

## **Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel – Extraordinary Meeting held on Tuesday, 9th February, 2021.**

**Present:-** Councillors Hulme (Chair), Kelly (Vice-Chair, left at 7.45pm), Ajaib, Begum, Matloob, Minhas, S Parmar and Sabah.

Co-Opted Member: Trevor Pollard (Residents Panel Board)

**Also present under Rule 30:-** Councillors Gahir, Nazir and Strutton.

**Apologies for Absence:-** None.

### **PART 1**

#### **48. Declarations of Interest**

None declared.

#### **49. Member Questions**

None received.

#### **50. Repairs Maintenance and Investment (RMI) Contract Update**

The Neighbourhood Contracts and Business Services Manager introduced a report that updated Members on progress of the performance of Osborne's delivery of the repairs, maintenance and investment (RMI) contract since the report to the Panel on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

James Quy, Head of Operations and other representatives from Osbourne were present and provided a detailed update. The Panel noted the current position was as follows:

- Call Centre – in response to concerns and complaints relating to not being able to get through to the call centre and waiting time for calls to be answered, an Improvement Plan was implemented. A Customer Service Assistants Team Leader and seven new Customer Service Assistants were employed during 2020/21. Average call waiting times had significantly improved which was illustrated with an average waiting time of over 4 minutes in April 19/20 to 2 minutes 30 seconds in April 20/21. The key Performance Indicator (KPI) for number of calls lost / abandoned was also performing above target.
- Void Completions were measured by the average number of days taken to complete void works. Although there was a downward trend in the average number of days, this rose in January due to the Christmas period, annual leave and material shortages; but also impacted by the return of 4 long term voids.
- Although the number of uncompleted repairs had reduced significantly, the target was not being met. It was explained that this due to issues

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surrounding Covid-19 lockdown which meant that there was no access or access refused to properties by residents and shortages of material and available labour in completing repairs. As of January 2021 the number of works in progress was 1,533 against a target of 1,000; and whilst the target was not currently being met this was a significant improvement from 4,450 uncompleted repairs in September 2020.

- Osborne had recognised that the volume of overdue complaints in 2020 was not acceptable and had appointed two Service Delivery Specialists, who were proactively working with residents to deal with outstanding matters. The Operations Manager was working closely with the RMI Client Team to manage/monitor the 2021 member casework complaints to ensure they were responded to within the Council's timelines.
- The percentage of appointments kept was on a downward trend. This was partly due to the high volume of works being put through to catch up with the backlog of uncompleted orders but primarily caused by pressures due to lockdown with operatives sick/self isolating and residents changing appointments due to isolation. It was acknowledged that achieving this performance target was challenging and that the issue would be closely monitored by the client team over the coming weeks.
- Details of the work carried out on the development and management of the Social Return on Investment (SROI) were outlined, in particular the launch of the online 'Employment and Wellbeing' course which had assisted eight individuals in securing employment. Osborne's commitment to support people across Slough remained a priority. Osborne's had identified a measurement tool, 'Thrive' which would be used to provide live, transparent and accurate data of social, economic and environmental impacts across Slough and this would be reported to Members at a future meeting.
- The results of the annual Resident Satisfaction Survey had revealed that overall satisfaction in a number of key areas had decreased compared to the previous year. The development of an improvement action plan was currently on hold pending transformation when new job roles and responsibilities had been clearly defined.
- Limited progress had been made on estate inspections due to the Covid-19 lockdowns and the number of inspections carried out since November 2020 were outlined. It was explained that post lockdown, a more thorough estate inspection regime would be implemented and that this would include ways in which Councillors and residents could be more involved.

The overall position was that whilst performance improvements had been made and the backlog of repairs had reduced, it was recognised that further improvements were required. These included further reductions in outstanding repairs, the turnaround time for void properties, responding to residents complaints and data collection and monitoring. The Panel were assured that clear governance arrangements were being followed to ensure concerns were addressed and all identified issues were proactively managed through clear action plans.

