

Report of Head of Head of Voids, CPM, Disrepair and Responsive Repairs

Report to Director of Resource and Housing

Date: May 2019

Subject: Request to increase capacity in the responsive repairs team to improve the quality of service offer to tenants across the city.

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

1 Summary of main issues

- 1.1 The Director of Resources and Housing is requested to approve the recommendation to increase capacity in the responsive repairs team in order to improve the quality of service offer to tenants across the city.
- 1.2 At the March 2019 Leeds Building Services (LBS) Improvement Board a number of priority areas were highlighted that needed addressing to improve the overall Responsive Repairs service offer and more specifically productivity within LBS. Addressing these key areas will contribute to improving LBS productivity through better order raising and quality assurance, this will also lead to improved customer experience with the repairs service. This will also reduce the high levels of disrepair claims particularly in the east area of the city. The key benefits of implementing this proposal is that it will contribute to improving tenant satisfaction with the repairs service through achieving the following outcomes:
- Improved efficiency in the order raising process
 - Improved productivity of the repairs service
 - Improved productivity and growth in LBS
 - Reduction in the number of disrepair claims
- 1.3 This report seeks to increase the structure by 5 FTE's, 4 Technical Officers (TO's) and one Senior TO. A copy of the structure outlining the proposed structure is attached as Appendix A (Appendix B details the existing structure).

1.4 A review is currently underway to look at the order raising process, this is linked also to improvement initiatives to increase the performance of the Council's Contact Centre. The impact of both these changes will increase the workflow into frontline technical repairs diagnostics and this proposal will avoid a bottle neck being created in the overall process.

2.0 Recommendations:

2.1 The Director of Resources and Housing is requested to approve the recommendation to increase capacity to the surveying resource by four (SO2 FTE's) and one senior officer (PO2) in the responsive repairs team to improve the quality of service offer to tenants across the city.

3.0 Purpose of this report

3.1 To seek approval to increase capacity to the surveying resource by a total of 5 FTE's in the responsive repairs team to improve the quality of service offer to tenants across the city.

4.0 Background information

4.1 Current resource levels within the Responsive Repairs team are restricting the delivery of a high quality and efficient responsive repairs service. The recommendations in this report seek primarily to increase key frontline resources within the responsive repairs team. Analysis of the recent STAR (tenant feedback) survey results evidences that citywide satisfaction of the repairs service is currently in the lowest quartile when compared with peer landlords.

4.2 The repairs service changed its longstanding approach to complaints handling in 2018 with the intention to improve efficiency, develop a more robust approach to monitoring and tracking outcomes and capturing lessons learned so that better outcomes can be delivered for tenants. The focus has shifted from a reaction to complaints to proactive service improvement, it has resulted in a significant increase in work load through an increase in the volume of formal complaints (as anticipated) by c50% over the last 12 months. It is proposed that resources are increased in order to improve the quality of the service through the addition of a PO2 Senior Technical Officer. The proposal supports the Housing Ombudsman's recommended best practice approach to complaint handling and the drive to improve tenant satisfaction with the repairs service.

4.3 Prior to the formation of the ALMO's, there were 76 Technical Officers based within the then 38 local housing management office and a centralised 'Standards Team' of 6 surveyors responsible for citywide quality assurance through post inspections, a total of 82 TO's. Numbers have steadily reducing since then. At present there are currently 25 Technical Officers on the structure delivering both the responsive and void service functions (17 responsive repairs and 8 voids). This position represents an overall reduction of 57 Technical Officers across the services. Notwithstanding the reduction in staffing resources the expectations of the service remain high with a high level of ward member involvement. Appendix B details the current Responsive Repairs team structure. At present the 17 TO's designated to the responsive repairs service cover the 3 wedges of the city as follows:

- LBS east repairs – 4 FTE's
- Mears south repairs – 4 FTE's
- Mears west repairs – 6FTE's

5 Main issues

5.1 The frontline TO role is essential to the effective delivery of a quality repairs service. At present the level of technical resource is insufficient and thereby compromising the quality of service offered to our tenants and wider stakeholders. To illustrate this point:

Waiting times for pre-inspections (predominantly damp and complex repairs) are consistently higher than Leeds 10 working day published service standard, these currently range between 12.20 – 20.75 working days, reducing the council's ability to successfully defend disrepair claims and meet stakeholder expectations.

Post inspections levels are considerably lower than industry standard target levels of 10%. Current levels are at circa 3%-4%, dependant on geographical area with the numbers of LBS post inspections lowest of all areas. This severely limits the quality assurance function including the ability to identify trends and areas of poor performance.

