
Meeting of the Executive Members for Housing and Adult Social Services and Advisory Panel

30th October 2006

Report of the Director of Housing and Adult Social Services
Report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services

Housing Repairs Partnership - Update

Summary

1. This report is an update on the progress of the Housing Repairs Partnership Agreement and seeks approval to deliver the council adaptations, on a 12 month pilot, through the Partnership.

Background

2. In September 2003 the Executive approved in principle, the procurement of housing repairs, from Commercial Services (Neighbourhood Services), and the implementation of a partnering agreement between Community Services (Housing and Adult Social Services) and Commercial Services (Neighbourhood Services).
3. The details of the Partnership were agreed in November 2004 and replaced the R10 contract, tendered under CCT in 1996, for the delivery of the repairs service to council homes in July 2005.
4. A Service Level Agreement was developed which outlined the basis of partnership working together in a culture of cooperation, openness and trust to deliver the best possible service to our customers. The principles of this agreement are:
 - Delivery of a high quality repairs and maintenance service;
 - Maintain customer satisfaction;
 - Continuous Improvement;
 - Joint control and responsibility for costs, and provide the service customers want within the agreed budget;
 - Work towards reducing the actual cost of delivering the service;
 - Eradicate duplication, bureaucracy and waste;

- Promote 'right first' time;
- Ensure value for money;
- Reduce disputes;
- Be motivated.

It is against these broad principles that the success of the Partnership should be judged.

5. The contract for the delivery of adaptations work to council homes for older and vulnerable tenants was won by Commercial Services (Neighbourhood Services) in 1998. This contract has now expired, although the current contractual arrangements have been extended and prices renegotiated to ensure continuity of service. However procurement options for the future now need to be agreed and considered in line with other arrangements in place for the delivery of work to council properties.

Consultation

6. The update on the partnership is for information only therefore there has been no specific consultation, however the Annual Housing Service Monitor, which is an annual survey of satisfaction of council tenants with the service they receive, reported in 2005 that seventy-seven per cent of respondents were satisfied with the way the Council deals with repairs. This is a reduction in satisfaction on the previous year but it should be highlighted that the survey was carried out only a few months after the partnership was established and therefore any improvements in satisfaction levels as a result of the change in working should be reflected in the 2006 AHSM. Recent customer satisfaction of P2 repairs (those which were un appointed and/or non urgent during July show an improved level of overall satisfaction across all areas of the service from initial reporting of a repair to quality of workmanship and completion.

Options

7. This report is an update on the progress of the Partnership, the specifics of which have already been agreed by Executive. The options for the council adaptations work will be dealt with later in this report

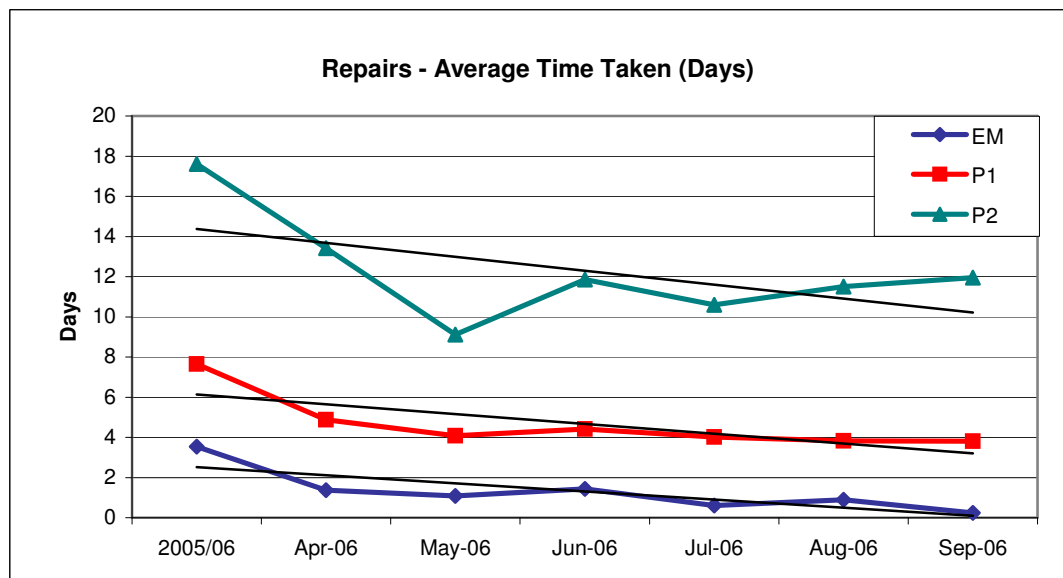
Analysis

8. Prior to the establishment of the Partnership the responsive repairs service to council homes was independently bench marked against comparator organisations. This bench marking exercise concluded that:
 - the costs of the service were competitive;
 - a higher than average number of repairs were carried out by appointment;
 - that there was a clear commitment to continuous improvement;

- there was a genuine desire by the management team to succeed;
 - there were high levels of customer satisfaction, but inconsistencies in performance particularly on satisfaction with repairs to new tenants, and the turn round of void properties.
9. The service has been delivered through the partnership agreement since July 2005 and although there is still considerable work for the Partnership Board and the management teams to do in changing the culture in which staff work there have been some notable achievements.

