

Mapping exercise for Community Select Committee – Housing Repairs Scrutiny Review

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Agree Scope for the review	S Weaver, Scrutiny Officer, Denise Lewis, AD Building Safety & Housing Property Services.	N/A	Draft scope for the review was agreed at 26 July 2023 meeting	
Interview the Executive Portfolio Holder, Housing & Housing Development	Cllr Jeannette Thomas Executive Portfolio Holder, Housing & Housing Development	Invite Cllr Jeannette Thomas to the 14 November meeting.	Interview at CSC 14 Nov 2023 Spoken evidence at meeting.	
Interview Denise Lewis, SBC AD Building Safety & Housing Property Services	SBC AD Building Safety & Housing Property Services	AD Building Safety & Housing Prop. Services Denise Lewis to talk CSC Members through the Mapping document for the review, working through the responses to the issues and questions raised in the scope and this document. CSC meeting 19 October 2023.	Spoken evidence at meeting.	

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<p>Issue for review to cover – Responses to information requests from the repairs team</p>		<p>At the site visit on 29 August 2023, a number of questions were raised by Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much does the Council receive in re-charging tenants if they are liable for vandalism etc? I have requested this information from FTA Recharges. • Re satisfaction surveys via text messages to tenants following completed repairs, please can you share the data you have re responses received, and do you have numbers regarding wrong numbers recorded/not updated by the tenants where its not possible to get a post repair text response? Officers can provide a sample for CSC. • Can you provide a brief overview of the schedule of rates for repairs to share with Members? The Schedule of Rates takes repair tasks and breaks them down into individual jobs that have a description, a code a timescale and a price. This book of codes can be used to tender work with contractors as they can submit their price as up or down in percentage terms of the base code price. It allows SBC to collect repair data as codes that can be analysed, this is preference to random descriptions that don't have an ability to be grouped. • Can you provide some anonymised top 20 bottom 20 examples you were referring to? Top and bottom 20 repairs are something that we want to aspire to analysing. We are not in a position to do this at the moment due to the volume of changes already being 		

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		<p>worked. The idea is that meetings are arranged monthly with Repairs, Investment and housing to understand why the top 20 properties have gained that position of high spend. The bottom 20 should also be analysed to understand why we don't hear from these properties. This type of work can help inform the properties that may benefit from tenancy inspections.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members were keen to hear about the improved access to repair parts with the Gibbs and Dandy SBC depot in Stevenage, however previously Members were told that the siting of a depot for the previous contact with Travis Perkins at Cavendish was an improvement on what had gone before. What should give Members confidence that the current arrangement with Gibbs and Dandy will be more of a success than the last iteration? Gibbs and Dandy provide us with a scale of material availability that is impossible to match with a small supply arrangement at Cavendish. We have a dedicated shop area at Gibbs and Dandy. This supplier is one of the largest specialists in the area. I would be happy to show members this arrangement in person, only in person can the scale of the operation be realised. When can the annual gas safety visits incorporate a stock condition survey? The investment team (M&E) compliance run this contract. The Repairs team continue to feed into investment for a wish list for future contracts. 		

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you share any procedures you have for abandoned houses? The Repairs team only flag suspected information into the Resident and Estates team. • Please can you arrange a further site visit with one of the repair team operatives when they go out on a repair for Cllr Mason Humberstone and Cllr Conor McGrath? Please could you let me know the availability for Cllr Humberstone and Cllr McGrath and I will be able to accommodate. Also, if any Cllr wants to see the Gibbs and Dandy set up I am happy to make this happen. 		
<p>Issue for review to cover - <u>Look at the current repairs standards</u> – consider the policy on ‘emergency’, ‘urgent’ and ‘routine’ repair works, and the scope of works currently undertaken, (e.g. fencing and other renewals) which Housing consultant Ridge are currently reviewing for the Council.</p>		<p>The review would like a sample of the ‘emergency’, ‘urgent’ and ‘routine’ repair works, to determine if there is a clearly definable current standard and policy in this area, and if not see what is in the Ridge report.</p> <p><u>Officer response:</u></p> <p>There is no current policy or standard and therefore needs to be picked up as part of the suite of policy, procedures and processes we need to put in place as part of the Repairs service improvement plan.</p>		

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<p>Issue for review to cover - Contractor focus - Provide a presentation from the SBC housing contractor focusing on some key stats including the breakdown on the volumes of works e.g. emergency, urgent etc, % of first time fix, staffing overview, some examples of what's working well and where the challenges are.</p>	<p>Covered by PowerPoint presentation to the CSC on 26 July 2023 & Site visit 29 August 2023.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Repairs look after 8,500 tenanted properties. • During 2022/23 carried out over 2,000 emergency repairs, nearly 5,000 urgent repairs and over 14,000 routine repairs. • 95% of repairs are fixed first time. 	<p>Will be covered at meetings on 26 July 2023.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 Carpenters • 4 Electricians • 7 Plumbers • 6 Maintenance Operatives • 3 Plasterers • 2 Driver/Labourer • a Floor Layer, Bricklayer & a Decorator • Work overseen by 3 trade Supervisors & 3 Schedulers, and supported by 2 Maintenance Surveyors 	<p>To be agreed.</p>

