

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 31ST OCTOBER 2012

REPORT BY: HEAD OF HOUSING

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON THE REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE SERVICE

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 This report will update members on the progress of the repairs and maintenance service performance improvement work streams.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 The Asset Management Team have been progressing a number of service improvement work streams to improve the quality of services delivered to tenants.

The new Interim Asset Manager has taken the opportunity to review current and planned work streams in order to assess the current position and plan effectively to realise the most improvements for the service over future months and the long term. There are a significant amount of projects underway and planned for the service and the Asset Manager is keen to ensure that each project is managed and embedded effectively as it is only then that the projects will be a success and deliver the most benefits to the service. The Interim Asset Manager has also provided updates for members within the report on additional work streams that are underway that he feels will have significant impacts for the Asset Management service and provide the foundations for improved and sustained performance. The work areas currently being progressed are:

- Implementation of revised staffing structure
- Staff Development
 1. Flintshire Trades Academy
 2. Customer Service and Development Training
- Review of the vehicle fleet and trackers
 1. Fleet
 2. Tracker Investigations
 3. Track You System
- Implementation of mobile working

- Extend hours of repairs service
- Improve reputation and performance of repairs service
- Establish an in house adaptations team
- Delivery of Capital works scheme
- Further develop the stores service
- Implement new contact centre system
- Implement a new suite of financial and performance reports
- Schedule of Rates
- Job Scheduling

3.00 **CONSIDERATIONS**

3.01 **Implement revised staffing structure** (please find revised staffing structure at appendix (1))

All job evaluation questionnaires have been submitted, however due to the number of other service reviews it has not been possible for the JEQ Team to evaluate the questionnaires and these are now anticipated to be completed in October. Once evaluation has been carried out on the questionnaires the assimilation process will commence. Any remaining vacancies following assimilation will then be recruited to and this process will be internally only in the first instance. The service review only impacts on office based staff and not trades staff. It is now intended that the staffing structure will be fully implemented by the end of March 2013. The implementation of the structure is a critical project and a key priority for service improvement. The revised job roles will provide a fit for purpose structure that will support new, improved ways of working moving forwards. The new structure also re-allocates resource to key areas that significantly contribute to service performance. From a staff team perspective it is crucial that we implement and embed the structure as soon as possible as this will provide clarity and stability. Pending the implementation a number of interim measures have been introduced to progress improvements. These measures are as follows: -

- Nik Evans (Business Performance Team Manager) has assumed the role of Housing Asset Manager in the interim following the departure of Mike Bernard
- Temporary recruitment to the second Operations Manager post is being undertaken
- Key members of the team are assuming responsibility for the duties within the role of Business Performance Team Manager

- Resources are being allocated to resolve capacity issues on call handling and complaint management whilst the new telephone system is implemented and becomes fully operational

3.02 Staff Development

3.02.1 Flintshire Trades Academy

Housing Services pay rates reflect the expectation that trades staff perform additional skills to their main trade. Some staff are meeting this requirement but a significant number of staff do not yet fully meet this standard. Managers from Housing Asset Management in conjunction with the Community Services Training Manager have met with Deeside College Construction Department and agreed a programme to provide all trades staff with the required skills to become fully competent in a range of skills that will allow them to attain a Level 2 NVQ in Multi Skilling. Attainment of this qualification will assist the trade operative to:

- a) improve the quality of their work
- b) complete more work in one visit
- c) improve productivity
- d) assist in the delivery of the repairs by appointment process

This will also have a positive impact for tenants and on customer satisfaction as it will provide the platform for a higher rate of jobs completed on the first visit.

The course is provided free of charge and will take 16 weeks for the trade staff to complete, and will require their attendance at college on a day release basis with a days study leave. It will take approximately two and half years for all trades staff to complete the course and the order for staff attending the course has been established via a skills analysis carried out by Deeside College staff. The introduction of the scheme has been discussed with the trade unions and has their full support.

