

# EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

## HOUSING COMMITTEE – 7 NOVEMBER 2001

### BEST VALUE SERVICE REVIEW – PROPERTY REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

#### Report by the Director of Homes and Technical Services

#### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to advise elected members of progress in implementing the agreed action plan to improve the repairs service

#### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting on 23 May 2001, the Housing Committee noted the conclusions of the Repair Service Review and endorsed the action plan approved by the Best Value Sub-Committee of the Policy and Resources Committee, as a basis for Homes and Technical Services to move forward in delivering improvements in the repairs service.

- 2.2 The aim of the plan is to improve levels of service to internal and external customers whilst delivering value for money within approved budgets. The 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.

### **3. PROGRESS**

- 3.1** Progress in achieving each of the improvement actions is detailed in the plan document appended to this report. Due to the considerable efforts invested by all parties involved, the significant majority of improvement actions have been achieved within the timescale agreed by the Council. However delays occasioned by the IT suppliers in each case, have led to slippage in introducing LG Repair Finder – the diagnostic repairs tool for use by tenants and staff – and Respond 3, the customer care tracking system. These tools are held to be critical to the successful implementation of the new repairs service. Revised deadlines for implementing both systems have been negotiated and the bulk of the preparatory work has now been completed. Subject to all processes being tested satisfactorily, including newly-designed interfaces with existing client and contractor IT systems, the new service will launch by the end of January 2002.

### **4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1** As previously reported to members.

### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1** The costs involved in delivering the agreed action plan can be contained within agreed budgets

### **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1** Committee is asked to:

- (i) Note the progress achieved to date;
- (ii) Agree the introduction of the new repair service for East Ayrshire;
- (iii) Approve the revised launch date for the revised service; and
- (iv) Agree that the Director of Homes and Technical Services continue to monitor the implementation of these actions and report to this committee on an annual basis.

James Lavery  
Director of Homes and Technical Services  
CMcA/WT  
23 October 2001

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**NIL**

Anyone wishing further information should contact Chris McAleavey, Head of Homes on 01563 554876

Implementation Officer: Chris McAleavey, Head of Homes

## REPAIRS REVIEW 2001 - ACTION PLAN

### A: Re-Prioritising of Repair Types within Each Response Category and the Usage of Response Categories

Source of Evidence	<b>Purpose of Proposed Action:</b> More Realistic Usage of Response Categories. The redefining of the Response categories and the reclassification and type of work done under each is required to ensure a consistent application of similar repairs across the Council along with a conscious move away from response repairs towards repairs of a more planned nature which will allow appointments to be made with our tenants and internal customers. The move towards more Orders being issued under more planned response categories will also result in recharges attracting lower contractual percentage uplifts, thus effecting greater value for money. This proposal would also address the concerns of the contractors who are of the opinion that too many Emergency repair Orders are issued at the expense of other response categories.				
	Action / Solution	Action Owner	Time Target	Comments	
<b>Conclusions drawn from Contractor Consultation + Internal Customer Consultation + Performance Comparisons</b>	A1	<b>Emergency</b> - <i>Completion within 24 Hours</i> - To be restricted to genuine <u>emergency</u> repairs including a number of tenants right to repair issues (no pre-inspection).	Head of Homes in conjunction with term contractors	All Oct 2001	Client and multi-trade contractors have agreed procedures to deal with emergencies.
	A2	<b>Urgent</b> - <i>Completion within 3 Working Days</i> - To be restricted to repairs that are <u>urgent</u> but not covered by Emergency (no pre-inspection) and the remainder of tenants right to repair issues.			Client and multi-trade contractors have agreed job classifications/response categories
	A3	<b>Planned</b> – <i>Completion within Mutually Agreed Target</i> – To be used where not Emergency or Urgent, but where a more planned approach is appropriate. Tenants and internal customers will be advised of a site visit <i>within 10 Working Days</i> from receipt of request for repair to allow Homes staff time to carry out pre-inspection where required. A number of Orders will be carried out under the Repair-By-Appointment Scheme for certain internal defined repairs, where no pre-inspection is required with the remainder carried out within programmes of planned works.			LG Repair Finder implementation delayed due to supplier problems.  Proposals tested successfully via customer focus groups. Consultant's feedback reports available.  Repairs appointment procedures for programmed repairs in place. Next phase of development will target void/new tenant work.



