

London Borough of Enfield

Housing Scrutiny Panel
7th December 2021

Subject: Review of Enfield Repairs Direct

Cabinet Member: Cllr Gina Needs
Executive Director: Sarah Cary

Purpose of Report

1. This report reviews the progress and performance of Enfield Repairs Direct as we approach a year and a half from its setup. It details the successes, the challenges and the opportunities for future development of the service along with the staffing model which has been subject to staff consultation and explains how these arrangements will improve the service
2. This report also notes the contribution of the Repairs Stakeholder group and recognises the value of resident involvement in shaping and scrutinising the service.

Proposals

The Panel is invited to note the contents of the report and make comments, suggestions or recommendations for further work or improvements.

Background

3. Resident and member feedback on previous repairs contractors responsible for undertaking responsive repairs in recent years has been poor.
4. In June 2019, the Cabinet approved the in-sourcing of the Housing Repairs Service (KD4868). This service was launched in May 2020. In addition to the setting up of a new inhouse team wider feedback was considered. Firstly, that residents wanted their call to be answered quickly by polite, helpful staff who could diagnose their repair and book a convenient appointment slot with minimum customer effort. Secondly, there needs to be more reliability in attending appointments and we achieve higher rates of 'first time fix'. Finally, that we communicate better to satisfactorily resolve repair issues including improving how we handle escalations and complaint casework.
5. In February 2020 Cabinet reviewed a report (KD5070) detailing the design of the service, a policy for repairs, timescales for delivery, a financial business, branding and a service model with proposed timetable for the introduction of defined functions.
 - Housing Resolution Centre – align with the establishment of a new Housing Hub set for January 2022.
 - ERD direct labour force – established. Staff have been recruited firstly on a temporary basis moving to permanent contracts. The market is particularly challenging

- MOT service ceased due to covid restrictions although the team has focussed on the treatment of damp & mould and ensuring there is a robust winter service which ensures all of our elderly and vulnerable customers are supported.
- Active Asset Management – this has been developed further and allows the Council a higher level of sophistication in asset planning and management.

Response to the challenge of the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Members will appreciate the disruptive impact that covid-19 has had upon the service as with all other sectors in economic and social life. Repairs services across the country have applied restrictions in repairs to critical emergencies only, furloughed staff and have been fraught with supply chain difficulties. Enfield Repairs Direct having launched in May 2020 has remained operational throughout.
- The service has had to change its working practices and procedures in order to meet the challenge. Staff have been updated frequently and issued with the latest in PPE in order to safely discharge their duties and participated in regular testing onsite at Council premises.

Performance

- Residents expect a responsive repairs service which is fast and effective. ERD has expended a great deal of effort into developing our job management system to enable us to effectively manage appointments. The chart below shows our progress over the past year in completing appointments on time. The team have not carried a backlog coming out of Covid restrictions as other housing providers have experienced. Instead we have now achieved a level of confidence in our system and method where our operating Works In Progress (WIP) is below a thousand jobs and we expect to see the targets being met in the last quarter of the year.

Indicator	Nov 2020	Dec 2020	Jan 2021	Feb 2021	Mar 2021	Apr 2021	May 2021	Jun 2021	Jul 2021	Aug 2021	Sep 2021	Oct 2021	Current Target
	Value	Value	Value	Value	Value	Value	Value	Value	Value	Value	Value	Value	
EH072 Percentage of Urgent Repairs Completed on Time (YTD)	91.6%	91.6%	91.9%	92.0%	92.1%	97.0%	96.0%	95.1%	95.8%	96.3%	96.7%	96.4%	97.0%
TP150 Responsive repairs completed by agreed target date - (YTD)	91.1%	91%	91.2%	91.3%	91.3%	98%	96.8%	96.2%	96.5%	96.8%	97%	96.7%	98%

- Following on from the general trend of improvement completion times, we expect to see a corresponding increase in satisfaction. The Council engaged the services of BMG to conduct an independent survey of our residents' views of key housing services. There was previously a survey conducted in 2019. The 'percentage of residents satisfied with the way Enfield Council's Housing Service deals with repairs and maintenance' increased by 7% (general needs). Moving from 55% in 2019 to 62% in 2021.
- Recognising that the route to improving the responsive repairs service, the team needs to act on feedback. For this reason we capture data on a transactional basis from completed jobs. Residents may receive a text alert should they consent, which allows us to remind the resident about the

