

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting	Improving Places Select Commission
2.	Date	Wednesday 23rd July 2014
3.	Title	Housing Repairs and Maintenance Update Report Spring 2014
4.	Directorate	Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

5. Summary

This report seeks to provide a summary update in respect of the Repairs and Maintenance Service in line with Minute Number 35 of the Improving Places Select Commission held on November 27th 2013. The content of the report focuses on the Void Property process and issues raised at the aforementioned meeting.

6. Recommendations

That the comments in this report are noted – no specific actions required.

7. Proposals and details

Background

The delivery of the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Repairs Service was transferred to Morrison Facility Services (MFS) and Willmott Dixon Partnership (WDP) on the 1st of November 2010. A report on progress was last presented to the IPSC in November 2013 and this report seeks to update the position presented at that time. It also seeks to address questions raised about Void Property performance.

Contract Term

The contract offers service providers an entitlement to a one year contract extension subject to meeting the performance criteria set out in the agreement. In both case, MFS & WDP have exceeded this performance measure for 2013/14 and as such are entitled to their contract extension. As such the contract will now run until 1st of April 2018 – the council has the right to withdraw this extension should performance dip in subsequent years. Likewise if performance is maintained the contractors have the opportunity to gain 2 further years extension. In discussing this initial year of extension a concession has been agreed with contractors in respect of the shared saving mechanism in the contract which currently gives a 30% / 70% saving share in favour of the contractor. For year 7 (2016/17) and beyond this will equalise to a 50/50 sharing of any savings.

Shared Savings and Legacy in the 2012/13 Financial Year

The aim to construct 2 pairs of Semi Detached Disabled Persons Bungalows on infill sites in Rotherham.

Work progresses on the proposed legacy build and planning permission for a site in the Rockingham area has been submitted. This will be heard on the 12th June 2014. Subject to this approval work will be started as soon as possible with the aim of completion by the end of the financial year. A second site is currently under consideration in the south of the borough at Wadsworth Road and this will be progressed with a view to starting work in the autumn of 2014.

Customer Insight

Customers remain at the heart of the service and have regular involvement through the Quality & Standards Challenge Group. Throughout the year, a number of Mystery Shopping exercises have been carried out by customer volunteer inspectors. Areas studied included the empty homes standard, responsive repairs and garage inspections, amongst others. The inspections were carried out using telephone and face to face surveys, visits to empty homes and on-site garage inspections.

The general feedback remains positive and any issues highlighted are reviewed and acted upon as service improvement actions.

Where are we now?

At the end of the 2013/14 Financial Year the KPIs set in the contract and reported to the NAS Directorate Leadership Team were all on or above target. The table below shows key KPI outturns at 31st March 2014:

Criteria	Rating at start of contract	Rating at Year end 2013/14	Target
Customer Satisfaction	98.61%	99.19%	95.5%
Appointments Made & Kept	89.53%	99.21%	98.5%
Repairs Completed on Time	88.10%	99.29%	99.00%

Attached at appendix A is the full set of KPIs reported within the contract with outturns at the full year 2013/14.

Value for Money

The CSD team continue to focus and challenge out of scope variations to ensure we maximise the value returned from the contract. This is supported by the Commercial Manager and his team in overseeing cost control and management.

We continue to focus on reducing the levels of variations by focusing our investment using the knowledge gained from the repairs history; this should assist us to achieve this objective.

During the winter period we did experience a high degree of storm damage due to periods of high winds. This took the form of damage to roof structures and drove additional costs for work to repair structural damage. These costs were covered by the contingency allowed in the Repairs and Maintenance budget for such events.

Performance Management

With regards to the Repairs and Maintenance service all the R&M performance indicators have achieved the cumulative year end targets (2013/14 period). This has been achieved through being pragmatic, dedicated and having a proactive approach in our partnership working. All parties have worked together and been focused on putting actions into practice to help improve things and supported and shared good practice within the partnership. Most importantly the understanding of the customer view of the service has been critical to achieving this improvement.

