



PLACES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

Subject Heading:

Housing Resident Safety and Compliance Performance

SLT Lead:

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Policy context:

For information only
The report provide details of the new Repairs and Voids contract for Housing with Mears

SUMMARY

1. The report is for information only, no decision is required.
 - 1.1. The report provides an update to Places OSSC on the new Repair and Voids contract with Mears.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. Members note the report

REPORT DETAIL

Background

3. The Council owns and manages circa 9,200 homes and circa 2,500 leasehold properties including 10 tower blocks and 1,000 medium and low rise blocks.

- 3.1. The Council undertakes circa 30,000 responsive repairs annually (excluding heating repairs which are under a separate contract) and works to circa 1,000 void properties (stock and PSL properties)
- 3.2. The Council's previous contract for delivering the responsive repairs works ended in March 2022 and following an extensive procurement Mears were appointed to a new 10 year contract to deliver the new service.
- 3.3. The procurement exercise gave us the opportunity to re-assess the requirements from the service, including improved use of technology, better end to end journey for our customers, better system interfaces, more stringent KPIs and an improved Social value offer.

Mobilisation and TUPE

- 3.4. In order for the full end to end process to work effectively it was necessary to integrate the Council's Housing Management system, Open Housing, with Mears MCM system. This allows jobs to be raised by our call centre in Open and seamlessly pushed to MCM for planning and completion.
- 3.5. Significant work was undertaken by both parties to ensure this full integration and we now have complete visibility of the MCM system which allows us to interrogate all jobs, including looking at before, during and after photos, agree variations, approve jobs in much quicker and auditable way than previously.
- 3.6. A number of staff (front and back office) transferred across from the previous contract but not in sufficient numbers to provide the full service. Mears supplemented this resource with their Task Team, a specialist group of operatives who support mobilisation of contracts, whilst they recruited to the new service.
- 3.7. This has proved to be extremely challenging in the current economic circumstances, Mears have seen some turnover in the original transferred staff plus some new team members who have not fitted into the culture of the new service and have moved on. Mears have continued the recruitment drive but given the difficulties they are supporting the service with the Task Team to ensure the works in progress (WIP) remains in control and we move towards meeting our KPIs.
- 3.8. One of the reasons that the previous contract was not as effective as required was a lack of collaboration and we have worked hard to develop a joint delivery culture with the new service co-located at the CEME centre in Rainham. This has completely transformed the culture of the service and allows for quicker resolution of problems, more open dialogue around performance and a much greater understanding of each other's challenges.
- 3.9. Also co-located at CEME are members of the Council's call centre who are specialist repairs handlers. They sit alongside Mears planners and supervisors allowing them to appoint jobs at first point of contact and improving our ability to triage jobs, improving the journey for customers.

- 3.10. Mears have a full fleet of vehicles in place, with Havering preferred livery and a full material supply chain using local merchants.
- 3.11. Where Mears have found challenges have been around sub-contractors and securing those which provide the quality of performance and capacity to undertake works. Given the current high demand in the sector coupled with a low supply of labour, and the challenges of rising prices across all areas this has been one of the most difficult aspects, but is now improving.

Current Performance

- 3.12. The Council have a clear plan for the repairs service and have set some very challenging goals which have the full commitment of Mears
- To meet all of our KPIS by 1 - 2
 - To be the best repairs service in London in year 2 - 3
 - To be the best repairs service in England by year 3 - 4



- 3.13. The first 6 months of any new contract are very much a bedding in process, development of approaches, clarifying any areas of ambiguity especially around voids, staff and sub-contract recruitment and therefore formal performance figures tend not to show significant improvement during this period. Accordingly our main measures for the Mears contract to date have not hit target.

Measure	Performance	Target
Emergency jobs completed on time (attended 2 hours and made safe 4 hours)	91.61%	100%
Urgent jobs completed on time (3 days)	61.04%	97%
Routine jobs completed on time (28 days)	89.33%	95%
Average void days with repairs	39 days	8 and 16 days
Customer Satisfaction		95%
Havering Data	80%	
Mears data	79%	

- 3.14. Emergency and Routine repairs are moving towards their targets, but remain challenging due to the recruitment difficulties across the sector, and as such Mears will continue to support the service with their Task Team.
- 3.15. In order to provide the best service to our customers we aim to hold circa 1,000 jobs in WIP which represents around 2 weeks of work. Our WIP is currently 1916 but with all mobilisations there is always a period of crossover between contractors in which jobs move between systems and contracts and Mears have had to deal with this alongside new demand.
- 3.16. Due to the storms in February we had a large number of fencing jobs which were handed over to Mears and this backlog has made bringing the WIP down to our target more difficult. Mears have now brought in additional specialist resource to deal with new fencing jobs which remain a high volume area of work.
- 3.17. The urgent jobs performance (such as partial loss of electric, containable/controllable leak) reflects the disproportionality large number of jobs which are incorrectly raised as urgent and we are working with the call centre and Mears to improve the triage and messaging to customers, through better call scripts, video call triaging and communication with residents.
- 3.18. The voids performance is reflective both of the sheer number of voids Mears have had to complete and the difficulty they have had recruiting high quality sub-contractors in the current market conditions.
- 3.19. There is a detailed plan in place to bring the open number of voids down and Mears have already reduced the number to the lowest level the Council have had in several years. As at the end of August we had 79 voids in WIP, needing to bring this down to circa 60 voids in order to meet the turnaround times of 8 days for small voids and 16 for those which involve decent homes work.
- 3.20. A robust customer satisfaction approach has been introduced with Mears giving residents options on how they would like to provide feedback (on the doorstep, paper survey via post, email, text) and this is also followed

up by the Council undertaking a separate telephone survey, average performance to date is shown in the table above and largely correlates.

- 3.21. We are still dealing with some legacy issues from the previous contract but customer satisfaction is improving toward the target.
- 3.22. The Council is working with Mears to develop the social value offering, we included a significant suite of requirements which will be delivered over the term. We will work with Councillors to identify suitable projects and consider those which join up other social value offers to ensure we maximise local opportunities.
- 3.23. During this initial mobilisation Mears are recruiting three apprentices from within the borough, they attending the Housing fun days, they provided a cooker for an elderly vulnerable resident who had no cooking facilities and they are about to work with the Harold Hill Wombles on some estate work in the Harold Hill area.

Future Development

- 3.24. In order to reduce the demand on the repairs service, which is the most disruptive and costly approach to maintenance, we need to move to a more proactive service, which gets ahead of likely problems
- 3.25. The Council is currently re-introducing cyclical decorating programme and gutter and drain clearance programmes but will also be looking to introduce a property MOT approach with Mears.
- 3.26. This is a proactive approach in which operatives visit a property and undertake checks and minor repairs across the whole property, largely in low cost high use items such as window and door handles, kitchen door and drawer adjustments, taps and traps checks with the aim of eliminating the need for future responsive repairs. We will initially look at high and low users of the repairs service and this approach will also allow us to capture some stock condition data to inform future planned programmes of work.
- 3.27. The Council are also working with Mears on developing some other areas of planned preventative works, especially around fencing and hardstanding's which cause significant concerns to residents when left on a reactive basis.
- 3.28. The Council is also continuing to further improve the IT integrations, including direct access to our asset management system (Keystone) and our finance systems to streamline efficiencies of service

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None