

MINUTES

Community Services Scrutiny Panel

28th October, 2008

Present: Councillors Howarth (in the Chair), Cowper, Laverick, Mavin, Norman, Robinson, D Smith, Walton and Young.

Also Present: Councillors Colledge, Kellett, Marsden, Simpson, Stoddart and Thomson.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Crooks, Lightley and McDonnell.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 30th September, 2008, were confirmed as a correct record, subject to it being noted that Councillor Norman had submitted her apologies for absence.

3. Review of Council House Repairs

The Head of Property Services, Responsive Maintenance Manager and Portfolio Holder for Communities were in attendance to update Members with progress made towards the recommendations made in the Report of November, 2007, and to advise of the performance of the Repairs service.

Since April, 2008, the number of emergency and non-urgent repairs completed on time had been at least 97% and in some months, 99%. The results of the Gas Satisfaction Survey (April – November, 2008) were very pleasing with 100% of tenants being satisfied with the workmanship and the attitude of staff. Whilst only 91% of respondents had reported that workmen showed ID cards, it was possible that many tenants were familiar with the Council's repairs workforce. Staff had been reminded to show their ID cards when attending appointments.

Similarly the results of the Repairs Satisfaction Survey were very pleasing, with only the showing of ID cards (83%) being lower than the others. Again, it was considered that this arose as many tenants were familiar with the workforce.

The Exceptions System allowed potential missed appointments to be spotted in advance which allowed alternative staff to be dispatched or the customer to be contacted. Staff continued to use the handheld telephone/PDA communication system, which following upgrades, was now performing much better and many of the blackspots had been eliminated.

Re-let times on void properties had increased by 4 days since last year to 47 days. This had been due to a great extent to the inclusion of one particularly difficult to let property which had been empty for 917 days. Additionally the number of void properties at any one time was difficult to predict and when the number was high, it was difficult to carry out all of the necessary works. Some void properties were in very poor condition, particularly where previous tenants had refused to allow modernisation works to be carried out in the past. Three major house fires had also added to the workload.

The Panel had previously recommended that ongoing training be provided for staff. This had been carried out over the last 12 months and the introduction of the Repair Finder allowed both customers and Customer Services to identify repairs and was working very well.

A small number of recharges had been carried out where the emergency reporting system had been used by tenants to bypass the appointments system, although it was difficult to prove misuse of the system. Efforts were being made to reduce this problem.

Members had previously been reminded that customer repairs must be reported to Customer Services to be logged at the first point of contact. This provided an audit trail and enabled the jobs to be actioned more quickly than if they were reported to Officers direct.

The Panel were very pleased with the progress made and congratulated the Head of Property Services and his staff for the work they had done. It was hoped that the same standard of work would continue following the move to the new Unitary Authority.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Property Services, Responsive Maintenance Manager and Portfolio Holder for Communities for attending the Meeting.

4. Review of Playing Pitch Strategy

At the last Meeting of the Panel, the Technical Support Manager (Environment & Leisure), Streetscene Technical Officer and Policy and Regeneration Manager had been in attendance for a review of the Panel' previous scrutiny of the Playing Pitch Strategy.

A draft report had been produced following the Meeting, copies of which had been circulated to all Members.

It was agreed that subject to minor amendments to paragraphs 1.5 and 4.5.1 and the addition of a further recommendation reading 'That this report and recommendations be brought to attention of the new Unitary Authority and relevant Workstreams', the report be passed to the Scrutiny Committee for their consideration.

5. Any Other Business

The Chairman reminded Members that the next Panel meeting was to be held on 25th November, 2008, the business being to approve the final report on the scrutiny of Council House Repairs.

The Meeting terminated at 6.15 pm