### C: Improved Customer Communications between Client and Tenants/Property Keepers

Source of Evidence	<b>Purpose of Proposed Action:</b> To improve the sharing of information with tenants and internal customers both in relation to when the work is scheduled to be carried out and when delays occur. For our internal customers the introduction of planned cyclic visits to properties will make the process for requesting repairs more systematic. The introduction of set response times for Housing Officers, in conjunction with the reclassified Response Categories, will result in tenants and internal customers being given a Response Time for the whole service including the client function; 3 days will therefore mean 3 days from the request date and not 3 days from the placement of the Order. Tenants and internal customers will henceforth be kept fully up-to-date with the progress of their Orders and be given reasons for any delay.				
	Action / Solution	Action Owner	Time Target	Comments	
<b>Conclusions drawn from Internal Customer Consultation + Tenant Consultation</b>	<b>C1</b> Client officers to have set time to respond to tenants and property keepers requests and queries, including targets for pre and post-inspections. Procedure Note to be introduced.	Operations Manager	April 2001	Procedure in place.	
	<b>C2</b> Property Officers to carry out asset survey of all properties capturing the key components and their life-spans. Also to be captured are all requests for repairs, improvements and spend-to-save proposals from the property keeper.	Operations Manager	Dec 2001	Ongoing process	
	<b>C3</b> Property Officers are to have a cyclic programme of visits at which inspections of all work will be undertaken and requests logged.	Operations Manager	June 2001	Inspection schedule in place	
	<b>C4</b> Procedure Note to be adopted regarding Client Officers keeping tenants and property keepers fully informed as to work-in-progress and likely delays.	Operations Manager	June 2001	Procedure in place.	
	<b>C5</b> Read Only access to Orchard IT system to be introduced for clients, enabling them to view the progress of all works.	Senior Systems Officer	Dec 2001	IT deployment to client departments including Education, Development Services, Social Work and Community Services complete. Client system training schedule agreed.	
	<b>C6</b> Repair Request Receipts to be given to all tenants and all requests for repairs to be logged. These receipts are to confirm both tenant's requests for repairs and the issue of the Order.	Senior Systems Officer	Sept 2001	Repair receipts process now being tested prior to initial pilot scheme being introduced at area housing offices.	
	<b>C7</b> Internet and facsimile facility to be introduced for tenants to lodge Repair Requests.	Senior Systems Officer	2002/03	Delayed. Ongoing development in partnership with corporate IT department.	
	<b>C8</b> LG Repair Finder system to be introduced.	Operations Manager	January 2002	Respond 3 implementation delayed due to supplier problems.	
	<b>C9</b> Corporate Working - Joint appraisal to be undertaken between Education's Onsite Services and Homes re the adoption of a more co-ordinated approach to asset management.	Head of Homes	Dec 2001	Discussions ongoing between homes and On-Site Services.	

## D: Improved Recording of Accurate Information by Client and Building & Works

Source of Evidence	Purpose of Proposed Action: To enable accurate and up-to-date reporting of Building & Work's performance. The condition and attributes survey is to be used to inform management decision making process and to enable a more planned approach to repairs and upgrades, covering both capital projects and repairs.				
	Action / Solution	Action Owner	Time Target	Comments	
Conclusions drawn from Internal Customer Consultation + Contractor Consultation	D1	In order that the client can report accurate Key Statutory Performance Indicators, Building & Works require to procure an IT interface system compatible with Orchard and which allows accurate information to be fed into the system, with particular reference to Order Completed time/date.	Head of B&W	March 2001	System in place.
	D2	A house condition and attributes survey has been completed on a representative sample of the properties (25%). This survey has captured the attributes of the stock along with the life-span for the major components. The data will now be migrated into the Orchard IT system for use in the Capital Programme and the Repairs Service generally. The data collected has already informed the Housing Capital Programme for 2001/2002. Costings are to be compiled for component renewal based upon the life-span information gathered in the survey.	Head of Homes  Design Services Manager	April 2002  Costings by August 2001	Data migration to Orchard deferred following re-assessment of business priorities within Orchard implementation plan.  Complete for 2001/02 programmes. Ongoing review process to inform future programme planning.

