



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday, 20 September 2017

Time: 6.00 pm,

Location: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Contact: Lisa Jerome

Members: Councillors: L Martin-Haugh (Chair), P Bibby CC (Vice-Chair), J Brown, H Burrell, M Downing, A Farquharson, M Gardner, L Harrington, C Latif, J Lloyd, S Mead, A Mitchell CC, R Parker CC and C Saunders

AGENDA

PART 1

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS & FEEDBACK HANDLING

The Committee will interview witnesses for the review into Complaints & Feedback Handling including officers from Housing Repairs, Housing Investment and Refuse and Recycling.

Pages 3 – 12

3. REVISED SCOPING DOCUMENT

To note the revised scoping document following Members comments from the meeting held on 28 June 2017.

Pages 13 – 18

4. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

To consider any Part 1 business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

5. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To consider the following motions –

1. That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

2. That Members consider the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and

determine whether or not maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

6. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

To consider any Part II business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

Learning from Aids & Adaptations and Damp & Condensation Cases

Difficulties Experienced

The former BMO review was undertaken because the service was not effectively delivering the Aids & Adaptation or Damp & Condensation services.

The most substantial impact to the Investment function was the transferring of new services listed below as recommended when the former BMO was rebranded as the Repairs & Voids service:

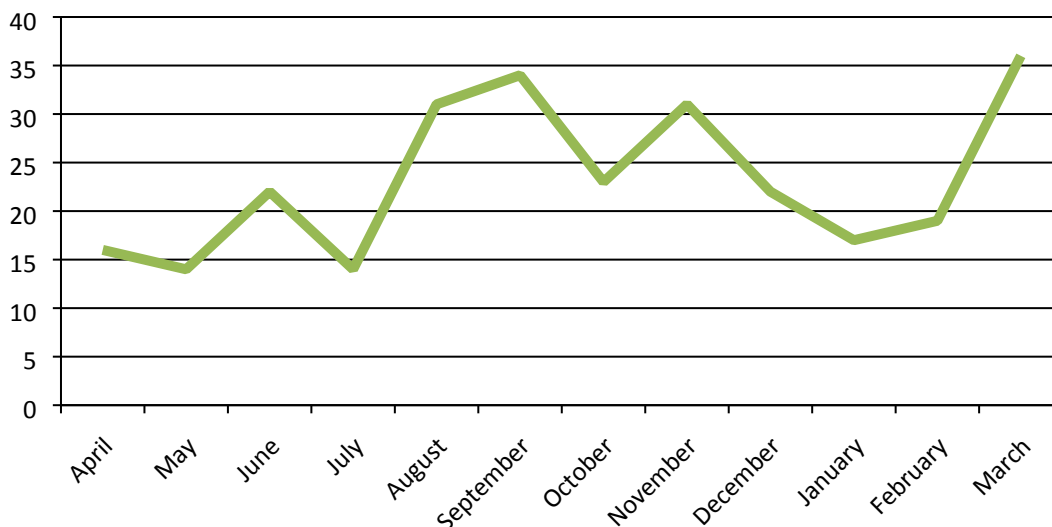
- **Damp and Condensation**
- Gas Servicing
- M&E Compliance
- **Aids and Adaptations**

The need for a specialised and specific team was identified and the Specialist Works Team was created.

