



PLACES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Subject Heading:

Housing Repairs and Voids update

SLT Lead:

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Policy context:

For information only
The report provides an update of the
performance of the 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 performance of the Repairs 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.

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- 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.
- 3.4. The new approach was based on a significantly different and more robust contract and control mechanisms, a fully resourced Housing Repairs team and a significant improvement in relationships with Mears including full co-location, currently in a fully serviced office space at the CEME centre in Rainham.
- 3.5. The contract also included the option to allow Mears to undertake the call handling function for housing property related activity and this option was exercised with the call handling going live in May.

Performance

- 3.6. The contract mobilised in 2022 which was an extremely challenging period for a number of reasons;
 - 3.6.1. Post covid the sector has seen significant increases in repairs volumes, and this impacted on additional resource required
 - 3.6.2. Less staff than expected TUPEd onto the contract and we had difficulties in initially recruiting staff
 - 3.6.3. Extreme challenges around rising prices of materials and subcontractors
 - 3.6.4. Higher volumes of jobs handed over from the previous contract than forecast
- 3.7. However despite the challenges the contract is performing well performing at or around its key KPIs as per the below table
- 3.8. The current Works in Progress (WIP) is below 1000 which represent circa 2 weeks of routine repairs jobs.

Measure	Performance	Target
Emergency jobs completed on time (attended 2 hours and made safe 4 hours)	99.79%	100%
Urgent jobs completed on time (3 days)	96.28%	97%

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Routine jobs completed on time (28 days)	97.53%	95%
Customer Satisfaction	83%	95%

3.9. Our voids performance continues to make significant improvements in turnaround times and the number of properties in WIP

Measure	Performance	Target
Average void days with repairs V1	14.5 days	11 days
Average void days with repairs V2	24.57 days	19 days

3.10. As stated we exercised the option for Mears to directly take calls from customers to continue to improve the service.

3.11. Customers continue to call the same Havering number but choose options for repairs and property enquiries or for heating repairs and enquiries. This provides a seamless solution but allows residents to speak directly with experience repairs officers, located in the CEME centre and working directly with Mears planners, our repairs surveyors and back office staff.

3.12. This approach has provided significant improvement in both the call waiting times and all the diagnosis of repairs, improving the right first time approach and customer satisfaction.

3.13. We have also been able to improve the functionality of the customer portal with automatic responses, and are continuing to develop IT interfaces and functionality.

Measure	Performance	Target
Mears – average call waiting time	28 seconds	30 seconds
K&T – average call waiting time	16 seconds	30 seconds
Mears - % of abandoned calls	6.50%	5%
K&T - % of abandoned calls	2.53%	5%

Social Value

4. 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 have delivered a number of social value projects including;

- 4.1. Extensive Works to improve Hitchin Green
- 4.2. 400 Easter eggs donated to hostels within Havering
- 4.3. Hampers provided for quiz nights in sheltered scheme's
- 4.4. Heras fencing provided for St Francis hospice
- 4.5. £1500 made in donations
- 4.6. Project scheduled for October to regenerate area at Brunswick court
- 4.7. 4 local apprentices currently in employment.

Other Improvements

5. 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
6. The Council is currently re-introducing cyclical decorating programme and gutter and drain clearance programmes and we have successfully introduced property MOTs, initially on properties at Hilldene and Farnham, with a wider rollout to follow, starting with the properties on the current regeneration programme.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. Prior to the terrible death of Awaab Ishak in Rochdale from mould related illness we had already changed our approach to supporting residents with mould issue. We improved our guidance documents (appendix 1) and our surveyors visit every report of damp. We also introduced a Mould MOT which provides initial property checks including ventilation followed by a programme of mould washes to support resident manage issues.
11. We classify mould as one of three types;
 - 11.1. Defect - mould which stems from a defect in the property such as a leaking pipe, insufficient ventilation or broken gutters. This can be tackled quickly through repairs.
 - 11.2. Structural - mould which can develop because of the structural design of the building (often related to our non-traditional builds). This will

be tackled in the medium term through our fabric first zero carbon approaches and through regeneration

- 11.3. Environmental – mould which is caused predominantly by difficulties in managing the moisture which flows from everyday living activities such as cooking, bathing and drying washing. This is often associated with overcrowded properties but also where residents are struggling with cost of living issues, especially related to heating their homes properly. These are often more difficult to resolve and we work with residents to help manage the issues and ensure they are maximising available benefits. We are also looking at how we can address overcrowding through proactive approaches such as extensions.
12. 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
13. We are also procuring a full suite of contracts under a strategic alliance, across all of the property service functions, designed around our 2040 zero carbon targets. This will create a fully integrated, collaborative suite of contracts which can deliver consistent service to residents, alongside the repairs contracts, and will provide a deliverable approach to transitioning into new technology whilst maintain residents safety, meeting decent homes standards and complying with the Regulator of Social Housing new consumer standards.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – Mould leaflet