

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Customer & Community Scrutiny Panel

DATE: 8th December 2021

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(For all Enquiries)

WARD(S): All Wards

PART I **FOR COMMENT & CONSIDERATION**

REPAIRS MAINTENANCE & INVESTMENT (RMI) CONTRACT UPDATE

1. **Purpose of Report**

The purpose of the report is to provide an update to the Scrutiny Panel following the meeting on 9th February 2021, focused on the performance of Osborne's delivery of the RMI contract, including the points below.

- Issues with the Responsive Repairs service.
- 2021 update on Service Delivery.
- New performance measures.
- Details on Future Audit Scope.
- Detail on the social return on investment from the contract;

2. **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Panel are recommended to note and comment on:

- a) The contents of this report and progress made
- b) The contents of the presentation
- c) Future reporting requirements for the RMI including financial year-end report and separate quarterly RMI updates on landlord statutory compliance in HRA tenanted stock.

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

3a. **Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

The provision and maintenance of good quality and affordable housing can reduce housing need for local households and contributes to the identified priorities of the JSNA. The RMI is contracted to provide investment into existing council properties through a partnership approach between Osborne Property Services Limited and the Council to sustain good quality homes that will improve the safety, health and well-being of the boroughs tenants.

3b. **Five Year Plan Outcomes**

The RMI contract is housing revenue funded from a 30-year business plan that has enabled the investment required to sustain a HRA Housing Asset

Management Strategy to meet objective 4 'Our residents will live in good quality homes'. The RMI is intended to focus on making the best use of the borough's existing stock and provide better solutions to the needs and challenges through delivery of services, adopting excellent customer care and safeguarding and working to find these solutions in partnership.

4. **Other Implications**

(a) Financial

The RMI is a 7-year contract with an option to extend for three years. The contract is funded from the Housing Revenue Account and the business plan has set aside £100m for the Contract Administrator to fund the annual expenditure of day-to-day repairs and maintenance, voids properties refurbished for reletting, and the major works programme e.g. kitchens, bathrooms, windows. The total spend can be up to £14m per year.

(b) Risk Management

The committee are requested to note that the contractual governance offers a formal basis for management of risk through contract management, a framework for discussion intended to seek not just solutions but foster innovation through partnership initiatives. The structure of governance allows for a forum for the raising of issues, discussion on performance as well as commercial initiatives across the breadth of the contract. The levels of escalation and accountability are set out alongside basis for contractual scrutiny by members and residents.

The table below outlines the context of risk management.

Recommendation from section 2 above	Risks/Threats/ Opportunities	Current Controls	Risk Management Matrix Score risk	Future Controls
a) Managing Responsive Repairs	The level of uncompleted responsive repairs is consistent over the previous 9 months, and is still around 2 weeks more work than would be ideal.	Osborne have recently recruited more operatives to reduce the number down. Osborne are finding difficulty in completing some repairs due to nationwide material shortages.	3 Low	This remains a key focus of the contract and is monitored weekly.
b) Osborne Staffing and experience.	Osborne have struggled to recruit to supervisory, planning and operative vacancies.	Osborne have expanded their search for staff beyond their previous consultants and this has resulted in more candidates being interviewed.	6 Medium	Osborne have 2 new senior members joining the team in December and January to replace staff SBC had raised concerns over which should benefit the contract.
c) Production of Performance Data	Inconsistencies have been identified in the performance data supplied by Osborne.	From 1 st October 2021 new performance data has been commissioned which better analyse problem areas within the contract and will properly target improvement areas.	6 Medium	Although early results show the responsive repairs element is in a poor state, we will now have results which are more reflective of reality and enable improvement to be targeted in the correct way.
d) Resident perception of the service	Although the aspects of the service have improved the volume of complaints and enquiries remains high.	Complaints have remained high through 2021, recently we have seen a slight reduction in numbers and quicker handling of complaint from Osborne.	12 Significant	Complaints and speedy resolution still remains the main focus of the RMI team.

(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

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

(e) Workforce

The workforce delivering the RMI 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 **Issues with Responsive Repairs Service**

Since the issue of the last report Slough Borough Council has continued to experience difficulty with Osborne's management of the responsive repairs service. These issues include:

- Repairs being reported as completed but not actually completed.
- Repairs taking a long time to be resolved.
- Repairs being attended and follow on works recommended, but not followed up.
- Residents not being regularly updated with the status of their repair when timescales have become longer than anticipated.
- Appointments being missed.
- Osborne manage emergency situations well, and manage straight forward repairs well, all large scale works resulting from repairs are passed to the planned works team which are then well managed. We have identified that repairs which fall between straight forward and large scale which cause the complaints.