During the last 12 months we have:

- Gone from strength to strength in completing more repairs on time with the highest customer satisfaction levels ever
- Reduced the number of properties stood empty to 190 (324 in December 2013)
- We have supported more customers with fuel poverty throughout the borough and will continue to pursue opportunities to improve the energy efficiency of the housing stock

- We have integrated the Emergency Repairs Out of Hours service within the Council's Corporate Call centre.

In national benchmarking the repairs service was ranked as follows:

- Percentage of repairs completed at the first visit Number in sample ranked 25 against 162 other organisations (amongst the best)
- Percentage of all reactive repairs completed within target time Number in sample ranked 51 against 227 other organisations (amongst the best)
- Appointments kept as a percentage of appointments made Number ranked 49 against 140 other organisations (above average)
- The service was ranked 43 against 102 other organisations of all re-lets (including any time spent on major works) (above average) This is an improvement on where the service was ranked in 2012-13

Complaints

The number complaints in 2013/14 remains at the same level as 2012/13. These figures include a 12% reduction of complaints made against the two repairs and maintenance contractors. Significantly improvements were made particularly in reducing the number of complaints made about the contractors missing appointments.

Identifiable trends of issues triggering complaints were about damage or mess caused by the contractors, the condition of empty properties, damp, leaks and heating/gas boiler repairs although the latter have reduced on the previous year. The trends have been used to implement improvements.

Learning from Complaints

In most cases the complaints of damp proved to be condensation rather than damp caused by disrepair, traditionally condensation has been seen as a "lifestyle" issue and tackled through education. The increase in condensation complaints, linked to benefit reforms and fuel poverty has resulted in a new approach from 2014/15 involving a specialist condensation company to recommend advising the Council on ventilation solutions.

The number of complaints about the quality of empty homes reduced after the team was brought within the Contract and Service Development team in the last quarter of 2013/14. Increased monitoring of the contractors and a holistic approach to empty homes is likely to see a further reduction in 2014/15. A partnership with British Gas Commencing on the 1st April 2014 has resulted in gas and electricity being available to the contractors to complete all necessary tests before the customer takes possession of the tenancy and avoids lengthy delays for tenants arranging for utilities to be connected.

Successive gales and persistent rain in the last quarter of the year caused a significant number of complaints about delays completing repairs as the contractors and their sub-contractors were faced with batches of hundreds of additional roof repairs generated over a short period of time. The volume of additional repair resulted in delays before some repairs were completed. Learning from the gales the Contract and Service Development Team, if faced with severe gales in the future, will inspect and prioritise all gale damage and refer through to the contractors in a prioritised order. This will not impact on the overall time to complete all jobs but will ensure that gale damage affecting the Councils assets

and causing most disturbance to customers will be dealt with as soon as reasonably possible.

Example of customer feedback

Quality of Service - Compliment for Dean Allott of Morrisons. “On Fri night June 6th I rang the response team regarding a hot leaking tap, being disabled I could not turn the water off at the stop cock. I reported it at 21.45PM and at 22:10PM I had a plumber called Dean Allott of the response team come. He fixed it for me with little mess and intrusion. Could you please pass on my thanks to Dean and his team that was involved from taking the phone call to dean himself”.

Quality of Service - Compliment for the Contract and Service Delivery Team.” Thank you for all you help, hard work and patience with regards to the situation. I would also like you to say thank-you to Andy Lumb as he has also been a big help”. **Mrs Linda Machon
189 Barnsley Road**

Quality of service - Compliment Alan and Brian from Morrison. “We had a couple of operatives working on a roof leak at **31 Wombwell Avenue** , today (9th June)they had seen the customer go out earlier when they noticed that there was smoke coming from the customers property from the kitchen extractor, they noticed through the window that a dog was in the property and that the smoke was getting worse, Alan and Brian rang for the fire brigade and sought their advice, within minutes the fire brigade was on site and gained access to the property to find a fat fryer had been left on unattended and melted, this could potentially have been a lot worse but for the prompt actions of our operatives

Quality of Service - compliment for Billy Wilson Contract and Service Development he had been on the freephone to a member of your staff. He had nothing but praise for Billy who he said had got everything sorted out for him and that nothing was too much trouble him.

