

# Taunton Deane Borough Council

## Tenant Services Management Board

Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2015

### Responsive Repairs Performance

#### Report of the Building Services Manager

#### 1. Executive Summary

The Direct Labour Organisation management system, which was updated in September 2014, has taken longer to embed and has created a number of unforeseen issues which we are currently dealing with.

This report highlights those areas of concern and the methods we are collectively using to resolve them.

In addition we have reviewed our operational service delivery to accommodate changes to the demands of the organisation and the business in general.

With the introduction of Mobile working and the appointment system we are striving to ensure that our tenants have an improved service in relation to response repairs.

Significant improvements are already being felt by tenants. Cold calls have been stopped and 100% jobs have appointments.

Performance data shows an improving picture despite the disruption of project implementation. Improvement can be seen within all priorities, P1, P2, P3 and P4 being above target for February.

#### 2. Background

The DLO Building Services section and TDBC Property Services team are jointly working to deliver a comprehensive responsive repairs service for the benefit of TDBC tenants. Externally this would include repairs to or replacement of leaking roofs, windows, doors and frames, fencing and walls, drainage, and paving in dangerous condition. Internally it would include items such as repairs to or replacement of kitchen and bathroom sanitary fixtures and fittings, doors, frames, and ironmongery, light fittings and socket outlets, floor, wall or ceiling finishes, and leaks on internal water supply. In addition to this, other external

contractors would deliver repairs to metal windows and doors, built-up felt roofing, gas servicing and maintenance, and communal aerial systems.

In order for the DLO to achieve their part in this, it was essential to review the existing data management system being used to handle the tenant repair/contractor information and in doing so, it was established that a new software platform was required. Following an extensive procurement exercise and evaluation on sites using the system, it was decided to adopt Open Contractor as a management system. This was installed and went live on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2014. The original software platform, "Cosy", was no longer fit-for-purpose, was out-dated and future enhancements and support were no longer available.

In addition to a new software platform, we had also looked at increasing the availability of repair appointments for our tenants, giving them more freedom of choice as to when they would like to have their repairs carried out. This allows our tenants to arrange appointments to suit their working and social arrangements and allows us to deliver a more structured and cost-effective repairs service. In order to achieve this, we worked closely with our Information Technology advisors and decided on the DRS scheduling system which, when coupled with Total Mobile technology delivers a fully integrated mobile working platform.

All Social Landlords have a duty to carry out essential repairs to their properties and, to work with their tenants and leaseholders to provide a customer focused response repair service. In delivering the service, we have followed the industry and national standards and categorised our repairs into priorities of importance or urgency, however, we are often challenged when we categorise some repairs as routine, when the perception of the reporting individual is that it's an emergency. In these circumstances, we will ensure all options and concerns are considered. The following priorities are the ones we deliver as normal and whilst we do operate an out of hours call out service, the below are the priorities against which our performance is measured:-

- P1 (emergency works with attendance required within 24 hours)
- P2 (urgent works with attendance required within 3 working days)
- P3 (routine works with attendance required within 7 working days)
- P4 (works that require planning and attendance within 28 days)

The recorded performance in relation to the above categories by month, Sept 2014 to present, is shown at Appendix (a).

This report seeks to clarify some aspects of the system and to put into context further operational changes which are needed to meet future business challenges.

### **3. The Product**

Open Contractor is an Information platform that, when coupled with other IT packages, such as DRS and Total Mobile, will achieve our goal of providing a comprehensive platform for delivering a good, fit for purpose, response repairs service. Like all new technological systems, there are "hick ups" and setbacks along the way, which can be frustrating and challenging to say the least. We

have to date found the DRS scheduling system, the Total Mobile software and the operative hand held devices to be reliable, functional and resilient.

Open Contractor and the DRS system, when utilised with the hand held devices which will communicate via Total Mobile, will improve our service delivery and customer experience over time. The following are a number of the outcomes :-

- Text reminder service to remind customers of appointment dates and times thus reducing 'no-access failed visits.
- Better in-the-moment data (once refined further), meaning more accurate performance and financial predictions.
- Ability to 'bolt-on' other functions and upgrades, not just for the benefit of the DLO business but the Council as a whole. This may include asset management for surveyors, a voids and projects module for jobs other than responsive repairs.
- Mobile working, reducing unproductive travel costs and leading to more efficient and cost-effective work planning.
- Better stores stock control with instant mobile and static stores volume data through PDAs' stock allocation.

