken, and the service area risk register updated. If required, risks will be escalated.	A review of the risks related to Repairs Right First Time is underway and the service area risk register will be updated.
5.1 Review Information for Customers	The website will continue to be reviewed and updated regularly.	The website is regularly reviewed and updated. A further review will be completed by the end of March 2024.
5.2 Repairs Policy	An owner will be identified for the Repairs policy. The policy will be reviewed for accuracy and updated accordingly.	This is underway now.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Evidence of completion of actions will be uploaded to the Team Mate platform for review by Internal Audit colleagues. Actions may be subject to future checks as part of the annual audit plan to ensure that controls remain in place and effective.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The actions in this report have no impact on Council budgets, however, the strengthening of controls identified will assist with the implementation of sound governance. As noted above, the Service Director has also commissioned a value for money review of housing repairs to ensure best value in the future.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 There are no direct equality or poverty impacts arising from the findings of this audit. It is acknowledged however that the Council's housing stock of c20,500 homes, including a majority of homes situated within areas of multiple deprivation. This assessment includes a range of factors including income, educational attainment, and health outcomes. Around one in five children in the city are living in poverty, many of which are in Council homes. It is also clear that under the Scottish Government's Child Poverty outcomes, there is a significant correlation between these outcomes and those in social housing.
- 7.2 Delivery of quality social housing for those who seek it, including property repairs, and the achievement of best value through commissioning and contracting work in Council homes, can have provide both important benefits to tenants and long term investment in housing stock. This includes equality and poverty considerations for all tenants. These matters will be kept under review as the management actions are implemented.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1 There are no climate or nature emergency implications arising from the findings of this audit.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

- 9.1 The audit management actions referenced in this report will contribute to a strong system of risk management and compliance through a strengthening of controls and procedures.

10. Background reading/external references

10.1 Housing Repairs Right First Time (PL2306) Internal Audit report.

11. Appendices

None.