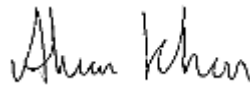


## LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST

Meeting / Date	<b>Cabinet</b> <b>13 July 2023</b>	
Report Title	<b>Housing Scrutiny Committee Themed Review 2022-23: Delivering the best repairs and maintenance service to residents</b>	
Cabinet Portfolio	Councillor Ahsan Khan – Deputy Leader (Housing and Regeneration)	
Report Author/ Contact details	Ian Buckle – Head of Electoral and Democratic Services Resources: <a href="mailto:ian.buckle@walthamforest.gov.uk">ian.buckle@walthamforest.gov.uk</a>  Emily Wood – Scrutiny Policy Assistant Resources: <a href="mailto:Emily.wood@walthamforest.gov.uk">Emily.wood@walthamforest.gov.uk</a>	
Wards affected	None specifically	
Public Access	OPEN	
Appendices	Appendix 1 – Themed Review 2022-23: Delivering the best repairs and maintenance service to residents - Annex 1 – Summary of Committee Meetings Appendix 2 – Proposed Response Appendix 3 – Equalities Analysis Screening Tool	

### 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council's scrutiny committees conduct themed reviews as part of an annual work programme. This is an opportunity for a committee to engage in a sustained way with a particular topic. This year the Housing Scrutiny Committee conducted its review into the Council's repair and maintenance service and the resident experience around this. The attached report sets out the Committee's findings and recommendations.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Cabinet is recommended to approve the following recommendations:
- 2.1.1 That the Housing Scrutiny Committee Themed Review report be noted;

- 2.1.2 That the recommendations outlined in the report be adopted and taken forward as outlined in the proposed response in appendix 2 including where recommendations have been amended.

### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Committee conducted its themed review throughout 2022-23, and its approach is outlined in **appendix 1**. Officers have prepared a proposed response which is attached as **appendix 2**. Cabinet are asked to review and approve the response.
- 3.2 The full recommendations are outlined in the report (appendix 1). A summary of recommendations can be found below:

### PROPOSAL

#### 3.3 Summary of recommendations

The Committee recommends:

1. **Dealing with backlog:** Priority to be given to reducing the larger volume of Works in Progress (e.g. cases in the system), which is a legacy of the backlog built up during lockdown periods, including, where necessary, putting in place additional temporary capacity.
2. **Contractual KPIs:** Services to consider whether some measure of average completion time (measuring the time taken from a repair being reported to a repair being completed) should in future be included in contractual KPIs, rather than just operational KPIs.
3. **Enabling local recruitment:** Contractors to ensure recruitment drives are as inclusive as possible and to link into the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities, by involving young people and care-leavers.
4. **Online platform for reporting:** Services to look to introduce an online platform which will allow residents to report repairs work required on their property, to arrange appointments, and to track, and where necessary chase, this work, so that they have a clear understanding of the status of the job and the timescales for resolution
5. **Implementing STAR scrutiny recommendations:** Services to give great weight to any recommendations on the STAR scrutiny group's review of how customer satisfaction is captured and measured.
6. **Referral point for unresolved or complex cases:** Services should put in place a referral point within the department with the capacity to focus on resolving complex cases, or cases that appear to have gone unresolved for too long. This referral point - whether a team or a particular role - should have a problem-solving and tenant communications remit and skills, in addition to building works remit and skills.

7. **Resolving access issues** – Services to consider what more can be done to resolve issues in securing access to third party properties necessary to undertake repair and maintenance, including having officers within the team with suitable problem-solving skills and remit to solve such issues.
  8. **Communal area repairs** – Services to consider how day-to-day repairs and maintenance work required in communal areas can be most effectively logged, tracked, and chased by either a resident, a group of residents, or a Place officer. Services to then make any necessary changes in order to ensure that there are clear lines of communication and accountability to residents for any work on communal areas.
  9. **Communal area repairs** - Services to consider how responsibility for changing lightbulbs in communal areas can be improved, for instance whether estate caretakers could be tasked with regularly checking lights and reporting those not working.
  10. **Place and Estate Services teams** - Services to continue to improve the effectiveness with which Place and Estate Services teams work with Housing Assets teams, to ensure that all are able to effectively report, track and chase necessary repair and maintenance work. Again, this should include looking at how to optimise the role that caretakers can play in this.
  11. **Support for additional needs:** Services to review the support available for residents with greater needs, including language and other communication difficulties, in accessing repairs and maintenance services. This to include ensuring that call handlers and operatives know when and how to refer appropriate support services.
- 3.4 Officers propose that all recommendations are accepted.

#### **4. OPTIONS & ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 The Committee has reviewed the Council's policy and practice, and its proposals relate to current service delivery. It is a requirement for the Cabinet to consider each individual scrutiny committee themed review and respond to the recommendations within the report.

#### **5. COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (AND OTHER NATIONAL OR LOCAL POLICIES OR STRATEGIES)**

- 5.1 The attached report of the scrutiny committee sets out a number of ways the themed review has taken into consideration both local and national policies in respect to its area of focus.

## **6. CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 Formal consultation is not required for a scrutiny committee to conduct a themed review. The Committee has, however, spoken to a range of witnesses and sought a diversity of views in respect to its topic, as set out in its report.

## **7. IMPLICATIONS**

### **7.1 Finance, Value for Money and Risk**

- 7.1.1 The recommendations have been developed so that they can be implemented within the existing budgets available to relevant services. However, if in preparing to implement the recommendations contained within the themed review report, they are not sustainable within existing resources and officers find that additional expenditure is required, a report should be brought back to Cabinet to explain either: a) why the recommendations cannot be implemented; or b) proposals to finance their implementation.

### **7.2 Legal**

- 7.2.1 Part of the Council's constitution sets out the Overview and Scrutiny procedure rules including, in paragraph 5, the procedure for Policy Review and Development. This report has been prepared in accordance with paragraph 6.1 of the procedure rules as a report by Overview and Scrutiny. The procedure rules provide that in carrying out any such policy review or development, Overview and Scrutiny must have regard to available budgets and resources (para.5.2) and make recommendations to Cabinet (6.1).

### **7.3 Equalities and Diversity**

- 7.3.1 The Council must further take into account its wider Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under s.149 of the Equality Act 2010 when making a decision. The Council will consider the impact of changes that might arise as a result of implementing the recommendations on those with protected equality characteristics, in particular where there is likely to be an impact on residents or service users from any changes to, or decommissioning of existing services. In order to assist with this, an Equality Analysis screening tool has been completed and is attached as **appendix 3**.

### **7.4 Sustainability (including climate change, health, crime and disorder)**

- 7.4.1 The recommendations contained within this themed review report may have a positive impact on sustainability as engagement at an earlier stage may avoid sustainability implications at a later date. The recommendations may have an additional impact on sustainability, arising from day to day operations. These concerns will be taken into consideration by relevant officers during the design and implementation phase. If in preparing to implement the recommendations contained within the themed review report, they are

noted to have a negative impact on sustainability, a report should be brought back to Cabinet to explain either: a) why the recommendations cannot be implemented; b) options to curtail negative sustainability impact.

## **7.5 Council Infrastructure**

- 7.5.1 The recommendations contained within this themed review report are expected to be delivered within existing council infrastructure and resources.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION (as defined by Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)**

See themed review for information.