## E: Improved Financial Client Side Management

Source of Evidence	<b>Purpose of Proposed Action:</b> To improve the accountability of client officers in the financial management of the contracts. To enable managers to closely supervise the handling of requests for repairs from inception to completion. The application of the proposal to employ the recovery of costs due to end-user abuse will result in a decrease in damage to properties and free additional funds for redeployment in the repairs service. The re-evaluation of commitment values for the most common repairs will assist officers in their commitment accounting practices and will mean that closer financial controls are in place for budgetary management purposes.				
	Action / Solution	Action Owner	Time Target	Comments	
<b>Conclusions drawn from Staff Consultation + Performance Comparisons</b>	<b><u>Improved Financial Client-Side Management</u></b>				
	<b>E1</b> The Commitment Value of the most frequently ordered jobs (by number) to be re-evaluated for accuracy in light of actual recharge levels and to be linked to the LG Repair Finder to allow more accurate commitment accounting.	Operations Manager	April 2001	Complete	
	<b>E2</b> All teams/units with a responsibility for ordering work to be given expenditure profiles against which actual spend will be monitored, both by them and by senior officers.	Head of Homes	April 2001	Procedure in Place.	
	<b>E3</b> The same staff will be monitored for the ratio of Response Category Orders generated by them on a regular basis to ensure appropriateness of usage.	Area Managers	Ongoing from April 2001	Procedure in Place	
	<b><u>Recovery of End-User Abuse Costs</u></b>				
	<b>E4</b> System for formally warning tenants and other third parties guilty of repeated abuse to be set up, along with a system for ultimately recovering costs from tenants and other third parties who are guilty of repeated abuse.	Head of Homes	Oct 2001	Procedure in Place.	

## F: Improved Building & Works Recharges Throughout the Year

Source of Evidence	Purpose of Proposed Action: To improve the accuracy of recharges and therefore reduce the amount of disputed accounts and hence speed payment to Building & Works. This will also improve the client's reporting of financial performance as more up-to-date and accurate financial information will be available.			
	Action / Solution	Action Owner	Time Target	Comments
Conclusions drawn from Performance Comparisons	F1	Internal disputes between client and Building & Works are to be resolved by mutual agreement within 4 weeks of the issue being aired. Thereafter protocols to be amended, rogue items introduced and VO issued.	Client Contracts & Planning Manager	Procedure in place
	F2	Building & Works to systematically record data relevant to claims and provide client with information as soon as possible to avoid year-end global settlements which may attract undue and otherwise unwarranted attention.	Head of B&W	All April 2001 Procedure in place.
	F3	Resolution of disputed accounts and procedures to be fed back into the Building & Works system and notified to Client immediately to ensure that operatives and managers cease bad practice at source, thus avoiding repeated disputes.	Head of Homes & Head of B&W	Procedure in place.