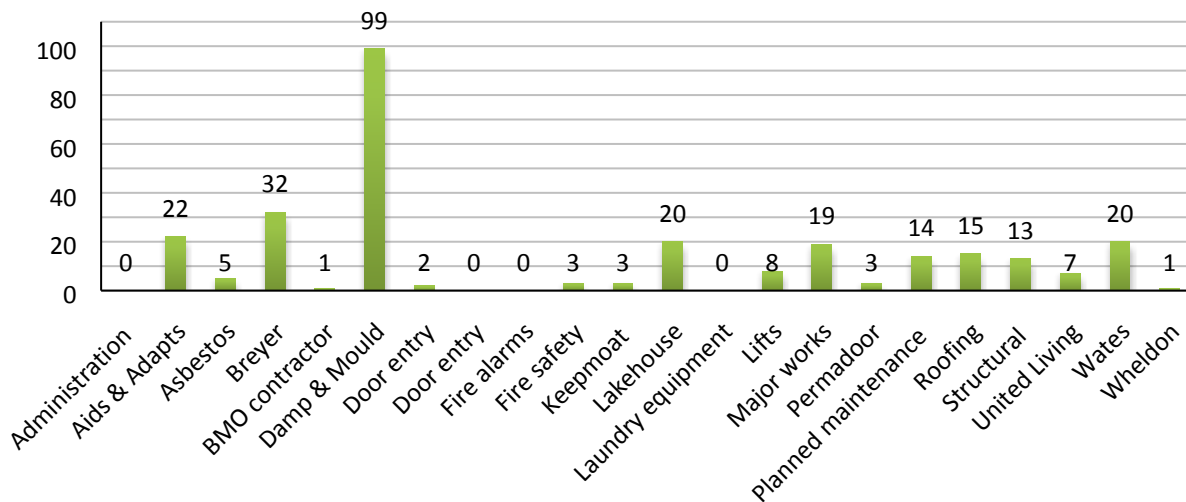
The Specialist Works Team (SWT) have been performing under very challenging circumstances attempting to establish business processes and at the same time managing a substantial backlog of works that was transferred from the BMO without considering additional resources.

The graphs below detail A. the spike in number of complaints received monthly following the transfer of works in July 2016 and B, the impact of Damp and Mould and Aids & Adaptations on the total number of cases.

A. Total Complaints & Enquiries Investment 2016/17



B. Total Case Types Investment 2016/17



Learning from Complaints

There is no denying that learning from complaints is important to track trends and to use this key information to inform improvements and drive the business forward. Along with the new services adopted from the former BMO, the Investment team have been managing the largest level of complaints they have ever received.

In the process of responding to and closing complaints, the admin team rely heavily on the project officers/surveyors to provide learning. This learning had not been prioritised by the previous line manager and therefore many cases have been closed with minimal or no learning information.

Nevertheless, we are aware of the specific issues with the service. The repetition of the same learning on the complaints would not be a practical and not add any value.

Since the transfer of the new services into Investment, there have been common themes in the complaints received as the graph below shows:

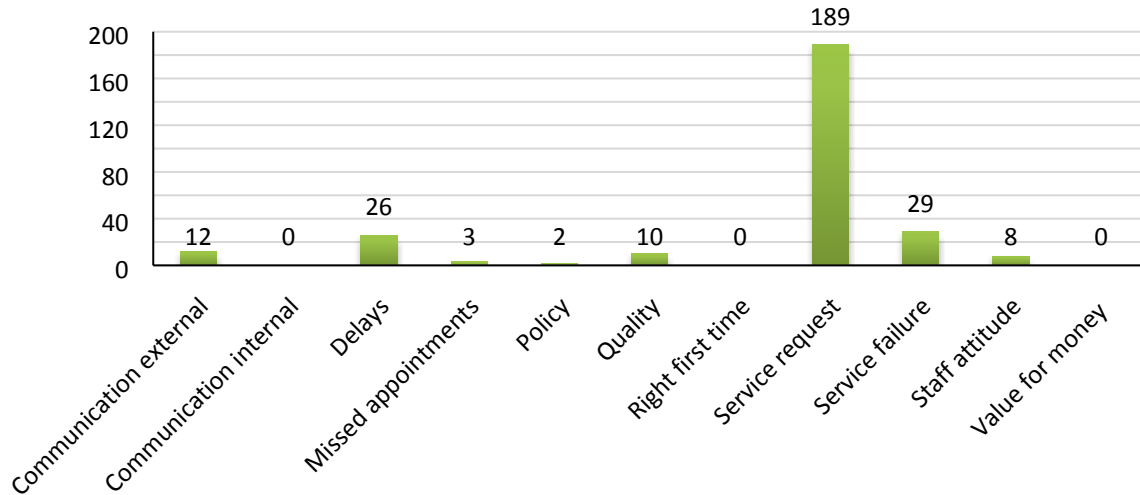
A&A

- Delays in having the work completed following inspection/recommendation
- Lack of communication from SBC following inspection/recommendation
- No call backs following numerous calls from customer

D&C

- Delays in having the work completed following inspection
- Poor communication with the tenant following inspection
- No call backs following numerous calls from customer

Total Complaints & Enquiries Investment 2016/17



What has been done?