Compliment - Quality of Service for **Tony and Andy, Wilmott Dixon** for their fantastic help with residents on the **Harthill Skip Day** - they went to the extreme to help everyone - many thanks for the support

Responsive Repairs

Delivery in area of service remains on track with high levels of customer satisfaction and low levels of complaints.

The two key measures of the service; Appointments Made and Kept (AMK) and Right First Time (RFT) both out-turned ahead of the contractual KPI target as

AMK – target 98.5% – year end position 2013/14 – 99.21%

RFT – target 92% – year end position 2013/14 - 97.73%

Beyond delivery of the Responsive Repairs Service the contract also delivers on 5 other work streams:

- Voids – Major & Minor
- Gas Safety & Cyclical Works

- Planned Works
- Capital Works
- Aids and Adaptations

Voids (Empty Homes)

The IPSC specifically asked following the presentation of the November 2013 update on R & M for more detail to be provided around Voids performance and expressed some specific concerns about the quality of properties being let.

In January 2014 the responsibility for service deliver in respect of R & M to voids was returned to the CSD team from the Choice Based Lettings team who had overseen this work-stream since the closure of the ALMO in 2011. In the period 2013/14 the Council saw a significant upturn in void property volumes from a historical average of C1500 properties per annum to over 2000 returned in 2013/14. This clearly place additional pressure on the service and the contract partners who had geared up capacity around the original volumes. This also created an additional financial strain on the R & M budget due to the increased volumes.

At the 1st January there were 324 empty properties on the books. The following actions have been taken to address the arising issues and to tackle the time to re-let and quality issues raised by the committee.

Actions taken:

- Processes have been changed to introduce “Back to Back” lettings the aim with these properties is to carry out minimal works on properties that are returned in a good state of repair. This reduces re-let times and costs due to decreases in work required and carried out. It also offers in some case additional items such as Carpets (where in good condition) being left for incoming Tenants. In all case the R & M service carry out both Electrical and Gas Safety checks at change of Tenancy as a matter of course.
- The level of post works QA have been increased to 100% on voids where major works are carried out and currently 100% on minor voids where repairs only are undertaken. QA checklists have been introduced to be completed by the partners and then signed off by the Technical Officer responsible at point of handover. In due course we aim to reduce levels of inspection on minor voids to C25% once all are satisfied the quality of returns is under control.
- We are now ensuring that 100% of properties for re-let have EPC survey this helps to inform incoming Tenants and the Asset Management team about the efficiency of the property in regard to heating and running costs. This data will be used to inform future investments on insulation and other energy efficiency measures.
- We are undertaking a trial in respect of void security by eliminating void screening to be replaced with more discreet security. This aims to:
 - improve the appearance of the estates,
 - reduce cost and damaged caused as a consequence of screening,
 - reduce re-let times by removing delays caused waiting for the removal of screens
 - follows current best practice in respect of a more modern approach to void security.
- An arrangement has been entered into with British Gas to ensure that Utilities (Gas & Electric) are in place and the point when the new Tenancy starts. This means the Council inform British Gas once we have notice of termination, 21 days later the

utilities are transferred into the name of the council with British Gas as the supplier. At time of re-let the responsibility for the utilities is then passed on to the incoming Tenant. Clearly the new Tenant has the option to remain with British Gas or to move to a supplier of their own choice. This action ensures:

