

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 3 June 2021

Housing Service Improvement Plan – Repairs Update

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| Executive/routine Wards Council Commitments | Executive All |
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1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee:
 - 1.1.1 Notes the progress made to date with improvements within the repairs service and the priorities for the next 12 months;
 - 1.1.2 Agrees to discharge the motion agreed by this Committee on 18 March 2021; and
 - 1.1.3 Agrees to receive an update in six months as part of the Housing Service Improvement Plan (HSIP) six-monthly update report.

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Housing Service Improvement Plan – Repairs Update

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 On [18 March 2021](#), the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee approved a motion which agreed to provide two additional reports alongside the Housing Service Improvement Plan (HSIP) Update: a report updating on the repairs improvement plan and a report on the process for dampness, mould and condensation.
- 2.2 A separate report on the process for dampness, mould and condensation is also presented to this Committee.

3. Background

- 3.1 On [6 June 2019](#), the Housing and Economy Committee received a report on the HSIP. This set out the approach to redesigning the housing service with a specific focus on developing more effective and responsive services for customers.
- 3.2 Further updates on the HSIP have been provided to the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee on [20 January 2020](#) and [5 November 2020](#).
- 3.3 On 18 March 2021, the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee approved an emergency motion from the Coalition which called for a report on the improvement plan for the repairs service. The motion requested that report should include a framework for analysis of data on repairs to identify where there may be specific issues relating to communication, customer engagement and interaction, completion of works and complaints.
 - 3.3.1 In addition, it was agreed that the report should cover:
 - 3.3.1.1 The roll out of Total Mobile to ensure that this is being used effectively, and review if the roll out to housing officers could be accelerated;
 - 3.3.1.2 The process around missed appointments, how these are monitored, and whether there could be improved processes for tenants to report these;
 - 3.3.1.3 Monitoring of tenant satisfaction on repairs, including processes for how tenants' feedback on repairs carried out;

- 3.3.1.4 Processes around booking follow up appointments, including timeframes for when work will be carried out;
- 3.3.1.5 Details of the resolution teams and the improvements that can be made to the complaints process including specific named contact for tenants in multi-storey properties;
- 3.3.1.6 A review of the work being carried out under the Covid-19 restrictions to ensure that it is capturing all instances where there is a risk of harm to tenants; and
- 3.3.1.7 A plan of action to address all issues raised and follow on reports where necessary.

4. Main report

- 4.1 Since the introduction of the HSIP, improvements to the repairs service have been an early priority and continue to be a key area of focus within the programme.

Total Mobile and wider digital improvements

- 4.2 Since Summer 2019, a range of digital improvement projects have been introduced.
- 4.3 The Total Mobile system has been central to digital improvement for the service. Total Mobile is targeted at addressing legacy issues which were arising as a result of degrading ICT systems, which had led to inefficient paper-based working methods, declining productivity and increased reliance on sub-contractors.
- 4.4 Total Mobile will roll out in four phases.
 - 4.4.1 Phase 1 went live in September 2019. This introduced automated appointments to help with workforce planning and scheduling. Prior to Total Mobile being introduced, operatives had been unable to pick up jobs electronically, negatively impacting on productivity. In addition, since the roll out of Total Mobile, the number of jobs allocated to subcontractors for the main trades (gas, plumbing and electrical) had reduced significantly prior to lockdown. This reduction is expected to be sustained as job volumes begin to increase, with ongoing monitoring required to ensure this continues;
 - 4.4.2 Phase 2 went live for empty homes in June 2020 and for gas servicing in July 2020. The launch was adapted and brought in at pace as a result of Covid-19 to enable remote working for operatives. The initial gas process had to be amended to allow for tenants who were shielding and in light of the decision not to carry out forced entries at that time. In order to accelerate the roll out, some planned functionality was scaled back and further work will be carried out as part of the Phase 3 to bring the Phase 2 roll out up to its full functionality; and
 - 4.4.3 The pipeline for the future roll out of Phases 3 and 4 includes improvements which have critical co-dependencies with other ICT system development

and upgrades, including with Northgate and Verint, and therefore the programme of delivery will be determined by when the other system developments and upgrades can be completed. The service will continue to work with CGI and Digital Services to monitor ongoing system developments and alignment to Corporate Digital Strategy to ensure that solutions are future proofed as far as possible.

