

TITLE OF REPORT: Repairs and Maintenance Improvement Plan Progress Update

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide an update on outcomes from the Repairs and Maintenance Service Review.

Background

2. A Service Review commenced in Construction Services in March 2022. The purpose of the review was to improve productivity and performance, challenge convention and ensure that the form of the service was fit for purpose.
3. With support and in negotiation with the collective trade unions a Joint Local Agreement was introduced for revised salary structure and working arrangements.
4. A key thread throughout all areas of under performance was a lack of ownership of work. New processes for each area have addressed this.

Recruitment

5. 111 new posts have been recruited to across Construction Services. This includes 53 new trade operatives. 6 new Building Technicians and 7 additional Customer Operations Staff.
6. This has enabled additional resource to manage the 'front end' of repairs.
7. With changes to staff designation in the Joint Local Agreement all trade operatives can move between the different areas of work as needed.

Repairs

8. Trade operatives no longer have a rigid set time for each job. Operatives can request additional work when a job takes less time than expected in our standard minute values or stay longer at a property to complete newly identified work.
9. Ownership of work means where a job cannot be completed in one visit, the same operative will be assigned to go back to complete it.
10. Upskilling of trades operatives has enabled the completion of minor cross trade work in one visit rather than multiple visits. This makes better use of resources and provides better customer service.
11. Building Technicians are embedded in the Customer Operations team to support identification of repair work before a trade operative attends.

12. Repair Schedulers are now part of the Customer Operations team to deliver a more effective service and directly liaise with Building Technicians and Customer Support.
13. When attending to each repair raised, the team take a whole property approach to look at any additional repairs or causes of disrepair.
14. To maximise productive time, stock purchasing arrangements are available with trade counters across the borough, and improved van stock monitoring in place to reduce the need to return to central stores.
15. Evening appointments were trialed between October and December 2023 and have been in place Monday to Thursday since March.
16. Repairs team performance has seen a significant improvement: Jobs completed right first time have risen from 36% in March 2022 to 74% in September 2023, appointments kept from 50% to 93% over the same period, and repairs completed in target from less than 50% to 82%.
17. The level of new repair jobs coming to the team each month has increased from 2000 per month in the first quarter of 2023 to 3500 per month during the summer. Part of this increase is due to the whole house approach now taken during repairs inspection and trade operatives completing additional work during their visits.
18. Levels of major repairs to properties are rising from 1,477 major jobs in 2021/22 to 4,750 major jobs in 2022/2023. Part of this trend is from better identification of works and a whole property approach to repairs. Major repairs include new kitchens, bathrooms, and part and full electrical rewires.
19. Use of contractors is under review due to poor performance, quality issues and rising costs.
20. The Customer Operations Team have seen an increase of over 2,000 calls per month.
21. The Repairs policy is under review to both enable better customer service, and timescales that can be better benchmarked against similar organisations.

Damp, mould and condensation

22. A new process was introduced in April this year. This has enabled more accurate diagnosis and quicker responses to customers. A dedicated Building Technician is in place to coordinate and investigate reports of damp mould and condensation and treats this as a repair issue rather than a housing management function.
23. System reports are still being refined to enable accurate reporting on the type and number of cases, with a clear reporting of mould cases instead of the current combined figures that include any works related to damp.
24. The approach to damp involves finding the source of the problem – repairs, inherent property defects, insulation, extract systems and ventilation.

25. Positive intake ventilation units have been installed in over 100 homes. These are now under review as to their efficiency, impact on electrical cost and how they affect heat loss.

Voids

26. Changes to void processes have increased productivity and decreased delays in work streams. 576 properties were made ready to let in the period April to end of September 2022. 619 properties were made ready to let in the same period for 2023.
27. Levels of repairs needed to empty properties have almost doubled since last year impacting on turnaround times, budget spend and inhouse targets.
28. As with repairs, use of contractors is under review due to poor performance, quality issues and rising costs.
29. Void performance is expected to meet business plan targets at the financial year end.

Proposal

30. Repair and void processes, performance and productivity will remain under review and changes made as necessary.
31. Options to move away from contractors to inhouse staff are under review. This is intended to improve responsiveness, quality, and customer service.

Recommendations

32. OSC is asked to note this report.

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