## G: Improved Stakeholder Awareness

Source of Evidence	<b>Purpose of Proposed Action:</b> To enlighten tenants, internal customers, members and contractors of both the scope of the repair service their own obligations as stakeholders. It is expected that this will result in a clearer understanding of what type of repairs are to be carried out, differentiating between those which are the responsibility of the tenants. More clearly defined response times for each type of repair should also result in a higher satisfaction rating from our tenants and internal customers. It is also expected that the proposals will reduce the number of "Emergency" Orders thus allowing a more planned approach and the implementation of a Repair-By-Appointment system, with the added bonus of reduced uplifts and hence free financial resources for reinvestment in the service as a whole.				
	Action / Solution	Action Owner	Time Target	Comments	
<b>Conclusions drawn from Contractor Consultation + Internal Customer Consultation + Tenant Consultation + Member Consultation + Staff Consultation</b>	G1	Members to receive information/guidance on the rudiments of any changes to the service, including changes in scope of repairs, targets for completion etc.	All Head of Homes	Nov 2001	Members seminar to be arranged.
	G2	Tenants to be consulted in relation to introduction of programmed / improvement works prior to implementation of change.		May 2001	Focus group consultation complete. Examine options for future monitor and review arrangements involving tenants.
	G3	Contractors to be made aware of any changes which are likely to effect them, either directly or indirectly prior to implementation of changes.		June 2001	Complete.
	G4	Tenants to be made aware of any changes to the response category useage and of any changes to obligations re repairs.		January 2002	Internal procedures complete but links to LG repair finder – implementation delayed.
	G5	All tenants ( <u>and internal customers</u> ) to receive information outlining their and the Council's obligations clearly stating the likely target times for completion of approved repairs. Communication channels to be clearly stated with contact numbers. The LG Repair Finder booklet is to be made available to all tenants.		January 2002	Internal procedures complete but links to LG repair finder – implementation delayed.
	G6	Internal customers are to receive information re procedures and timescales involved in the prioritising of work within the budgetary resources available.		April 2001	Initial advice issued. Subject to review to reflect future budget priorities.
	G7	Tenants & Property Keepers are to be further surveyed after 6 months of the launch of the new service to seek their opinions.		April 2002	To be arranged.

## H: Improvements in Client's Description of Works (Narrative)

Source of Evidence	<b>Purpose of Proposed Action:</b> To minimise the duplication of effort by client and contractors in carrying out pre-inspections, thus freeing resources. The proposals will also reduce the number of visits required to tenants and hence will reduce the inconvenience of multi-visits. Post-inspection arrangements are to be shared between client and contractors thus ensuring awareness of outstanding issues by both parties.				
	Action / Solution	Action Owner	Time Target	Comments	
<b>Conclusions drawn from Contractor Consultation + Internal Customer Consultation + Member Consultation</b>	<b>H1</b>	<u><b>Improved Client's Description of Works</b></u> Client officers to better describe the content of the works required by way of fuller detailed narrative orders. This will include dimensions and manufacturer of key components, approximate quantities, contact numbers, access restrictions and all other relevant information for the purpose of informing the contractors with as much useful information as is reasonably practical where pre-inspections have been carried out.	Operations Manager	January 2002	Internal procedures complete but links to LG repair finder – implementation delayed.
	<b>H2</b>	<u><b>Improved Arrangements for Pre &amp; Post Inspections</b></u> Arrangements to be formalised for both Pre-Inspection and Post-Inspections. Pre-inspection protocol to be agreed whereby the level of detail to be included in any Order is outlined. Post inspections to be set to a minimum level of 15% of all Orders.	Head of Homes & Head of B&W	June 2001	Complete