Aids & Adaptations

The service has undergone a comprehensive review of the Aids & Adaptations service by an external consultancy. The review has highlighted 6 key areas to improve:

- 1 Implement a comprehensive management system
- 2 Improve communication process with customers
- 3 Improve communication processes between Stevenage Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)
- 4 Improve communication processes between departments within Stevenage Borough Council
- 5 Develop use of external contractors
- 6 Revise A&A policy and review and revise procedure

We have reviewed all of the electronic information stored on the shared systems and archived any historical information. We have implemented a new property file library to collate all future electronic documentation. We have revised the interim tracker spreadsheet to only include the current case load.

We have commenced the internal process review and held a workshop with colleagues in August. The redesign of Northgate will commence 5&6 September with a fit for purpose process planned to be available late September.

Damp & Condensation

The Community Select Committee has overseen the production of a new “Damp and Condensation Strategy”. The strategy was informed by witness testimony, officer experience and the experience of elected committee members. The scrutiny was thorough and led to a

frank exchange of ideas. Officers worked with the committee to draw up a new process to deal with issues relating to damp and condensation. The strategy is now being enacted and includes:

- Recommendations on resources
 - Established structure of the Specialist Works Team
 - Recruitment of a full time Technical Support Officer - Joined the team August 2017
- Improved customer communications
 - Worked with Repairs & Voids to put relevant D&C information in the Repairs Handbook, which has been sent to all 8200 tenants.
 - Emphasise to Specialist Works Team the service agreement of returning customer calls within 48hrs.
- Better diagnosis when a resident reports a problem
 - Clearer script for CSC to follow and triage routes
 - Eform on Website due to be released which allows tenants to specify location and concern in the home and to attach photographs.
- Improving the quality of technical apparatus and technical skills
 - Increased use of data loggers and protimeters (Damp Meters) to provide scientific evidence of conditions inside the property over a period of time.
 - Purchase of thermal imaging cameras
- Resolving defects or installing new equipment to help tenants manage condensation problems
 - Taking a holistic approach when surveying properties.
 - Installing extractors and resolving building defects that are identified as the source of water penetration.
- Strictly not citing “lifestyle” as a factor until we fully understand the cause of a problem
 - We know that in many cases, condensation is one of the main causes for the mouldy conditions. The use of the data loggers will provide scientific evidence of the conditions in the property to minimise surveyors ‘estimations’ of tenant’s lifestyle.
 - We know there is a borough wide problem within flat blocks with damp and condensation. Many of these issues will be addressed with the works planned in the Major Refurbishment Contract to upgrade the flat blocks.

What is left to do?

Short Term

Aids & Adaptations

- A&A policy being reviewed and updated

- Business process being renewed, where the use of Northgate is fundamental
- Building relationships with HCC Occupational Therapists and key teams in the council i.e. Lettings, Environmental Health, Repairs & Voids.

Damp & Condensation

- New D&C policy being developed
- Improve information on SBC website
- Improve 'How to manage condensation in your home' leaflet to be given out during all visits
- Training for the wider team, including Members, Housing staff, CSC staff and Repairs staff
- Provision of accredited, advanced training courses for the Specialist Works Team surveyors
- Closer working with the manufacturers of mould treatment materials and Repairs & Voids Team
- Create 'how to' videos and upload to website/You Tube
- Develop annual Open Day to promote damp and condensation service and prevention

Long Term

- Monitor the effectiveness of the new procedures and information
- Record learning outcomes routinely and use these to drive service improvements
- The MRC (Major Refurbishment Contract) will reduce many of the issues in the ground floor of low rise flat blocks

