

HOUSING & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Housing & Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on Tuesday 21 October 2014 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G01B - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Tom Flynn (Chair)
Councillor Ben Johnson (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Vijay Luthra
Councillor Claire Maugham
Councillor Damian O'Brien
Councillor Martin Seaton
Councillor Johnson Situ
Cris Claridge
John Nosworthy

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Radha Burgess – Deputy Cabinet Member for Women's Safety

OFFICER SUPPORT: Jonathon Toy - Head of Community Safety & Enforcement
Cheryl Russell - Head of Housing DLO
David Lewis - Head of Maintenance and Compliance
Christine Bramman - Repairs and Maintenance Manager

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 There were no apologies.

2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

2.1 Councillor Ben Johnson requested that the committee take a report on the case of AA, which had recently been in the press. The sub-committee agreed to take this item at the next meeting.

2.2 Councillor Claire Maugham stated that she supported this item

being brought to the next meeting. She understood that the judgement raised questions for both the housing and legal departments and it would be useful to understand more from both perspectives to see what can be learned from this case.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

3.1 There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2014 be agreed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:-

1. Page 10, paragraph 5.60, 1st line insert after had – “not consulted with freeholders, but”.
2. Page 18, add recommendation 7. “That the sub-committee agree to look at 3 case studies of major works taking place in the borough to check how they are progressing”.

5. WOMEN'S SAFETY CHARTER

5.1 Jonathon Toy (Head of Community Safety & Enforcement) and Councillor Radha Burgess (Deputy Cabinet Member for Women's Safety) presented the charter, which aims for Southwark's licensed premises to commit themselves to make Southwark the safest place for women in London. The charter would require premises to:

- Prominently display high visibility posters in the venue which discourage harassment and encourage reporting.
- take every report of harassment and sexual intimidation seriously and take appropriate action.
- take active steps to support persons who report harassment or sexual intimidation which might take place in their premises.
- train all front of house staff to address women's safety and harassment.
- take active steps to ensure women leave the venue safely.

5.2 The Head of Community Safety & Enforcement reported that officers had gone out to consultation since the last meeting and had over 200 replies from a mixture of licensed premises and

residents.

5.3 There were now 28 premises prepared to sign up to the charter. The areas in the borough targeted were Camberwell, Peckham and the Elephant & Castle.

5.4 They were keen to work on the following areas:

Training

- Officers were piloting a training programme with a number of licensed premises.
- Officers wanted to seek the premises operator's views about what would be valuable.
- There was a specialist international company called "Hollaback" that worked around women's safety and had expertise in delivering training programmes in this area. They would lead in developing training alongside licensing officers.
- Officers would take the programme, adopt it and then roll it out to licensed premises offering training to premises operators free of charge.
- By the end of November 2014 those premises would have been trained and adopted the charter, and provided with publicity material.

Communications

- Communications material was being developed with Hollaback
- The council wants to link the Charter into the City Safe programme, which works with businesses in the local area and provides a safe haven for persons who feared for their safety.
- The reporting system would not be onerous on licensed premises, and be a very simple way of reporting any incidents identified. The police would then record any reported incidents and give regular feedback on what had happened and link that into victim support services.
- Officers had already met with the police to put systems into place.

5.5 The chair invited members of the sub-committee to ask questions of the officer and deputy cabinet member.

5.6 A member asked what arrangements are being made for door supervisors? The Head of Community Safety & Enforcement reported that the premises manager would brief staff as they came onto duty in terms of their roles and responsibilities. There would be work specifically around making sure people got home safely and that was a critical part of the door staff role.

