

# **WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

## **Report by the Strategic Lead, Regeneration**

**Housing and Communities Committee: 4 November 2020**

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**Subject: Building Services Actions to Improve Tenants Satisfaction with the Service**

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to advise Committee of actions being taken to improve tenants' satisfaction with the Councils' Maintenance and Repairs Services delivered by Building Services.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1** It is recommended that Members:

- i. note the contents of this report.
- ii. note updates on progress will be monitored.
- iii. building services tenant satisfaction performance will be reported within the Scottish Social Charter Update Report presented to the committee for 2020/2021.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1** An annual progress report on meeting the requirements of the Scottish Social Housing Charter was presented to the Housing and Communities Committee on 2 September 2020 on the Councils' performance for the 2019/2020 period.
- 3.2** The report outlined continued good progress, with 25 of the 28 indicators, or 89% of the key indicators either meeting or almost achieving target.
- 3.3** In this period Building Services achieved / exceeded the Councils' targets in 4 from 6 Scottish Housing Regulator Charter performance indicators all of which improved upon the performance in 2018/2019.
- 3.3** However, there were a number of areas where performance did not meet target including a significant drop in satisfaction levels with the repairs and maintenance service.
- 3.4** The report noted a paper would be brought to a future Housing and Communities Committee setting out a number of improvement actions around the repairs service aimed at ensuring tenant satisfaction levels

are increased.

- 3.5** Committee members will be aware tenants satisfaction with the maintenance and repairs services in 2019/2020 was 68.33%; a significant decline from 2018/2019 when this was 88.51%. At the 6 November 2019 committee the Scottish Social Housing Charter/Regulation of Social Housing in Scotland Progress Report showed at mid year 66.6% of tenants were satisfied or very satisfied with the maintenance and repair service.
- 3.6** Despite the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic feedback from tenants in 2020/2021 shows encouraging signs of improvement with 78.22% satisfied or very satisfied with the service provided in quarter 1 April to June. It is also worth noting surveys completed on craft workers mobile devices on completion of repairs show that 97.8% of tenants that completed the survey were very satisfied or satisfied with the service provided.

#### **4. Main Issues**

- 4.1** A number of challenges contributed to the decline in the level of customer satisfaction 2019/2020; the main issues were as follows:
- i. difficulty in contacting the service to report or enquire on the progress of a repair, or a general enquiry; this was due to limitations of the old telephone platform and staff turnover within Citizen Services; the telephone platform was replaced by a modern system in December 2019.
  - ii. the majority of customer satisfaction surveys were carried out within the first six months of the year by Citizen Services; this resulted in the service not having an opportunity to monitor feedback on tenants' repair journey throughout the full year.
  - iii. team members within Building Services were getting accustomed to the new Integrated Housing Management System (IHMS) implemented in November 2021.
  - iv. the culture within the service needs to become more customer focussed.
- 4.2** Tenant satisfaction has been over 90% historically and improvement action plans have been developed to improve customer satisfaction in 2020/2021 and future years.
- 4.3** Notwithstanding the impact of COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic and the impact the lockdown and continuing restrictions have had on the service delivery we are targeting 85% customer satisfaction for 2020/2021. The target aim will be to increase to match the best peer organisations in future years.

#### **Improvement Actions**

- 4.4** Fit for Purpose review of Building Services was carried out by an external consultancy in March and April 2019 and a comprehensive action plan has been developed to implement changes in areas highlighted requiring improvement; the following are some of the main improvement areas:
- i. review the management structure; posts have been added to the structure at senior level and other changes considered necessary will be rolled out over the next 18 month period
  - ii. an overarching 5 year business plan is being developed and this will be supplemented by the service delivery plans
  - iii. improve leadership and management skills within the service; an officer development programme has been developed which will be delivered in 2019/2020
  - iv. improve and have an effective culture within the service in customer focus
  - v. establish a clear performance framework reflecting high level objectives and targets within the business plan
  - vi. reduce the high level of sickness absence
  - vii. negotiate and introduce general and multi-skilling to service delivery
  - viii. negotiate and introduce more flexibility into service provision with extended working hours, Saturday working as part of the normal working week, annualised hours, and seasonal working
  - ix. reduce the high level of emergency repairs
  - x. improve the operation of the stores
  - xi. develop a value for money action plan including recharges with a view to simplifying current recharge models which are very complex
  - xii. improve staff communication within the service and across client groups
- 4.5** A customer service improvement action plan has been developed with many actions progressing with clear evidence of improvement including:
- i. improve repairs centre telephone system to avoid complaints of customers not being able to contact; the new platform went live December 2019 and work is ongoing to improve customer contact
  - ii. improve on-line reporting of repairs; work has been carried out, however real benefits will be realised when the IHMS self-service portal goes live which is part of the development plan for the new system; this may take up to the next 12 months to fully implement
  - iii. explore improvements which can be made with resourcing the repairs centre telephones/workflow. Monthly meetings take place between Building Services and Citizen Services and Central Administration Services to agree new processes, training plans and to improve joint working
  - iv. improve timescales with answering enquiries and reducing complaints of no contact/no access from customers & clients
  - v. customer satisfaction surveys will be completed on 10% of all completed routine repairs with surveys carried out across the year;

