

Housing Sub Committee

Monday, 2 December 2019

Present: Councillor A Newman (Chair)
Councillors L Darke, John Hunter, A Percy, M Thirlaway,
J Walker, E Parker-Leonard and M Wilson

Apologies: Councillors M Reynolds, L Bell and F Weetman

HO11/19 Appointment of Substitute Members

There were no substitute members appointed.

HO12/19 Declarations of Interest

Councillor M Thirlaway declared a non-registerable personal interest in Item 5, Construction Project, as his father works for North Tyneside Council repairs and maintenance service.

HO13/19 Minutes

It was agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

HO14/19 Construction Project

The Sub-committee received a presentation which provided Members with an update on the delivery of the Construction Project. The presentation explained what had been delivered as part of the project; how the first 6 months had gone; some high-level performance indicators; benefits realised as part of the project; and demonstrations of the repairs booking system. A report considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 25th November 2019 titled 'Construction Project – Delivery and Benefits Realised' had been circulated prior to the meeting as background information.

At its meeting on 27 September 2017, Cabinet agreed not to extend the agreement with Kier and brought delivery arrangements back into direct management of the Authority from 1 April 2019. A project team had been created to develop the correct arrangements to deliver the construction needs of the Authority. The project consisted of 8 workstreams: People, Technology, Logistics, Supply Chain, Accommodation, Design for Non-Housing Construction, Finance and Culture.

The sub-committee was informed that the Authority had successfully TUPE transferred approximately 360 staff to North Tyneside Council from Kier North Tyneside. In addition to this, around 30 existing North Tyneside Council staff migrated into the new service area from the client team to establish a structure to reflect business need, including comprehensive consultations and briefing sessions. An operating structure was developed with full consultation and involvement of trade unions. Transferring staff were successfully auto-enrolled on to the Local Government Pension Scheme and successfully paid on the

first pay day following the transfer. A survey of all repairs staff had been undertaken in order to assess feedback on the new working arrangements and culture of the service.

It was explained that technology was the biggest risk and challenge to delivering the project. Following a procurement exercise, a new ICT system solution, AccuServ, was procured and implemented to manage the repairs and maintenance and construction business. The system allowed the logging of jobs and repairs which were sent directly to the operatives' tablet. The system also sent messages to tenants confirming repair appointments, reminders and alerts on the day when the operative was on the way. Work was ongoing to review and develop the system to best meet the needs of the repairs service.

In relation to logistics, it was noted that a fleet of around 130 vehicles was established with a further 10 electric vehicles being piloted. New tools and kit were also purchased, rather than operating a hiring model. A new supply chain had also been sourced and prepared, ready to deliver business requirements through sub-contracting frameworks. Soft market testing had been undertaken to raise awareness of procurement activity. It was highlighted that there was an emphasis on providing opportunities for smaller, local businesses to deliver work on behalf of the Authority. The sub-committee was informed that contractual review mechanisms had been established in order to monitor supply chain performance.

Members heard that for the first 6 months following the transfer, work continued to progress across all of the 8 workstreams, with project closure at the end of October 2019 and a move to 'business as usual'. During the first 6 months, 18,000 housing repairs had been carried out, nearly 35,000 calls answered by the contact centre, 577 empty homes refurbished ready to be re-let and 1,555 aids and adaptation jobs completed. In relation to performance, it was noted that the level of complaints received in the first 6 months since the transfer had remained at a consistent level to that of before. It had been anticipated that the significant change in service may have caused a spike in complaints, but this had not been the case and data demonstrated a strong start for the new service, with some indicators demonstrating that performance was the same or better in some areas. It was noted that there was still progress and improvements to be made, including the quality of data recorded in order to identify performance.

The sub-committee was shown a demonstration of how the online booking system worked and how an operative would record a job. Officers confirmed that appointments were booked out as either an AM or PM slot, or there was an option for a school run appointment which was between 10am and 2pm. There had been no negative feedback received in relation to the appointment slots available. It was raised by a member of the sub-committee that one of the biggest issues with the complaints service has previously been that multiple repair jobs could not be undertaken at the same appointment. It was explained that linked work and trade was being explored, so that operatives could be provided with sufficient support to enable them to carry out associated works during the course of a repair.

A member of the sub-committee asked if there was a system in place for operatives to report back anything they witnessed when attending appointments that did not seem right. It was explained that there was a 'see something, say something' procedure where an operative would inform a manager if they had concerns following attendance at a property. The information would be reviewed and referred to safeguarding if deemed appropriate.

Officers informed the sub-committee that, going forward, the service would continue to be reviewed with stakeholders, further induction and training provided to improve the culture,

along with further development of supply chain monitoring. Members raised concerns in relation to the Moving In and Moving Out standards and questioned when this would be reviewed. It was noted that the Moving In and Out standards were still in place and that these could be reviewed in light of changes with the service. It was suggested that the sub-committee be involved in the review of the standards and in quality checking.

The Chair thanked officers for the presentation and the work that had been undertaken to successfully transfer the repairs service back into the Local Authority.

It was **agreed** to note the contents of the presentation.