It should be noted that multi skilling is designed to provide the operative with additional skills to complete work in another trade without the need to send an additional trades person to perform a minor task in another trade e.g. we would not send a joiner to install a bathroom suite but we would expect a joiner to remove and replace a w.c. pan when repairing a bathroom floor.

3.02.2 Customer Service and Development training

Members will recall that following the completion of the Customer Service Award, 16 members of staff went on to study for the full NVQ Level 2 certificate in Customer Service. It is pleasing to note that 15 officers have fully completed the award.

The Housing Asset Manager has also completed the Senior Management Development Programme and a number of other staff are completing the Team Leader or Supervisors development programme set up by FCC training and Deeside College.

The Housing training section have also organised a specific course designed for Team Leaders on attendance management, performance, appraisals etc which all team leaders in Housing Assets will be attending.

3.03 Review of the vehicle fleet and trackers

3.03.1 Fleet

Discussions on the removal of vehicles provided to certain members of staff other than trade's staff have been ongoing with trade unions. All staff have been consulted individually and have been given three months notice of their vehicle being removed. Essential car allowance will be offered to all those affected. The implementation date will coincide with the implementation of the Housing Asset Management Restructure and this is now anticipated to be completed by March 2013. This change will achieve considerable efficiencies of around £80k each year for the service on expenditure such as lease costs, repairs and servicing and running expenses.

3.03.2 Tracker Investigations

As members will be aware a number of investigations relating to vehicles and tracker information have been ongoing and have now been concluded. There were various outcomes as a result of these investigations and there were also a number of improvements that were determined as part of the process that would aid the service moving forwards. A number of measures have already been taken including refining the tracker system and its use and benefits as a management tool, revisiting management procedures on call out and overtime and re-training on HR systems and policies.

The Housing Asset Management Team are also working closely with the Trade Unions on improving policies, practices and inconsistencies discovered throughout the investigation process. The Investigating Officer and Senior HR Advisor have proposed to compile a summary report following the investigations to cover all recommendations established throughout the process and ensure service improvements are realised for the future.

3.03.3 Track You System

The Track You system provides a number of alerts designed to draw the supervisors attention to such issues as vehicles driving at excess speed, vehicles parked at home inside core hours etc. The Lean review determined that the track you system was not being fully utilised. This was mainly due to the design of the system and the number of

unnecessary alerts supervisors had to administer. FCC has worked with Track You to completely redesign the alerts element of the system and to ensure that it is an effective, efficient management tool. Many of the alerts are now tailored to reflect the service and how it operates. The new package has been re-launched and the new version of the Track You system is fully operational in the service teams.

3.04 **Implementation of mobile working**

The implementation of this work stream has been hampered by the continued IT related technical problems; this has prevented some staff from fully utilising the mobile working system. A number of staff (gas engineers) have been unable to go live at all due to these technical issues and other unrelated software that allows the engineer to complete an electronic Landlord gas safety certificate (CP12)
The IT issues can be divided into two categories:

- a) A software problem that causes the job ticket to be suspended in the ether (freezing) and or places the job ticket at the wrong stage of the job ticket process. This can affect between 300 and 400 hundred jobs at a time and when identified the tickets have to be manually released (one at a time) with the trades person present verifying time and or materials used. When this has happened these jobs have been identified straight away and dealt with and processed appropriately. Capita are aware of this and a solution is available in the Version 10 update, which is currently in 'test' and due to be installed in the 'live' environment by the end of October. Monitoring of this should then take place for a fixed period to assess if the issue has been resolved.
- b) A proportion of the PDA devices have been subject to data clashing with the voice element of the sim card. When the device receives data it switches the phone off and fails to switch it back on and it is not possible for the trade's person to make or receive calls. This is problematic when dealing with emergency repairs and also has a detrimental affect on responsive repair related appointments and overall productivity and service performance. There has been a lot of activity to resolve this problem between Corporate ICT, Capita, device supplier and manufacturer to try and determine the cause of the problem. Every effort and possible solution for this has been made by both Housing Asset Management and Corporate IT and it has been accepted that it is a Capita software issue and they are currently looking into the cause and solution. In the interim separate mobile phones are being ordered for the trades persons in order to ease the problem and allow them to continue to effectively complete repairs.

