

## **CABINET – 14 NOVEMBER 2018 – EXTRACT OF MINUTES FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 7 NOVEMBER 2018**

### **REPORT NO.110 – HOUSING REPAIRS – UPDATE ON IMPROVEMENTS AND FUTURE OPTIONS**

Garry Knights, Head of Housing Property Services presented this report which sets out the progress to date in improving the customer experience for responsive repairs and a timeline for a full options appraisal of future delivery models, and a recommendation to Cabinet based on the outcome of that analysis.

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee were asked to review the report and provide feedback.

The following was highlighted:

- The Housing Service in Enfield carries out circa. 54,000 repairs and services annually to the borough's housing stock through a total of 4 external contractors (2 for Responsive Repairs, 2 for Mechanical and Electrical (M&E) works. All of these 5-year contracts are due to expire in March 2020, with the option of extensions for a further year or more.
- In light of concerns about current performance, an improvement plan is currently in place, and consideration is being given to how these functions can best be delivered.
- In order to tackle the issue of poor performance Council Housing has put in place a repairs task force, with member involvement, and working closely with staff in the Transformation team who have identified housing repairs as a key process for improvement in the Customer Experience Strategy.
- To supplement these intensive efforts to improve delivery through the contracts in the short term, a decision has now been taken to set up an internal 'property MOT' team to drive improvements and to test the operation of a 'hybrid' model for the stock in which contractors and directly employed staff each have an operational role.
- This is a cyclical maintenance approach aimed at reducing the high cost and high resident impact of day to day responsive repairs.
- The plan is to engage 3 teams of two multiskilled in-house operatives, plus 1 planner/manager to oversee the programme. Recruitment is due to commence shortly. The team will be fully funded from existing Housing Revenue Account budgets. There is confidence that these additional staffing costs will over time be wholly offset by a reduction in revenue spend, as fewer repairs need to be carried out by contractors and funded from the same budget source.
- Following discussions with members, in the coming months a full options appraisal will be conducted to arrive at recommendations for the best future service model. This will include analysis of benchmarking data, visits to other boroughs are also envisaged, as well as a robust analysis of all local intelligence and data to arrive at a fully considered view of the best way forward.
- In November 2017 the Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommended as part of their repairs workstream report that a feasibility study should be carried out into bringing the repairs service in-house. This study will form part of the

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options appraisal described above and can now incorporate consideration of the property MOT team as a partial in-house model.

- The issues with the current repairs service have been further exacerbated by procuring all repairs, compliance and major works contracts at the same time and with the same contract durations. It has therefore been proposed to consider staggering any procurement of these contracts in future. This change was recommended by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in their report on repairs in November 2017.

The following issues were raised:

- Councillor Needs praised Garry Knights for the progress that had been made to housing repairs since he had joined the council and thanked him and his team for their hard work and determination.
- Discussions took place regarding Appendix A of the report – Ridge Property & Construction Consultants – Repairs and Maintenance Options report, draft for discussions. Members commented that this report was dated February 2017 and Officers agreed to look into this and feedback accordingly.  
**Action: Garry Knights/Susan O'Connell**
- Members agreed however that this was a most useful report which as a document, does form the basis of the analysis to be carried forward.
- There needs to be a very honest look at the options available and full consideration given in relation to statutory requirements. The various options need to be considered with a view to 'honing in' on fewer options that tick all the boxes by looking at what is needed and what are the key criteria for the service.
- Councillor Lemonides, Cabinet Member, Housing reassured members that the task force were carefully considering all options and to date nothing had been ruled in and nothing had been ruled out. Guidance would be sought from reports such as the one produced by Ridge Property & Construction Consultants.
- The approach of allowing sufficient time to undertake a fuller options appraisals exercise and allowing a suitable mobilisation/conversion period is recommended to achieve the optimum model.
- Garry reminded members that the key isn't just about the model but also about the management as both these factors need to work.
- In reply to a question regarding the implementation of an MOT service, Garry advised members that he had successfully delivered MOT services elsewhere and was confident that this could be achieved here at Enfield. He also explained that the Key Risk in the report to Cabinet relates only to timelines and not the MOT service itself.

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In conclusion the Overview & Scrutiny Committee noted the following:

- The establishment of the officer/member repairs task force and the improvements made since its inception, along with the work of the transformation team on repairs.
- The creation of a small in-house 'property MOT' team under delegated authority to work alongside the contractors, improving the quality of stock data and resolving routine repair issues.
- The options for future delivery now being assessed and Cabinet will be asked to delegate authority to the Director for Housing and Regeneration to consider further these options in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing.
- The timeline and actions shown at para. 7.7 of the report including the presentation of a further paper in April 2019 making recommendations on the future delivery model for repairs.

The Chair thanked Garry for his informative and interesting report.