

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

HOUSING COMMITTEE – 23 MAY 2001

BEST VALUE SERVICE REVIEW - PROPERTY REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

Report by the Director of Homes and Technical Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to recommend to Committee major changes arising from the review of the repairs service and to seek approval to the revised Action Plan, to improve the level of service to customers.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As part of the council's commitment to Best Value, the repairs service was subjected to a Best Value review during the year 2000. This exercise was concluded in conjunction with the Performance Management and Planning (PMP) Audit undertaken by Audit Scotland, the development of the Building and Works Business Plan and the Repairs Service EFQM Audit.
- 2.2 A report to Housing Committee on 17 November 1999 outlined the proposal and general principles of the repairs review. Further reports on 26 January, 18 April and 13th September 2000 detailed progress and, latterly, results of the review exercise. Separate reports on the Building & Works Business Plan 2001/2002 and on the outcome of the Performance Management Planning Audit were submitted to Housing Committee on 31 May and 13th September 2000 respectively.
- 2.3 In accordance with the council's Best Value Strategy, a Member / Officer Service Review Group was established to consider the outcome of the Repair Service Review and any proposed actions to improve the service prior to these being submitted to the Best Value Sub Committee and thereafter to the Housing Committee for approval.
- 2.4 At the last meeting of the officer / member group held on 26 March 2001, members considered and endorsed the attached Action Plan prepared by the Director of Homes and Technical Services subject to minor amendments and agreed to recommend the proposed actions to the Best Value Sub Committee as a basis for service improvement.
- 2.5 On 15 May 2001 the Best Value Sub-Committee of the Policy and Resources Committee met and was advised that the Review was conducted in a thorough and robust manner, and had been the subject of both external and internal validation. The Sub-Committee agreed to the report and the action plan on the Review.

3. REPAIRS REVIEW 2000/2001

3.1 A key element of the review was to capture the perceptions of our customers, contractors, elected members and staff and to incorporate their requirements into an improved service that is more responsive to the needs of our stakeholders and deliver these in a more cost effective manner. The review was thorough and included in-depth analysis of the entire repairs service including the repairs service to the council's non-housing stock. It examined not only the performance of the contractors, but the performance and approach of client officers responsible for assessing and ordering repairs, the numbers of repairs ordered, the way in which they are ordered, the outcome of these repairs, the customer or tenant's satisfaction with them, and the longer term effect on maintaining the council's buildings, as well as reviewing the appropriateness of the contracts. It was also necessary to compare this council's performance and expenditure with that of other authorities and agencies where such information is available. The watch words for the review, both in terms of our service requirements, and in terms of Best Value, were Challenge, Compare, Consult, and Compete. In addition, as outlined above the review was itself the subject of detailed examination and oversight by Audit Scotland, the Councils EFQM process, the Housing Committee, and the Member Officer Working Group.

4. AIMS OF THE ACTION PLAN

4.1 The aims of the proposals contained in the Action Plan are simply to improve the level of service to our customers, both internal and external whilst delivering value for money within available budgets. The areas of improvement cover clarity of obligations, speed of handling requests for repairs by the client through to timeous completion of repairs including getting it right first time. Where delays are unavoidable tenants, internal customers and members are to be kept fully informed of progress and reasons for delays. The various aspects of the Action Plan are designed to address improvements across the service, from staff training and clear procedures, including contractors who are to be encouraged to adopt a more programmed approach for most orders, and tenants and internal customers who are to be given appointment systems and more up-to-date information, to members who are to be kept informed both formally via reports and on a day to day basis by the use of a Customer Complaints/Query Tracking System.

4.2 The attached plan lists specific improvement actions under the following headings:

- Reprioritising repair types within response categories and the useage of response categories
- Improved internal communications between Client, Contractors and Technical Services
- Improved customer communications between Client and Tenants/property keepers
- Improved recording of accurate information by Client and Building and Works

- Improved financial client side management
- Improved Building and Works re-charge procedures
- Improved stakeholder awareness
- Improvements in Client's description of works
- Improvements in Contractors performance
- Improved management of the out of hours helpdesk service
- Improved Client training
- Implementation of repair by appointment system
- Introduction of customer care track system
- Re-launch of Repairs Service.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1** The Service Review Member/Officer Working Group for Property Repairs and Maintenance (which consisted of three Elected Members, the Director of Finance, Head of Administration and Legal Services and the Depute Chief Executive) met on 4 occasions. The Member/Officer Group considered reports which provided the background and context to the review, the review process and the Service Improvement Action Plan resulting from the Review.
- 5.2** The Head of Corporate Development and Communication has advised that the review has been carried out in a robust and methodical manner, in accordance with Best Value practice.
- 5.3** Amongst other things, the Service Review Group agreed to endorse these actions as a basis for Property Repairs and Maintenance to move forward in delivering service improvements.
- 5.4** The Council on 14 December 2000 asked the Member/Officer Group on Property Repairs and Maintenance to consider the issue of providing reports on repairs on a ward by ward basis. Having heard the Director of Homes and Technical Services advised that it would not be practical to report repairs information on a ward by ward basis, and that the information required for business operation would be made available on a geographical basis by Area Housing Team, the Member/Officer Group noted the position.

6. MONITORING AND REPORTING

- 6.1** The actual progress of the items contained in this action plan will be monitored on an ongoing basis with progress reports and a year end statement being formally reported to the Housing Committee, outlining the performance against the set targets.

7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** The Service Review was conducted in terms of the Council's Best Value Implementation Plan which recognises fundamental service reviews as a key feature of the Council's approach to securing continuous improvement in service delivery.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 It is recommended that members:-

- (i) note the conclusions of the Repair Service Review and Action Plan and the approval of the Best Value Sub-Committee of the Policy and Resources Committee to these;
- (ii) endorse the proposed actions as a basis for Homes and Technical Services to move forward in delivering improvements in the delivery of the Repairs Service;
- (iii) agree that the Director of Homes and Technical Services continue to monitor the implementation of these actions and present a progress report to this Committee on an annual basis; and
- (iv) otherwise to note the contents of this report.

James Lavery
Director of Homes and Technical Services
27 March 2001
CMcA/WT/AB

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Anyone wishing further information should contact Chris McAleavey, Head of Homes on 01563 554876 or Alex Reid, Senior Procurement Officer on 01563 555203

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AGENDA