- The Council can carry out appropriate safety checks on live supplies during the vacant period,
 - It allows the contractors facilities such as lighting and power for repairs and helps the cleaners as they can now access hot water and power for cleaning if required.
 - This should facilitate a reduction in re-let times avoiding delays and rent lost due to the property not being fit for occupation due to lack of facilities, i.e. Heat and Power.
- A further trial is about to start to reduce issues caused by key management. A new system using a “master key” approach is to be trialed to see if a one key fits all approach to voids can be adopted. This will involve changing the lock barrel at the start of the void period and changing again at the start of the new tenancy. The lock fitted in the interim – i.e. while the property is void, can be accessed by those with the master key – Contractors, Cleaners, and Technical Officers etc.
 - The system adopted has two levels of security the physical key which is also an electronic key matched to the cylinder in the door and controlled by the CSD team. This means no one can go out and buy a physical key and access the property as it will not trigger the electronic element of the security.
 - Keys will be set up to be live for 1 week only and during working hours only after which they will need to be re validated – any keys not validated will cease to work. As such the system has a very high level of security attached to it and poses little risk to the Council of security breach. This approach which will be trialed for the next 3 months will again reduce let times as it will no longer be necessary to pass the keys from one party to the next where each transfer has the risk of adding a day to the process.

Outturns due to actions taken:

- At 1st Jan 2014 324 Empty Properties. In the preceding 6 months this has been reduced to an average of 185 and this level has been maintained and a target set to keep this number below 200 units at any one time being vacant or C1% of the stock
- Re-let times measured against the national bench mark is now running at 21.81 (22.04 days in May 2014 & 22.38 in April 2014) – this is against an agreed target of 25 days.
- The quality of properties being returned has improved measured by the reduced level of complaints and comments and feedback from the Tenants working group who visit to check on quality on a regular basis.
- Cleaning – this was an area of concern and one where quality was falling below an acceptable standard. The matter has been discussed with EDS who provide this service and actions agreed to improve the outturn. The provision of utilities referred to earlier should help in this regard – i.e. ability to have power on in the property.

Two areas of concern in respect to void properties are Gardens and Outhouses.

Gardens

Over many years minimal works have been undertaken in Gardens and this has culminated in many being in a poor state of maintenance. The costs associated with addressing this issue will be significant and work will be started shortly to establish how

best to address this matter both from a cost and process point of view. Attached at appendix B are some example photographs of Void Gardens.

Outhouses

Again these have not been a focus of repair over recent years and again a policy and approach is being investigated.

Gas & Cyclical Works

One key area in this work stream is the maintaining of compliance with the Councils responsibility as Landlord, within gas safety legislation. Since the start of the contract there has been a significant improvement in compliance. The table below shows the compliance percentage for the last 6 months. Regrettable in January and due to an IT issue we failed to meet to KPI for this area of service. However the problem was recognised early and action taken to address the situation and bring performance back on track within the month.

Month	Minimum acceptable percentage against 100% Compliance objective	Outturn
October 2013	99.6%	99.95%
November 2013	99.6%	99.93%
December 2013	99.6%	99.87%
January 2014	99.6%	99.33%
February 2014	99.6%	99.98%
March 2014	99.6%	99.97%

This position reduces risk for the council of breaching Health and Safety regulation and reduces costs of enforcement through gaining legal access.

Gas Responsive Repairs

The level of Gas Responsive Repairs remains stubbornly high at around 18,500 jobs per year. We continue to work with our partners to improve the service and seek to identify issues that may result in reducing demand over time. The particularly mild winter has helped in respect of performance in this area.

Planned and Capital Works

Both R & M contractors are actively carrying out planned and capital schemes across the borough.

Additional contractors have been engaged for the delivery of some Capital schemes:

- Keepmoat for a programme of facias, soffits and rainwater goods and some door and window replacements.
- Bamford Doors for replacement of communal entrance doors to blocks of flats

A focus for the client team is and remains both quality of outturn and timeliness of delivery. Significant progress has been made in respect of quality of outturn, some work remains to be done in respect of timeliness.