Status

- 91 devices have been built by corporate ICT. 5 training devices

have also been set up. 79 devices have been issued to operatives with Gas Servicing the remaining group to be issued. In the last month, of those issued, 48 devices have been used operationally.

- To date, over 2000 jobs have been issued and completed using mobile devices. This will continue to be monitored.
- Training has been conducted as follows:
 - 68 staff have had full training
 - 10 have been part trained but training has been put on hold (gas operatives)
 - 12 staff require full training

As these issues have been on-going for a period of time and continue to hinder the ability to fully implement and embed mobile working. A meeting has been held with the senior account manager from Capita to stress the importance and urgency of resolving these issues. The meeting involved the Head of Housing, Housing Asset Manager and Corporate IT Services. The outcome of the meeting was that Capita would allocate additional resources at a senior level in an attempt to overcome the current issues. Capita were also instructed to return with a summary of findings, resolutions and a forward plan of action. In addition to this it is proposed to initiate a steering group involving senior officers from FCC, the Housing Cabinet member and senior officers from Capita in order to progress the mobile working project and other IT developments. Although the delays and issues are a frustration every effort is being made to resolve these and Housing Asset Management remains fully committed to successful full implementation of mobile devices.

3.05 **Introduction of extended service hours**

The compressed hours working group has been working with a group of trades staff to develop a modern shift pattern that will provide tenants with an enhanced service. It was the intention to extend working hours to provide hours of service covering an 8am to 6pm working day including one late night until 8pm and a Saturday morning. Following a pilot scheme that was conducted the evidence from customers demonstrated a limited demand for a late night and Saturday morning which does not justify making workforce available for these times at the moment. The Saturday morning and late night were also the main area of contention during workforce consultation. Therefore, the intention now is to work with the Compressed Hours Working Group to provide the extended day 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday in the first instance.

Housing Asset Management is working with colleagues in Street Scene on the development of appropriate shift patterns to deliver this important change in service delivery and arrangements are being made for the working group to visit similar organisations to see first hand how the shift patterns operate. The likelihood is that this will involve an 8 or 9

day fortnight arrangement to accommodate this service and will therefore mean a change of terms and conditions for staff involved which will need to be negotiated. The Housing Asset Management team are also starting to identify and develop options to improve and streamline the out of hour's service and incorporate gas servicing as part of these proposals so that appointments for this trade can be made available at evenings and weekends. The proposed implementation for the extended service to customers is March 2013.

3.06 **Improve reputation and performance of repairs service**

Housing Asset Management are continuously looking to improve the performance and reputation of the service and provide a first class service to our tenants. As part of this there is currently a lean review being undertaken on the repairs process which is assessing the current process of the journey of a repair being reported over the phone or e-mail through to the job being completed. This will identify areas where improvements can be made to both the quality and speed of service delivery.

The Housing Asset Manager has introduced monthly analysis of jobs being processed in each category to ensure correct recording and classification and to identify areas of concern and potential improvement. This process and the additional performance reports and measures (discussed below) should realise benefits for the department's performance.

Period	Emergency	Target	Urgent	Target	Non urgent	Target
Q1 2012/13	0.55	0.5	8.87	8.5	82.16	35
Q2 2012/2013	0.56	0.5	8.08	8.5	43.63	35

Quarter 2 overall is a positive improvement for the Housing Asset Service in terms of performance. Although well below the 1 day indicator target in the current tenancy agreement, Emergency Repairs are slightly above the 0.5 improvement target. The main reasons for this are data transfer to PDA's and additional work being raised on Emergency job tickets. These issues are being addressed as detailed above. Analysis on all data and categories is now taking place and will continue each month to audit the data and ensure that additional works are raised on separate works instructions and also to verify correct classification of jobs.