- 4.5 The elements of Phases 3 and 4 which do not have any ICT co-dependencies will be driven forward first to ensure progress is sustained. These include roll out for the automation of the CES out of hours service (allowing real time completions during the night to ensure consistency with the daytime process), improvements to gas servicing (including Force of Law Entry for Gas Servicing) and improving the sequencing of repairs for Empty Homes (which were not completed in Phase 2).
- 4.6 Future phasing of the remaining improvements will be planned around the ICT system developments and upgrades:
 - 4.6.1 Roll out of Total Mobile to concierge and housing officers will allow them to book and schedule repairs. This is planned in Phase 4 as it has a co-dependency with the Verint programme and is currently anticipated to be delivered later this year (2021); and
 - 4.6.2 The Mechanical and Electrical and Legionella workstreams have critical co-dependencies with Northgate system upgrades, which are programmed for later this year.
- 4.7 Wider planned ICT improvements include: a pilot of dampness sensor smart technology as part of the Council's Smart Cities initiative; and a fully integrated IT Asset Management System (which also has key co-dependencies with the planned Northgate system upgrades).
- 4.8 As part of the HSIP Digital Improvements workstream, a monthly digital forum has been set up which brings together colleagues from Housing, Homelessness, Customer Contact, Digital Services and CGI. A roadmap is being developed through this forum, which will clarify and track delivery timescales for current and future projects. This will enable risks, interdependencies and resource requirements to be considered across the wider portfolio of work.

Tenant Satisfaction

- 4.9 Repairs satisfaction surveys recommenced in February 2021, having been paused due to Covid-19. The survey captures tenant satisfaction across a range of indicators including: ease of reporting; punctuality of and satisfaction with the operative who attended; whether the repair was completed on the first visit; and overall satisfaction with the service. The data collected is shared with Housing Property on a weekly basis for analysis, identification of issues, monitoring of trends, follow-up action (if required) and lessons learned.
- 4.10 Since being re-introduced in February 2021, the average year-to-date satisfaction figure is 93%. Satisfaction surveys have previously been carried out through telephone calls. An alternative approach is to be introduced on a pilot basis, which

makes use of the Consultation Hub. This pilot approach will also ensure the inclusion of tenants without digital access.

- 4.11 Satisfaction is also monitored through the annual tenant survey. In addition to the core satisfaction indicators, the survey enables further feedback on the reasons behind satisfaction and dissatisfaction. This analysis feeds into the HSIP.
- 4.12 Feedback is also received from tenant working groups and focus groups.
- 4.13 In addition, a review exercise has been initiated to undertake in-depth analysis of a sample of escalated complaints, to gain a full understanding of what went wrong in these cases. This will involve an end-to-end review of the issue, and engagement with the tenant and officers involved in the case. This will produce lessons to be learned and recommendations for improvement.

Tenant Communication and Complaints

Text Messaging

- 4.14 In the summer of 2020, text message reminders for tenants were introduced for repair and servicing appointments. This allows tenants to receive a text message when the repair is booked; the day before the appointment; and when the operative is on the way to attend. The impact of this was initially limited due to the suspension of repairs appointments in line with government restrictions; however, this will be re-enabled as appointments resume. It is intended to further enhance this service in the future to allow tenants to cancel or re-schedule appointments through text messaging, as well as introducing an additional text message to tenants if the operative is unable to gain access upon arrival. This would notify the tenant that the operative will remain on site for a grace period of five minutes, to minimise instances of no access.