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Overview

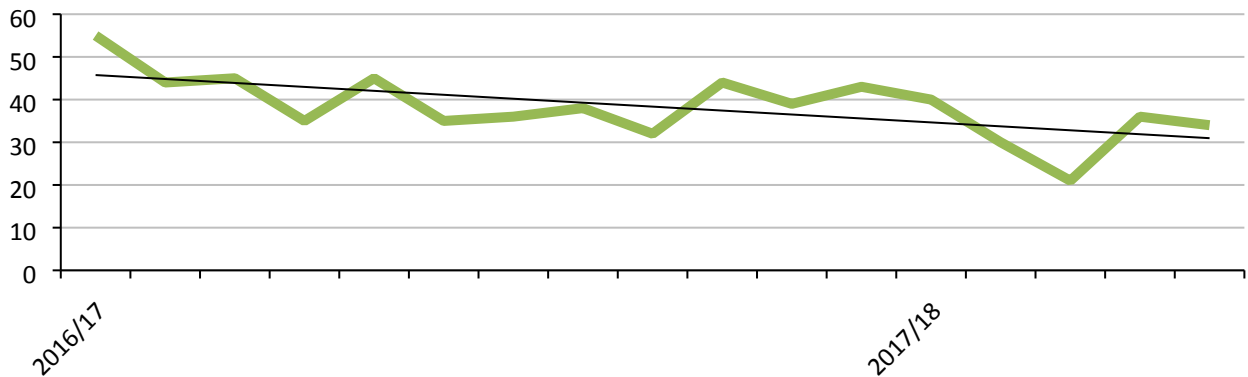
Members will recall the issues that required officers to make changes to the way the BMO (now Repairs and Voids) were providing services to its customers. During the last year many changes and improvements have been made through the Enhancing our Repairs Programme.

During 2016-17 Repairs & Voids received a total of **423** Complaints & Enquiries. This represented a reduction of **59** from 2015-16 which is encouraging given the changes the service was going through.

Current projections indicate that a further reduction in complaints will be recorded for 2017-18.

The graph below shows the total number of complaints and enquiries R&V have received from 2016/17 to date.