These issues have resulted in high levels of complaints which aside from taking up a lot of officer time, more importantly have caused distress to residents.

Osborne as our chosen service provider have, like all other contractors experienced unprecedented difficulties this year and these issues have contributed greatly to their ability to provide an effective responsive repairs service. These issues include:

- Operatives being absent from work due to testing positive for Covid-19 or being told to isolate because a close contact has tested positive for Covid-19

- Shortages of key building materials like plaster, fencing panels and roofing materials.
- Residents changing appointments due to testing positive for Covid-19 or having to self-isolate.
- Increased costs of building materials and fuel.

The issues with the service have been consistent throughout 2021, and although not getting any worse, only recently have we started to see small areas of improvement which include:

- Recruitment of additional complaints handler to improve communication with residents.
- Recruitment of additional operatives to reduce the amount of uncompleted repairs.
- Slight reduction in complaints received.

We have recently met with Osborne's senior management to agree on what further action is needed to improve the service. Osborne have committed to the following actions:

- Use of alternative recruitment companies to fill the vacant supervisory, planning and operative roles. Previously Osborne went through one company.
- Dedicate 2 operatives to work through any complaints received so these complaints are dealt with more efficiently.
- Recruitment of a new Operations Manager with specific experience in terms of day to day management of a responsive repairs service, starts on 10th December.
- Recruitment of a new Commercial Manager who will be able to action use of local sub-contractors more effectively and thus increasing the resource used on the responsive repairs contract, starts 18th January.

SBC and Osborne meet regularly and the issues with this service area are always the highest priority. Both parties remain committed to improving the service provided.

5.2 Update on Other RMI Service Areas

Osborne have performed very effectively in other areas of the contract during 2021.

Below is a list of works carried out under the RMI contract successfully during this year.

- Gas servicing has been maintained at 100%
- All compliance services fully maintained, legionella testing, fire equipment maintenance, lift servicing, communal asbestos surveys.
- Installation of new communal boiler at Seymour House.
- Ongoing programme of Fire Risk Assessment works including, new fire doors, fire stopping, roof compartmentation.
- Delivering high standard void works.
- Installation of new fire doors to Broom & Poplar House.
- Installation of new level access showers and other disabled adaptations to several SBC properties.
- Re-roofing programme of work.

- Upgrading of door entry systems.
- Asbestos removal works.
- Upgrading communal electrical installations.
- Upgrading electrical installations in individual properties.

5.3 New Performance Measures

Following feedback from the Residents Board over the validity of the Performance information supplied by Osborne, a new set of Performance measures were designed. The new set of measures were defined following a meeting with the Residents Board and the key improvement areas were identified.

The new performance measures came into use on the RMI contract from 1st October. The first months results can be found in Appendix A. These new measures will form the key driver for making the necessary improvement to the Responsive Repairs service.

The Eight new Performance Measures are:

- The percentage of repairs completed within a single visit to the Property.
- The percentage of repairs due in the month which were completed within the prescribed timescale.
- Resident Satisfaction with the most recent repair completed.
- Average number of days to complete Voids
- Accuracy of costs submitted for repairs.
- Number of complaints escalated from stage 1 to stage 2 in the month.
- Average time to answer incoming calls and longest call wait time in the Customer contact centre.
- Average number of days for the first appointment to be attended from the time of reporting the repair.

Monitoring this key information which is directly linked to the majority of complaints about the service will place emphasis on Osborne to improve these specific measures and hence raise the overall level of the service provided.

5.4 Details of the Future Audit Scope

At Scrutiny panel meeting in February 2021 a full audit of the RMI contract was recommended. Due to the Section 114 notice being issued earlier in the year, priorities for audit changed. The audit is now planned to commence February 2022, detail of the scope of the audit can be found below:

- Checking works are invoiced using the correct rates within the contract.
- Checking SBC has appropriate measures in place to assert the quality of finished works required.
- Checking complaints are managed and resolved in the most efficient way.
- Checking compliance activities are recorded and managed correctly.
- Checking governance of the contract is appropriate and followed by both parties.

