Reducing the Responsive Repairs Backlog

Scrutiny Commission – 09 May 2023

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North Northamptonshire Council

Introduction

- Each month, the Council completes over 1,300 non emergency responsive repair requests.

- The nature of these responsive repairs requests are varied from dripping taps, to damaged doors, leaking roofs and therefore the time and materials required to rectify them differ greatly by job.

- During the Covid-19 national lockdowns/tier 4 restrictions in 2020 and 2021, the legacy Councils in Corby and Kettering were limited to emergency repairs and external work only, causing a backlog of outstanding repairs.

- Since April 2021, NNC have been working hard to resolve the backlog of repairs, alongside of the new repair requests received, with the same resource levels as pre Covid-19.

- The allocation of an additional £900,000 from HRA reserves will be used to increase resources in 2023/24 to reduce the number of outstanding repairs.

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Stock Profile

- The two property services teams are responsible for the Council's 8,084 homes (4,572 within the former Corby area and 3,512 within the former Kettering area)
- There are some major differences between the stock of the two former Councils (note the figures below are based on 2021 data), as shown below:

Corby

Property Type	No of beds	Total
Bedsit	0	124
Bungalow	1	309
	2	179
	3	42
Flat	1	654
	2	478
	3	43
	4	10
House	1	1
	2	672
	3	1682
	4	210
	5	37
Maisonette		183
	Total	4624

Year	Total
Pre 1945	516
1945-1964	1983
1965-1974	1130
Post 1974	995
Total	4624

Kettering

Property Type	No of beds	Total
Bedsit	0	40
Bungalow	1	197
	2	276
	3	3
Flat	1	930
	2	586
	3	4
House	1	28
	2	502
	3	1040
	4	39
	5	1
Maisonette		10
	Total	3656

Year	Total
Pre 1945	973
1945-1964	1368
1965-1974	494
Post 1974	815
Unknown	6
Total	3656

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Issues we often see in particular property build periods or types

Pre 1945
- Solid walls – more costly to insulate
- Dated layouts – don't meet modern ways of living with small kitchens etc.
- Previous modernisations require further upgrades – rear addition bathrooms

1945 – 1964
- Mixture of cavity wall and rendered solid walls – difficulties with damp and mould
- Split WCs and bathrooms – need to modernise

1965 – 1974
- Non-standard construction methods – harder to source materials
- Non-standard property designs – harder to resolve repairs

Post 1974
- Properties constructed by developers – different standards of construction adopted
- Property dimensions significantly reduced

The Responsive Repairs Backlog

Job Priority	Number of jobs awaiting completion 01/03/23	Of which, number outside of target timescale 01/03/23
Corby	3369	2887
Kettering	2619	2426
Total	5988	5313

- The figures shown indicate the number of Responsive Repairs jobs outstanding as of 1st March 2023 in both of the HRA Neighbourhood Areas and of these, how many are out of target timescale.
- The 1st of March 2023 has been chosen as the date by which any repairs outstanding before this date will be categorised as part of the backlog project.
- This means that the repairs received after this date will be handled by the regular team.
- This approach is designed to give us an opportunity to break the responsive repairs backlog cycle that we have been in since Covid 19.
- It is not possible to provide figures for the number of outstanding jobs on vesting day due to the IT systems not being able to provide retrospective data.
- In addition, by having a clear list of jobs covered by the backlog project we will be able to clearly monitor progress over the next year.

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Our approach to reducing the backlog

- A project group has been established with Transformation team support, reporting into the Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing Transformation Board and the Member Transformation Board.

- Outstanding repairs from before the 1st March 2023 have been exported from the two IT systems used in the HRA Neighbourhood Areas and merged into a single document with analysis undertaken to group the repairs by property, area and type.

- Four multi-skilled operatives, a surveyor and an administrator have been recruited to undertake the repairs and the administration work of booking appointments.

- An estate-based approach to the order in which repairs will be completed is being taken to ensure the most efficient use of resources, with all outstanding repairs in that property completed at the same time, where possible.

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Our approach to reducing the backlog

- Tenants with outstanding repairs will be contacted by letter to inform them that Operatives will be working in their area over a defined period.
- Repair appointments will be made with tenants via telephone calls, which will also be used as an opportunity to confirm that the repairs we have outstanding are still required.
- If an appointment is missed by a tenant then a yellow card will be left asking them to rebook. If a second appointment is missed a red card will be left and the job closed on the backlog spreadsheet.
- Tenants will need to contact NNC and raise a new repair if they miss two backlog appointments.
- If a new repair is raised by a tenant, we will check if there is an outstanding repair within the backlog project before accepting it.
- Contractors will be used to support the team of four operatives with specialist work, such as fencing.

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Progress monitoring

- The Assistant Director is part of the Responsive Repairs Backlog Project group which meets weekly.
- This will enable swift action to be taken to resolve any issues that are encountered.
- Progress will be reported into the Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing Transformation Board, Tenant Advisory Panel and the Member Transformation Board.
- Two new cost centres have been created, one in each of the HRA neighbourhood accounts, to monitor the spend.
- The commencement of this project coincides with the opening of the Corby stores, meaning we do not foresee any issues with obtaining stock affecting progress.
- We aim to clear the backlog over the next year. However, we will need to establish if this aim is achievable as we progress with the project. The information we have on outstanding jobs and estimated costs will be tracked to establish if we have sufficient budget to clear all outstanding jobs.

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Thank you.

Any questions?