

Housing Themed Review: Delivering the best repairs and maintenance service to residents

Proposed Response

Recommendation	Accept, Amend or Reject the recommendation	Comments
Recommendation 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.	Accept	<p>An action plan to address historic works-in-progress has been agreed and signed off by Housing Senior Leadership Team. This includes Morgan Sindall Property Services (MSPS) bringing on additional resources to support clearing the backlog.</p> <p>Our target is to complete clearing this backlog within 9 months from May 2023. The Housing Assets team will routinely monitor progress against this target through monthly Core Group meetings with MSPS.</p>
Recommendation 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.	Accept	<p>The average time for completion is currently a contractual KPI under the MSPS contract.</p> <p>Work is underway to review and further develop our suite of KPIs. This development work will help us to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• better manage performance• quickly identify areas where we need to improve.

		<p>Our target for delivery is no later than Q3, to include further requirements gathering to ensure our reporting is meaningful, comprehensive, and agile in reporting across a range of different services and requirements (for instance damp and mould, where average completion times will be mandated in future depending on the severity of the problem).</p>
<p>Recommendation 3:</p> <p>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.</p>	Accept	<p>We accept that our own workforce and the workforce of our partnering contractors should be inclusive, reflect the rich diversity of Waltham Forest and that recruitment initiatives should be as wide in their reach as possible.</p> <p>Whilst our contractors may face different recruitment challenges to our own, we would expect that they recruit in a way which reflects our own inclusive values and those of our residents. We know, for instance, that our contractors have their own commitment to social value, including community out-reach and employability.</p> <p>MSPS and Astons are both committed to providing apprenticeships and engaging with local schools and we will support them through working with other Council teams to explore opportunities for a targeted approach to care-leavers.</p> <p>Current data shows that Astons has met their apprenticeship target of 8 and that MSPS has</p>

		partnered with 9 local schools to deliver careers support against a target of 6 and has mentored 23 students against a target of 20.
Recommendation 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.	Accept	<p>As part of the Housing Digital Programme, there are plans to develop and implement a customer interface which will enable online repairs logging and tracking, working closely with our contractors.</p> <p>Detailed work on developing our core housing management system (NEC Housing) and the data that sits behind this needs to be carried out first to ensure a functional platform and optimal customer experience.</p> <p>Planning for the implementation of an online solution for repairs will run in parallel with other projects within the Housing Digital Programme. Piloting of a new online platform for logging & tracking repairs is scheduled for Q4, though will be subject to successful testing.</p>
Recommendation 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.	Accept	<p>On completion of the resident-led scrutiny review on repairs satisfaction, their report and recommendations will be considered at the Housing Senior Leadership Team (HSLT). A formal response and improvement plan will be developed by the service in response to the findings and recommendations from the review. The improvement plan will commit to specific</p>

		actions with an identified lead officer and timescales. Progress will be monitored by the Strategic Tenants & Residents (STAR) panel.
<p>Recommendation 6:</p> <p>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.</p>	Accept	<p>We accept there is a need for a more effective end-to-end approach to managing complex cases which goes beyond our existing enquiries and complaints approaches.</p> <p>We have already invested in additional resources to support improvements in the delivery of enquiries and complaints, including councillor enquiries. In addition, we will develop a more customer-centric approach to support the day-to-day management of complex cases. This will act as a preventative measure to complaints and enquiries arising in the first place.</p> <p>Currently, we are reviewing our structures with a view to building a team of experts who will provide a single point of contact (referral point) who will manage all enquiries relating to an individual complex case, and who will coordinate communications across residents, contractors, and other stakeholders.</p> <p>We will have fully scoped out our proposed structure by Q3 with a view to implementation in Q4.</p>

<p>Recommendation 7:</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Accept</p>	<p>We are currently developing “no access” processes to cover all situations. As part of that, we will be recruiting dedicated Access Officers who will be skilled in securing access to third party properties.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8:</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Accept</p>	<p>The Housing Place Team currently does a regular review of outstanding communal repairs and follows up with the contractor.</p> <p>Work is already underway to streamline the way in which communal repairs are logged and tracked through existing systems.</p> <p>Functionality is being developed to give residents the ability to raise both property-specific as well as communal/block-related repairs (see 4 above).</p>

<p>Recommendation 9:</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Accept</p>	<p>Caretakers are already expected to check and change light bulbs, however the overall efficiency of the service needs to be reviewed with a view to improving our rate of first-time fixes. Currently, caretakers are also asked to report any lights which they cannot fix. This information is then submitted to our contractor for action.</p> <p>There is also a general review of the caretaking service underway, including a pilot on completing minor repairs. The outcomes of this review will be implemented in Q3.</p>
<p>Recommendation 10:</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Accept</p>	<p>There has been a review of the Housing Senior Leadership Team structure. Consequently, the Place, Estate Services, and Assets teams now report into a single Director. Joint service plans have been developed collaboratively to strengthen joint working and to ensure shared objectives.</p> <p>As referenced above, alongside the reviews there will also be training for staff, including new starters, to ensure greater proficiency with systems and to guarantee teams work closely together.</p>

<p>Recommendation 11:</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Accept</p>	<p>We accept that our systems need to be more information-rich and agile so we're better able to respond to those residents with additional needs.</p> <p>Our contractors have processes in place to identify and flag concerns around domestic abuse and other vulnerabilities. Our Housing teams are then alerted to any concerns so they can liaise with the appropriate support services.</p> <p>We will be reviewing how we record and update information on support needs as part of our Housing Transformation programme.</p>
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