teams will follow-up with tenants reporting poor satisfaction, a lessons learned action log has been set-up to monitor improvements implemented and to evidence the actual reductions / elimination of repeat complaint areas

- vi. investigate improvements which can be made with Building Services officers and craft supervisors responding to customer enquiries
- vii. all internal repairs to be appointed; this is now happening as part of the IHMS
- viii. explore improvements which can be made for craft workers attending jobs i.e. increased communication/customer care/ training/texting
- ix. implement reminder texting facility within the IHMS to reduce no accesses and improve tenant communication
- x. improve the monitoring of the quality of materials and workmanship (on site quality audits/ site inspections) to avoid complaints on completion of work

**4.6** Other action plans include:

- i. supporting employee wellbeing
- ii. IHMS improvement and development plan

**4.7** Progress on these action plans and actions are reported to the Building Services Board and Housing Improvement Board (HIB) who closely monitor the progress and where necessary make recommendations on any further action that may be required. The Building Services and HIB boards meet monthly. Other groups monitoring progress are West Dunbartonshire Tenants and Resident Organisation (WDTRO) and tenant scrutiny groups.

**4.8** A new service delivery model is also being considered to be piloted where routine repairs would be carried out in geographical areas on a cyclical basis. However this will require further consultation with all stakeholders in the coming months. Emergency and urgent repairs would continue to be delivered in the same way as present.

**5. People Implications**

**5.1** Progressing these improvement actions and new delivery model will impact on all stakeholders. These will improve the services delivered and in turn improve the satisfaction levels with the service.

**6. Financial and Procurement Implications**

**6.1** The costs of implementing necessary changes and improvements will not add costs for the delivery of services and there is an expectation costs may reduce over a period of 3 years.

- 6.2** All procurement activity carried out by the Council in excess of £50,000 is subject to a contract strategy. The strategy for any necessary contracts required to implement all necessary changes will include but may not be limited to; contract scope, service forward plan, the market, procurement model and routes – including existing delivery vehicles, roles and responsibilities, risks, issues and opportunities and on-going contract management. The contract strategy for the procurement of any contracts will be produced by the Corporate Procurement Unit in close consultation with Consultancy Services and Building Services.

## **7. Risk Analysis**

- 7.1** On-going modernisation of the service, in-line with action and business plans, will allow the Council to meet its landlord, health and safety and quality standards obligations whilst improving tenant and customer satisfaction.
- 7.2** Risks and mitigation/management measures will be identified as part of the development of communication strategy for the pilot of the new delivery model if this is approved.

## **8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

- 8.1** An Equalities Impact Assessment screening has been carried out which did not identify any significant issues. The report does not alter the principles of service delivery or any existing policy.

## **9. Strategic Assessment**

- 9.1** This report contributes to the Council's Strategic Priorities and in particular towards:
- i. improving economic growth and employability.
  - ii. improving local housing and environmentally sustainable infrastructure; and
  - iii. improving the wellbeing of communities.

## **10. Consultation**

- 10.1** Finance and Legal have been consulted regarding the contents of this report.
- 10.2** The Corporate Procurement team have been consulted in the development of this report. They will provide assistance and professional guidance with the administration of the tender exercises.

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**Date: 4 November 2020**

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**Appendices:** Nil

**Background Papers:** Nil

**Wards Affected:** All