

Agenda Item 7

CABINET

4TH APRIL 2012

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER OF QUALITY OF LIFE

Development of the Landlord Handy Person Service and the Landlord Repairs Policy

EXEMPT INFORMATION

N/A

PURPOSE

- To set out the arrangements for the Landlord Handy Person Service as detailed in the Repairs Policy
- To agree the repairs policy following the principles agreed in January 2011 and used for the procurement process

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet are recommended to:-

- Approve the Repairs Policy at Annex One
- Approve the implementation arrangements for the Handy Person Service contained within the report
- Approve the development of a Q&A leaflet, based on the proposals within the report, for all Sheltered Scheme Residents initially.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Costs involved in the delivery of a combined Repairs and Investment Contract have been reported separately.

There are no additional costs of delivering an estate based Handy Person Service, in fact it is anticipated that this will be a real example of invest to save. As part of the "added value" processes within the new repairs and investment contract, Mears are providing a salaried handy person, with a van, free of charge within the contract. Works will then be charged as materials only using the schedule of rates. This will represent value for money and officers' believe generate a reduction in costs which can be re-invested else-where in the repairs service. In 2011/12 around £160,000 was spent on minor works at Sheltered Schemes. The Council will see expect to pay for scheduled materials, but labour will be contained within the salary cost. Therefore it is envisaged that there will be around a £100,000 that can be used to meet other repairs costs.

LEGAL/RISK IMPLICATIONS BACKGROUND

The delivery of a Repairs Service is a statutory and contractual obligation. The raft of legislation reported in January 2011 remains in force. Cabinet will recall that the Tenancy Agreement has also been reviewed to set out and clarify landlord and tenant obligations in relation to repairs, this took effect from 16th January 2012.

Members should note that whilst this is good news and a service improvement, there are risks around managing expectations. To start with the resources will involve 1 handy person and this will mean they spend either a morning or afternoon at each scheme, each week, so until demand can be assessed it will be a limited service initially.

The other risk is managing tenants' own expectations, the handy person is there to

complete minor repairs only and will not be offering a one stop solution for all repairs - across all trades.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The HRA Business plan, approved by Cabinet in March, clearly set out the Council's ambitions, as a stock retained landlord, in relation to developing the Decent Homes Standard as well as focusing on the wider commercial ambitions around estate regeneration. The level of investment will clearly provide an opportunity to create well balanced and sustainable estates that have positive community outcomes.

A robust Repair and Investment Service clearly contributes to the Council's corporate and strategic objectives in relation to being healthier and safer. There are also contract promises around Mears and Morrison's investing and supporting in the local economy by developing relationships with small businesses, recruiting apprenticeships and setting up schemes such as the handy person.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Cabinet approved the principles within the Repairs Policy in January 2011. These principles and details were further enshrined in the tender documentation that formed part of the repairs procurement process. Cabinet approved successive reports that culminated in the Contract award to Mears in December 2011.

The Repairs Policy is attached and shown at annex one. Stakeholders have exposed this to a new Health & Community Impact Assessment. This is attached at Annex three. This policy summarises the arrangements going forward. The policy document has been updated to include both Mears (Repairs and Investment) and Morrison's (Gas) logos and contact details.

The policy will be developed as opportunities are realised through self – financing and the council, as a landlord, will seek to set out how environmental improvements, introduction of the Tamworth Standard and improvement works at sheltered and flatted estates will be delivered.

THE LANDLORD HANDY PERSON SERVICE

Mears have committed to providing a Handy Person Service. As part of the contract realisation plan they have agreed to deliver this service to all Sheltered Housing Residents from May 2012 and extend it to all vulnerable residents by the end of 2013.

Basically the handy person service will consist of an operative who is multi-skilled and will visit each of the 11 sheltered schemes, on a rota, to undertake low level, minor repairs. Typically they will be no longer than 1hr and the operative will be skilled in customer service as well as having the right technical ability. The repairs will not normally be emergency repairs, although the handy person will be trained on how to report all levels of repairs, should that be necessary, recognising that some repairs can't be completed there and then.

Tenants, who are defined as vulnerable, within the policy, will receive the handy person service and continue to benefit from a full repairs service and the Council will continue to undertake minor repairs. Vulnerability is defined as

- Living in sheltered accommodation
- Being over 75yrs and living alone
- In receipt of DLA, Attendance Allowance of War Disablement Pension
- Or at the Director of H&H discretion

It is likely the handy person will undertake a whole range of minor repairs, but for illustrative purposes are likely to do:-

- Renewing toilet seats, plug chains and tap washers
- Putting up shelves, curtain rails, picture hooks
- Minor decoration works such as basic tiling around a sink
- Helping to relay a floor covering (where allowed)
- Replacing faulty window and / or door catches
- Checking battery smoke alarms
- Seasonally - Turning on and testing heating to determine if repairs are required prior to the winter months

THE KEY BENEFITS

Providing a regular and consistent service has a range of benefits including:-

- Improvements in overall customer satisfaction in that a local relationship is developed and services are provided outside of the normal repairs policy, i.e. putting up a shelf, curtain rail
- Demonstrable commitment to “right first time” in that customers will have direct access to the workforce and be-able to seek advice on a range of housing related matters
- Saves money in that it reduces avoidable contact, potentially reduced reported response repairs and allows for a more planned approach to work
- Supports vulnerable clients and illustrates how services are tailored to the health and well-being needs of customers

Members should note that in the 2011 Status Survey, overall satisfaction in sheltered schemes was 92%, which is already high. Benchmarking data from House mark, and recent best practice, shows that those tenants who have access to a handy person services are likely to be at least 10% happier with their landlord. House mark recently published Marches Housing Association scheme, which was launched in 2011 and have reported 100% satisfaction with the service after the first year.

IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

To help manage expectations and to stage the implementation it is recommended that the service is staged in terms of its implementation.

Service	Implementation Date
Handy Person Service at All Sheltered Housing Schemes	May 2012
Handy Person Service offered for All Vulnerable tenants	By April 2013
Handy Person Service Offered to All including bi-annual Property MOTs	B April 2014

Customers, at the Sheltered Schemes, will be able to access the service directly by contacting the Handy Person on the day they are due at their scheme. The Independent Living Manager will keep a record to pass to the handy person when they arrive on site. If approved the Housing Options Manager will develop a rota in

consultation with the schemes and Mears.

Any emergency, urgent or planned repairs will continue to be reported (using the usual channels) through MEARS call centre and will not be completed by the handy person. The Handy Person will only complete minor repairs.

REPORT AUTHOR

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APPENDICES

Annex one – Repairs Policy 2012

Annex Two – Proposed Q&A for the implementation of the handy person service to be developed

Annex Three – Health Impact Assessment