- 5.7 A member asked what the consultation had told officers about the wider issues affecting women in their every day lives, such as sexual harassment on the street as well as in venues and where might we go next with this? Councillor Burgess reported that while officers were asking about people's experiences in the night time economy, people responded with a lot more, for example they had heard that women were catcalled on a regular basis along with daily verbal harassment.
- 5.8 Councillor Burgess stated that one of the most shocking things was when she took part in a street stall in East Dulwich and teenage girls had said that harassment was a daily occurrence. Councillor Burgess had also been told about a 13 year old girl who walked to school past a construction site where the builders would line up and slow clap her as she walked past.
- 5.9 The Head of Community Safety & Enforcement reported he had met with the Director of Regeneration to discuss this issue, and agreed that the Director would contact the biggest development companies operating in the borough and meet with senior operating managers along with the police and put a system in place, so that if any employees were identified to be harassing women it would be treated as criminal and the police would investigate. A strong message would be sent to all employees and any future development companies. Further work would be carried out around safety in parks and on public transport.
- 5.10 Councillor Burgess suggested that maybe the council should hardwire this expectation into its policies with all contractors. As a local authority we should make it clear that there would be serious penalties or criminal action arising from the harassment of women or girls.
- 5.11 A member of the sub-committee asked what were the sanctions for those that break the charter? And were there any strategies for those who do not sign up to the charter? Officers reported that no one in the targeted areas had refused to sign up to the charter. People had asked to see more information about what it meant for them and what they had to do, as well as what training was available and what was the reporting mechanism. All those points would be addressed before returning to those premises.
- 5.12 Officers would be submitting the new licensing policy to licensing committee in November and then through to consultation in January which would take up to three months. As part of the new policy officers would be making reference to the inclusion of the women's safety charter in the licensing conditions.
- 5.13 Officers would be looking at allegations of harassment that came through on the charter's recording system. Part of officers'

dialogue with the police was to review all the 101 and 999 calls that had come in, and to identify whether there were some clubs that could do more or if there were some clubs that had not signed up so that officers can approach them about getting signed up to the charter.

- 5.14 A member asked what the application provided? Councillor Burgess reported she had the application on her phone. It was called "Hollaback" and was developed by a international organisation that combats street harassment - they had developed the a phone app with New York City Council with a very simple interface that allows users click on and share their story.
- 5.15 The aim was that later this year the council would partner with Hollaback so that when people submit reports, Southwark and Hollaback get the data and can begin to map incidents of harassment and look at hot spots where this kind of thing happens, identify times of day and where there was a particular problem.
- 5.16 The chair thanked the Head of Community Safety & Enforcement and Councillor Burgess for attending the meeting

6. HOUSING REPAIRS

- 6.1 The chair introduced the item and stated that this was a continuation of work begun by councillor Edwards on the performance of the housing repairs service.
- 6.2 The chair had met with officers and the contractors and was aware of the commitment and dedication that had been put into housing repairs.
- 6.3 The sub-committee interviewed the principle contractors Mears who were represented by Bob Granville and Gary McFarlane, Southwark Building Services (SBS) were represented by Cheryl Russell (Head of Housing DLO) along with David Lewis (Head of Maintenance and Compliance) and Christine Bramman (Repairs and Maintenance Manager).
- 6.4 The sub-committee accepted the report as read and moved directly to questions to Mr Bob Granville and Mr Gary McFarlane representatives of Mears.
- 6.5 The following questions from the sub-committee were directed to representatives of Mears

1. The chair asked in terms of performance data and looking at the graphs, would representatives of Mears talk the sub-committee through these numbers on pages 34-37, especially August which looked particularly difficult as well as January and give

members an outline of what this data means?

The representative reported that the new contract started in October 2013 and part of the transition into the contract was restructuring which continued through to January 2014. New management took over in February and the focus was to create solid structures that would lead to long term improvement. There were 1300 overdue orders that had to be focused on and reduced. Performance showed a dip during June and was brought under control in July. In August there was a combination of sickness and summer holidays which lead to a dip in performance.

Mears were improving and were trying to ensure the changes made to the service structure create more accountability and transparency on individual performance which could be tracked. If people underperform management could deal with them specifically, this would also be the case for sub-contractors.

2. A member asked when the improvement plan would be fully implemented?

The representative reported that much of the plan had been delivered in July 2014. Mears had introduced new training and a recruitment drive to address people not following procedures and the fact that a third of the workforce were on temporary contracts and were now in the process of converting them into permanent contracts. This would bring a greater buy-in for operatives.

The representative stated the figures should meet the target requirements set in the terms of the contract and performance standards that the council had set. Service improvements and new systems were still embedding and staff were working with the contractors and the Head of Maintenance and Compliance to progress towards the target. There were slips such as overdue repairs but Mears were moving in the right direction.

3. A member of the sub-committee asked how do you refer to tenants? What is the philosophy that you promote for tenants?

The representative reported tenants were referred to as customers.

The philosophy was that the customer was the main focus and the belief was to create a desire among the customer base to have Mears as their contractor. Mears now have a training programme called "red thread" that goes through a series of core values regarding behaviours and cultures. Mears believes if the organisation gets the equation right with the customer, they would be the most influential part of retention of the contract.