## I: Improvements in Contractors' Performance

Source of Evidence	<b>Purpose of Proposed Action:</b> To improve the performance of B&W in relation to keeping appointments with tenants and internal customers, completing jobs on time, along with improving the accuracy of recharges and thus reducing resources currently spent on "disputed accounts". Although some types of repairs are to be reclassified into less onerous response categories, tenants and internal customers should benefit from the vast majority of repairs being completed on time, as B&W will be able to have a more planned approach to repairs and therefore be able to meet the more realistic timescales for completion. The reduction in <b>response categories</b> is expected to result in greatly improved performance for those Orders which are raised under these categories.			
	Action / Solution	Action Owner	Time Target	Comments
<b>Conclusions drawn from Performance Comparisons</b>	<b>11</b> <u>Improvement in B&amp;W Performance</u>			
	<p>The current service delivery will improve by the adoption of the following procedures and strategies:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption of redefining of Response Categories to be used in Orders as laid out in Section A of this Action Plan.</li> <li>• Adoption of new protocol to cover Orders which require an immediate response to emergency situations to be introduced.</li> <li>• Adoption of a Repair-By-Appointment-Scheme whereby Contractors have the opportunity to plan their workload and reduce travel time as well as offering tenants appointments.</li> <li>• Greater use is to be made of Planned Orders whereby Contractors have the opportunity to plan their workload and reduce travel time.</li> <li>• Operatives to be supported more by way of increased supervision by managers.</li> <li>• A system for reporting back potential delays stating reasons to be set up by B&amp;W to enable clients to be kept up to date with the progress of the works.</li> </ul>	Head of B&W + B&W Operations Manager	Full Implementation by Oct 2001	Complete
<b>12</b>	All contractors' performance in relation to "Level of Recharge" and "Orders Completed on Time" to be reviewed six months prior to the end of the current contract arrangements. The options open to the Council at that time will be:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-tender the same packages.</li> <li>• Apply 1 year extension.</li> <li>• Apply 2 year extension.</li> <li>• Tender the entire service.</li> <li>• Tender part of the service.</li> </ul>	Director of Homes and Technical Services	Completed for Specialists Jan 2001  April 2001 for Gas & Multi-Trade Contracts	Appraisal exercise complete.

## J: Stricter Management of the Out-of-Hours Helpdesk Service

<b>Source of Evidence</b>	<b>Purpose of Proposed Action:</b> To ensure that all genuine requests for assistance are timeously dealt with, whilst channelling non-emergency work and all repairs back through the normal Homes system for dealing with repairs. This should greatly reduce the number of out-of-hours call outs which in the past has had a detrimental effect on progress of normal working. The policy not to carry out "Repairs" under a Category A Order will also greatly reduce the work carried out out-of-hours, thus freeing resources to attend to such repairs in normal working time and in a more co-ordinated fashion. Once the tenants have been made aware of the reclassification of work which will be acted upon out-of-hours it is anticipated that the level of calls handled by the Help Desk will be reduced significantly. Financial savings <b>in premium payments</b> are expected which will be reinvested in more repairs of an improvement nature.			
	<b>Action / Solution</b>	<b>Action Owner</b>	<b>Time Target</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Conclusions drawn from Contractor Consultation + Staff Consultation</b>	<b>J1</b> <b>Out of Hours Helpdesk</b> Help-desk operatives to have new operational protocol for approving Orders, based upon revised usage of Response Categories and reclassification of types of work undertaken in each and in conjunction with the LG Repair Finder. This would be limited to Emergency or Urgent Orders required mainly to remove the danger from the situation or to meet the Council's statutory requirements. Other requests will be passed on to Homes staff the next day for normal assessment and action as appropriate.	Operations Manager	June 2001	New arrangements agreed.

## K: Improved Client Training

<b>Source of Evidence</b>	<b>Purpose of Proposed Action:</b> To ensure that staff are confident and knowledgeable in the policy, strategy and procedures to be applied across the service, and in particular to their element of operation. The proposed measures are also designed to give all staff a more Customer Focussed approach to their work.			
	<b>Action / Solution</b>	<b>Action Owner</b>	<b>Time Target</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Conclusions drawn from Staff Consultation</b>	<b>K1</b> <b>Client Training</b> Client staff, including Help Line staff and Local Office staff, are to receive refresher training on the following:- Orchard <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reclassification of Job Types within each Response Categories &amp; Response Category Usage</li> <li>• Contractual Obligations &amp; Procedures</li> <li>• Policy &amp; Strategy</li> </ul>	Head of Homes	All staff by Sept 2001	Training needs assessment complete. "Refresher" training scheduled.
	<b>K2</b> Needs Assessment exercise to be carried out in conjunction with Personnel Services, linked to internal Customer Focus training.		Completion by Dec 2001	Ongoing.

