

TITLE OF REPORT: Repairs Policy in Construction Services**REPORT OF: Ian McLackland, Service Director Repairs and Building Maintenance****Purpose of the Report**

1. To set out proposed changes to the Repairs Policy in Construction Services

Background

2. The Service Review of Construction Services highlighted that the existing Repairs Policy was overcomplicated and out of step with other Registered Providers (RPs) regionally.
3. Existing repair categories and timescales are not directly comparable with other RPs which makes Gateshead Council's performance appear less favourable when benchmarked against others.
4. Emergency and Urgent categories have historically been confused, are difficult for IT systems to manage and remove flexibility.
5. The use of an additional Urgent category restricts flexibility of appointments for tenants within the Repairs IT system only allowing repair slots in day 2 and 3. It prevents customer choice of appointment dates.
6. The existing 40 day planned work category is unachievable, a shorter timescale than other RPs, and unrealistic in the context of the type of work. For example, kitchen and bathroom replacements, material ordering and supply, sourcing contractors, carrying out pre-work asbestos surveys, 14-day notification to the HSE, and minimising disruption for customers.

Proposal

7. To simplify the Repairs Policy whilst ensuring it is fit for purpose, enabling an effective, customer focussed repairs service that is comparable regionally to our peer group.
8. Retain the Emergency 24 hour and routine 20-day categories and change the planned work category from 40 to 90 days. Remove the Urgent, 3-day category to free up more '1st day' appointment slots and retain indicators to allocate priority to vulnerable tenants.
9. Adopt a planned repairs timescale in line with other registered providers. An unintended consequence of these changes is a reduction in out of time repairs and

disrepair claims. This will not affect action plans in place to address out of time repairs.

Customer consultation

10. An online survey via our social media platforms outlining the proposed changes to repair timescales and priorities was carried out in August 2023.
11. 85% of 502 responses were in favour of simplifying the repair categories.
12. 65% of 502 responses were in favour of increasing the planned works priority to 90 days.
13. A focus group of customers, alongside elected members, also met in November 2023 to go through the policy changes. The group agreed with the changes.
14. The full draft policy went out for consultation via our customer portal in January 2024. 66% of 101 responses agreed we had the right objectives in the policy and 79.59% agreed the policy was easy to understand.
15. The proposed amendments were approved at June's Strategic Housing Board meeting.

Recommendations

16. It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - (i) approve the amended policy and associated process change;
 - (ii) agree to receive a further report in six months' time to review policy implementation and the impact on both customer service and performance.

for the following reasons:

- (i) To introduce a more user-friendly policy.
- (ii) Enable achievable targets that are directly comparable with benchmarked organisations.
- (iii) Clarify the difference between emergency and urgent jobs.

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APPENDIX 1

Policy Context

1. This proposal supports the Council's policy, service planning and performance management framework which aims to ensure that all resources are directed towards delivery of the Council's strategic approach, making Gateshead a 'Place Where Everyone Thrives'.
2. Supports the new consumer standards promoting explicit policies regarding the Landlord and Tenant relationship.

Background

3. The service review of Construction Services set out to challenge convention and introduce customer focussed, transparent services that enable better performance and options for improvement.

Consultation

4. Customer feedback via customer portal, customer panel groups and social media, Service Directors HEHC, and Strategic Housing Services, CMT, Housing Portfolio, Strategic Housing Board.

The following officers have been consulted on the preparation of this report:

Neil Bouch
Kevin Scarlett
Martin Poulter
Sandra Watson
Vicky Sibson
Deborah Ewart
Kevin Johnson
Craig Gandy
Thomas Sutton

Alternative Options

5. None that would enable simplification and transparency. None that could be comparatively benchmarked.

Implications of Recommended Option

6. Resources:

- a) **Financial Implications** – There are no financial implications arising from this report.
- b) **Human Resources Implications** – There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

- c) **Property Implications** - There are no property implications arising from this report.
7. **Risk Management Implication** - There are no risk implications arising from this report.
8. **Equality and Diversity Implications** - There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.
9. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.
10. **Health Implications** - There are no health implications arising from this report.
11. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications** - There are no climate emergency and sustainability implications arising from this report.
12. **Human Rights Implications** - There are no human rights implications arising from this report.
13. **Area and Ward Implications** - There are no ward implications arising from this report.