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<p>Issue for review to cover - <u>Client focus</u> - Provide insight from the Council's housing consultant with an overview from the 'client' in terms of the work of Ridge, how the refreshed asset strategy will hopefully increase the proactive / planned maintenance programmes and also look at the need to review the Stevenage Standard i.e. the fencing policy.</p>	<p>Will be covered by session with the AD Building Safety & Housing Property Services – 14 11 23</p>	<p>The content of the Ridge review should be available to share with CSC Members at the 14th November meeting.</p>	<p>Will be covered at meetings on 14 11 23. Written documentation and verbal update.</p>	<p>To be agreed.</p>
<p>Issue for review to cover - <u>Look at the current process officers use regarding receiving, logging and carry out repairs to see if it is fit for purpose</u> as Members are “concerned that the current processes do not appear to be straightforward or be running well”</p>		<p><u>Officer response:</u> During the site visit 29 08 23, Members saw the current IT software system for logging and allocating repair works. This system coupled with a proactive workforce enabled jobs to be logged and allocated in a logical way, so this has largely been dealt with now.</p>		

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<p>Issue for review to cover - <u>Identify ways to improve the current service including, where possible, streamlining the process to have one point of contact for tenants from the point they register a repair request</u> this would help to co-ordinate all repairs in the property, especially important in cases where there are multiple repairs needed in the same property.</p>		<p><u>Officer response:</u></p> <p>Officers have agreed to bring a draft improvement plan to the November meeting as by then the Council will have received the Ridge final report, which will enable Officers to collate a response.</p> <p>A single point of contact for tenants sounds attractive but could make matters worse. Within the Repairs service this isn't practicable, it's better that all staff have access to up-to-date information on repairs, so that anyone can deal with any queries. Not one person in the service manages the whole process. Initial reports come in via CSC (or increasingly will be on-line). Officers agree communications with customers' (and internally) needs to improve and this is a theme emerging from the Ridge review so</p>		

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		improvements will need to have a heavy focus on this area.		
<p>Issue for review to cover - <u>Improve Communications</u> (The context is to avoid cases where “the current process requires too many steps with too many operatives and subcontractors to get a repair resolved”) Members are concerned that “Tenants are being told a repair will happen, then it doesn't and there doesn't appear to be any process for letting the tenant know what is going on and why,” “Communication about repairs is poor or non-existent leading to anger and frustration for tenants”</p>		<p><u>Officer response:</u></p> <p>As per the response above, communications (internal and external) will be a theme in the improvement plan – some of this is about policies, processes/procedures which will ensure clarity on roles and responsibilities, including coms with customers, but some of it is about culture and there will be an element of performance management in there too.</p>		
<p>Issue for review to cover - <u>Early identification of cases that could be described as in the “too difficult box”</u> – (The context is a</p>		<p><u>Officer response:</u></p> <p>Again, if we have good processes and procedures this will pick up complex</p>		

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<p>Member quoted a case where “there has been a flooding issue that has been going on for multiple years, and it appears that no one can get to the root cause of the problem, so it falls into the ‘too difficult box’”</p>		<p>cases/issues. Sometimes these arise because it is not clear if these are ‘repairs’ or ‘major works’ and responsibility can be blurred at present because there isn’t currently a process for how teams manage these between them. Also, within Housing there is a need to build relationships between teams to support better collaborative working.</p>		
<p>Issue for review to cover - <u>Make better use of technology</u> – (For instance, tenants can send a photo of the problem, such as a blown down fence, that perhaps doesn’t need an officer to inspect before materials are ordered and repair booked etc. if the photo shows the extent of the repair)</p>		<p><u>Officer response:</u></p> <p>We already have the ability for tenants to send in photos to help with repairs diagnosis – Officers could look at how much this is used already in CSC and if we can promote this more with tenants. But again, need to manage expectations of tenants as it will not avoid inspections in all cases.</p> <p>The Ridge review suggests we have appropriate technology to support the</p>		

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		<p>service but need to make better use of this, so again that will be a theme in the improvement plan. Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using data on types of repairs to understand what drives demand on service and how we can reduce this through cyclical and planned works. • Investigate remote diagnostic tools such as Switchee and Aico but more likely to be viable for a targeted % of stock as installation across the stock would take a long time and also be very expensive in terms of both initial capital outlay and ongoing revenue requirements in terms of data monitoring and reporting but could look at business case but not until 2024/25 at earliest given other service priorities. 		

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Issue for review to cover - Site visit to repairs team		Site visit completed and written response from two Councillors who accompanied repairs team operatives into tenants' homes are appended to this document.	Site visit 29 August agreed and completed.	Completed ✓
Issue for review to cover – <u>Climate Change Impact</u>	Interview the SBC Climate Change Officer & SBC Head of Climate Change. Veronica Chan, SBC Climate Change Officer & Fabian Oyarzun SBC Head of Climate Change, AD Planning and Regulation, Zayd Al-Jawed.	Ask the SBC Head of Climate Change, Fabian Oyarzun, what the impact is of this area? Future ways of working that can improve things.	To be agreed.	
Issue for review to cover - <u>Equalities & Diversity Issues</u>	Various witnesses. The review could reach out to disabled umbrella group to canvass opinions.	The review should consider what equality and diversity issues there are for Housing Repairs? This could encompass such issues as impact of major repairs (or planned maintenance) on disabled tenants, any language barriers, digital poverty?	To be arranged.	To be agreed.