#### **4. The Main Issues**

A number of questions have been asked about the DLO Building Services performance when delivering the response repairs service on behalf of the Housing client to its tenants and Leaseholders. Issues around timescales for completed works and missed appointments have recently generated a number of complaints which have been looked into and where necessary the appropriate actions or changes have been made to service delivery.

In addition there have been a number of isolated complaints in relation to the quality of some of the works carried out and the attitude of the staff delivering the service. We have investigated these isolated incidents and spoken with the complainants first hand in most cases and taken the appropriate steps to prevent any repetition of such behaviour.

To keep complaints in context, it should be noted that responsive repairs jobs for Housing alone number some 18,000 per annum. This does not include the other works which we complete during the year for other organisations and departments including:-

- Housing void property maintenance and refurbishment(450-500) p/a
- Corporate Works-Public buildings
- Private Works
- Car parks/adopted roads
- Disabled Facility Grants
- Aids and Adaptations
- Street Signage
- Bus Shelters
- Civic events
- West Somerset Council Corporate and Public buildings

In total, some 22-25,000 jobs are carried out by the Building Services team each year and whilst we are striving to reduce our level of complaints to a minimum there will always unfortunately be those who will not be satisfied with our response.

## **5. System-based Challenges**

There have been a number of system and data processing issues identified since 'go-live' in September 2014. This has resulted in a number of delays with regards to the processing of some batched information. This has restricted the ability of works managers to update performance and financial information about completed jobs in a timely manner.

With regards to this issue many of the processing and reporting issues have been resolved and work is ongoing to ensure that all information is up-to-date. This will allow us to accurately report our performance based on more concise information in future. In addition to this aspect of reporting, it should also be noted that it is necessary for performance reports to be run in arrears to allow for the updating of job completion data. Reports which are run before the works are updated or completed financially will not produce an accurate picture.

Due to the increased number of failed or missed appointments identified we have carried out a number of system checks and we have identified the following as system based issues which have had an impact on service delivery:-

1. Incorrect appointment reminders being sent to customers via the DRS text messaging facility.
2. Multi-trade jobs not linking together when scheduled, so one trade attends but not the other. If one trade discipline is re-appointed, the other may be missed.(electrical/plastering)
3. The connection of hand-held devices used by the trades' workforce may be lost without warning requiring manual distribution of job tickets. It is often necessary in this situation for workforce employees to return to the depot for work or instructions, reducing the opportunity to deliver efficiencies. There is a risk that jobs may be missed through being scheduled when no slots are available.
4. PDA users' notes not able to update on O.C. job information log.
5. It was difficult to get accurate performance and financial information from the old system.
6. Some jobs can't be immediately appointed and require Planner intervention, delaying the appointment process.

## **6. System-based Solutions**

Open Contractor and its associated systems are not yet fully embedded within the organisation and there are a number of actions required by the Building Services and Property Services teams to ensure that confidence in the system is raised. This will take time; however, there is a suitable and sufficient support

structure to assist new employees and those who require additional assistance with various aspects of the systems.

We have implemented a number of follow-up actions to resolve the issues detailed in section 5 above:

1. We have logged calls with Capita and Xmbrace to help resolve the text messaging issue and have switched of the function temporarily
2. We are reviewing procedures for linked trades' jobs such that Planners keep all job elements together.
3. The issue of VPN connection reliability for hand-held devices is being looked at through an existing request.
4. There is a call logged with Capita to progress the transfer of PDA users' notes.
5. New 'Insight' reports will be produced using a new reporting tool so that there is accurate management information available to Works Managers.
6. A review of the Schedule of Rates is underway with a view to re-importing this data into all system component parts. This will improve consistency of information and increase the number of jobs that can be appointed immediately.

## **7. Organisation-based Challenges**

As discussed in part in the beginning of this report there has been a number of operational complaints around poor service and quality of work and has part of a review process we have identified a number employee-related contributory factors as follows:-

1. Planner resourcing issues (staff who deal with the appointment phase).
2. Poor quality work from agency staff.
3. Workforce job uncertainty.
4. Changes to working practices.
5. Employee apprehension over the sale of Priory Depot.
6. Local competition for jobs and low comparable salaries.
7. PPM changes – Trades employees out of their comfort zone.

