
REPORT TO:	COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 9
DATE OF MEETING:	11 th SEPTEMBER 2006	CATEGORY: RECOMMENDED
REPORT FROM:	DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	BOB LEDGER HEAD OF HOUSING EXT 5775	DOC:
SUBJECT:	REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE PROGRESS REPORT	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: HCSO1

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 To monitor, discuss and comment upon the contents of this report.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To inform members of progress made in fulfilling the recommendations made by the Audit Commission in their October 2005 report on our Repairs and Maintenance Service.
- 2.2 The Chairman of this Committee has also provided a list of background questions, which this report aims to give clarification on.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The Audit Commission is responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively and delivers high quality local and national services for the public. In terms of Housing this is achieved through the branch of the Audit Commission known as the Housing Inspectorate.
- 3.2 The formal inspection of the Repairs and Maintenance Service of South Derbyshire District Council commenced in April 2005 with the submission of the self assessment pro-forma alongwith some 200+ attached documents.
- 3.3 The on-site part of the inspection was undertaken in the week beginning 6th June. The inspection team comprised four inspectors. The first draft report was produced in mid-July and following a series of further meetings and drafts the final report was published on the 13th of October 2005.

3.4 The final scoring of the service was "fair" with "promising prospects for improvement". The final report contained a number of recommendations for attention and action. These were summarised in tabular form and that table is reproduced at 4. below with an additional column outlining our progress to date. As well as the twelve formal recommendations there were a number of others within the body of the report and the Service has not lost sight of these and is progressing its own 'in-house' action plans.

4.0 Audit Commission Inspection

<i>Recommendations</i>		<i>Progress as at 1.9.06</i>
<i>Within three months</i>		
R1	<i>Report the findings and recommendations of this report to the Council, staff, tenants and leaseholders and stakeholders</i>	<i>Completed Nov 05</i>
R2	<i>Prepare a SMART action plan to address all weaknesses identified in this report and ensure that progress is regularly monitored and reported.</i>	<i>Completed Oct 05</i>
R3	<i>Undertake a comprehensive review of the provision of repairs and maintenance leaflets to tenants to ensure that information is provided in a consistent and co-ordinated manner and that all tenants are supplied with information to help in the diagnosis of repairs.</i>	<i>Review complete and stakeholder working group engaged with new leaflets. Target of January 07.</i>
R4	<i>Review progress against all outstanding diversity actions within the key action plans. Ensure that action is taken on outstanding items.</i>	<i>Now fully engaged in corporate process</i>
<i>Within six months</i>		
R5	<i>In conjunction with all stakeholders undertake a detailed analysis of the responsive repairs service to address the high incidence of variation orders and reasons for the high levels of jobs being diagnosed and ordered as emergencies.</i>	<i>No of emergencies reduced by 25% since inspection. Addressing variations is part of the action plan for stakeholder group Target February 07. Needed to first establish meaningful stakeholder process.</i>
R6	<i>Undertake a review in conjunction with stakeholders of contract administration, management and evaluation procedures to enable the delivery of a more customer-focused service.</i>	<i>Part of action plan for stakeholder group. Target April 07.</i>
R7	<i>Review the procedures for aids and adaptations to ensure that initial requests for aids and adaptations are recorded, works are captured on property attributes and the service is monitored to ensure that it is meeting its stated objective of achieving independent living.</i>	<i>Complete Mar 06.</i>

R8	<i>Continue to develop the provision of performance information so that it includes all service areas and corresponding commentary and actions to manage under performance and deliver service improvements.</i>	<i>Complete July 05. In August 06 new Corporate process adopted.</i>
R9	<i>Increase resident involvement and influence in all aspects of this service.</i>	<i>Initial phase complete. Hosted a repairs challenge day July 06 out of which a stakeholder group established.</i>
Within twelve months		
R10	<i>Implement appointments across all trades to enable all tenants to be offered them in accordance with prescribed timescales and to improve ease of access for tenants.</i>	<i>Complete May 06 (6 months ahead of schedule – prioritised because this assessed as biggest impact on positive service delivery)</i>
R11	<i>Ensure that all elements of the repairs and maintenance service deliver value for money.</i>	<i>Action plan being developed in conjunction with Council's Procurement Officer – outcome is to be amended tendering schedule. Independent report commissioned on value of DLO to report September 06.</i>
R12	<i>In conjunction with contractors and tenants actively develop a strategy that will enable a move from a responsive to a planned repairs and maintenance service.</i>	<i>At the time of Inspection in comparative terms we were, on the division between responsive and planned, performing to a best practice level. We are likely to propose annual inspections of all properties in a restructuring report to go before Policy Committee shortly – these should assist in this task.</i>

