

**COUNCIL HOUSE REPAIR & MAINTENANCE PROCESS**

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**Reason for the Report**

1. To facilitate Committee Members' consideration of how the Council manages the quality of its existing housing stock through its repair and maintenance service.

**Scope of Scrutiny**

2. When considering the Committee's Work Programme for 2021/22, Committee Members agreed to undertake a piece of work to assess how the Council is managing the quality of its existing housing stock.
3. Members are to note that, in line with the information requests from Committee Members, the subsequent information provided in the Appendices, will be in relation to domestic properties that are occupied by Cardiff residents, and not properties that are vacant (voids).
4. The meeting will serve as an opportunity for Committee Members to:
  - Understand and explore the Council house planned maintenance and repairs service.
  - Examine the range of repair requests the Council receives from tenants, including their frequency.
  - Investigate the costings of repair and maintenance works.
  - Examine workforce management, including the use of external contractors.

- Determine if the Council is being proactive and preventative in its approach to managing the quality of existing Council stock.
- Assess the efficiency of the process for Council tenants and explore if any improvements are required.
- Provide observation and constructive feedback to support service delivery.

5. To inform their consideration, Members requested:

- Introductory detail on the Council's Responsive Repairs Unit. Including, how repairs are reported, how repairs are classified and timeframes for repairs classification to be complete.
- Confirmation on what is not classed as a repair.
- Brief overview of the Council's 'Responsive Repairs Standard'.
- Introductory detail on the Council's planned maintenance service. Including, how this service is initiated, its frequency and how work identified through this avenue is addressed.
- Detail on how repairs and planned maintenance work and service differ.
- Insight into recent performance surrounding repairs
- Insight into the costings of repairs and maintenance work.
- Confirmation on if tenants are allowed to carry out work themselves.
- An understanding of how work is allocated between the in-house team and external contractors.
- Insight into council tenants' satisfaction levels with the service.

### **Structure of Papers**

6. In line with Committee Members requests detailed in point 5 of this report, the following Appendices are attached:

- **Appendix A** –Briefing note prepared by the housing team
- **Appendix B** - Responsive Repairs Standard
- **Appendix C** – A Scrutiny Research Report on the Council Housing Condition and Repairs Survey

## **Background**

7. As stated in the Directorate's 2021-22 Delivery Plan, the Housing Service manages 13,723 Council homes. Teams within the service provide a full range of management and maintenance services for council tenants, including:
  - tenancy management and enforcement,
  - responding to anti-social behaviour,
  - responsive and empty property repairs, and;
  - compliance with all safety requirements.
8. The Council's Building Improvement team, and Responsive Repairs team, control all planned works to properties and ensure that the Welsh Housing Quality Standards are maintained across all stock<sup>1</sup>.
9. Committee Members will be aware that Cllr Thorne's September 2021 Full Council statement, confirmed that there has been a 10% increase in the number of responsive repairs requested compared to the same period in 2019, with around 6,000 requests now being made each month<sup>2</sup>.
10. During formal Committee meetings, Committee Members have also been made aware of the backlog and pressures facing the repairs and maintenance team due to the associated challenge of accessing properties during the pandemic.

## **Background - Cardiff Council's Building Maintenance Framework**

11. The Council's previous Building Maintenance Framework (BMF) was in place since 1 January 2018 and ended on 31 December 2021.
12. In February 2021, Cabinet considered and agreed a new BMF to cover the period 1 January 2022 – 1 January 2024 (with the option to extend for a further 2 years). Within this framework, rates are to be adjusted on an annual basis using an appropriate financial index

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<sup>1</sup> [Microsoft Word - Adults Housing and Communities - Directorate Delivery Plan 2021-22 \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

Page 15. Accessed 14 Feb 2022

<sup>2</sup> [8 - Cllr Thorne Statement September 2021.pdf \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#) Accessed 14 Feb 2022

13. The new framework, agreed in February 2021, is intended to improve previous arrangements and address the following issues found in the previous framework:
- Withdrawal of contractors due to their inability to complete works within their rates.
  - Withdrawal of one contractor due to a performance issue.
  - Problems with contractors' interpretation of Schedule of Rates
  - Specialist works being better delivered by specialist contractors
  - Recognition that it is easier to manage works through more refined models – which allows for quality ratings that are fully reflective of the nature of the work.
14. To address the issues listed above, Cabinet agreed the following new workstreams within the BMF:

• **Framework 1 – Repairs & maintenance to vacant domestic properties,**

estimated annual value £2.9M. Delivery will be undertaken through a combination of the inhouse team and a pool of two smaller contractors with one contractor delivering a larger portion of the work than the other contractor. Tender award weighting – 40% cost, 60% quality.