4. The member then asked what is the most significant change you

have made since taking on the contract?

The representative stated engagement with the new management team, communication with the workforce and demonstrating the importance and the value around service, such as the impact of good and bad service.

5. A member stated that last winter there was a performance dip under 70% in January which then leaped significantly in February that was when you said you started, what was behind the dip and the recovery, from your point of view?

The representative reported during December and January there had been major restructuring of the management team and along with the uncertainty of restructuring there was a dip in performance. In February the new management team were in place and people were assured of their position and performance started to improve effectively.

6. The member then asked from was there anything from council side which may have contributed to that dip and then improvement in February that might make this common to Mears and SBS?

The representative stated the council were a consistent client with clear aspirations, very well communicated, focused on out-puts and keen that Mears moved to achieve the targets. If the council were treating Mears and SBS in the same way that could explain why the council were getting parallel behaviours as they were driven in the same way.

7. A member stated that best practice showed 70% planned work, 20% urgent and 10% emergency work and we were still some way off the target, although it is acknowledged there has been an improvement in the percentages for urgencies. The member requested the representative's view on why there had been improved figure for urgencies and what steps can be taken in the other areas?

The representative reported all social landlords go through a period where the balance shifts between emergencies, urgent and routine work shift. Culturally there are drivers that operate in the borough which will force the council in a particular direction. Some of that might be around call centres and how residents raise issues and even the weather.

8. A member stated that the planned repairs were very important and they were being potentially neglected because of urgency and emergency repairs. Was there something more fundamental we can do to reduce the number of urgent and emergency repairs?

The representative reported the first point of contact would be the

call centre staff and their ability to discern whether the call was urgent or not, and they rely on what the customer says to them. On-line reporting could be adopted and this could perhaps take the pressure off phone calls to the call centre

9. A member asked would a tenant be at an advantage if they reported the repair online?

The representative reported no, it would not change the priority process, but if normal repairs were e-mailed into the office this would free up the telephone lines at the call centre for emergencies and urgent repairs to be reported.

10. A member asked where Mears has a communication strategy? And how does that feed into performance?

The representative reported there was a general communication policy and clear guidance regarding follow on. A card is left with residents when work is completed. Mears were in the process of improving the level of communication with the customer by training and performance issues.

The sub-committee were informed that Mears used PDA's as a tool to raise orders. The night before a job the customer would receive a text informing them that the operative would be coming the next day. On the day of the appointment the operative would text the customer to confirm they would be coming today. On the way to the customer the operative would text to confirm they were on route to them. On arrival the operative would text to inform the customer that they had arrived.

The representative informed members there was a weakness in the system with appointment changes, but assured the sub-committee Mears undertook to contact the customer and explain why the appointment had been moved. He explained that Mears had not been consistent in the past but were working on improvement and when an appointment was changed a letter would be sent out to confirm the change.

The sub-committee were informed that Mears had experienced difficulties where planner had moved appointments without communicating back to residents. There had also been cases where operatives had been sick and cancelled works and this had not been communicated to residents. This is something Mears were picking up with the planning team and the representative offered his apologies.

11. The member asked the representative in terms of communal repairs, the report mentions a special team that liaises with the TRA – was there any information on how the relationship was between Mears operatives and the TRA? The sub-committee were

informed that the council have those details.

13. A member stated that communication was a massive problem, would representatives be able to provide further information to a future meeting as to how it is going?

The representative agreed to provide information regarding how Mears communicated with customers and the workforce.

The chair requested that this written information should be circulated to members via e-mail before the next meeting.

The chair stated he wanted to touch on sub-contractors as it was said in the report that members would be given a more accurate figure as to what percentage of work is currently covered by sub-contractors? The representative reported it was 33.47%.

14. The chair asked how do we appoint sub-contractors and what was the process they would have to go through to be approved? When there are peaks, for instance weather related we have to compete with Lewisham and Lambeth for access to the same contractors who were there to provide the excess capacity. We are trying to get an idea of whether everyone on the list has been through a process and are up to a required standard? Is the standard set by Mears or Southwark?

The representative reported there was a Mears standard and every contractor on the book would go through a pre-qualification questionnaire which covers insurance, health & safety, work history, capacity and turnover to check that they were suitable. This usually takes up to three months to go through this process.

