

Item No. 20.	Classification: Open	Date: 8 December 2020	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Response to the Housing Scrutiny report on Housing Repairs	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Leo Pollak, Housing	

FOREWORD - COUNCILLOR LEO POLLAK, CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING

The housing scrutiny commission's report highlights many of the front and back end issues that effect the critical issue of satisfactorily delivering repairs to Southwark's 55,000 homes.

Recommendations range from unifying the different client delivery and reporting functions of the repairs resolution system, to implementing a new works management system with specialist call centre staff, to residents signing off repairs, to ensuring the right mix of skills and tools arrives at people's homes on a repairs call. I'm pleased that we are able to accept all of the recommendations of the commission, with the report offering accompanying narrative showing the latest progress and initiatives as part of the council's three year Repairs improvement plan.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the cabinet notes the response to recommendations within the housing scrutiny commission's report into the housing repairs service.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The Southwark housing scrutiny commission reported its findings and made its recommendations to the cabinet on 7 April 2020. Immediately prior to this, on 1 April 2020, Southwark building services (SBS) moved from environment and leisure directorate to housing and modernisation directorate. At the same meeting, the cabinet considered the repairs service improvement plan that aims to transform the repairs service over three years into a modern service with residents at its heart. The recommendations from the Southwark housing scrutiny commission were addressed within the repairs improvement plan.

3. The key to a modern repairs service is a works management system that helps to drive the back office processes, which support front-line delivery of services. As part of the improvement plan a new system has been procured and is in the process of being set up. Initially the system will focus on scheduling, job costing and managing imprest stock. As the system is rolled out and processes are embedded the system has considerable functionality to engage with residents with satisfaction survey as well as allowing them to upload photographs and videos pre and post repair and receive updates on progress of their individual jobs direct to their phones.
4. The table below addresses each of the recommendations in turn:

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

<p>Recommendation 1: The commission recommends that, following appropriate consultation with staff and stakeholders, the light client model is dismantled so that Southwark takes direct management control over the repairs service.</p>	<p>Agreed. SBS was transferred to the repairs and maintenance team within housing and modernisation with effect from 1 April. Managers within the service are working effectively as one team and any restructure will ensure that the service act as Southwark Repairs in the best interests of residents.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2: Taking advantage of new systems being introduced, Southwark should introduce a system which requires a resident to confirm if a repair is complete, and the repair should not be marked as complete until the resident has done this.</p>	<p>Agreed. This recommendation will require a new modern works management system. The system has been procured and work is ongoing to configure the system, which will be piloted within the leaks from above service before rolling out.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: A new Key Performance Indicator should be introduced defining the number of unresolved, incomplete repairs which are beyond their target completion time. Driving down this number should become a key priority of the service</p>	<p>Agreed. Internally the number of unresolved incomplete repairs is already monitored. We will be looking to review all key performance indicators as part of the improvement plan.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4: The council should halve the number of surveys done to 400 and then use the newly freed up resource to focus on resolving problem repairs which have been identified via other means (such as complaints or Councillor casework).</p>	<p>Agreed. Once the new system is implemented we will be able to get immediate feedback on jobs and will look at a number of different feedback mechanisms.</p>

<p>Recommendation 5: Changes should be made to staff pay incentives in the repairs service, via negotiation with recognised trade unions, which ensure speedy, high quality repairs and remove perverse incentives to prioritise inappropriately.</p>	<p>Agreed. The Strategic Director of Environment and Leisure is leading on new terms and conditions for SBS, AMS and Pest Control based on a salary scheme rather than the current bonus schemes. An in principle agreement has been reached with trades unions and a formal offer will be made shortly.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6: “What happens next cards” should be re-introduced and properly implemented by managers so that they are used in all cases of incomplete repairs.</p>	<p>Agreed. As part of normal working post covid-19 managers will be clearly tasked with ensuring that this longstanding process is followed. Putting residents at the heart of the service means ensuring that every resident knows what will happen throughout all stages of their repairs journey. We will also explore technological solutions as part of the new system.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7: Consideration should be given to separating a specialist repairs call centre from the wider call centre operation and basing this team with a newly integrated repairs service. In addition, a review of training requirements for these roles should be carried out, to ensure staff responding to repairs requests have the skills and knowledge they need.</p>	<p>Agreed. This is included in the repairs improvement plan and proposals for consultation with residents and staff will be developed in the coming months as integration continues.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8: Working in partnership with staff trade unions and taking advice from councils such as Islington, Southwark should introduce a comprehensive multi-skilling training programme for repairs operatives</p>	<p>Agreed. Visits have already been made to Islington and Southwark repairs is in regular contact with a number of London councils with direct labour organisations to share good practice and explore different operating models. Work has started on identifying skills gaps.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9: Any future changes to the repairs service should pay particular attention to unifying the service and making its different elements operate in a more joined up fashion.</p>	<p>Agreed. The merging of the repairs client teams and SBS is the first step in this and the repairs improvement plan will ensure that a unified service is one of the outcomes the changes required will produce.</p>

Policy implications

5. There are no direct policy implications

Community impact statement

6. The repairs service affects all council tenants and supports the council's commitment to providing affordable quality housing and deliver on its Fairer Future objectives. Putting residents at the heart of the service will have a positive effect on service users

Resource implications

7. There are no specific resource implications arising from this report. Issues are being addressed within the repairs improvement plan.

Legal implications

8. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

Financial implications

9. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report

REASON FOR URGENCY

10. This is an outstanding scrutiny response to cabinet from a scrutiny report originally submitted in cabinet in April 2020. In view of the importance of housing repairs for the community it is imperative that cabinet consider this response without delay and as a matter of urgency. As outlined in the report the repairs service affects all council tenants and supports the council's commitment to providing affordable quality housing and deliver on its Fairer Future objectives.

REASON FOR LATENESS

11. It has not been possible to circulate this report five clear days in advance of the meeting in order to finalise the responses and undertake the necessary liaison with officers.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS.

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Housing Scrutiny Commission report submitted to cabinet April 2020.	160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Paula Thornton 020 7525 4395
Web link: http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=302&MId=6420&Ver=4 (Item 11)		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Leo Pollak, Housing	
Lead Officer	Michael Scorer, Strategic Director of Housing and Modernisation	
Report Author	Christine Bramman, Head of Repairs and Maintenance	
Version	Final	
Dated	1 December 2020	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Law and Democracy	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	1 December 2020	