Pro-active joint working is minimal for example locality working/estate walkabouts with housing management and elected members is limited. There service is increasingly reactive and with little time for building confidence through quality assurance.

It is accepted the repairs service is an area of high volume, high pressure and high expectation. Existing team resources have been stretched as far as possible, anything further will adversely impact on staff health, wellbeing and job satisfaction.

5.2 Table A Repairs Activity Overview

	East	South	West
Stock Numbers	16,831	15,912	20,349
Numbers of Repairs per Year*	85,847	41,650	63,706
Satisfaction With Repairs & Maintenance**	67%	73%	68%
% of Citywide Disrepair Claims***	54%	26%	20%
Current no. of TO's	4	4	6

*2017/18, **STAR 2018/19, ***2017-19 YTD

5.3 The service has lost some of key benefits that come with increased local presence such as better joint working with housing management and proactive work with elected members. The assumption that responsive repair volumes would reduce significantly post the delivery of Decent Homes did not materialise instead of which responsive repair levels has steadily increased. There are currently 190,000 responsive repairs being raised and actioned annually. The historical lack of investment tackling fundamental issues such as installing damp proof courses and re-pointing external walls has also placed additional pressure on the repairs service and budget. Moving forward the investment strategy will be much better aligned to mitigate disrepair and repairs liability.

5.4 Key measures of success will included the following:

- A positive trend of improved operative productivity in the east area
- A reduction in disrepair claims
- Reduced waiting times for pre-inspections and increased levels of post inspections

- Increased tenants satisfaction with the repairs service

5.16 The proposed increase to the structure results in growth through the creation of 5 permanent FTEs, 4 TO's (SO2) and 1 Senior TO (PO2) which will support improvements to the quality of the repairs service and the increased delivery of disrepair prevention activity. This is an increased cost of £190,111 per annum (as compared to the existing arrangements) as a reoccurring cost (including on-costs). The enhanced structure is based on a 'spend to save' rationale as it will deliver improved productivity and a reduction in costs associated to disrepair claims through enhanced on-site quality assurance process. This will also support improved locality presence and joint working with housing management colleagues alongside improved elected member confidence in the service offer.

6.0 Corporate Considerations

6.1 Consultation and Engagement

6.1.1 The proposals set out in this report are for growth to the current established structure thereby alleviating the pressure on the existing staff team and bringing in additional resource to support the enhanced functions.

6.1.2 The proposal are in line with the councils employment policies and all new appointments would be in line with the Recruitment and Selection polices.

6.1.3 The Trade unions have been consulted on the recommendations set out in this report. As a result of this consultation, clarification has been provided in relation to the following:

6.1.3.1 The new posts will go through the fair recruitment and selection process including talent pool and opportunity for internal staff to apply

6.1.3.2 The new posts will be HRA funded

6.1.3.3 The new posts will support the Responsive Repairs process

6.1.3.4 The new posts will be permanent and therefore the posts will be treat the same as other permanent posts on the structure in the event of any future reduction in HRA

6.1.3.5 Stock numbers alone are not the only factor in determining how technical resources are allocated. The new posts will support citywide improvement to the Responsive Repairs however as the east area is the current highest priority, the allocation of these new posts will be weighted towards the east area.

6.1 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

6.1.1 An Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration screening of the recommendation has been carried out (Appendix c to this report), this concludes that an impact assessment is not required.

6.2 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

6.2.1 The proposals within this report support wider aspirations for Leeds set out in the new Leeds Vision, City Priority Plans, Directorate Priorities and Cross Council Priorities.

7 Resources and value for money

7.1 The proposed changes to the Responsive Repairs team established structure are set out in Appendix A to this report.

7.2 The proposed structure results in an increased cost for the 4 TO's is £149,600 to the existing structure and one PO2 £40,511 to move the council closer to delivering its aspiration to deliver high quality services. The total of this additional resource is £190,111 (including on-costs). The budget currently allocated for the financial year 2019/20 is £1,282,398. The funding for the additional posts will be through the HRA and are a 'spend to save' initiative based on savings on disrepair costs that will be achieved through the increased delivery of disrepair prevention activity/improved quality of service.

8 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

8.1 This decision is a Significant Operational Decision and therefore is not subject to call in.

9 Risk Management

9.1 Failure to adequately resource the Responsive Repairs team will mean that the Repairs service will be unable to achieve its key objectives to improve customer satisfaction across the city and specifically to improve productivity and reduce disrepair claims in the East area of the city. These financial and reputational risks impact on the perception and confidence in the Council.

10 Recommendations

10.1 The Director of Resources and Housing is requested to approve the recommendation to increase capacity to the surveying resource by 5 FTE's in the responsive repairs team to improve the quality of service offer to tenants across the city.