



ADUR & WORTHING
COUNCILS

Joint Strategic Committee
12 January 2021
Agenda Item 11

Key Decision [~~Yes~~/No]

Ward(s) Affected: All Adur

JOSC review of Adur Homes repairs & maintenance service

Report by the Director for Communities

Executive Summary

1. Purpose

- To provide JSC with a response to the JOSC review of Adur Homes repairs and maintenance services
- To provide an update on actions taken so far on the recommendations of the JOSC Working group

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Joint Strategic is recommended to:

- Note the report
- Agree that a timeline for the implementation of the recommendations is provided to the JOSC Working Group by 31 March 2021

3. Context

3.1 The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) Working Group set up to reviewed the performance and areas of work of the Repairs and Maintenance service of Adur Homes presented a report of its finds to JSC on 3 November

3.2 The Working Group report proposed a number of recommendations to be put to the Adur Executive/Adur Executive Member for Customer

Services to improve the Repairs and Maintenance service and the processes.

- 3.3 JSC agreed to receive a report in January 2021 on the issues raised by the JOSC Working Group on consideration of the implications for each recommendation contained in the Scrutiny
- 3.4 This report is the response to the JOSC Working Group conclusions and recommendations

4. Response to Recommendations

- 4.1 Adur District Council welcome the conclusions and recommendations of the Working Group and accept that the service currently delivered by Adur Homes does not reach the standard Adur Homes tenants' deserve. The Council agrees with the Working Group that the full improvement of the repairs and maintenance service is not a quick process and will take time to deliver.
- 4.2 The Council restates its commitment to bring performance levels to the standard that will make Adur Homes the pride of tenants and the Council as a whole.

That the Council put in place a transformation programme that sets out a timetable to implement the following improvements to Adur Homes core business of the provision of social housing (Paragraph 6.3).

- 4.3 A transformation programme, which was divided into three phases, commenced earlier in 2020. This programme has now been reviewed to ensure it is able to achieve the desired change and improvement required.
- 4.4 Problem statements have been developed in order to provide a baseline for the next phase of work. The problem statement will also ensure that there is consensus among tenants and other key stakeholders on the improvement required. The problem statement will be tested with Adur Homes tenants as part of the initial stage of our tenant engagement work. So far, four key themes have been identified (Silo working, Leadership & Governance, Customer Focus and Resistance to Change). Within these themes, the issues have been

grouped into three strands - cultural and behaviour issues, business process and practice issues, and issues involving technology.

- 4.5 Given the emphasis on cultural change that has been emphasised in both the JOSC work and the internal work on problem statements the next phase of work will focus on making sure that the right team is in place to deliver the change needed.
- 4.6 A Transformation Programme Manager is being recruited to plan, coordinate and direct the business change projects and technology led change. A Service Designer is also being recruited. Though the Service Designer will mainly support changes with the Councils, they will have a significant role in Adur Homes Transformation Programme, for instance in the customer journey mapping.

That Adur District Council review and implement an appropriate governance structure within Adur District Council to include the appropriate senior officers responsible for delivering key Adur Homes functions (Recommendation 7.1)

- 4.6 The Council accepts this recommendation and has already acted to ensure an appropriate governance structure is in place. The new Adur Homes governance structure now has:
- the Adur Homes Management Board (AHMB), which has been reconstituted to ensure that it reflects the diversity of Adur Homes residents.
 - the Adur Homes Operational Group (AHOG), which brings together key officers whose services influence the delivery of the Adur Homes social landlord function
- 4.7 The new AHMB, which will meet quarterly, had its inaugural meeting on Tuesday 8 December, 2020. A new Terms of Reference has been written and will be approved by the board at its next meeting on 13 February 2021. The AHOG, which will report to the AHMB, will be responsible for the operational direction set by the Board and ensure a seamless service delivery to Adur Homes residents.

That Adur District Council ensures that an effective Planned Maintenance Programme and strategy is developed and implemented to deliver a sustainable renewal, repairs and maintenance regime (Recommendation 7.2).

- 4.8 Adur District Council accepts this recommendation. The Council will develop and publish a five year asset management strategy in 2021-22, which will set out how the Council will deliver investment into its housing stock to ensure more properties are brought up to Decent Homes Standard. The strategy, which will be aligned with the other Council priorities in Platforms for Our Places - Going Further (e.g. decarbonisation, energy efficiency) will focus on maximising the impact of the Council's investment in terms of the quality and sustainability of housing stock and the satisfaction and wellbeing of our residents.
- 4.9 Adur Homes is currently working to ensure that capital investment in existing stock complements the Council's affordable homes ambitions. Work is progressing on an 'Employers Requirement', which will set out the standard of materials used in both repairs and new builds to ensure consistency and ease of repair. This standard which is being developed with the Major Works and Projects service who oversee new developments should be completed in Summer 2021. As part of the use of technology in the Transformation Programme, the Council will seek to implement an asset management system, which will allow Adur Homes to bring together information on responsive repairs and asset performance, creating greater visibility into asset utilisation, cost and maintenance. This information, along with the Asset Management Strategy, will be used to design a planned and cyclical maintenance regime. As part of the review into current structures, the Council will ensure that a structure exists, different from responsive repairs, to deliver planned maintenance. Discussion has started with other services within the Councils who also require a similar system to ensure consistency and a joined up approach.

That Adur District Council identify and implement key performance measures that can be used to monitor the adequacy of service and signpost areas for improvement (Recommendation 7.3).

- 4.10 Adur District Council accepts this recommendation. Adur Homes has already created a quarterly performance digest which will be used to track and monitor key performance areas. The performance digest will continuously be improved and is part of the standing documents on the AHMB agenda.
- 4.11 Adur District Council and Worthing Borough Council are currently working to create the relevant skills and capability within the Councils to

better collate, analyse and interpret data. This will improve how the Councils (including Adur Homes) use data to manage performance, turn information into insights and forecast trends.