## L: Implementation of Repair By Appointment System

Source of Evidence	Purpose of Proposed Action: Repair By Appointment scheme is designed to enable client staff to advise tenants of a time slot for the work to be carried out at the time the repair is requested. This should result in improved service delivery in the amount of repairs carried out on time along with appointments being tailored to suit the tenant's availability and convenience.			
	Action / Solution	Action Owner	Time Target	Comments
Conclusions drawn from Contractor Consultation + Member Consultation	L1	Head of Homes and term contractors	Launch October 2001  Fully Implemented by April 2002	Repairs by appointment procedures for programmed repairs in place.
	L2			

## M: Introduction of Customer Care Tracking System

Source of Evidence	Purpose of Proposed Action: To enable Homes to formally report performance on a regular basis along with being able to readily inform members and senior managers on ad hoc queries regarding a request for repairs or the progress of an Order.			
	Action / Solution	Action Owner	Time Target	Comments
Conclusions drawn from Staff Consultation + Internal Customer Consultation + Member Consultation	<b>Customer Care Tracking System</b>			
	M1	Head of Homes and term contractors	Full Departmental roll-out by January 2002	Respond 3 implementation delayed due to supplier problems.
	M2			Initial pilot scheme for tenant "sign-off"/satisfaction forms in place.
M3				

**N: Miscellaneous Issues**

<p><b>Source of Evidence</b></p>	<p><b>Purpose of Proposed Action:</b> To allow the property stock to be maintained in a fair and reasonable state of repair. Currently only emergency or pressing repairs are carried out, as no funds are available to effect systematic repairs or improvements. Additional funds would allow a more programmed approach to be adopted to planning repairs and improvements. Additional pro-active services such as CCTV Maintenance, Fire Alarm Maintenance, Water Testing Services have now been introduced, with others planned (e.g. Intruder Alarm Maintenance).</p>				
	<p><b>Action / Solution</b></p>	<p><b>Action Owner</b></p>	<p><b>Time Target</b></p>	<p><b>Comments</b></p>	
<p><b>Conclusions drawn from Internal Customer Consultation</b></p>	<p><b>N1</b></p>	<p><u>Improved Funding of the Property Repairs Service</u> Pro-Active Contracts have been procured and are in place with further ones being procured for commencement during 2001/2002</p>	<p>Technical Services</p>	<p>All in place by June 2001</p>	<p>New term maintenance contracts for CCTV, fire alarms, water testing in place. Pilot projects established for gas soundness checks and fixed electrical wiring in schools – results being evaluated.</p>
	<p><b>N2</b></p>	<p>Council must appropriate necessary funds in order to maintain property stock at acceptable levels to end-users.</p>	<p>Council</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	

## O: Re-launch of Repairs Service

Source of Evidence	Purpose of Proposed Action: To formally advise tenants and internal customers of the changes to the service and to highlight their participation on rolling out the improvements which should be a benefit to all parties across the service. To advise staff and operatives of the outcome of the review with the aim of improving morale of both client staff and B&W staff and operatives. To adopt best practice as the standard across the service drawing on the findings of the review and to build upon existing processes and good practices and openly launch the service as a "new" <u>customer focused</u> service based on customer needs and expectations allied to available budget and human resources.			
	Action / Solution	Action Owner	Time Target	Comments
Conclusions drawn from Staff Consultation	<b>Re-launch of the Repairs Service</b>			
	O1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Press release in local newspapers on the outcome of the review and our intentions.</li> </ul>	Director	To be arranged.
	O2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint launch between appropriate HATS personnel.</li> </ul>	Head of B&W	
	O3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building &amp; Works full staff and operatives meeting to launch the service and communicate the new ideas and strategy.</li> </ul>	Head of Homes	
	O4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Client staff meeting to launch the service and communicate the new ideas and strategy.</li> </ul>	Client Operations Manager	
	O5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal presentation by senior management to all elected members.</li> </ul>		
O6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preliminary meeting with private contractors to advise them of the anticipated changes and to involve them in the process.</li> </ul>			

23 October 2001

AGENDA