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The Panel had a detailed discussion and Members asked questions on a range of issues which are summarised as follows:

- It was noted that a total of £14m per year was set aside to fund the annual expenditure of day to day repairs and maintenance, void properties refurbished for lettings and major works programme (kitchens, bathrooms, windows) of which £8.5m would be spent by the end of March 2021.
- The requirement for accurate data was emphasised in order to ensure consistency in monitoring of performance. It was reported that new performance measures had been agreed and would be collected from February 2021 which would provide more meaningful data.
- Repairs were prioritised based on whether they had been classified as urgent or routine. Additional details, for example if a resident was elderly, were also taken into account and informed the action taken.
- A Member queried whether more than one repair could be logged at the same time. It was noted that there was no limit on the number of repairs that could be logged on the same call.
- The impact of outstanding repairs on health and safety of residents and security of buildings was raised. The Panel were informed that specific details would be required in order to accurately respond to the query and it was agreed that this information would be provided to the member of the Residents Board who had raised it outside of the meeting.
- Clarification regarding the timeline for voids was sought and it was stated that although the performance target was 18 days this was currently at 26 days.
- The Chair asked for details of the number of repairs outstanding after 20 days and a breakdown of the number of operatives by trade. It was agreed that the information would be circulated to the Panel and included in future reports.
- A Member expressed concern that the RMI contract was half way through its seven year contract and key objectives were still not being met. It was acknowledged that there are a number of areas that required improvement and action plans were in place to address these.
- It was suggested that a number of Councillors be contacted to discuss and explore the manner in which estate inspections could be carried out most effectively with member involvement and officers agreed to action this.
- Social Return on Investment – The Chair recommended that the Panel receive an informal briefing/presentation regarding the use of Thrive – the social value measurement tool; to discuss/suggest ideas for improvement and consider whether the recommendations of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Task & Finish Group could be incorporated within the SROI.

The Chair invited Councillors Gahir and Strutton to address the Panel under Rule 30.

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Councillor Strutton raised a number of points including what the current longest outstanding repair job was, the number of communal area repairs that had been reported and the time taken for them to be satisfactory completed; and what additional costs had been incurred to the Council as a result of repairs not being carried out promptly or satisfactorily by Osborne. The Neighbourhood Contracts and Business Services Manager stated that there was a Capital Improvement Works Programme, details of which could be included in future reports. However, details of additional costs incurred to the Council as a result of delays in works being carried out were not known. It was noted that the landlord statutory compliance report was scheduled for consideration by the Panel at its meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

Councillor Gahir sought information regarding what the procedure was for existing tenants seeking larger properties and it was agreed that this would be provided after the meeting.

A Member asked whether the Panel's recommendation to Cabinet from its meeting in November 2020, that internal audit conduct a review of the contract with Osbornes to evaluate whether the objectives and performance measures were being met had been accepted. It was noted that Cabinet had accepted the recommendation and details regarding the implementation of the review would be circulated to Panel Members.

The Chair thanked Council Officers and representatives of Osbornes for their presentation and report.

### **Resolved –**

- a) That the contents of the report and progress made be noted.
- b) That the contents of the presentation be noted.
- c) That future reporting requirements for the RMI to include an end of year partnership report in June 2021 following which the Panel will receive six monthly updates.
- d) That the Panel receive separate quarterly RMI updates on landlord statutory compliance in HRA tenanted stock.

## **51. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Task and Finish Group**

The Panel were reminded that at its meeting in October 2020, a task and finish group had been established to investigate and make recommendations in relation to Slough's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategies. Councillor Ajaib, Chair of the task and finish group, introduced the report requesting that the Panel review and agree the recommendations.

The Policy Insight Analyst provided Members with a PowerPoint presentation that set out the key findings of the Task and Finish Group.

The Panel noted the findings of the task and finish group and endorsed the recommendations, as set out in the report.

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### **Resolved -**

- (a) That the Panel endorsed the Food Poverty Task and Finish Group report and recommendations, as outlined in Section 5.3 of the report.
- (b) That Cabinet be recommended to endorse the findings and recommendations of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Task and Finish Group.

### **52. Date of Next Meeting - 25th February 2021**

**Resolved** – The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.38 pm)