

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Cabinet **DATE:** 18 January 2020

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PORTFOLIO: Cllr Mohammed Nazir, Cabinet Member for Housing & Community Safety

PART I **FOR DECISION**

REFERENCE FROM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY – REPAIRS, MAINTENANCE AND INVESTMENT CONTRACT

1 Purpose of Report

To update Cabinet on the recommendation of the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel, following its session on the Repairs, Maintenance and Investment (RMI) Contract, which took place on the 18th November 2020.

2 Recommendation

That the Cabinet consider the panel's recommendation, that:

“Internal audit conduct a comprehensive and wide ranging review of the contract with Osborne to evaluate whether the objectives and performance measures were being met. Councillors and residents should be engaged in that review”.

3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan

3a. Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

The performance of the RMI contract relates to the third priority of the Joint Wellbeing Strategy - ‘Strong, healthy and attractive neighbourhoods’.

Housing is often identified as an important co-determinant of health, as the quality of housing will have a strong impact on an individual's health and wellbeing.

3b Five Year Plan Outcomes

The performance of the RMI contract will have a significant impact on the delivery of the fourth priority outcome of the Five Year Plan - *Our residents will live in good quality homes.*

4 **Other Implications**

(a) Financial

None – the review could be incorporated within RSM’s Internal Audit Plan for 2021/22.

(b) Risk Management

There are no identified risks with the proposed recommendation.

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

The Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 (the ‘Act’) adds hazards listed in the governments housing health and safety-rating system (HHSRS) set out in the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985. Tenants will therefore be able to legally compel their landlord to address any of the 29 HHSRS hazards, which ranges from fire safety issues to damp & mould or poor natural lighting and ventilation. The Act came into effect for new tenancies on 1st March 2019, but now applies to all existing tenancies.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

There is no identified need for the completion of the EIA in relation to the recommendations of this report.

The contractor routinely carries out Equality Impact Assessments as part of operational service delivery.

(e) Workforce

The proposed review would require SBC officer time and the support of senior leaders.

The workforce delivering the RMI contract are Osborne direct employees or sub-contracted services. The RMI has a contractual payment framework that offers a monthly establishment fee and thereafter payment is based on the work delivered.

5 **Supporting Information**

5.1 Background

On the 18th November 2020, the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel held an extraordinary meeting, which primarily focussed on an update from Osborne and SBC officers on the RMI contract.

The session examined a wide range of topics, including:

- The impact of COVID 19
- Plans to reduce the outstanding repairs backlog
- Response times
- Customer service and complaints
- Social Return on Investment

While the panel were pleased to note the improvement plan that has been put in place - and the progress that has been made in recent weeks under new leadership - they were concerned that the contract as a whole was failing to deliver the necessary benefits to residents or providing value for money.

Furthermore, the panel did not feel the future controls identified by officers to mitigate these risks were sufficient by themselves, and that a more thorough review of the contract was required.

5.2 Chair's comments

Cllr Christine Hulme, Chair, Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel:

'Over the past ten months, the NCS Scrutiny Panel has received extensive negative feedback from Residents Board members, Councillors and officers regarding the delivery of this contract.

The performance reporting that we receive from Osborne does not seem to match the feedback we receive from our tenants, and there is concern that payments are being made to the contractor for work that is either not being completed, or not completed to a high enough standard,

The NCS Panel therefore requests that a thorough audit of this contract takes place as soon as practicable.'

6 Comments of Other Committees

This report has not yet been seen by any other committees.

7 Conclusion

This Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel believes that it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive review of the RMI contract, to ensure it is delivering effective outcomes for Slough, and providing value for money.

8 Background Papers

'1' Agenda and Papers, Extraordinary Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel, Wednesday, 18th November, 2020. Repairs Maintenance and Investment (RMI) Contract Update.