Remote Assist

- 4.15 The Remote Assist platform was introduced on a pilot basis in Spring 2021. This gives tenants the opportunity to talk to an operative on a video call and to receive basic guidance (where appropriate). This includes, for example, guiding the tenant through the process of turning off the water if there is a leak, as an interim measure before the operative can visit the tenant's home. This video call technology also has the potential to support job diagnosis and first-time fixes by allowing the operative to view the repair issue before attending.
- 4.16 The impact of this has so far been limited due to prolonged periods of reduced service; however, it is expected that this will be used more frequently as restrictions ease.
- 4.17 The use of this technology will also be extended to other parts of the service, including for quality control officer appointments and to carry out initial checks when issues are reported (e.g. to confirm the thermostat is set correctly when 'no heat' issues are reported).

Communication of service changes

- 4.18 A small, targeted communications campaign is being developed to reinforce messaging around emergency, routine and servicing appointments as service delivery scales up and to raise awareness of the range of ways for tenants to get in touch.
- 4.19 This will also reinforce messaging around safe working practices to provide reassurance that the safety of tenants and operatives remains the key priority.

Resolution Team

- 4.20 A new model for repairs complaints has been introduced through the creation of a Resolution Team. This was first piloted in the South West locality in September 2020 and has now been phased in across all four localities. The Resolution Team are contact centre officers who are responsible for managing housing property complaints and taking full ownership for the frontline resolution stage of the Council's complaints process.
 - 4.20.1 Stage 1 – Frontline Response: The Resolution Team aim to resolve 80% of complaints on-the-spot, by means of an apology, explanation or corrective action. The team log the complaint, review the root cause and history of the complaint, and respond to the customer. Where required, the team can raise a repair, ensuring the job description highlights this as a complaint.
 - 4.20.2 If the complaint cannot be resolved at the first point of contact by the Resolution Team, they will contact the relevant Housing Property team leader for advice. A response is due to be provided to the tenant within five days. The Resolution Team take full ownership of all complaints and will follow up on referred cases by calling the customer once the job is complete to ensure they are satisfied with the outcome.
 - 4.20.3 Stage 2 - Investigation: Where the customer is not happy with the frontline response or if the complaint is complex, serious or high risk, it is dealt with as a Stage 2 complaint investigation. Stage 2 complaints are to be acknowledged within 24 hours and the tenant is to be called within three working days to clarify the reasons for the complaint and to ensure all details are captured.
 - 4.20.4 The Resolution Team complete the investigation form, detailing as much information as possible including relevant history and previous responses. The case is then assigned to the appropriate team leader or operational manager, depending on who completed the Frontline Resolution. The complaint is investigated, corrective action taken, and a response provided for the Resolution Team to issue to the customer within 20 working days, in line with the Council's complaints procedure. The appropriate operations manager should always complete final sign off for investigations.
- 4.21 All repairs complaints will be channelled through the Resolution Team, for frontline resolution where possible.

Single Point of Contact

- 4.22 The approved motion requested consideration of providing a named contact for tenants who live in multi-storey properties.
- 4.23 There are risks associated with sole reliance on one named individual, with potential for gaps or breakdown in service in the event of sickness absence or other unplanned leave.
- 4.24 The process that is in place through the Resolution Team and locality-based working will ensure that all contacts and complaints are logged, monitored and actioned. The Resolution Team provides a dedicated mailbox for each locality and through this, the complaint is picked up and full ownership taken through to completion, to prevent the tenant having multiple points of contact. There are certain instances where a named point of contact is provided to support the process (e.g. for dampness issues).

Future Improvements

- 4.25 Work is currently at scoping stage with CGI and Digital Services for enhancements to the way tenant feedback is captured. Digital platforms could allow the Council to automate surveys to tenants at specific interaction points. For example, automated surveys could be sent when a repair is booked and once a repair is completed.
- 4.26 This could also allow more tailored reports to be produced, highlighting issues and patterns in tenant feedback more quickly. This will be progressed through the Digital Improvement workstream within the HSIP, as part of a planned and coordinated approach for digital improvement projects.

