



Havering
LONDON BOROUGH

Town and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

22nd March 2022

Subject Heading:

Housing Repairs and Voids Mobilisation Update

SLT Lead:

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Policy context:

LBH has a legislative duty to undertake repairs and maintenance works to its properties owned and managed by the HRA

Financial summary:

None – information only

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Communities making Havering
Places making Havering
Opportunities making Havering
Connections making Havering

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SUMMARY

This report provides a briefing to the committee on the mobilisation of the new Housing Repairs and Void contract with Mears Ltd.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That members note the contents of this report.

REPORT DETAIL

This report provides an update on the key activities which are required to mobilise the new repairs and voids contract with Mears and demobilise the existing contract with Breyers.

We have a number of subject specific meetings each week, including overall service delivery, IT and Communications. We have had a number of sessions clarifying the scope and extent of the service and removing the ambiguities.

The full activity tracker is provided at Appendix 1.

There has been significant works undertaken by both the teams from Havering and Mears and as such we remain on target for the commencement of the full service on Monday 4th April, delivering responsive repairs and void works.

Demobilisation

We have worked with Breyer to minimise the disruption to residents. Mears task team of operatives, along with a number of smaller support contractors have been taking on the Routine repairs since the 1st March to allow Breyer to complete their outstanding jobs.

From the 28th March all urgent repairs will go to Mears and from the 1st April all emergency jobs will go to a support contractors. Mears will take all jobs from the 4th April, this phased approach will allow Mears to deliver the service with their task

team whilst they on-board new staff and the staff who are TUPEd across from Breyer.

IT Integration

In order to ensure a seamless customer journey, from the initial call through to undertaking a customer satisfaction survey, integration between LBHs Open Housing system and the Mears MCM system is necessary

We have undertaken a number of process mapping exercises to ensure the systems can, and will align, and identify the interfaces which need to be developed.

These 2 way interfaces are almost complete and ready for full testing, and are confident these will all be in place for the contract start. We have a more manual fall-back position available should there be any initial issues, this has been tested.

LBH surveyors will all carry a new tablet devices which will allow them to directly raise and allocate repairs into the Mears system whilst they are on site with residents, which will significantly improve the service and eliminate the double handling which currently occurs.

There are a number of IT areas which are not required initially for the delivery of the service but which will help us be more efficient going forward, such as full integration with our asset management system Keystone, full integration with our finance systems, these are phase two activities and both Mears and Havering have resource allocated to deliver these.

Call Handling

One of the problem areas identified on the existing contract was the difficulty for residents to raise or change repairs, but also the difficulties for non-technical staff in diagnosing and allocating jobs, with one of the predominant causes being the separation of the teams undertaking these functions.

Whilst our call centre will continue to manage calls we have agreed that four call handlers will be ring-fenced to repairs and will be co-located with the Mears planners and supervisors at our co-location facility.

This will allow our more specialist call handlers to directly liaise with the Mears team to assist with diagnosis, ensure jobs are allocated to the correct priority and allow them to quickly and easily check directly with Mears on outstanding repairs, rather than the email approach which has tended to permeate the service.

In addition the MCM platform will allow far better direct communication with residents, who will be sent texts and emails when jobs are raised, will be sent reminders before the jobs and will be sent live mapping when operatives are on the way. This will also

allow resident to make changes to appointments or advise operatives of any special instructions.

Branding

The branding for the vehicles and uniforms has been agreed (see Appendix 2). All vehicles are on order and will be sign written ahead of the go live.

Staff including TUPE (transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment))

Mears have been working with the Breyer staff who may TUPE onto the new contract. The final numbers of staff will not be confirmed until the end of the contract and accordingly Mears have their task team of operatives and back office staff on hand to deliver at go live.

Communications

A communication plan has been agreed (see Appendix 3) and a number of resident events will be held over the coming weeks.

Letters will be sent to all residents, detailing the key features of the service, key contact number etc and these will be delivered before go live of the service.

In line with our new resident engagement strategy a resident group is being created which will be involved in the ongoing monitoring and development of the service.

Premises

A key improvement is the co-location of Mears and LBH staff which will significantly improve partnering working and break down silos.

A modern office space has been procured at the CEME centre in Rainham, Mears will fully run the service from this office with all relevant staff and management based from here.

Alongside Mears staff our 4 call handlers will also be based there, along with on a daily basis, our Repairs and Void manager, one of our senior surveyors, one duty surveyor and two repairs/voids officers. There will also be an additional number of hot desks which will allow the rest of the team to drop in as required.

CEME also have meeting rooms and drop in spaces available as required.

Subcontractors and supply chain

Mears have procured the majority of their supply chain, and are just finalising some specialist services.

As part of the mobilisation meetings we have identified a small number of areas which weren't previously included in the but will benefit from being delivered under the Mears contract, such as door entry repairs and playground equipment, and Mears is securing the supply chain or will directly engage operatives to deliver in these areas.

Voids

A number of new void processes have been agree which will streamline the process and reduce delays in bring properties back into use, these include a more proactive pre exit visit approach to determine works, Mears managing all aspect of statutory checks such as asbestos surveys and EICRs and Mears undertaking all heating works in void properties. This will reduce the handoffs which are currently embeded in the process.

Social Value

A social value plan is being agreed, both considering the areas which LBH required as part of the tender but also additional areas which Mears offered.

Mears have already started to deliver, completing a number of calls to our over 75 year old residents, an initiative which we undertake annually to determine any additional need or support requirements among this group.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

This report is for noting and has no finance implications arising

Legal implications and risks:

This report is for noting and has no legal implications arising.

Human Resources implications and risks:

The comments made in this report do not give rise to any identifiable HR risks or implications that would affect either the Council or its workforce.

Equalities implications and risks:

No EQIA has been completed as this paper is for information only