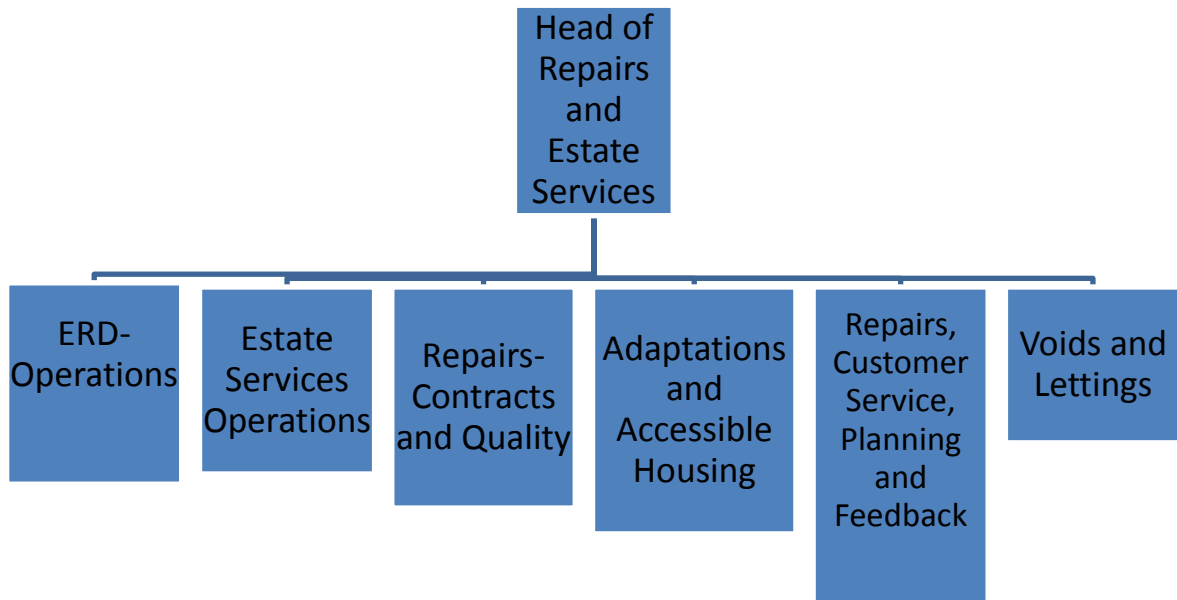
appointment but also to generate a survey following the completion of the works. We use this feedback to evaluate our performance and approach to resolving a repair and we may contact residents who report a bad experience to see how we could improve next time.

11. Similarly our feedback team also review data from complaints and Members' Enquiries. Management of casework is a priority for the team and we are actively working to de-escalate complaints and effect timely solutions as a matter of course. Furthermore, we look into trends and hotspots to see where we can focus our planned investment to reduce multiple expensive responsive repairs. For instance, on one block, given the number of leaks emanating from a failing infrastructure of heating pipes causing multiple callouts often out-of-hours, we have liaised with colleagues to bring forward a programme of works to alleviate the issue.
12. Tenants and leaseholders have the right to invoke formal legal disrepair protocols where they feel the council has failed to discharge its repairing obligations as a landlord. The number of disrepair cases have halved from the caseload in 2020 settling at 36 as of October 2021. We may contest the assertions made in some of these claims but where it is evident the Council has failed our focus is to quickly resolve the disrepair. The strong performance of the team should be recognised in the context of a country-wide increase in cases as a result of direct marketing of legal services on a larger scale and some legislative changes such as the Homes (Fit for Habitation) Act which can widen the scope and duration of proceedings.

Indicator	Apr 2021	May 2021	Jun 2021	Jul 2021	Aug 2021	Sep 2021	Oct 2021
	Value	Value	Value	Value	Value	Value	Value
CH066 **Legal Disrepair Caseload*** (New measure)	34	36	30	31	29	31	36
CH067 ***Disrepair cases completed*** (New Measure)	4	11	5	8	6	2	6

Staffing structure Changes

13. The service has changed its delivery model following a review of structures across the Housing Department as well as an extended period of staff consultation earlier this year. As part of a considered and integrated Housing wide restructure, we have sought to design a repairs service ready to meet the challenge of the future.