Achievements of the Housing Repairs Partnership since July 2005

- **Performance** is improving. The start of the partnership coincided with the introduction of a new IT system for the reporting of repairs and a move away from the traditional bonus system for trade operatives. Initially there were a small number of issues with data collection, interpretation, and IT problems which have been resolved. The performance information for the current financial year demonstrates the improvements in service delivery established through the partnership. For example the average time taken to complete an **emergency repair** is now only **0.98 days** against a 05/06 average of 3.53 days. **P1** performance has decreased from 7.65 days in 05/06 to **4.18 days** and similarly **P2** performance has decreased from 17.61 days to **11.43 days**. The time it takes to **let our homes** has also reduced from **32.27 days** to a current average of **25.24 days** at a time when the number of Scenario 3 properties which need major works is increasing.



- **Voids** process has been reviewed using a 'systems thinking' approach. This has been an end to end review of this part of the service i.e. from termination notice to new tenant in. Although this review involves more than just the repairs service it is a valid example of where a partnership

relationship can add value to process improvement when shared goals of reduced cost and improved output are a joint target.

- **Costs** of the repair service have started to reduce and much work is still being done to bring the service back within the approved budget.
 - **Improved working practise** has resulted in the ending of the operative bonus system for Neighbourhood Services staff and shifting the emphasis on whole departmental service delivery rather than individual operatives performance. This allows operatives to get the repairs completed 'right first time' without the complication of linking to individual earnings. There is also an increased flexibility for operatives to vary the original order to ensure the correct end product is delivered to the customer within a quality framework. All improvements are aimed at achieving a reduction in duplication and waste within the system of both partners
 - **Training and staff development** opportunities for staff have been created by the establishment of links with Leeds College of Building for training of local work force, this is allowing a number of apprenticeships to be placed within the department. Neighbourhood Services have also directly appointed 6 apprentices.
 - **Neighbourhood Services** are moving to a new location at Hazel Court before the end of the year. These facilities will further enhance NS ability to improve service delivery.
10. There is still much to do to improve the service that is delivered to customers, and ensure value for money for both tenants and the council. However there is commitment from the Partnership Board to build on the success of the past year and work will commence in autumn 2006 on comprehensive systems review of the day to day repairs service, assessing our service against the 'excellent standard' expected by the Audit Commission. This self assessment will identify any gaps in the service and areas for improvement. Some improvements have already been identified.

Areas for Improvement

- **Cultural change** in the way staff work from both directorates work and see their individual role with in the partnership contributing towards to overall success of the service. More work need to be done by senior manager in both directorates to emphasis the principles of the Repairs Partnership.
- **Review of operational procedures within Housing and Neighbourhood Services** is underway to enable a more customer focussed service to meet the actual goals, this is to be facilitated by restructuring the operational procedures around the outputs required.
- **Neighbourhood Services are working with the Office of Government Commerce to appoint a major supplier**, this service will allow for

dramatic efficiencies by controlling van stocks more effectively as well as reducing the time waiting for materials.

Council Adaptations

11. Adaptation work for older and disabled customers in council properties is currently delivered as a separate contract to the responsive repairs. This work was won by competitive tender by the then Commercial Services in 1998. Annual uplifts to reflect price increases have been negotiated since 2002 but this arrangement needs to be reconsidered as it was established in the climate of Compulsory Competitive Tendering of the 1990s before the focus on best value. The Adaptations work is being delivered within a similar contractual arrangement as the R10 repairs contract prior to July 2005, when council Executive agreed to delivery of the service within a partnership arrangement, between Housing and Neighbourhood Services, and the establishment of the Housing Repairs Partnership. The principles of the partnership have already been agreed and set out within the Service Level Agreement.
12. The total value of the Adaptations work is £200k although approximately £90k is for specialist equipment e.g. stair lifts, through floor lifts, and therefore it is estimated that the remaining £110k worth of work is delivered by Neighbourhood Services. This work falls broadly within 2 main categories.
 - Minor adaptations – adaptations up to the value of £1k that do not require construction or structural work other than simple fitting, such as bolting to a wall or floor. These are the majority of jobs including, grab rails, lever taps, simple electrical works such as raising a socket and temporary ramps.
 - Major adaptation – likely to cost in excess of £1k and require some construction or structural work, and the input of the Adaptations Surveyor. These work include external ramps and bathing adaptations.
13. The costs of providing the adaptations service have been benchmarked by Housing Quality Network (HQN), the same organisation that carried out the benchmarking exercise prior to entering the partnership. Neighbourhood Services costs are slightly higher than the market when compared on a like for like basis, however it is felt that the economies of scale that could be achieved as a result of integrating the adaptations work into the partnership, which has an annual value of approximately £3m, will result in reducing costs. Value for money will be closely monitored over the 12 month pilot period.
14. The Housing Standards and Adaptations team monitor satisfaction with the adaptations service and send out quarterly monitoring questionnaires. The average response rate for 2005/2006 was over 50% and of those that responded over 95% thought the service they received was good or excellent. Customer satisfaction over the 12 month pilot period will be closely monitored and analysed