Urgent repairs demonstrate a positive improvement in the quarter from 8.87 to 8.08 days. This improvement is partly down to improved control measures being implemented and partly due again to ensuring that any additional works are not completed on the same works instruction.

Non-urgent repairs have improved significantly over the quarter reducing from 82.16 to 43.63 days. A large amount of older jobs were completed in quarter 1 as we continued to reduce the repairs backlog which resulted in a significant impact on the performance figures. As these older jobs have now been completed the results can be seen in the significant improvement during this quarter. The outturn in quarter 2 is the best performance for at least 3 years. Work now continues to effectively manage jobs in this category and to improve performance on inspections for non-urgent repairs.

3.07 In-house adaptations team

Following Members approval for an initial 12 month pilot of an in-house adaptations team, four members of the team have been appointed – one plasterer, two joiners and a plumber, and the remaining two will be appointed as the work progresses. The team have been selected from the existing Building Maintenance Team and these positions will be backfilled initially with trade staff on a temporary contract and if the team is fully established permanent posts will be offered. Performance of the team will be reported to future meetings of this committee although initial feedback received from the Housing Grants team is very positive. The type of work carried out by this team includes walk-in showers, grab rails, steps and concrete paths.

3.08 Delivery of Capital Works Scheme

The Capital Works programme for 2012-2013 consisted of replacement programmes for Heating, Kitchens, Bathrooms and Smoke Alarms. The Heating contract has been let to Rothwells this year and to date they have completed 462 properties out of a budgeted 1100 properties. The contract will complete the required number of properties as the contractors are currently completing 25/30 properties per week. Included in the Heating element of works, gas mains work to off-gas areas is also being provided which is particularly time consuming due to Legal easement processes that is required. With this in mind, next years schemes are being looked at to speed up this process ahead of next years programme. Ongoing discussions are being held with Wales and West to try and find cost effective ways of providing gas to our off-gas areas. We will be unable to provide gas to all our areas and as such we are currently investigating Air Source Heating technology to provide an alternative heating for the solid fuel and oil properties FCC currently own. One Air Source pump has been tried in a property with a view to Piloting circa 20 properties in this financial year.

With reference to the kitchen replacement programme, the first six months of the year, Bramalls were completing the current contract and have completed 432 properties including partial properties and a further 30 have declined to date. A tender process has just been completed

and 2 Contractors have been appointed, Wates and Keepmoat-Bramalls, for the forthcoming contract. This contract can be let for 3/4 years if required and the remaining properties have been split 50/50 to each contractor. The budgeted figure for this year was 922 properties and it is on target to achieve this figure with both contractors working at the same time.

The Bathroom contract has provision for only 56 properties this year. Surveys have been completed and a tender is currently being finalised with a view to starting on site in November. This scheme will be completed ahead of the end of the financial year.

The Smoke Alarm programme has also been split into two contracts. There has been an historical problem on the sheltered accommodations in that the current systems are a mixture of Chubb and FCC systems. This provides a problem for the out of hours service when issues arise. The opportunity has been taken to place a contract with Chubb to replace all the FCC units with a Chubb unit to the sheltered accommodation blocks, so that any future call out issues will be solely a Chubb issue. All blocks will be complete with the exception of the Heights which are scheduled to be completed in next years programme. This years budgeted figure was for 884 units and Chubb have completed circa 400 to date. The DLO are also completing work to other Domestic properties and they too have completed circa 400 to date. The programme will be completed on time and will also provide additional units to those planned in the budget.

The Capital Works team send out Customer satisfaction questionnaires to Tenants when various schemes are completed. Last year questionnaires were sent out for nine different schemes. The results are collated and analysed and feedback, both positive and negative, is reviewed and then discussed with the various contractors at the monthly contractors meetings. The number of surveys sent out varies for the size of the scheme and between 27 and 355 questionnaires have been sent out with the various projects. Between 18% and 48% of the questionnaires have been returned providing satisfaction levels of between 84% and 99.1%.