Operational Processes

Missed Appointments

- 4.27 Total Mobile provides visibility on job status to team leaders, planners and managers, including any jobs that have not been completed by the end of each day.
- 4.28 There is a separate categorisation for any appointments that could not proceed due to access not being provided by the tenant, therefore any jobs that remain open at the end of each day indicate that the operative did not attend.
- 4.29 Guidance has been provided to operatives on how to close jobs on the system and action has been taken to address technical issues experienced by a small number of operatives with mobile phone updates and upgrades. Team leaders are building routine monitoring of the online diaries into their daily work programme to ensure all jobs are being completed as planned and to follow up where this is not the case.
- 4.30 With effective diary monitoring and visibility on job status, the number of missed appointments should be minimal. Where missed appointments do occur, a process is being introduced, whereby the Contact Centre will proactively contact the tenant to apologise and rearrange. This should remove the need for a tenant to have to report a missed appointment; however, if tenants do make contact, this will be logged, and an alternative appointment booked in.

- 4.31 The number of missed appointments will be included as part of the suite of performance information that will be reported regularly to the Housing Property management team. Regular performance monitoring meetings will ensure issues and trends are identified, with corrective action taken where necessary.

Follow on Appointments

- 4.32 The aim is to complete repairs at the first appointment wherever possible. However, there are occasions where a repair cannot be completed on the first visit; for example, if the repair requires additional parts or the requirement for another trade has not been captured at the time of booking.
- 4.33 When this happens, the operative is expected to take responsibility for booking the follow-on appointment on behalf of the tenant. Previously, this involved the operative telephoning Repairs Direct to book this in but there were issues with this approach.
- 4.34 Total Mobile now has the functionality to allow the operative to book in the majority of follow-on appointments on their mobile device whilst in the tenants' home. Currently, it is not possible for multi trade jobs to be booked through Total Mobile. Where these jobs are required, operatives will arrange through the Contact Centre as before.
- 4.35 Training on how to use the follow-on functionality will be rolled out to operatives and contractors from late May 2021 onwards. The Contact Centre will also be provided with support documents to provide guidance to operatives and contractors, if required.
- 4.36 Reports will be produced to monitor the percentage of follow-on jobs being raised through Total Mobile and those raised through the Contact Centre, to ensure this functionality is being used as intended. This will be included as part of the performance information which will report to Housing Property management for regular review and monitoring.

Capturing Vulnerabilities or Risk of Harm

- 4.37 Repair jobs are categorised as emergency, urgent or routine depending on the nature of the issue. The response time is determined by the category of the job. However, additional factors are taken into consideration when a job is booked in, to take account of any vulnerabilities or other factors that could pose a risk of harm to tenants.
- 4.38 Call handlers establish this by reviewing information held on the system and by asking a series of questions around the household composition (i.e. any children or vulnerable persons in the household or any health issues). This information is factored in when the job is raised on the system. All call handlers receive training on capturing tenant vulnerabilities to support them with this process and in the event that a call handler is unsure, there is an escalation route to refer cases to the team leader for decision.
- 4.39 All calls are recorded for training and monitoring purposes, with quality checks carried out on a small sample every month. A daily log of all jobs is captured by the

Contact Centre, which includes the details captured around vulnerabilities. An improvement action is underway to standardise the way vulnerabilities are recorded, to support ongoing monitoring.

