

TITLE OF REPORT: Construction Services Update October 2022**Purpose of Summary**

1. To provide an update on the current position of Construction Services during the service review process.

Background

2. A review of Construction Services is in progress to improve on customer service, performance, and value for money. The review is unpicking layers of systems and processes, and ways of working built up over more than a decade of the service moving between Council and private provider ownership. The emphasis now is on putting in place the measures needed to provide an evidenced customer first service.

Key Areas

3. **New Senior Management Team**

A new senior team is now in place. Initial key tasks are:

- Engage regularly with, and be clear to all colleagues, that we must improve and place the customer first.
- Sense check what people do and move to what needs to be done.
- Ensure that there are clear accountabilities and responsibilities.
- Challenge areas of underperformance, service failure and incomplete works. Be clear on new expectations.
- Evidence improvement.

4. **Joint Local Agreement**

A new agreement for revised working arrangements and a new salary structure was implemented on 1st September 2022. This has resulted in:

- a revised pay structure competitive with other housing providers in the region that is linked to a new performance framework with upskilling and ownership of job completion.
- A revised out of hours arrangement to reduce costs.
- Standardised working hours, holiday and stand down time giving all trade employees the same arrangements.
- Agreement for employees to work across the Council property portfolio.
- A revised customer care promise with a clearly stated code of conduct.

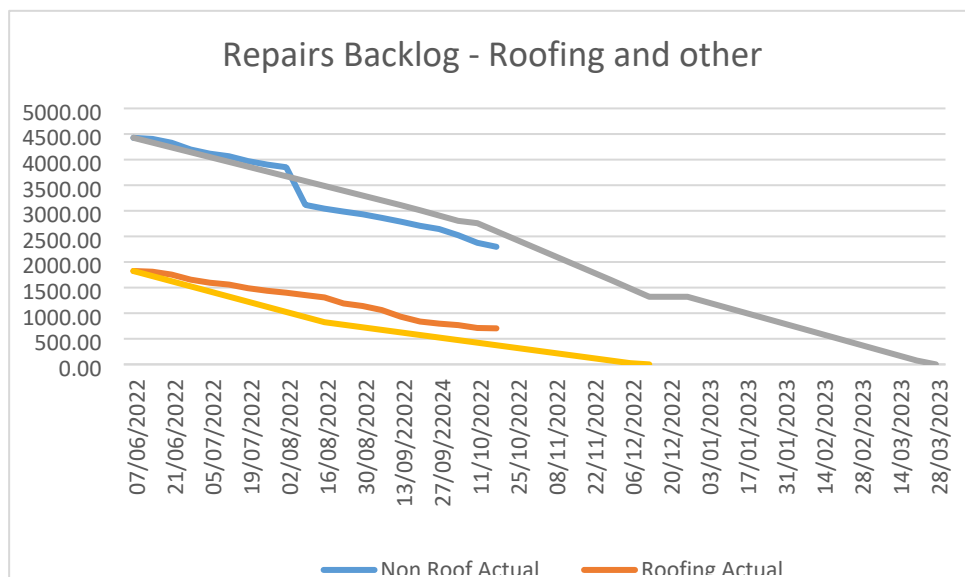
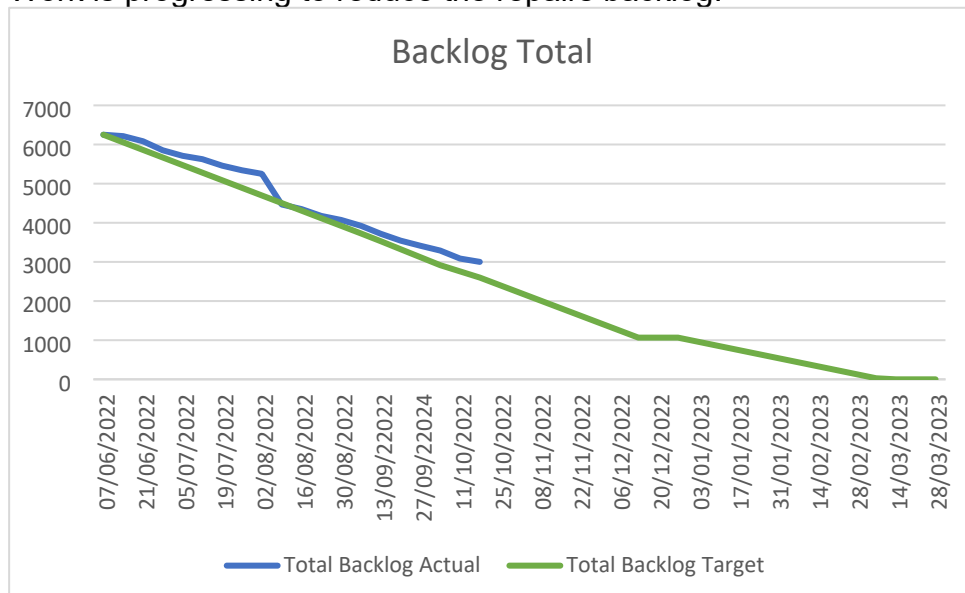
5. Recruitment