FCC have commenced discussions recently Wrexham County Borough Council with a view to providing joint procurement initiatives to maximise any savings that could be shared. On going discussions and meetings have been held to look into the New Green Deal strategy and funding streams associated with CESP providers such as British Gas. The Capital Works team are also in discussion with WCBC to look at ways of improving the Contract Administration processes, forms of contract and material choices etc. Both authorities are looking at ways of providing a joint initiative for a project in the new financial year, 2013 - 2014.

3.09 Further develop the stores service

The new stores service has been up and running for six months and has proved to be a significant success and improvement for the Housing Asset service. The newly established service is progressing particularly well considering the scale of the change both culturally and operationally. The first few months have indicated potential efficiencies of approximately £10k per month when comparing against the same volume of materials purchased in the previous year. The department is now purchasing 95% of materials through the managed stores in comparison to 50% in previous years through the former stores facility. This, obviously, has substantial benefits in terms of control and audit measures and standardisation of stock. It is also encouraging to note that the workforce have embraced this change and the staff transferred to Travis Perkins from the authority are extremely positive about the change.

Work now continues to further develop the stores service with the main objectives as follows: -

- Electronic Trading – Electronic Trading allows orders and invoices to be matched electronically which will provide significant efficiencies for back office processes.
- Van Stocks – A large project in itself, a complete review of van stocks is being undertaken with the aim to phase in over a number of months a fit for purpose van stock for each operative. This will reduce visits to stores and importantly aid the objective of completing repairs on the first visit as operatives will have the required materials on the van. This be introduced in conjunction with the embedding of mobile working to enable automatic stock replenishment and will realise significant efficiencies for the service once introduced.
- Tool Hire and Purchase – It is proposed to add tool hire and purchase into the managed stores contract. This will again have major advantages in terms of control measures and value for money but also have significant benefits, both financially and operationally, on PAT testing, repairs and replacements and health and safety issues.
- Develop Management Information – Ongoing reviews of stock requirements and product specifications will take place over the next 12 months and the development of key performance indicators and management information will aid continuous improvement throughout the contract. Benchmarking exercises on cost of materials will also be carried out annually.
- Planned Programmes – In order to again realise the most benefits from the contract it is proposed to direct the materials used on the planned programme schemes through the managed stores. This will have benefits such as value for money, bulk discounts and standardisation of stock used on our properties.

3.10 **Implement a new Contact Centre system**

The Housing Asset Management Team have been working with

Corporate IT to develop the requirements for a contact centre to be implemented for the repairs call centre. The introduction of a contact centre will provide benefits for the service and more importantly significantly improve the customers experience of contacting the department. Since the move from Canton Depot to County Offices the service has experienced issues with the repairs line as we were unable to transfer the IT system previously used due to significant costs involved. The contact centre will provide a solution to these issues by managing the call process. The system will allow the service to manage periods of high call demand through call routing and by providing an overflow facility which will ensure that tenants calls are always answered within specified timeframes.

The new system will also provide visual aids for the supervisor to monitor calls and manage the contact centre and will also provide numerous management reports to aid forward planning and achieving higher levels of customer satisfaction. As part of introducing the contact centre the whole department will benefit from a new telephone system which will promote agile and mobile working by allowing the transfer of numbers to different work stations, enable connection between landlines and mobiles and provide call management facilities via Lotus Notes. The Team aims to introduce the new system by December 2012.

3.11 Financial and Performance Reporting

Since the removal of the Trading Account a large amount of work has been completed on developing a new suite of reports to monitor productivity, financial and operational performance and aid forward work and strategic planning. These reports are now in operation. Further reports are now being developed for all areas of the service to enable effective people and performance management. These reports, for example, are being designed for Team Leaders to use as a management tool to effectively manage their trades teams and individuals and will provide information on productivity, workload, appointments, absence, leave and training.

