

CABINET

23rd JULY 2007

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**IMPROVEMENTS TO THE HOUSING REPAIRS SERVICE**

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**Report of the Corporate Director of Adults and Housing**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Members views on whether the repairs service should be altered/extended to reflect the wishes of tenants attending the Tenants Conference in January 2007 on the Council's Housing Repairs Service.

**1. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The Department held a Tenants Conference on Housing Repairs in January 2007 to review the current service, identify weaknesses and agree a programme for improvement for the future. The Conference was well attended with over thirty delegates and many issues were raised for officers to address.
- 2.2 However, as part of the process tenants also aired areas where they would like to see enhancements to the current service offered by the Council. These issues have subsequently been discussed and agreed in March 2007 by the Housing Management Board (the Council's formal mechanism for agreeing issues affecting tenants) and are outlined in this report for Members consideration.

**3. RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 The Cabinet is recommended to:
- a) note the improvements agreed at the Tenants Conference on Repairs and subsequently endorsed by the Housing Management Board;
  - b) indicate their support for the Action Plan, timescales for undertaking the work and revised Mission Statement.

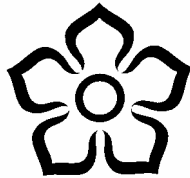
4. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (Graham Troup x7425)**

4.1 The report has no financial implications.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS (Joanna Bunting)**

5.1 This report has no new legal implications.

<b>Key Decision</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Reason</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Appeared in Forward Plan</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Executive or Council Decision</b>	<b>Executive (Cabinet)</b>



Leicester  
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL WARDS

CABINET

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## IMPROVEMENTS TO THE HOUSING REPAIRS SERVICE

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### SUPPORTING INFORMATION

#### 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Members will be aware the Housing Maintenance Service won Beacon Status for the Council in 2000/2001 (the first service to win this prestigious award). The Service also received 3 stars with excellent prospects for improvement under the Government's Housing Inspection regime in September 2002 (the first service to achieve this rating for housing maintenance in the Country).
- 1.2 However, for any service to stay out in front it is necessary for it to constantly review and refresh its services and in particular, how it delivers those services otherwise, over time, it will slip backwards.
- 1.3 To this end the Council held a Tenants Conference on Housing Repairs on the 26<sup>th</sup> January 2007 to review services, identify weaknesses and agree a way forward. The Conference also agreed a new Mission Statement for the service (see attached at Appendix 'A'). The 'way forward' and Mission Statement was subsequently ratified by the Housing Management Board at its meeting in March 2007.

#### 2. PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS

- 2.1 This report includes 18 improvements that were agreed at the Housing Repairs Conference and are designed to develop and improve services from a tenant's point of view.
- 2.2 Members will appreciate that with the large capital investment undertaken since 1997, in moving to the Government's Decent Homes target, the demand for day-to-day repairs has and continues to drop. In 2006 we receive 154,000 telephone calls, this

compared to 176,000 in 2004 and 178,000 in 2005. This highlights the benefit of the Council’s capital investment strategy.

- 2.3 However, the main themes coming out of the Conference were around speed of response, availability of appointments at times to suit tenants, communication, and customer care issues. A list of the 18 proposals that officers are currently working on is included at Appendix ‘B’ with timescales.
- 2.4 The Action Plan put forward from the Conference seeks to address all of these issues.
- 2.5 Members are asked to indicate their support for the Action Plan, the timescales for undertaking the work and revised Mission Statement.

**3. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 The proposal in this report will particularly help the elderly and infirm and make it easier for tenants generally to report repairs and receive an appropriate service from the Council.

**4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no new legal implications attached to this report.

**5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

Other Implications	Yes/No	Para within supporting papers	References
Equal Opps	Yes	3.1	
Policy	No		
Sustainable & Environmental	No		
Crime and Disorder	Yes	7.1	
Human Rights Act	No		
Details of Consultation	Yes	8.1	
Elderly/People on low income	Yes	10.1	

**6. SUSTAINABLE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no direct sustainable and environmental implications associated with this report.

**7. CRIME AND DISORDER**

- 7.1 The introduction of a dedicated repair teams will reduce the risk of elderly and/or vulnerable tenant’s receiving bogus callers.

**8. DETAILS OF CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 Tenants have been consulted at both the Tenants Conference on Repairs and at the Housing Management Board and support the proposals outlined in this report.

**9. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

- 9.1 Aim: To enable citizens of Leicester to stay in their homes as long as these homes continue to meet their needs.
- 9.2 Objective: To enable citizens of Leicester to find and stay in homes that meet their needs, offering choice of tenure, location and type of home.

**10. ELDERLY/PEOPLE ON LOW INCOMES**

- 10.1 The elderly and people in employment often find it difficult to access the repairs service. The proposals in this report will assist them with these difficulties and enable them to access the service at a time that suits them.

**11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 File in the Adults and Housing Department.

**12. AUTHOR OF REPORT**

- 12.1 Dave Pate, Service Director (Housing Improvement and Repairs Service).

**APPENDIX A**

**OVERALL STRATEGY STATEMENT FOR HOUSING IMPROVEMENT AND  
REPAIRS SERVICE**

The Housing Service has an overarching aim of 'A decent home within the reach of every citizen in Leicester'. This aim is linked to the Council's overall Corporate Objectives and clearly fits in with the Government's stated aim of a Decent Home for all tenants by 2010. Within this overall aim the Housing Improvement and Repairs Services has developed a Mission Statement that informs and directs the work of the Section.

This Mission Statement is a clear set of objectives that the Branch aims to achieve, short and long-term. It is intended to help focus staffs minds on why we are here and what our priorities are. These priorities have been discussed with and agreed by all stakeholders involved in the service.

The objectives have been developed around the Council's business planning, risk management, options appraisal and procurement considerations.

**The Mission Statement**

1. We will review and consult on our policies, procedures and priorities to ensure they are appropriate and still meet the needs of our tenants at least once a year.
2. We will maximise value for money for our tenants by following best practice in procurement and delivery of services.
3. We will set targets and regularly monitor performance in conjunction with our stakeholders at Community Association meetings.
4. We will work towards continuous improvement in all of our services.
5. We will meet the Government's target of a Decent Home for all tenants by 2010.
6. We will endeavour to set and meet appointments in line with the needs of our tenants.
7. We will aim to complete 90% plus of all Emergency and Urgent jobs on our first visit.
8. Where ever possible we will offer tenants, staff that meet their personal circumstances in terms of ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, within normal Health and Safety requirements.
9. We will be courteous and respect tenants home and privacy. We will equally expect tenants to be courteous to and respect Council staff.
10. When we get it wrong, we will admit our mistake and take action to resolve the issue as a top priority.
11. We will ensure our services are available to support tenants in crisis 24 hours a day, 365 days a year (366 on a leap year).
12. We will ensure our policies; procedures and purchasing strategies comply with the Council's best practice and limit their impact on the environment.

These twelve aims will form a contract between the service and our stakeholders. The aim of the Mission Statement is to develop and improve services in line with the priorities and delivery timeframe agreed with our stakeholders.

**ADULTS AND HOUSING DEPARTMENT****HOUSING IMPROVEMENT AND REPAIRS BRANCH ACTION PLAN FROM TENANTS CONFERENCE**

	<b><u>Planned Improvement</u></b>	<b><u>Proposed Action</u></b>	<b><u>Lead Officer</u></b>	<b><u>Target Date</u></b>
1.	Review Response Times	Reconsider current categories and see if still appropriate. Should more be added or some removed? Should they be brought more in line with the Government's Best Value targets?	Ian Craig	01/10/07
2.	Improve on our 1 <sup>st</sup> hit levels – currently 73.5%	Set a target for 90% plus completions on 1 <sup>st</sup> hit for all Emergency and Urgent repairs.	Ian Craig	01/01/08
3.	Move to a more flexible way of working – e.g. Friday pm and Saturday am appointments	Introduce flexible working for the workforce including Evening working, Friday pm and Saturday am cover.	Ian Craig	Pilot by 01/10/07
4.	Reduce our appointment slots from 4 hours to 2 hours	Introduce reduced bandwidth for appointments from 4 hours to 2 hours.	Ian Craig	Pilot by 01/09/07
5.	Ring tenants' in advance and advise of our estimated time of arrival	Subject to having a telephone contact number, system to be brought in alongside mobile working (item 6 below).	Ian Craig	Pilot by 01/10/07 Full by 01/01/08
6.	Take advantage of new technology such	Carry out a pilot project within 6 months for at least 10% of the workforce with the intention, should it prove successful, to rolling it out across the full	Ian Craig	Pilot by 01/10/07

	as mobile communication systems (hand held devices)	workforce within 12 months.		Full by 01/04/08
7.	Take advantage of the internet and provide more direct access to booking services, checking on progress etc., on line	To be developed following full introduction of the Planned Maintenance Module.	Amrik Singh	01/10/07
8.	Allow operatives to complete other work on a repair visit	Pilot scheme to be developed and if successful rolled out to all operatives within 12 months.	Ian Craig	Pilot by 01/10/07 Full by 01/04/08
9.	Follow up with customer satisfaction surveys 6 and/or 12 months after we have carried out major repairs/modernisations	To be introduced immediately.	John Hallett	01/08/07
10.	Work, longer term, to allocating operatives to specific blocks of property	A working group to be established late summer to consider the practicalities of such an approach, initially starting with Sheltered Housing Units.	Ian Craig	Pilot introduced in Sheltered Accom and Hostels 01/04/07 Full Review



				01/09/07
11.	Improved Communications	Full review of current arrangements to be undertaken including advising tenants what's happening with their outstanding work, what programmes are planned for the future, and when, and who is the named officer when there is a problem or a complaint, including giving tenants regular feedback.	Ian Craig/ Pete Stephens	01/05/07
12.	Customer Care	Develop/Refresh current training on customer care particularly around being helpful and courteous, cleaning up and remove rubbish during and after carrying out work and/or at the end of each working day, parking vehicles in a way that does not cause offence to tenants or their neighbours, Operatives/staff presenting themselves in a clean and tidy uniform with their ID badge clearly visible. Individuals taking ownership of a job and seeing it through to completion. Operatives giving tenants enough time to answer the door before moving on. Advising tenants if appointments cannot be met or if there is going to be a delay.	Ian Craig/ Pete Stephens	Develop and launch a Training Programme by 01/10/07 All staff to be put through it by 01/04/08
13.	Make it easier to complain	Where a problem occurs, or a repair carried out unsatisfactorily, send a different operative to put it right so tenant doesn't feel threatened.	Ian Craig	01/07/07
14.	State of Gardens for new tenants	Could gardens be brought up to an acceptable standard before a new tenant takes up occupation?	Martin Clewlow	01/06/07
15.	Provide Baby Belling Cookers to Tenants in WAAs	Survey to be undertaken and tenants given the choice of having a bench top cooker if preferred.	Pete Stephens/ Jean Denyer	01/09/07
16.	Call Centre	Need to improve knowledge of staff in call centre and get better/more accurate information from tenants to reduce need for pre work surveys. All information obtained by call centre staff must be passed on to operatives.	Ian Craig	01/10/07

17.	Emergency Out of Hours Service	Aim should be to complete all work during visit and not just make good.	Ian Craig	Consult by end Aug 07 Live by Oct 07
18.	Communal Areas	All tenants in a block of flats/ maisonettes should be advised when work is being undertaken in communal areas.	Ian Craig/ Pete Stephens	Programmed Work and Appointments 01/04/07