Total Complaints Trend 2016/17 - 2017/18



Complaints & Enquiries Types

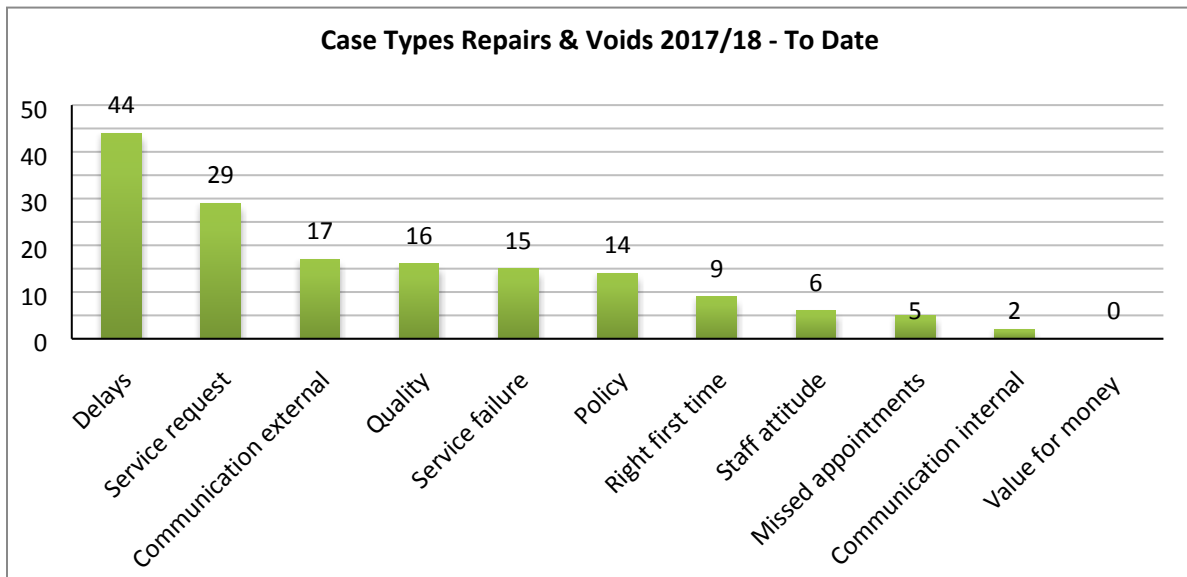
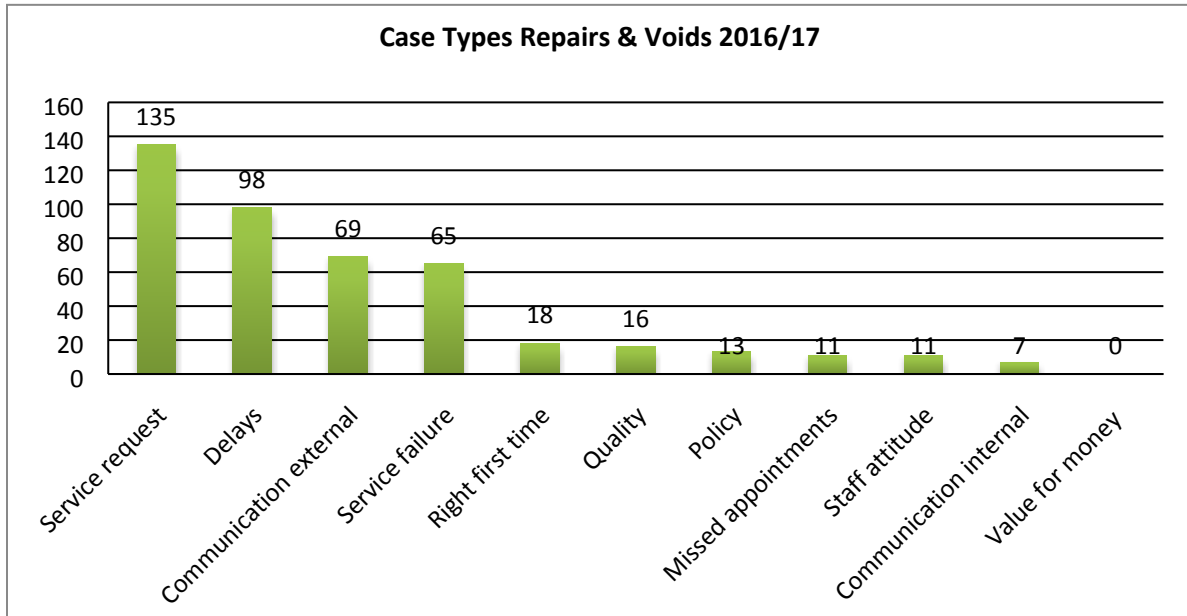
Looking at the report ([Appendix A](#)) that the Customer Focus team have provided 21 cases have been escalated to stage 3 which equates to approximately 5% of the R&V total complaints and enquiries.

Notwithstanding Service Request line, **Delays** is the no.1 complaints category for the second year in a row attributing to 24% or 1/4 of all complaints and enquiries between 2015 and 2017.

98 **Delay** cases were recorded during 2016/17.

In February 2017 delay cases peaked at 15. Most of these delay cases relate to issues such as the completion of electrical works and inspections including those that affected the letting of void properties. This issue was resolved with the procurement of an additional electrician.

External communication is also a concern for the service. This essentially means that, as a service, Repairs & Voids must improve its performance with regards to returning telephone calls within 2 working days and keeping our customers informed.