Once these additional reports have been finalised the next phase will be to roll out the reports across the service. Awareness sessions will be arranged with both office staff and operatives to introduce the new reports, raise awareness of performance and reaffirm the services aims, objectives and performance measures.

Following this the proposal is to arrange monthly performance meetings throughout the service from the Management Team to Team Leaders to 1:1's with trades staff. The aim is to further develop a performance management culture within the service, introduce some healthy competition and ultimately improve all aspects of performance throughout Housing Asset Management. It is also proposed to introduce visual displays throughout the Housing Asset offices on all Performance Indicators.

3.12 **Schedule of Rates**

The current schedule of rates contains approximately 1800 detailed rates including comprehensive descriptions of jobs and times allocated for completing repairs. Housing Asset Management are keen to explore a new schedule of rates with significantly reduced rates and descriptions that will compliment new working practices and encourage a new empowered culture when completing repairs for our customers.

The Operations Manager has been carrying out research to identify a new schedule of rates for the service which will compliment the new ways of working planned for the future. Discussions have been held with potential suppliers of schedule of rates and a working group has now been initiated including both office based staff and trades staff to discuss the project, benefits and solutions to any potential issues of implementation. With the new stores service meaning materials get accounted for on an actual cost basis, mobile working and the removal of the trading account there is a requirement to review the schedule of rates to work effectively with these improved practices. A new schedule of rates would have significantly reduced codes, amended times that would only be visible in the back office systems and encourage an improved culture different to the previous bonus scheme working practices. Through a reduced schedule of rates trades staff would be encouraged to assess significantly more jobs and carry out the work required on the same visit rather than the current practice which encourages a large amount of inspections before work is carried out. Average times for repairs would be a performance and productivity measure assessed in the background and would therefore encourage a culture of completing jobs without referring to the set times included in the current schedule of rates.

3.13 **Job Scheduling**

Job scheduling was originally planned to be implemented early in the next financial year. Following the review it is felt that in order to realise the true benefits of a job scheduling system that the implementation for this project be planned for the following financial year. In order for such a system to be implemented successfully and provide the potential efficiencies and benefits there are a number of other projects and improvements that need to be fully embedded first and working effectively. For example the job scheduling system will only provide further improvements once other improvements and practices are in place such as fully operational mobile working, van stock replenishment, revised schedule of rates, established working hours, a fit for purpose staffing structure and most importantly effective people and performance management. There are also improvements that can be learnt from other major change projects such as mobile working in terms of planning, resourcing and implementation time and phases. Job scheduling is another large IT project that will require effective planning

and project management to ensure successful implementation. To realise the full benefits of the system members are asked to support the revised date for planned implementation in order to plan effectively but more importantly allow focus to be given on successfully implementing and embedding the other improvements work streams detailed above to provide the foundations for job scheduling to present the service with further improvements when implemented.

In the meantime the Housing Interim Asset Manager has had initial meetings with procurement to begin planning work for the project well in advance and has pulled together draft business cases and a specification in preparation for tendering.

3.14 **Next Steps**

Delivery of service improvement work streams will continue and will be reported regularly to this committee.

4.00 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.01 Members are asked to note the positive progress being made to improve performance and to deliver the service improvement work streams.

5.00 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.01 None as a direct result of this report

6.00 **ANTI POVERTY IMPACT**

6.01 None as a direct result of this report, though works to maintain and improve the stock and repair and maintenance services provide a direct benefit to the lives and living conditions for some of the poorest Flintshire residents.

7.00 **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

7.01 None as a direct result of this report.

8.00 **EQUALITIES IMPACT**

8.01 None as a direct result of this report.

9.00 **PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.01 There are a number of items which will require continuing negotiation and discussion with trade unions over the coming months.

10.00 **CONSULTATION REQUIRED**

10.01 Consultation will be required as detailed above.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 Consultation with trade unions is ongoing, regular meetings are held with Trade Union representatives to discuss all strands of the service.

12.00 APPENDICES

1

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Contact Officer: Nik Evans
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