

Housing Select Committee 4 January 2024

Response Repairs Update



Background

- Following transition back into the council a review of the service has been undertaken
- Performance reports, costs, colleague feedback and level of resident complaints show the service requires significant improvement
- Service includes four areas:
 - Response Repairs
 - Disrepair
 - Voids
 - Damp and Mould Teams

November Performance Reports (YTD)

- 42% Emergency repairs completed in time
- 54% Non-emergency repairs completed in time
- 15,426 jobs with work in progress, some issued over 12 months ago
- Tenant overall satisfaction with repairs service 59% with the time taken to complete the last repair 49%
- On average 41 days to complete a response repair (service standard is 20 days)
- 1,490 formal complaints/Member enquiries about the service in the previous 7 months
- Current estimates show a forecast overspend on budget by 31 March 2024 of over £4m.
- Formal Disrepair cases (currently 507) and Damp and Mould (483) continue to rise, with high costs in damages and legal fees (£1.3m in 7 months)
- Average days to bring minor void properties back into use is 75 days and the average cost of each void YTD is £8,500.

In Addition

- We have several vacancies in the service and over 20 interim staff and lack key workstream operatives in roofing, glazing and drain clearance.
- We have limited contract management resource to manage external contractors
- Lewisham Homes had introduced a recruitment freeze and prohibited outsourcing work to external contractors resulting in poor performance to residents – a 3 month appointment for window replacement
- Team is under-resourced in key areas and colleagues lack key skills and experience
- Teams are struggling with outdated systems and IT with no Diagnostic tool or CRM system to process repairs efficiently
- Tenants are experiencing long delays in their telephone calls being answered, during November this was an unacceptable 70 minutes with 53% calls being dropped.
- During November, our call Centre received 9,800 calls, 42% of these were chasing Existing repair orders
- The team has produced 30,000 works orders in 8 months

CURRENT POSITION

On 7 December we self-referred ourselves to the Social Housing Regulator

- Breach of the Home Standard in relation to Response Repairs/Decency and Fire Safety
 - ***provide a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service to homes and communal areas that responds to the needs of, and offers choices to, tenants, and has the objective of completing repairs and improvements right first time***
- Regulator has a wide range of powers including unlimited fines from 1st April 2024
- 21 December Regulator has requested additional information by 11 January 2024

A scope for a full-scale transformation project was agreed by the Housing Transformation Board on 30th November.

- ***This project will be a comprehensive review of the structure and how we deliver every component of the responsive repairs service as it is currently. This will include satisfaction levels with the aim to improve services delivered to tenants and leaseholders by putting in place new working arrangements, meaningful targets and robust monitoring so that improvement can be demonstrated and reported in line with regulatory requirements.***

CURRENT POSITION (2)

- A Short-Term Rescue Plan with improved KPIs forecast for 31 March 2024 has been introduced and has been requested by the Regulator:
- The Interim Head of Service has left the Council
- The recruitment freeze and ban on external subcontractors has been lifted, all vacancies are in the process of being advertised and work is now being outsourced to sub-contractors
- 2 new temporary Call Centre operators have been recruited from 27th November and an additional post seconded from the corporate call centre, a further vacancy has been filled from 8th January
- Additional hours are being purchased from our Out of Hours calls operator each day, all of which will reduce waiting times for resident calls into the centre
- The following larger more time-consuming repairs have or will be moved from the In-House Service
 - Capital Repairs
 - Electrical testing
 - Fire risk assessment actions
- A new job scheduling process has been introduced

CURRENT POSITION (3)

- Recruitment is underway for additional contractors with a review underway to transfer 9 Disrepair Operatives back into the Repairs team
- A new accounting process has been introduced identifying more accurately costs for each department with revised forecasts available
- Additional detailed performance information is being produced to identify problem areas
- Training priorities are being assessed for all colleagues in the team and will be implemented immediately
- Additional surveying and contractor resource are being brought into the Disrepair team and a review of the Damp and Mould Team is underway
- The number of void properties has reduced considerably since April 2023, but further investigation is underway to identify efficiencies in turnaround time and cost reduction
- A Communications Plan is being produced to keep residents , colleagues and members up to date on the current situation.
- A new Director of Quality & Investment in place and a Head of Service post advertised, interviews being held on 18th January

Summary

- Performance issues are significant and warrant self-referral
- A full-service transformation review is required to address systems failure
- Short term action plan will improve position but increase short term costs
- Stock condition survey and prioritisation of stock investment is needed to improve stock quality in the longer term, manage demand for response repairs, reduce Disrepair claims and instances of Damp & Mould

QUESTIONS