Members were informed Mears had a large number of sub-contractors on their books that worked in different London boroughs and had a pool of people they could call on. In the case of peaks in workloads it would be a case of going through and seeing who had spare capacity and whether they could work to the standards required in Southwark.

15. A member asked do you collect satisfaction figures by sub-contractors? The representative reported that Mears did not collect satisfaction figures, it was collected centrally.

16. The member stated that the council collect satisfaction data linked to specific jobs, and do Mearns know which sub-contractor carried out which job, down to the person?

The representative reported that Mears knew down to the operative but it was never flagged as a particular area of concern, because the expectation was that the sub-contractor or operative would perform to the same level.

17. A member asked when tracking the performance of operatives using PDA's, can Mears link specific people to jobs? The representative reported yes and their location and how long they have been on a job.
18. The member asked what was the correlation between the percentage of work carried out by the sub-contractor and the overall levels of satisfaction? The representative stated he did not have that information available to him.
19. A member stated that data and desktop assistance was great, but wondered what quality assurance process sits behind that and are people actually going out to check that the work has been done to the required standard, and how often was this done? And was it done randomly or were people notified in advance?

The representative reported that Mears had two dedicated post inspectors and their jobs were to go out and inspect works, some of that was based on reviewing photographs, workmanship and inspection of people's homes.

The schedule of works was what the inspectors should inspect on any given month and was determined by the commercial manager, this was based on risk and came in two parts. One was about known areas of concern and the second was in relation to a particular individual and the inspector would isolate some of the work and do in-depth checks.

Mears had supervisors whose role was to monitor ongoing works and to see how that work was delivered. There were also specialist supervisors who were doing work related to the trades around glazing and electrical works where detailed works were being undertaken.

The representative reported that Mears aspired to have 4 dedicated neighbourhood supervisors, 2 were already in place and expected to expand to 4 with the aim for more supervision of works. The health and safety officer would randomly select a number of jobs to inspect looking at the quality of the workmanship and the manner in which the work was undertaken.

Members were informed that there was regular discussion with client officers on quality issues. Clients provided Mears with a schedule of failed works from their inspection which Mears then did as recalls, and some were post inspected to make sure lessons were learned.

20. A member asked what the tipping point was for a sub-contractor - when we might Mears say we are going to suspend you from our approved list of sub-contractors. How bad does it have to get

before you say we are not going to give you more work in the future?

The representative reported there was a balance to be struck around availability of a particular type of sub-contractor and whether to work with them to improve because there was a risk about getting a replacement. Mears would prefer to create an investment in the sub-contractor and work with them and moved forward. In turn they would invest in technology, equipment and training to enable them to hit the standard in a consistent way.

Members were informed that Mears met with the sub-contractors on a monthly basis to ensure that they could monitor their effectiveness and customer satisfaction.

21. A member asked with regards to PDA's which were used for communication right through to ordering stock after jobs - are they provided to sub-contractors?

The representative reported that Mears provides the software, hardware and training to sub-contractors as well as monitoring delivery and quality. When the surveyors were validating and approving work that had been submitted, they would identify any particular issues not just how the sub-contractors and operatives were behaving but also in terms of evidence of their activities.

Members were informed that PDA's had not been rolled out to all sub-contractors because it was not necessarily appropriate for them at that point, because Mears had bigger things to sort out with some sub-contractors than others. When Mears had engaged and trusted the sub-contractors they took them through the PDA process.

22. The chair asked if the Mears representatives would be happy to receive questions from members of the sub-committee after the meeting via e-mails, and the representatives agreed. The chair thanked the representatives for attending the meeting.

6.6 The following questions from the sub-committee were directed to the Head of Maintenance and Compliance and Southwark Building Services (SBS)

1. A member asked a question about last winter because the trajectory for SBS was the same as Mears in January and then there was a rise in performance on February, what was the reason for this?

The officer reported that the main influence was the winter weather - from January onwards it started to ease up and this had an impact on operatives' ability to keep up with the work required and

the number of roofing jobs increased significantly.

There was a new management team at SBS. The officer who had covered the post interim had been responsible for the day to day management of the service and the reason for the steady improvement was due to the changes being implemented and bedding in.

There had been no change in methodology. It was exactly the same as described in the report. The table in the report showed over the last 4 years that the performance had improved and this was a continuation of the work officers had been doing to improve the service and what members were seeing was incremental improvement.