Aids and Adaptations

Both R & M contractors deliver works on Aids and Adaptations in three work areas:

- Minor Fixings
- Minor Adaptations
- Major Adaptations

These works are measured against fixed timescales for each area of work and progress reported monthly – 99.06% of works were delivered on time as a cumulative out-turn for 2013/14.

Contractors Corporate and Social Responsibility

All contractors involved in the repair and maintenance of housing have embraced this aspect of their responsibility and the results are visible in the commitments they have made to Rotherham.

Some examples of contributions made:

May 2014

Our operatives Steve Oscroft and Martin Sanderson recently installed water butts, donated by Tesco, at Shaftesbury House. These will collect rain water for the community garden. The residents were over the moon and sent their thanks to the operatives.

We were approached by Sarah Vogelsang to ask if we could support Kimberworth TARA group in helping them fund a skip for their community project. We were able to help and managed to secure a skip via network waste who provided the skip free of charge.

Thanks came from the Electoral Services Officer for our work and support in contributing to a successful election. This was in the form of the delivery/collection of the polling equipment, getting all the polling booths/noticeboards ready and ensuring lighting was provided and any issues resolved.

June 2014

Morrison linked with Rotherham schools to provide work experience to a total of 17 students. Each student was provided with the opportunity for a full week working with a variety of operatives and supervisors, giving them a varied learning experience. This project was enjoyed by all involved, both students and Morrison colleagues.

Rotherfed's Open Forum was attended by our Customer Care Team who offered information and support to residents. We also attended one of the planned workshops, Repairs Workshop, delivered by RMBC to offer support as required.

Morrison took a group of 12 residents to CIH Manchester where they were able to visit the various stands attending the exhibition. They also attended the Mears Lunch at the adjacent Midland Hotel where they were given the opportunity to mix and talk with

residents from other Councils and Housing Associations from around the country. A very informative and enjoyable day.

A cake sale was held in the offices at Thames Street in support of the Motor Neurone Disease Association raising a fantastic £75. This was at the suggestion of one of our operatives as a way to support a colleague who's father has recently been diagnosed.

July 2014

We were approached by Canklow TARA to assist them to brighten up their shopping area. They had been given a grant from Rotherfed to purchase 10 hanging baskets and brackets but were in need of some assistance in fitting these to 5 commercial properties. We arranged for our on-call operative to meet with Julie on Sunday 6th July to fit the brackets and hang the baskets.

Canklow Rain Shelter is finally underway within the community garden. This project has been delayed several times due to poor weather conditions, but hopefully the weather will hold out until this is completed.

Both partners continue to support apprentices and offer significant training opportunities on the back of the work they carry out in the Borough. Both Contractors will be holding their annual Apprenticeship Award Ceremonies in November of this year.

We will continue to focus on the added value that can be achieved through partnership and look for ways to support our communities where ever possible. An example of this approach is the work we are now doing with R & M partners to identify potential disrepair or propret neglect for further investigation by the Neighbourhood Housing Officers.

What does the future hold?

The Contract and Service Development Team as the name suggests are committed to working with both partners to modernise the service and improve the experience for the customer. We have seen significant improvement through joint effort and must continue to build on this platform.

What will we be working on?

Service development is a journey and we have reached a milestone on the way from which we must move on, objectives for the next year are:

- Focus on Voids / Empty Properties to embed the progress made in the last 6 months
- Continuing the focus on quality of outturn and workmanship with a view to further improvement. This will include appropriate levels of Quality Assurance inspection to ensure standards are maintained.
- To improve perception and recognition of the service by delivering to the highest standards
- We are working with our partners to reduce the level of minor defects and ensure that the level of customer care received is of the highest standard.

8. Finance

There are no specific financial issues in relationship to this report.

9. Risk

There are no specific risk issues in relationship to this report.

10. Background papers and consultation

Appendix A 2013/14 Year KPI outturns

Appendix B Void Gardens

11. Contact name

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