Currently recruitment is underway to over 100 vacant posts. This will:

- Provide additional call handlers and customer support staff to enhance customer service – due to problems recruiting to the Customer Operations Team there are currently only two staff dealing with customer and member enquiries as well as providing support to residents during complex repairs.
- Recruit Building Technicians for better customer communication and to improve the accuracy of repair diagnosis.
- Give a sufficient trades-based resource to clear the backlog of repairs, voids, capital improvement work and disabled adaptations, and keep on top of future demand.
- Reduce the number of non-specialist subcontractors.

6. Backlog Works

Work is progressing to reduce the repairs backlog:



26 contractors and 3 inhouse teams are now assigned to backlog repairs. £2.5m additional cost has been identified within the HRA to fund these works.

Contractor management continues to be challenging due to market demand.

Levels of void properties continue to be high at 500+ excluding long term voids.

Recruitment is in progress to add two additional in-house void squads from November. This is expected to increase inhouse delivery from 16 to 24 properties per week.

Contractor performance is averaging 7 properties per week and additional contractor resource continues to be sought.

7. **Job ownership**

Changes to how jobs are now 'owned' by the employee who started the job have seen uncompleted jobs previously being passed from daytime to out of hours jobs reducing from an average of 8% jobs to a current 3% jobs when compared with the same period last year.

8. **Evening appointments**

The offer of an evening appointment has been implemented from 6th October with 8 additional appointments booked in after 4.30pm. This will continue as a pilot one evening per week until Christmas. During this time scheduling, lone working and management issues will be trialled and resolved. At the same time all customers requesting a repairs appointment will be asked their preference about appointment time availability.

9. **Stores**

A full operational review of stores is in progress. Outcomes so far include:

- A discontinuation of over 1000 unnecessary items.
- Increased use of trade counters across the borough to reduce wasted travelling time back to the Depot.
- Weekly van stock audits to maximise the time trades operatives are working productively and ensure van weights are minimised for safety and fuel use.

10. **Performance Management & Culture Change**

Performance management is at the heart of the service review. Performance expectations have been made clear to all employees including service managers, team leaders, contract managers and trade supervisors. Monthly performance monitoring includes:

- Right first-time performance – numbers of jobs completed on first visit vs those requiring follow on works
- Productive time – levels of completed jobs per day

- Work in progress levels to ensure no new backlog is building up
- Use of tracking systems on phones and vans
- Van condition
- Personal appearance

11. **Communication**

Several measures have been taken to improve communication with tenants and Members including:

- A members enquiry direct email
- Letters to all residents advising of the current backlog situation and providing contact details
- Texts to residents on completion of jobs with a satisfaction survey
- Evening appointment survey with residents

Recommendation

12. To consider this report and provide any questions and comments.

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