• **Framework 2 – Responsive repairs & maintenance to domestic properties,**

estimated annual value £2M. Two contractors, both delivering a similar volume and value of works to support the in-house workforce by completing works that the in-house team do not have the capacity or the specialist skills (e.g., asbestos works) to complete. Tender award weighting – 40% cost, 60% quality.

• **Framework 3 – Planned works to domestic properties,** estimated annual value

£5.9M. A maximum of 8 contractors would be appointed to this framework and the framework would have two award mechanisms. Direct award for the minor planned works such as kitchen & bathroom, and further competition as the second mechanism for unforeseen planned schemes such a sheltered scheme refurbishment. Tender Award weighting – 50% cost, 50% quality.

*Members are advised the frameworks relevant to the information provided for this item are Framework 2 & 3. Detail on Framework 1 is provided to Members for contextual reasons.*

15. Major planned works such as roofing and boiler installation are procured outside of the frameworks and individual trade-specific arrangements would be put in place, each would be subject to a separate procurement process.

## **Funding**

16. The Council's landlord functions are managed within a ring-fenced Housing Revenue Account. Cardiff Council must present an 'acceptable' Housing Revenue Account Business Plan to the Welsh Government each year to facilitate the Welsh Government's assessment of how the Council is maintaining the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS). Committee Members are to note this must be done for the Council to be eligible for the Major Repairs Allowance Grant.
17. In 2021-22, following a successful submission of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, Cardiff Council received £9,557,000 Major Repairs Allowance<sup>3</sup>.

## **Tenant Satisfaction on the Repair & Maintenance Service**

18. To provide initial insight into Council's tenants experience, and satisfaction, with the Council's repair and maintenance service, this Committee commissioned a survey with Council tenants. The Scrutiny Research Team has analysed the responses to that survey, and a summary of the findings is provided in **Appendix C**.
19. Committee Members should also be aware that the service area seeks feedback from Council tenants on the repair and maintenance service through the following routes:
  - Tenant Satisfaction Survey  
*Annual Survey, that goes to Council tenants once a year.*
  - Repair Reporting Line Survey  
*Conducted via c2c call handlers once a repair has been completed.*

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<sup>3</sup> [Welsh housing quality standard | GOV.WALES](#), Accessed 10 Feb 2022.

- Exit Survey

*This survey is conducted when a tenant hands in their notice.*

Insight into these surveys, and recent responses, is included in **Appendix A**.

## **Way Forward**

20. At this meeting, the following witnesses will be in attendance:

- (i) Councillor Lynda Thorne (Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities)
- (ii) Sarah McGill (Corporate Director, People & Communities)
- (iii) Helen Evans (Assistant Director, Housing & Communities)
- (iiii) Ellen Curtis (Operational Manager, Housing Services)

21. At the start of this meeting, the Cabinet Member and officers will provide a presentation, providing an overview of the attached briefing note (**Appendix A**).

22. Following the service area's overview, Members will then enter a Q&A session to explore the current service and reflect on the information provided in the papers, and at the meeting.

23. Following the discussions, Members will be able to decide if they wish to feed any comments, observations or recommendations to the council's Cabinet for their consideration.

## **Legal Implications**

The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to the Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decision taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirements imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g.

Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (he) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

### **Financial Implications**

The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee is recommended to:

- i. Consider the information set out in this report and its subsequent appendices;
- ii. Consider the information provided by witnesses to this meeting;
- iii. Decide whether it wishes to relay any comments or observations to the Cabinet;  
and
- iv. Decide the way forward with regard to any further scrutiny of this issue.

**Davina Fiore**

**Director of Governance & Legal Services**

**3 March 2022**