5.0 Chairman's additional questions

5.1 Following in this section are answers, in the format of the questions supplied by the Chairman.

Q. When do you plan to be an 'excellent' housing service?

A. We believe that we are approaching the 'good' categorisation. Responsive repairs was our weakest area and the main focus in the Audit Commission Inspection but we still came out of it with a 'fair' rating. The consistent theme of the Audit Commission Inspection was them noting the very low base we had started from and the not inconsiderable achievement in being where we were at the time of inspection. To move from good to excellent may require additional resources. There is no further external inspection of the service planned and therefore no independent assessment planned.

Q. Why isn't 'Tenants Xtra' and 'Shine' circulated to members?

A. It can be. From now on copies will be left in members' pigeon holes.

In terms of the recommendations:

R 1	What is meant by leaseholders and stakeholders?	In SDDC we have 22 Leaseholders i.e. they have purchased their flats but are still 'connected' to the Council by virtue of a service charge for repairs to common parts. Stakeholders is primarily a term used in the Housing sector to mean tenants and leaseholders but is also used to mean anyone with a vested interest in the business e.g. contractors.
R 2	Can a copy of the SMART action plan be made available ASAP?	We made this a public document on its release. Several copies of the document will be available at the meeting.
R 3	Has the Tenants handbook been distributed? Does it cover diversity issues raised for R 4?	Not yet. It is a sizeable task to produce from nothing i.e. we're not updating a previous version. When the final draft is ready we will take to the Policy Committee for approval.
R 4	Are there any 'outstanding actions' from previous auditor reports that are not complete?	No.
R 5	What actions have been taken as a result of the 'Challenge Day'?	The primary one is the formation of a stakeholder working group which has met and established a work programme.

R 6	<p>What actions have been taken as a result of the Contracts review?</p>	<p>There are two elements underway as mentioned above i.e. in conjunction with the Procurement Manager we are working on a new timetable for tendering out major works contracts. Alongside that the stakeholder working group is reviewing specifications, etc.</p>
R 7	<p>Is the IT system in place to support the records of DF in properties?</p> <p>What is the waiting time for DFG's from the original tenant request through to delivery? Do we use significant process milestone targets to aid our performance management?</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>Major adaptations completed Apr-June 06 had an average time, from request to completion, of 69 weeks. (Excludes one job completed after 7 years). New applicants can expect completion in 57 weeks.</p> <p>Comprehensive information collected on all milestones and main ones reported to members.</p>
R 8	<p>What performance information is published for what service areas? (A practical example would be useful.)</p>	<p>Full performance information produced on a quarterly basis to the policy committee since November 04. The first service to prioritise performance in this way. Full performance also available to public on website.</p>
R 9	<p>Are there still 3 telephone numbers (none are freephone)?</p> <p>Have opening hours been reviewed?</p> <p>What customer surveys have been undertaken and what actions have been taken as a result?</p>	<p>There still are 3 numbers pending review of whether we move repairs to CRM. South Derbyshire Tenants Forum and the tenants in the challenge day freely stated that a freephone was not a priority. Tenants also not prioritising work to be carried out at weekends but want to be able to report repair on Saturday mornings. However the service still looking at these issues as matters of good practice. In repairs and maintenance each job carries a satisfaction questionnaire – the issue prioritised most highly was appointments hence the recent introduction.</p>

R 10	Does this include evenings and weekends for all trades? How specific are appointment times?	See R9 Currently am or pm. Working towards more specific times.
R 11	Have the R & M contracts been put to tender this year? What elements have been included to improve best value?	No. See R6.
R 12	What progress has been made?	Out of the 12 targets we have achieved 6. A further 3 are in progress re stakeholder engagement and the remaining 3 have new targets set. Inevitably the absence of the Head of Housing has had some effect in such a high profile area.

6.0 Financial Implications

6.1 There are financial implications to a number of the actions currently underway within the repairs and maintenance function but these arise as much out of our modernisation of the service as they do to the recommendations of the Inspectors.

7.0 Corporate Implications

7.1 Achieving a one star rating for the part of the service that was weakest was a considerable achievement and reflects well on the improvements made by the Council in the Housing Service.

8.0 Community Implications

8.1 Improvements in service delivery are centrally focussed on putting the customer and community first.