There are other human factors affecting data within the system from which reports, etc. are taken:-

8. Works Managers have not used correct dates when updating job information on the O.C. system. This means if they enter the wrong completion date, the job will show as missing target, even if it was completed on time.
9. There is a backlog of jobs which have not yet been updated because of technical glitches, many now resolved.
10. Trades' employees can make incorrect selections from PDA menus such as 'job abandoned' instead of 'completed – no access'.
11. There is a disconnect between Repairs Assistants taking calls from tenants and Works Planners who manage the trades' workforce.
12. Jobs that extend over more than two days don't go into the DRS scheduling system. This made them difficult to track leading and hard to provide progress updates to tenants.

## **8. Organisation-based Solutions**

We have implemented a number of follow-up actions to resolve the issues detailed in section 7 above:

1. More stand-in Planners have been trained on DRS.
2. We have recently discontinued our arrangements with a number of agency staff as a result of our investigations.
3. We are recruiting into a number of vacant trades' posts.
4. Working practices are still evolving and we are writing procedures and arranging training sessions to ensure clarity and consistency.
5. We are continuing to keep staff informed of progress via briefing notes.
6. This will continue to be a risk as the calibre of staff recruited will not be from the wider pool.
7. Employees who need to be moved into other work areas for operational reasons will be helped to settle into their new work patterns.
8. Training sessions have been arranged for Works Managers to bring them up to speed with changing processes and to emphasise the need for accuracy when updating job information.
9. There is ongoing work to get data up-to-date to improve the quality and accuracy of performance reports.
10. Training sessions are being arranged with PDA users to remind and clarify procedures and data input.
11. It has been agreed that Housing Repairs Team employees and Building Services Works Planners experience sessions with their opposite number to better understand the impact of decisions made by each upon the other.
12. We have changed management responsibilities for these jobs such that all responsive repairs job requests are managed in the same way and by the same Works Manager.

## **9. Performance**

The performance report, appendix (a), shows the jobs completed against target since the implementation of the system back in September 2014. All priorities have remained stable with 3's and 4's being green throughout and 1's and 2's being red.

The performance figures previously reported have been lifted directly from the Housing Revenue Account Scorecard. This is produced from data held by Housing and is constructed in a way to be commensurate with "Housemark" reporting guidelines. The guidelines recommend Performance Indicators for job completion within Priority times that cover all Housing repairs jobs and delivered by all Housing contracted suppliers; this includes the DLO and all the contractors delivering other repairs as described in Section 2 Background.

It is necessary to leave a gap before final data is reported to allow for the full close down process of each job, therefore March's performance statistics are not yet complete. February's data is the newest accurate data available at the point of running the report and this shows that target completions have been achieved across all priorities.

The table identifies improvements in performance since the implementation went live, in fact in January P1's only missed the target by 1.65% and P2's by 0.32%. Whilst this is still a miss, the improvements here should be recognised as a success of the system and processes.

## **10. Environmental and Community Safety Implications**

There are no Environmental or Community Safety implications identified as a result of information or actions contained or referred to within this report.

## **11. Equalities Impact**

There are no Equalities Impact issues identified as a result of information or actions contained or referred to within this report.

## **12. Risk Management**

Risk is being managed in the actions detailed within this report and the wider project strategy.

## **13. Partnership Implications**

None identified

## **14. Recommendation**

That the Tenant Services Management Board continues to support the Building Services team in continuing to evolve, making the necessary changes within Open Contractor and associated systems to improve resilience and develop a fully integrated system suitable for ongoing future service delivery.

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Appendix (a)

BS PERFORMANCE - BARRS - BY TARGET DATE

	PRIORITY	TARGET COMPLETION	Sep-14	Oct-14	Nov-14	Dec-14	Jan-15	Feb-15
TOTAL JOBS FOR COMPLETION IN MONTH			992	1469	1443	1505	1352	1292
CUMULATIVE TOTAL JOBS			992	2461	3904	5409	6761	8053
	P1	98.00%	85.25%	87.39%	96.31%	94.17%	96.35%	98.07%
	P2	94.00%	82.78%	89.55%	88.07%	86.70%	93.68%	94.42%
	P3	85.00%	89.26%	93.56%	88.20%	91.58%	94.63%	95.02%
	P4	85.00%	85.82%	95.72%	94.59%	93.73%	95.07%	97.34%