- 4.40 Under the Covid-19 restrictions, the repairs service had to restrict the jobs that could be carried out, in line with government guidelines and safe working practices. Over the period, this ranged from a critical service which was limited to health and safety works, to an essential service carrying out repairs that would typically be categorised as emergency or urgent.
- 4.41 However, the service has also safely accommodated requests for repairs of a more routine nature where it has been identified that there are vulnerabilities or health factors that could be impacted by the issue. This has placed greater reliance on the call handler screening process to identify where a more tailored response is required. The screening questions have recently been reviewed and were found to be robust.
- 4.42 As appointments are reintroduced, certain jobs will continue to require a tailored, risk-assessed approach, particularly where multiple tradespersons need to attend, or where an alternative approach required.
- 4.43 This may impact on some aspects of performance, such as turnaround times for empty homes; however, safety remains of paramount importance.
- 4.44 In the event that an operative identifies a vulnerability when they attend a job that could require further action, this will be raised with their team leader for local level discussion with the housing management team.

5. Next Steps

Future Service Improvements

- 5.1 Improvements delivered to date have focused primarily on improved systems and technology, while training has been primarily focussed on safe working practices and use of operational systems. This will continue as further system and process changes are rolled out.
- 5.2 A wider programme of training will be required, with a strong focus on staff development and customer service. The plans for this are currently being scoped out, taking account of tenant feedback and operational service improvements.
- 5.3 Covid-19 has had a major impact on the repairs service. A new service model had to be developed in a short space of time, along with safe working practices and processes to ensure the safety of tenants, operatives and the wider staff group. Despite these challenges opportunities for service improvements have been identified, particularly the acceleration of locality-based working which have enabled local teams to work more closely with Housing Repairs colleagues to jointly plan and prioritise and to respond to issues as they arise. This approach will continue to be developed as service provision scales up.

- 5.4 Improved performance reporting will play a key part in enhancing local level joint working. In Summer 2021 it is expected that improved real-time reporting information will be in place to support local monitoring, resource allocation and prioritisation. In the interim, productivity reports are produced manually and provided to the teams for regular monitoring and action. A framework for analysis of repairs data is detailed in Appendix 2.
- 5.5 There is a continuing focus on how services are delivered to tenants. Alongside enhancements to communications platforms, work will be undertaken to review the range of appointments offered to tenants to make sure this meets their needs. This will be informed by tenant engagement through the Annual Tenant Survey.
- 5.6 Wider improvements are being planned to support Council commitment around net zero carbon.
- 5.7 Going forward, the service will also consider how it operates as a business, looking at opportunities to simultaneously increase service productivity, improve customer service, reduce costs, and deliver environmental efficiencies. Scoping work will commence over the summer of 2021, considering areas such as vehicle and fuel use, as well as opportunities for technology to cut down on unnecessary journeys
- 5.8 Future updates on improvements in the repairs service will form part of the HSIP update report every six months.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The repairs service is paid for by the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The HRA is funded from tenants' rents, fees and service charges for services provided to tenants and assets held on the HRA account.
- 6.2 The HRA has a ring-fenced annual budget for the HSIP to fund vital improvement activities. This is regularly monitored to ensure costs are contained within budget.
- 6.3 The HSIP has an overall aim of reducing operating expenditure by 12% by 2025/26. In 2020/21, the repairs service carried out a reduced number of jobs and therefore the spend was below budget. However, work is ongoing to analyse the extent of unforeseen expenditure due to Covid-19. Significant adjustments have been made to services to comply with government guidance and protect tenants and staff, including adjustments to buildings to manage social distancing, staff training, equipment and materials, staff shielding and absence due to ill health, allowances for extra time for cleaning, repairs and maintenance and facilitating social distancing.
- 6.4 The financial outturn for the HRA for 2020/21 will be reported to Finance and Resources Committee in August 2021. Due to the impact of Covid-19, HSIP savings for 2020/21 and 2021/22 will be tracked as a combined target, to allow for more meaningful monitoring and to ensure savings are attributed to lasting change as opposed to any short-term reductions in spend.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 The Council has an extensive programme of consultation and engagement with tenants, including surveys, focus groups, working groups, and resident and community meetings. In response to Covid-19, arrangements have been put in place to ensure tenant engagement can continue in a safe and accessible way.
- 7.2 City-wide tenant surveys continue to be held annually to monitor changes in perception and overall satisfaction. The next survey is due to take place in summer 2021. There is also a dedicated annual budget consultation exercise designed and delivered in partnership with tenants.
- 7.3 In addition to the annual rent consultation and tenant survey, the housing service is in regular contact with tenants and has a wealth of information on tenant satisfaction and priorities from a variety of sources. During lockdown, housing officers mobilised to carry out welfare calls with their tenants to ensure that contact was maintained. Repair customer satisfaction surveys were reinstated in February 2021 to allow satisfaction to be tracked and monitored on an ongoing basis.
- 7.4 The Resolution Team has been introduced to drive a shift from complaints management to complaints resolution. Planned future improvements to tenant communication and engagement including scope work for enhanced tenant feedback, enhancements to repairs text messaging and improvements to reporting a repair online.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 Housing Service Improvement Plan Update; Housing and Economy Committee, [6 June 2019](#).
- 8.2 Housing Service Improvement Update; Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee, [20 January 2020](#).
- 8.3 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget Strategy 2021/22; Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee, [5 November 2020](#).

9. Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Summary of actions in response to the issues identified in the motion.
- 9.2 Appendix 2 – Framework for data analysis.

Appendix 1: Summary of actions in response to issues raised in the motion

| Issue Raised in Motion | Activities/ Improvements | Target Date | RAG | RAG Commentary |
|--|--|----------------|--------|---|
| Missed Appointments | Carry out monitoring checks to ensure robust use of Total Mobile system and follow-up on any issues identified requiring further training. | April 2021 | Green | On track |
| | Introduce phone calls to tenants for all jobs flagged as a missed appointment, to apologise and reschedule. | May 2021 | Yellow | Progressing, subject to final agreement with Contact Centre |
| Follow-on Appointments | Training rolled out to operatives and sub-contractors on how to book follow-on appointments on their device. | June 2021 | Yellow | Scheduled, ICT co-dependencies |
| | Guidance notes provided to call handlers and briefings on how to support operatives and sub-contractors with any technical issues. | June 2021 | Yellow | Scheduled |
| Monitoring Tenant Satisfaction | Satisfaction surveys reinstated for a random sample of tenants with recently completed jobs. | February 2021 | Yellow | Ongoing |
| | Pilot approach to capture satisfaction surveys using the Consultation Hub | June 2021 | Yellow | In development |
| | Annual Tenant Survey – citywide survey of 1,000 tenants which includes questions on repairs satisfaction. | September 2021 | Green | On track |
| | Scoping work ongoing with CGI and Digital Services to enhance how tenant feedback is captured through automated surveys – preferred option to be identified. | August 2021 | Yellow | ICT Dependencies |
| Improvements to the Complaints Process | Monitoring of implementation of the new processes implemented with the establishment of the Resolution Team. | Ongoing | Green | On track |
| | Completion of deep-dive review into a sample of escalated complaints to identify lessons learned and recommendations for improvement. | May 2021 | Green | On track |
| A review of the work being carried out under the Covid-19 restrictions to ensure that it is | Repair appointments to resume in line with Scottish Government restrictions. | May 2021 | Green | On track in line with Scottish Government guidance |

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| capturing all instances where there is a risk of harm to tenants | Improvement action to standardise the way vulnerabilities are recorded by the Contact Centre to support ongoing monitoring | June 2021 | | In development |
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Appendix 2: Framework for analysis of repairs data

The motion requested a framework for analysis of data on repairs to identify where there may be specific issues relating to communication, customer engagement and interaction, completion of works, and complaints. The illustration below sets out the data currently available across these areas and how this data is used. Work is underway to produce enhanced performance information, which will play a key role in supporting operational planning and performance monitoring.