15. It is proposed that the adaptations work is delivered within the already agreed principles of the repairs partnership and benefit from the advantages and improvements that partnership working has already delivered for the responsive repairs service, and that this arrangement is reviewed in 12 months time. The service will continue to be delivered by the teams in Housing and Neighbourhood Services however the same issues of efficiency and duplication will be reviewed as with the repairs service.
16. A number of Performance Indicators relating to this element of the service will be added to the Partnership relating to cost, speed of delivery and customer satisfaction these are detailed below. It is anticipated that due to the relatively small number of jobs within the adaptations work progress can be monitored on a monthly bases and as long as the jobs and codes are correctly set up on Servitor, each job can be monitored and analysed, commitment against actual cost. Detailed analysis of this discrete area of work may highlight some particular issues of best practise for the wider partnership .

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	CPA	Statutory	Local	Operational
Percentage change in actual cost of repairs and adaptations			✓	
Average cost of a basket of 20 most common adaptations				✓
Percentage of jobs (repairs and adaptations) completed on first visit			✓	
% of minor adaptations delivered from the date of assessment to works completed within 20 working days		✓		
% of major adaptations delivered from date of assessment to works completed within 60 working days		✓		
% of minor adaptations completed within 15 days of works being ordered		✓		
% of major adaptations completed within 40 working days		✓		
Satisfaction with adaptation service			✓	
Percentage of customer feedback cards and adaptation satisfaction survey forms received to jobs raised				✓
Percentage upheld fault finding resulting from post inspections of completed work of adaptations				✓

17. It is anticipated that capability measures could be piloted using the adaptations work. This is an end to end measure of all activities from the Occupational Therapist assessment date to ordering of works through to works complete on site. Development of these measures will help in managing variation in the works. It is acknowledged that there are some activities outside this scope but this measurement has been agreed as retrospective data can be provided to calculate the baseline. Over the next 12 months the time taken for all jobs can be measured and closely monitored.

Corporate Priorities

18. Specific links can be made to the following:

“Outward facing”

- Improve the actual and perceived condition and appearance of city’s streets, housing estates and publicly accessible spaces
- Improve the quality and availability of decent affordable homes in the city
- Improve the health and lifestyles of people who live in York, among the groups whose levels of health are the poorest

“Improving our organisational effectiveness”

- Improve our focus on the needs of customers and residents in designing and providing services
- Improve the way the Council and its partners work together to deliver better services for the people who live in York
- Improve efficiency and reduce waste to free up resources

Implications

19. **Financial** – The adaptations will still be carried out within the existing budget of £110k. Although initially costs are likely to increase, there are other benefits of including this work in the existing repairs partnership as outlined in paragraphs 16 and 17.
20. **Human Resources (HR)** – There are HR / TUPE implications of Neighbourhood Service not delivering the adaptations work. Currently 2.5 posts in Neighbourhood Services would be at risk if an external contractor won any competitive tender.
21. **Equalities** – the adaptations work delivers an essential service to some of our most elderly and vulnerable tenants allowing them to remain living

independently, and allowing them to return home from hospital in the case of illness.

22. **Legal** – the partnering arrangement have already been established and agreed, therefore there are no further legal implication of including the adaptations work to existing arrangements. If the adaptations work is competitively tendered then the process and selection of a contractor will comply with the council procurement arrangements.
23. **Crime and Disorder** - none
24. **Information Technology (IT)** – None
25. **Property** - none
26. **Other** - none

Risk Management

27. The most significant risks that the partnership have to manage are:
 - Increase in costs and inability to deliver the service within the existing budget;
 - Decrease in customer satisfaction;
 - Decline in overall performance;
 - Service to elderly and vulnerable customers is not maintained at the current high standard;

Risk Mitigation

28. Monthly operational meetings are held where Housing and Neighbourhood Services review the financial projections and the performance of the partnership. In addition to this, there is a monthly partnership board meeting where key strategic issues relating to the partnership are discussed and decisions taken.

Recommendations

28. The Executive Member is asked to
 - Note the progress and achievement of the Housing Repairs Partnership
 - Agree the recommendation that the Adaptations work to the Councils HRA housing stock is delivered within the already agreed principles of the Housing Repairs Partnership, on a 12 month pilot with the out come reported back to Members.

Reason : to inform the Executive Member of progress and achievements of the Repairs Partnership and to seek approval for inclusion of the adaptations work within the Partnership.

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Report Approved **Date** 4th Oct 06

Specialist Implications Officer(s)

Housing and Adult Social Services, and Neighbourhood, Finance Managers

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Housing Repairs Partnership Executive Report November 2004
Service Level Agreement in support of a Partnership Agreement between
Community Services and Commercial Services (agreed November 2004)

Annexes

None