2. A member asked about the level of satisfaction of sub-contracted work and looking at June 2014 when the satisfaction with SBS sub-contractors goes right down - what was behind that?

The Head of Maintenance and Compliance reported members would need to look into the specific details in June. The number of SBS sub-contractors was considerably less than Mears and it would only take a small number of jobs to go wrong for that to have a significant impact on the overall satisfaction figure. The average roll in was approximately 10% of work carried out by sub-contractors and this was roughly split between 50:50 specialist work and extra capacity.

3. A member asked what was the volume of jobs per year? The officer reported 12,000 per year.
4. The member asked so it was unlikely that there would be statistical blips within that? The officer reported there may be blips in gathering of information but the number of jobs remained consistent.
5. A member asked how SBS tracks the performance of a particular sub-contractor against overall levels of satisfaction? The officer reported it was important to have performance detail and an aspiration was that all the KPI's were met. The targets set with residents were the primary objectives to meet through delivery of a better and more consistent service.

Members were informed that the commercial manager reviews the performance of sub-contractors and required the information to drill behind the satisfaction survey so they could look at the performance areas for each sub-contractor and then monitor. Officers do now have details of each specific sub-contractor where the satisfaction survey had been carried out.

6. A member asked what was SBS level of work given to sub-contractors? The officer reported 10% of repairs were carried out by sub-contractors.
7. A Member asked whether sub-contractors are sent out on their own or with mixed teams? The officer reported they did not generally allow sub-contractors to work with SBS teams. Jobs were given to the sub-contractor and SBS monitored their work, 50% of the work given to sub-contractors was specialist type of work where SBS did not have those skills in-house.
10. A member asked whether SBS know the reasons some sub-contractors were finding the targets far more challenging than others?

The officer stated there were a number of reasons - it could be the sub-contractor had missed the target date, or the job was done well but they may have finished it 2 days late, or they missed an appointment, so there could be a number of reasons why the customer was dissatisfied.

The judgement of satisfaction was not necessarily about the quality of the repair undertaken, it could be about any part of the repairs process and could have been difficulty in reporting the repair, or even how long the job took. There were a number of difficult factors that influence the judgement which was necessarily about the product of the job done.

11. A member stated that Mears were using a far greater number of sub-contractors than SBS, but seem to had fewer problems and that suggests there was a issue in one or two of the sub-contractors that SBS are using. Is that something that has been looked at? Is there data somewhere with a particular issue with a set of sub-contractors?

The officer reported data was available, but it was in embryonic form and would shortly be embedded and the change would be monitored on a monthly basis. The commercial manager would be drilling into it in great detail to get intelligence, to look into why some sub-contractors had such issues and set the trigger point at what was acceptable performance and then drill into that in the challenge meetings with sub-contractors.

12. A member asked if you had a list of 10 sub-contractors, there must be 3 or 4 that consistently come at the bottom? The officer stated she did not have that information, but stated that the data was not analysed in the same way, the analyses was taking place now and the performance matrix was now taking shape.
13. A member said given that SBS have been around for some time, it was surprising that that the infrastructure for improving

performance is not in place already and established? The officer reported that the infrastructure was in place and the information was robust and consistent, but for the purpose now required officers would be going into another layer of information.

The officer explained there had always been a process to deal with poor performance sub-contractors and a number of relationships had ended. The data clearly showed there were issues with some sub-contractors and there had been a process of selecting, managing and removing sub-contractors from SBS.

14. A member asked what was the philosophy of SBS? The officer reported the philosophy was to provide the best service possible, hit the performance indicators given and communicate with residents and customers. SBS wanted to do the best job possible, and do it to the satisfaction of the customer as well as be an efficient organisation that was reliable.

15. A member asked how do SBS communicate with employees and sub-contractors? The officer explained they were in the process of establishing a management team and was working with them to understand the council priorities and the implications of actions, this was communicated to individuals and team meetings.

The officer reported that she had met with the operative teams and management teams on a regular basis and communicated through writing, phone calls, texts and e-mails. She explained they had a performance management framework which was targeted to individual accountability, personal accountability and the philosophy was to give everybody the best opportunity they could to succeed.