That Adur District Council continues to implement improvements to maintenance and repairs processes to ensure prompt delivery of services and value for money (Recommendation 7.4).

4.12 Adur District Council accepts this recommendation. All teams responsible for repairs and maintenance will be brought together in Commerce Way by the Spring 2021. The Procurement Team are currently working with Adur Homes to review all existing contracts and key spend areas to ensure value for money. Customer Services are part of the ongoing work to ensure tenants get adequate and timely information on maintenance and repairs enquiries.

That Adur District Council implemented a revised strategy to improve tenants' timely engagement with Adur Homes. This should include a revised Tenants' Manual which sets out the expectations of both tenants and Adur Homes (including such things as agreed timescales for repairs) and should involve customer journey mapping and the use of the Customer Services Effortless programme to gather customer feedback to help improve the service (Recommendation 7.5).

4.13 Adur District Council accepts this recommendation. The Responsive Repair Policy sets out both landlords, leaseholders and tenants repairs responsibilities. The policy states timescales for carrying out Emergency, Urgent and Routine repairs. Working with the Adur Tenant Forum, we have consulted tenants on the policy. We are reviewing the draft policy based on the feedback from the consultation. A new Tenants Handbook will be created once the new Policy has been agreed.

4.14 The tenants will be actively involved in both the discovery and implementation of various parts of the Transformation Programme, including work to improve their experience of the repairs and maintenance process. The Transformation Programme will include customer journey mapping and use the learnings from the Customer Services Effortless project and Good Service Standard. This work can commence once the Transformation Manager is in post.

4.15 The first draft of the new Tenants and Leaseholders Engagement Strategy has now been produced by a joint working group of staff and tenants, facilitated by TPAS a not-for-profit organisation which represents tenants across the Country. The draft strategy will also be tested with a wider group of tenants. The problem statement, which will set the provide a baseline for the next phase of the improvement work be tested with Adur Homes tenants.

Continue to improve the voids process which both increases the revenues to Adur Homes but also more importantly reduces the waiting list for social housing (Recommendation 7.6).

4.16 A new voids process has been implemented. The new process includes 'pre-void inspection' once an end of tenancy notice is received. This will ensure repairs are identified and scheduled earlier so that they can start immediately when the property becomes vacant, or before it becomes void if appropriate. Voids repairs and the lettings process will now run concurrently to ensure a tenant is ready to sign up at the end of the voids repairs. A new system has been introduced to monitor progress of the new process and officers meeting fortnightly to review progress on each void and unblock issues. The new process also tracks revenue loss from rent and council tax payments and will use this to make a decision on the most efficient way to return a void property into use, especially with long term voids. We will also define a new void standard and checklist to ensure consistency in voids signed off ready to let.

That the JOSC agrees to keep this Working Group constituted for monitoring purposes (Recommendation 7.7).

4.17 Adur District Council accepts this recommendation. While the AHMB will have oversight and scrutiny of all Adur Homes business, the Working Group oversight on repairs and maintenance will bring the required assurance and feedback on the work to improve this area of service.

Provide a timeline for implementation of the recommendations

4.18 The Council agrees to provide a timeline for the implementation of the recommendations. However most of the essential improvements actions are within the Transformation Programme. Recruitment of a Transformation Programme Manager and Service Designer has

commenced and discussions with other services within the Council who will part in the changes has also started. The Council expects to be able to provide clear milestones and timeline by 31 March 2021 and before the meeting with the JOSC Working Group on Repairs and Maintenance.

5. Engagement and Communication

- 5.1 The Adur Homes leaseholders and tenants will be actively involved in both the discovery and implementation of various parts of the Transformation Programme, including work to improve their experience of the repairs and maintenance process. The Transformation Programme will include customer journey mapping.
- 5.2 Regular reporting on the Transformation Programme will be presented to the AHMB.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The Housing Revenue Account has an overall 2020/21 revenue budget of £2.7m for day to day repairs.
- 6.2 In addition, within the capital programme there are budgets of £19.9m for major works to the Adur Homes properties (excluding budgets for new properties) over the next three years.

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Total
	£	£	£	£
Major repairs and improvements	6,038,610	8,251,000	5,600,000	19,889,610

The focus for the programme at the moment is fire safety and external repairs as identified by the condition surveys.

- 6.3 Overall the HRA has a budgeted deficit of £493,280 for 2020/21, and is expected to continue to make losses of over the next two years in the region of £0.5m for 2021/22 and £250,00 for 2022/23. This deficit is the legacy of the rent limitation regime for the period 2015/16 - 2019/20. Whilst rent limitation benefitted tenants, it compromised the financial viability of the HRA and limited the level of investment into Council homes that could be afforded from within the overall budget.

- 6.4 Consequently, any changes to the management of repairs needs to be funded from within the existing budgets otherwise the HRA will be placed under additional strain.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 Within their terms of reference JOSC may make reports and/or recommendations to the Executive in connection with the discharge of any functions on any matters affecting the Council's area or its inhabitants and make recommendations to the Executive arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process.
- 7.2 Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 grants the Council power to do anything that is calculated to facilitate ,or which is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions.
- 7.3 Section 1 of the Local Government (Contracts) Act 1997 provides that every statutory provision conferring or imposing a function on a local authority confers the powers on the local authority to enter into a contract with another person for the provision or making available of assets or services, for the purposes of ,or in connection with, the discharge of the function by the local authority.

Background Papers

- JOSC Review of Adur Homes Repairs and maintenance service - JSC Report 3 November 2020

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