5.5 Summary of Social Value Works Carried out by Osborne

Osborne have carried several social value projects during 2021, details of which are below:

March 2021	Enterprise Advisor Covid Recovery – Commitment 2	Working with local schools to enhance careers and business advice. Working with Wrexham School who we have had to withdraw work experience placements due to covid	
March 2021	Slough Covid Advisor Covid Recovery	Working with the Council who have proved training so that if residents have queries regarding the changes in the government rules, we are equipped to sign-post of advise	
March 2021	Donations Wellbeing	A recognised online clothing company reached out to ask if we could make use of end of lines items. Working with local charities and council to find a location and create a safe covid secure shopping environment for those in need to experience choosing new clothes.	 
April 2021	Yes Project Wellbeing	Initial meetings to understand needs and aspirations of the refurbishment project within Slough. Anticipated five days, resourcing by OPSL volunteers and supply chain, donations of materials. Due to holiday, covid and resource we delayed works until August 2021.	
May 2021	Mencap Slough Wellbeing	The centre supports local people with learning disabilities. Whilst the centre remains closed due to covid, the team are preparing for the return in the next couple of months. We donated a football table from Hawker House for service users to enjoy.	
July 2021	Britwell Centre Well Being	Initial conversations to review the works required to transfer the existing kitchen. Donation kitchen to be supplied from our Dacorum warehouse, supply chain partners and materials to be agreed	
August 2021	Britwell Centre Wellbeing	Supporting the very popular holiday club during school holidays. OPSL provided gifts, quizzes and prizes for their club and also gifted volunteering time	
August 2021	YES Project Wellbeing	DIY SOS project to refurb this centre which is a successful hub for the youth of Slough OPSL gifted their community day to support the event. Paint was supplied by Dulux. 5 day project management	 
September 2021	Job Fair Economic Support	Requested by Job Centre and DWP, Osborne supported the local job fair in Slough. Offering CV advice, career pathway, promoting construction	
October 2021	Langley Community Association Wellbeing	The centre has a well-established Tuesday food bank, a Thursday lunch club for more senior/isolated or vulnerable local residents and the centre is used by a prayer group Fridays. Osborne supported by cleaning out and disposing of unwanted items accumulated through covid donations	

October 2021	Meet the Buyer Event Economic Support	The event was held to encourage local suppliers and SME to join the Osborne supply chain. The event was widely publicised and companies were contacted directly by Osborne staff.	
November 2021	Britwell Centre – Kitchen Transformation Economic Support/Donations/Wellbeing	A club at the heart of community which many of our operatives attended as children. A very planned and co-ordinated programme to refurb the existing kitchen. OPSL gifted their time, supply chain partners offered materials and time	
November 2021	Britwell Centre – Launch Event Halloween Party Wellbeing	To welcome the younger club members back, Osborne donated pumpkins, decorations, Halloween crafts, and healthier lollypops, prizes for the best Halloween Pumpkins. Osborne Account Manager Steve dropped by to check on the progress of the refurbishment and for the more challenging task of judging the children's carved pumpkins	
November 2021	Careers Event Langley College	The aim was to encourage local students to enter apprenticeships. Osborne manned a stall alongside the Langley College head of apprenticeships. We explained to attendees how we worked together to provide an opportunity to earn and learn a trade.	
November 2021	Apprenticeship Recruitment Day Economic	A full day experience for those who attended included presentations from both Osborne and Langley college along with team exercises and interviews. We have offered roles to attendees.	
November 2021	Job Fair Economic	Working with Slough Job Centre, Osborne attended a local job fair which took place at the Queensmere Shopping Centre. Lots of interest was generated by several live job vacancies Osborne are looking to fill. Advice was given to people in terms of CV's, covers letters and ways to apply. Over four hundred people attended the event	

6. Comments of Other Committees

None

7. Conclusion

The RMI contract has delivered cost effective improvement works and compliance works throughout 2021. The challenge remains to bring the Responsive Repairs service to a standard where Residents can rely on the service.

By better targeting through effective performance monitoring both parties are focused on improving the responsive repairs service over the next six months.

The Audit of the service, which will be carried out during early 2022 will also provide an insight and actions points to further improve the service.

8. Appendices Attached

A – October 2021 New Performance KDI