6.7 The following questions from the sub-committee were directed to the Head of Maintenance and Compliance and Repair & Maintenance Manager

1. A member stated that the sub-committee had heard from Mears and SBS and wished to know more about the work cover?

The Head of Maintenance and Compliance reported there was a clear separation between direct delivery and sub-contractors, if members required information beyond satisfaction such as the range of sub-contractors that both Mears and SBS use this could be provided and a rating on how they were perceived.

Members were informed that there were monthly core meetings and one of the items included was the rating of sub-contractors indicating whether their performance was good, average or poor. The satisfaction data was not focused on sub-contractors and there was a lot of information that officers could sort out for

members, some was reported monthly, but members would have to let officers know what level of detail they required.

2. A member asked would these graphs tell us the relative satisfaction between sub-contractors as a whole group? The level of satisfaction vary hugely and what we do not have was how that variance relates to the percentage overall of work that was sub-contracted. Is an increased level of sub-contracting in itself related to better or worse performance overall, and was that something members clearly need to know? And which sub-contractors were responsible for better or worse performance from Mears or SBS?

The Head of Maintenance and Compliance reported that data exists and was a part of how the council were monitoring performance and officers would arrange for this information to be sent via e-mail to members of the sub-committee.

3. A co-opted member said she understood that officers were aiming for minimal input from the sub-contractors and maximum input from Southwark paid staff - this did not seem to have happened. Has there been a swing and has experience taught officers something that you did not know Mears may come with a package anyway because they are new on the block and they may employ 75% of sub-contractors?

The officer reported that they wanted direct delivery from both SBS and Mears for non-specialist works. In the case of SBS that had been achieved as reported by 10% of non-specialist work that had been sub-contracted.

In the case of Mears it was over 30% but they were expected to hit 10% from the end of this month. Officers would start to measure that target and there were financial penalties associated with non-delivery, if Mears did not deliver the financial penalty would be 1% which would be deducted from the total value of the works and that could move up to 6% for consecutive years.

4. A member stated that the data did not support the council endorsing direct delivery. The numbers suggest it was how they were managed, how the communication happens between main contractor and sub-contractor and the residents satisfaction

The officer responded potentially you could have 100% sub-contracted work, but it was about access, co-ordination, management and communication. Officers firmly believed that direct control was the way to go with the service. Officers had seen Mears reduce that percentage now to 33%, it will be 10% and officers expect to see increasing improvement in terms of satisfaction, right first time and KPI's.

5. The chair said that from what he had seen that a job would be

more likely to go wrong if a sub-contractor was involved due to the complexities that it brings and yet the data does not show that and so he would like to delve more into that?

The officer reported the data was from a sample survey. It would be interesting to have a survey of every single job that goes out to sub-contractors to look at it in its totality. What officers had at present was a statistically robust sample survey of at least 400 surveys completed each month at random of residents that had a job completed.

It was the case that Mears sub-contracted performance was as good as direct delivery performance and this was not the case for SBS. The reason officers want to see more direct delivery was that hand off to a sub-contractor potentially creates an opportunity for something to be delayed or go wrong and that was why officers favour direct delivery.

6. A member stated he wanted to move to the issue of repairs versus replacement or improvement. He was concerned about things needing to be repaired again and again, whereas they should be replaced and sometimes the person on-site from Mears or SBS identifies that. What was the opportunity for sub-contractors to recommend that something should be replaced or upgraded and what happens with those recommendations?

The officer explained there was a renewal process that makes recommendations on a weekly basis. It was a clear process of referral to the repair & maintenance team who would look at the request and arrive at a judgement whether renewal was the right answer, but the focus was on repairs rather than renewal and it was about getting the balance right.

In addition officers do stand back and take a wider view to look at whether works were already planned in the Warm, Dry, Safe programme, so when there was an issue about renewing a window or a section of roof and the operative knew that the programme was coming in 2 years time, officers would agree an interim solution. Renewals were looked at on a case by case basis where appropriate, but also taking that step back to see if there was a wider refurbishment programme as it often was.

7. A member asked at what point was that information communicated to the resident, that something might be replaced but it may be done in 2 years time?

The officer reported the information would be communicated at the time when the operative was feeding back to the resident, why it was not renewing it. It was not always popular because the resident would want it resolved then understandably and it was

about waiting, but the issue was for officers to communicate clearly about why the repair would be pending a larger refurbishment – this sort of thing happens on a weekly basis.