14. The chart above outlines how functions are organised. The structure is predicated on maximising efficiency so there are several functions brought together or share common resources. Eg. Estate Services and Repairs services share common demands for fleet, materials, waste disposal etc. This is therefore reflected in a new structure. Similarly, this setup enables us to have greater focus on the communal areas given feedback from caretakers.
15. **ERD Operations** – The inhouse repairs operation is of critical importance to the future success of the service. The reason is that we do not want to over-rely on contractors as has been a problem in the past. Instead our vision is to create a dedicated inhouse workforce with trained and knowledgeable tradespeople, with apprenticeship programmes and succession planning. The benefit of an inhouse service is that there is greater control and accountability for the standard of work. Many of our new staff are local to Enfield and have a connection to our community. We have a training programme agreed which will enable our staff to work safely, understand our systems and to be receive further trade skill training.
16. Our apprenticeship programme includes 5 apprentices in the next intake. There are significant advantages to the 'grow our own' strategy. Firstly, it affords local residents an opportunity to develop themselves at the same time as the Council benefits from the local knowledge they have. By learning on the housing stock in Enfield, apprentices build significant knowledge of repairs and maintenance solutions particular to our housing stock and increasing the chances of us completing repairs first time round.
17. ERD Tradespeople act as ambassadors for the Council. For many of our residents this is one of the few direct interactions they have with Council staff. For this reason, they have a public service opportunity far wider than a contractor. Through our regular programme of toolbox talks we can update on local initiatives the Council is undertaking as well as a level of training in safeguarding, 'prevent' training, hoarding as well as escalating potential buildings and structural defects we ought to be mindful of.
18. A good example of the service supporting the Council's response to the pandemic was the refurbishment of a council-owned building as a 'somewhere safe to stay hub'. A vital support for those who are homeless during a public health crisis.

19. **Contracts and Quality Team-** To support the delivery of repairs we have established in the structure a team providing technical support. This has had a positive effect on delivery in several respects. Firstly, by being the operational administrators for our IT we can use real-time data to improve the speed and quality of our responses. In addition, there is a data analyst function and financial controller allowing us to review repairs demand, hotspots and identify responsive repairs trends which may require a capital investment solution. For instance, it may be more cost effective to bring forward a programmed roof renewal rather than multiple repairs. Furthermore we are also concerned to maximise productivity from our inhouse workforce as well as monitor and challenge spend on materials and fuel.
20. Embedded in this team is the surveying function who have the responsibility to diagnose complex repairs, post inspect contracted work and manage our contractors if the work cannot be done inhouse. We are developing the surveyors' role to play a more integrated role in a wider asset management strategy. Similarly, we have improved our internal processes with regards to dealing with damp and mould. The surveyors approach reports of damp and condensation from a problem solving perspective rather than from a liability perspective. Where residents have difficulty with condensation we offer practical advice on how to manage moisture. It also enables us to approach the problem from a wider perspective. For instance, there may be a case of fuel poverty for which we can refer for help.
21. **Housing Resolution Centre** The structure combines the customer service, planning and customer feedback/ complaints functions. There are several business benefits to managing the end-to-end repairs process as a whole. Firstly, it enables us to improve diagnosis meaning improved efficiency down the chain. For instance, we are more likely to dispatch the right tradesperson for the job and book the appointment for the correct amount of time and there will be a greater chance of having the right materials. We have recruited the manager for this service and are making preparations for the transfer of this new service into the Housing Hub in January 2022.
22. Communications with customers are important. Unless we have an integrated call handling and planning system we will not be able to deliver a slick high-volume service. The opportunity we have with a one-stop-shop resolution team is to get things right at the point of call and reduce failure demand – i.e. customers chasing existing repairs. We have built in resource for the fielding of enquiries and complaints to improve our completion times and quality.

Planned IT Improvements

23. A modern Repairs team's success is largely tied up in the effectiveness of its IT and how it is used. The service is currently using Connect Mobile as a job management system which enables us to plan our works and send jobs to operatives on their PDAs. The system is comprehensive in that it enables clear descriptions of works, the ability to upload before/ after photos and GPS tracked to identify the next geographically closest job for the tradesperson and reduce travel time. We wish to develop the functionality of the system for example to enable residents to book certain repairs directly through the website. Service Connect also integrates with Civica CX which will soon replace Northgate as our principal housing system.

Resident Involvement

24. The insourcing and development of Enfield Repairs direct has been monitored by the Repairs Stakeholders' group. This has been very valuable in understanding the key concerns of residents and where we should prioritise our focus. The recent meetings have discussed:
- Procedure for dealing with damp and mould
 - 'Plentific Platform' – an innovative way of engaging small local contractors for certain types of works
 - Winter programme of support for elderly and vulnerable residents

Future Plans for the Development of the service

25. ERD is emerging from the start-up phase of its establishment and is now stabilising and settling. The public service ethos of the team is strong and there is a great willingness to succeed in our next phase of development. We intend to focus on performance, achieve 'right first time' wherever possible and approach maintenance in way which considers the broader asset management strategy. As performance continues to improve gauged by our own internal indicators and more importantly by customer and member satisfaction, we seek opportunities for the growth of the service.

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Appendices