Learning Points

Key learning points and service improvements identified throughout the year include:

- Evidenced Reduction of repeated visits and increase of first time fixes
- More accurate information being provided to answer the complaint at the first stage
- Charge hands to ensure appointments with customers are kept, particularly in relation to complaints
- R&V team need to adhere to 2 day call back SLA for customers
- Follow-on jobs must be reported and raised without the need for customers to call, chase and /or complain
- Better quality control of operatives work is taking place with more accurate reporting via mobile technology
- Communication between SBC and contractors has improved through holding regular supplier meetings

What has been done?

- Investigating the monthly calls Repairs & Voids received:
 - The number of calls that come in per tenant
 - Type of calls to see, and
 - Why tenants are having to chase their repairs and ultimately complain
- Repairs & Voids team training matrix underway to ensure that staff have up to date knowledge
- Customer Assurance Officer investigating and reporting on how CSC they are logging repairs complaints and escalations. Monthly meeting between CSC and Repairs & Voids scheduled to feedback learning and improve internal communication between the services.
- Monthly meetings held between SBC's Investment and Repairs & Voids teams with a view to improving internal communication between the services
- Chargehands are increasing post inspections to:
 - Measure and drive improvements of the customer experience
 - Monitor the costs and quantity of works
 - Monitor the quality of the works completed
- Customer Assurance Officer investigating the monthly complaints and is reporting the learning via a monthly team briefing
- Engagement of the Resident Inspectors team to increase number of returns by making outgoing customer satisfaction surveys calls.

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Template Scoping Document – amended following Members comments 28 06 17

Overview & Scrutiny Committee	
Scrutiny Review Title:	Complaints & Feedback Handling
Background issues to review – rationale for scrutinising this issue:	Members raised the issue of Complaints & Feedback Handling when it agreed items for the work programme in March 2017, this was following the Corporate Performance reporting for quarter three 2016/17 linked to the ‘Your Say’ percentage of complaints progressing from stage 2 to stage 3. The Executive and Scrutiny agreed that they would be looking for what the incoming Assistant Director’s (Corporate Projects, Customer Services & Technology) plan would be to resolve the management of complaints?
Is the issue highlighted as one of the Council’s corporate aims and objectives of the Council’s Corporate Strategy , – ‘Sharing the Dividends’? If so which one:	There are no formal commitments in the 2013-18 Corporate Strategy, ‘Sharing the Dividends’, with regard to the handling of complaints and feedback handling.
Is this issue covered by the Future Town Future Council Programme?	Under the Future Town Future Council co-operative approach ambition of being “connected to our customers” there is a broad commitment to “Improve the accessibility of our services and the customer experience”. It could be maintained that how the Council responds to feedback and complaints is very much linked to delivering this ambition.
Is this issue one that raises interest with the public via complaints or Members’ surgeries or with Officers?:	This issue is directly linked to the way the Council handles feedback and more specifically complaints, therefore it is of specific interest to Members and our customers who raise complaints against the Council. Members initially were most interested in the number and detail of Complaints that progress from a Stage 2 Complaint to a Stage 3 Complaint. <u>However, in considering the data when drawing together the scoping document the Chair & Vice-Chair agreed that what is of more interest is how Level 1 complaints are handled by the ‘back office’ service delivery units.</u>

Focus of the review: (State what the review focus will be)

*To be identified by the Committee at the scoping meeting. Officers have suggested the following possible Options:
Suggested areas to cover:*

- *Provide an Overview to Members of the way Feedback and Complaints are logged via Have Your Say via a presentation of a sample of the available data*
- *Establish the number of Stage 2 Complaints that move to Stage 3 Complaints and provide some context*
- *Invite the new Assistant Director, Corporate Projects, Customer Services & Technology to outline her plan to addressing the management of feedback and complaints?*
- *Focus on the service area that generates the largest volume of complaints (in 2016/17 1098 Stage 1 Complaints were received, of those 201 were Housing Asset Management Improvements, 310 were Housing Repairs (for context 166 were received for Refuse & Recycling).*
- *Of the 1098 Stage 1 Complaints 10% reach Stage 2 of those 5% reach Stage 3, of those 0.5% reach the Ombudsman (10 cases) and of that 9 are found in favour of the Council (1 still outstanding), the review wishes to focus on the Stage 1 process and find out what the initial response from the service areas are to the original complaint.*
- *The hope is that whatever learning can be gleaned from the way the service departments in Housing responds to the initial complaint then improvements can be extended to other areas to generate a “right first time” response to customer interactions and improved back office training.*

Some questions that Members may wish to ask:

What is the response in Housing Asset Management to the 201 cases? (i.e. letter, phone call, email, face to face contact?)

What is the response in Housing Repairs to the 310 cases? (i.e. letter, phone call, email, face to

	<p>face contact?)</p> <p>Does the logging of Member interventions via 'Have Your Say' skew the number of complaints Level 1 cases?</p> <p>What training is instigated corporately when the initial response to complaints is considered insufficient?</p> <p>(Members will no doubt identify some further questions)</p>
<p>Timing issues: Are there any timing constraints to when the review can be carried out?</p>	<p>Officers will advise at the meeting if there are any timing issues to consider. The review will have to fit in with the timing of the other Select Committee review work programme items.</p>
<p>The Committee will meet on (provide dates if known):</p>	<p>Dates: Day/Month/Time/Venue From Wed 10 May 2017 – Discuss scoping with Assistant Director, Clare Watson and the Chair of O&S Committee 28 June 2017 – agree draft scope at & receive presentation from officers at a standalone Select Committee meeting (not usual O&S Meeting). Interview witnesses - possible date Monday 20 September</p> <p>Date to be agreed – agree recommendations & final report – target at a future normal O&S Committee meeting possibly Sep/Oct 2017.</p>
<p>SBC Leads (list the Executive Portfolio Holders and SD's Heads of Service who should appear as witnesses):</p>	<p><i>Officers have suggested the following people:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Executive Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods & Co-operative Council, Councillor Simon Speller & Councillor Jeanette Thomas for Housing, Health & Older People</i> • <i>Strategic Director, Tom Pike</i> • <i>Assistant Director, Corporate Projects, Customer Services & Technology, Clare Watson</i> • <i>Customer Focus Manager, Berni O Regan</i> • <i>Customer Service Manager, Donna Smith</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lead Officers for Housing Repairs, Housing Asset Management and Refuse & Recycling</i>
Any other witnesses (external persons/critical friend)?:	To be identified by the Committee at the scoping meeting. <i>Possible options identified by officers:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Critical Friend – Members <u>did not</u> think that it would be appropriate for this review to invite an officer from another local authority as a “critical friend”</i>
Allocation of lead Members on specific individual issues/questions:	To be identified by the Committee at the scoping meeting. Members will ask questions on the following areas (list the issues to address during the interviews):
Any other Questions Members wish to cover:	<u>Equalities & Diversity Issues</u> – Are there any E&D issues to consider in this review? <u>To be determined</u>
Site visits and evidence gathering in the Community	Not relevant
Equalities and Diversity issues: The review will consider what the relevant equalities and diversity issues are regarding the Scrutiny subject that is being scrutinised	<i>To be identified by the lead Member – Cllr...</i>
Constraints (Issues that have been highlighted at the scoping stage but are too broad/detailed to be covered by the review):	<i>To be identified by the Committee at the scoping meeting 28 June 2017 (These issues can be captured and dealt with via other means – Briefings/email/officer action etc)</i> Any other matters that are not directly linked to the review should be directed to officers.
Background Documents/data that can be provided to the review	<i>As identified by the Committee at the draft scoping meeting 28 June 2017:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Agreed Milestones and review sign	<i>Formal response from Executive Portfolio Holder (Executives have a Statutory requirement to respond to Scrutiny review recommendations two months after receiving a final report and recommendations of a</i>

off -To be agreed by Members and officers

review: **Date Executive Portfolio responses are expected** (dependent on the final report & executive portfolio response template publishing date): **DD MM YY**
Date for monitoring implementation of recommendations – final sign off (typically one year from completion of the review): DD MM YY (Close to this date the Select Committee will receive a report at a Committee meeting to agree the final sign off of the review recommendations)

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