The issue was often repairs could be done but the resident wants it to be renewed, often it was about trying to achieve that fine balance of spending money wisely and at the same time meeting the wishes of the residents. If there was a case to be made operatives would carry out a repair whilst officers wait for a Warm, Dry Safe programme to start - there was a process to deal with these matters.

8. A member asked at what point do we look at statistics, do we say the difference between one contractor figure and the sub-contractor figure realise there is a problem and what figure is that?

The officer reported that it would not be right to set a percentage figure because officers could miss a range of issues, it was based on sub-contractor performance because the survey only measures a very small sample of the work undertaken.

The sub-contractor was judged on the results of post inspections, jobs completed, jobs done to the right standard, feedback by residents both by complaints and service requests. It was not based on a percentage. It could be that the extent of the issue that the sub-contractor has been brought to our attention was that officers stopped using the sub-contractor based on that on incident, so it was not based on percentages, it could be a high value job that was not done to an acceptable standard or not done at all, that officers take a view not to use that sub-contractors again, decisions were not based on percentages – it was based on sub-contractors performance.

9. A member asked are there any sub-contractors that we have bad relationships with in the past and suggest that we might not want to work with in the future?

The officer reported that the team monitors through post inspections and feedback when visiting residents' properties. There are a number of sub-contractors for both SBS and Mears where clients have said, we do not want you to use this sub-contractor. Officers get information from Mears that says these sub-contractors we are using and these are the sub-contractors we are considering using so that they can get our views. If there are sub-contractors that appear on the list that we have ended relationships with previously that we would not want to do the work, we could let them know exactly that.

- 6.8 A member asked how do you analyse the data you receive from the contractors? The officer reported the most important way that officers do that was through post inspection, the focus being areas where officers know there to be particular problems. One of the

most significant areas was residents concerns regarding communal repairs.

Members were informed that officers had increased the communal repairs response significantly by creating a team of 16 officers, although the posts were not fully recruited to just yet, but the team is being built up to full establishment. This allowed officers to look more effectively at communal repairs to check whether the jobs were done or if they were repeated issues that constantly reoccurs determine whether whether to renew or do it differently.

Information on repeat issues on matters such as rooves, windows and electric tripping data was fed into the warm, dry, safe programme and determined our priorities for investment over the last 4 years of the 5 year programme with 1 year to complete.

- 6.9 A member of the public stated that the council were looking at the problem the wrong way around by blaming officers when it should be looking at the system in place. The council presently finances housing and repairs in the most expensive way possible, it should be run in a planned maintenance programme.
- 6.10 The chair requested that the member of the public put this idea into an email and send it to him to pursue with officers.
- 6.11 A co-opted member stated that one area of problem not discussed today was the call centre and suggested this should be brought to scrutiny at a later date, which was agreed by the sub-committee.
- 6.12 A co-opted member stated that the setting up of the communal repairs team was a very good idea and voiced his concern regarding consultation and felt that this report should go to Homeowners and Tenants Council meetings once a year as it might open up discussion about experiences that residents were having. The sub-committee agreed that the report be circulated to both bodies for information.
- 6.13 A member suggested that a stronger emphasis on resident satisfaction should be factored into the set of tools for contract management. She was aware that the overview and scrutiny committee are looking at the procurement strategy for the council and it might be an opportunity to think about whether the tools we have to manage contracts actually reflect the outcomes that we all want to see.
- 6.14 The chair thanked the officers for attending this meeting.

**7. MEMBERS FEEDBACK FROM VISITS-COMMUNITY
WARDENS/CONTRACTORS/NOISE TEAM**

- 7.1 The chair invited Councillor Damian O'Brien to report back to the sub-committee on his visit with the noise and nuisance team which was as the attached report.
- 7.2 Councillor O'Brien stated that the report speaks for itself and the council should be very proud of the noise and nuisance team they were very professional, qualified, very experienced and do a great job.
- 7.3 The chairs suggested calling the call centre into scrutiny regarding housing repairs and then do a scrutiny on the call centre later on.
- 7.4 A member asked if members could do some mystery listening in? The chair replied they could as councillor Edwards had done this previously for scrutiny, there were different sections, if you get sat with an operative you will get only housing, noise team or something else. I suggest we all volunteer which ones we would like to do and we all go and listen.
- 7.5 The following councillors volunteered to visit the call centre: - Tom Flynn, Claire Maugham and Ben Johnson.

Meeting ended at 10.00 pm

CHAIR:

DATED: