

Report

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Report to:	Housing and Technical Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	2 March 2011
Report by:	Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources)

Subject:	Housing Repairs Service – Severe Weather Contingency Arrangements
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ provide Committee with an update on the impact of the severe weather experienced over December 2010 and January 2011
- ◆ propose amendments to the Housing Repairs Policy during periods of severe weather

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendations:-

- (1) that the details of the response to the severe weather and the impact on the housing stock be noted
- (2) that, subject to consultation with the relevant Tenants' Groups, the proposed contingency arrangements and delegation of powers to the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) as noted in Section 5, be approved for implementation during future periods of prolonged severe weather.

3. Background

- 3.1. During the recent period of severe weather experienced from 4 December onwards, significantly higher demands than normal were placed on the Housing Repairs Service.
- 3.2. The severity of the weather and the different weather systems experienced have caused a range of problems for the Repairs Service which have varied from the inability to attend repairs due to the excessive snow in early December, the requirement to deal with frozen pipes and the severe cold in mid December and, finally, the need to deal with multiple bursts following the thaw at Christmas.
- 3.3. These service demands have required the Resource to re-prioritise the way it has dealt with repairs since the start of December.
- 3.4. The current policy does not allow for any situations where we can formally re-prioritise tenants' repair requests.

4. Main issues encountered since December and summary position on repairs reported

4.1. Since the start of the severe weather we have had to put in place a variety of contingency arrangements and these include:-

- ◆ prioritisation of “follow-on” works to make good damage to properties following emergency repairs through multiple water pipe bursts within properties
- ◆ the subsequent temporary suspension of routine repairs and repairs by appointment. Tenants reporting repairs falling into these categories were advised that they would be logged but not actioned at this time due to other service priorities
- ◆ suspension of inspections to allow Technical Officers to focus on emergency works and any other follow-up works needed to make good properties
- ◆ engagement of sub-contractors to assist in service delivery

4.2. Detailed below is a summary of the repairs reported and work outstanding.

	December 2010 - January 2011	Completed as at 11 February 2011	Numbers to be completed
Major repairs relating to Severe Weather	613	494	119
Households decanted	80	25	55
Repairs reported and issued	17499	14649	2850
Repairs reported but not issued	1700	0	1700

4.3. It is anticipated that there will be a significant number of repairs which will not be completed within the required timescale prior to the year end.

4.4. The impact of the outstanding jobs will be that it will be unlikely that the Resource will achieve its performance target for repairs complete within the timescale. This target is set at 97% and it is anticipated that we will achieve an overall performance of around 93% for the full year.

4.5. This will also mean that the anticipated spend for Housing Repairs of £26.9m will not be achieved with a shortfall of around £1.35m forecast. This shortfall in expenditure will, however, be required to fund the completion of the above outstanding jobs in the new financial year and will be added to the HRA surplus at the financial year end.

4.6. Housing and Technical Resources employees are currently working 7 days per week and also employing external contractors to ensure the level of work outstanding at the end of the year is minimised.

5. Proposal to amend the Repairs Policy during prolonged periods of adverse weather

- 5.1. Since the start of December, staff within the Repairs Service have been prioritising repairs on an informal case by case basis and, whilst they have been informing tenants of the situation, there is no scope within the current Repairs Policy to allow a decision to be taken to fully suspend non-emergency or non-urgent repairs during periods of severe weather.
- 5.2. It is, therefore, proposed that, in situations of prolonged severe adverse weather, powers be delegated to the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) to approve the suspension of the current Repairs Policy and to approve the implementation of emergency proposals to ensure all resources are focused towards the prioritised areas of work.
- 5.3. The suspension of the Policy will mean that any non-emergency repairs reported to the Resource during the period of suspension will not be recorded as part of the Resource's performance targets.
- 5.4. On taking the decision to suspend the current Policy, consideration will be given to a variety of factors including:-
 - ◆ current and forecasted weather conditions
 - ◆ other agency (police/travel advisers) information and advice
 - ◆ travel conditions
 - ◆ health and safety of operatives/officers
- 5.5. At the point the decision is made to implement the emergency policy the Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) will notify all Elected Members of the proposed decision and an estimate of the period of enforcement.
- 5.6. The Repairs Centre telephony system will be used to keep service users updated on changes to normal service delivery. Other communication channels, such as the Council's internet site and display screens in Q&As, will also be used to provide updates to service users on the current status with regards the delivery of the service.

6. Employee Implications

- 6.1. There are no employee implications.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. The financial impact of the severe weather encountered is as noted at paragraph 4.5 and is that the Housing Repairs budget will under spend by an estimated £1.35m resulting in the HRA surplus at the year end increasing by this amount.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1. The risks associated with the above proposals relate to the Resource's ability to achieve agreed service standards for housing repairs following the lifting of any suspension phase and the financial consequences of the increased routine repairs undertaken following the lifting of the suspension. Both factors have been added to the Resource Risk Register.

9. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 9.1. Subject to approval of the above proposals by Committee, an Impact Assessment will be undertaken.
- 9.2 Consultation in terms of the proposals contained within this report will be undertaken with representatives from the relevant Tenants' Groups.

Lindsay Freeland
Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources)

9 February 2011

Link(s) to Council Values/Improvement Themes/Objectives

- ◆ Improve the quality, access and availability of housing
- ◆ Accountable, effective and efficient

Previous References

- ◆ Housing and Technical Resources Committee, 30 June 2010

List of Background Papers

- ◆ None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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