

Minutes

Scrutiny Committee

Venue:	Council Chamber - Civic Centre, Doncaster Road, Selby, YO8 9FT
Date:	Thursday, 17 June 2021
Time:	5.00 pm
Present:	Councillors S Shaw-Wright (Chair), N Reader and J McCartney
Officers present:	Suzan Harrington – Director of Corporate Services and Commissioning (present remotely), June Rothwell – Head of Operational Services, Allison Heap – Customer Services Manager, Phil Hiscott – Strategic Asset Management and Property Services Manager
Others present:	Councillor D Mackay

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Ellis, W Nichols and R Sweeting. There were no substitutes appointed.

2 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest.

3 CHAIR'S ADDRESS TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chair had no address to give to the Committee.

4 HOUSING REPAIRS

The Committee received a report and presentation from Officers about housing repairs at the Council from the Head of Operational Services, the Strategic Asset Management and Property Services Manager and the Customer Services Manager.

The presentation took Members through the services provided by the Council, process for booking repairs, the Repairs Policy itself, how trade operatives receive the information, a recap on responsive repairs including up to date data), the impact of Covid on capacity for repairs, the recovery and improvement plan post-Covid and lastly some information about the current materials shortage. The presentation had been published online as a supplementary agenda item for all Members to see.

Members debated the report and presentation and asked Officers several questions in relation to staff sickness and the effects of the pandemic, the number of void properties and the refurbishment required in them, the targets for and time taken to undertake repairs and refurbishments and gas checks at properties.

Members also asked Officers to investigate if residents that were not Council tenants could join the contract that was used for gas checks, for a fee. Officers were unsure and explained to the Committee that this would have to be checked with the Council's Legal Team.

A Member attending the meeting as a guest praised the quick response of the team to a tenant whose carer had raised a request for a repair; the matter was fixed on the same day. Officers were also pleased to report that they had received compliments as to the quality of the kitchen and bathrooms installed in several properties as part of wider refurbishments.

Officers explained that some of the figures produced from the housing database were difficult to interrogate; the Council's Data and Systems Team had done a great deal of work on them. Almost 19,000 records had been looked through and tidied up, and a new report created. A new software system would be installed and used soon, which would give much better data in the future and ensure that repair jobs progressed properly through the system. The new Civica mobile system that staff were currently using had proved to be a great success already. Customer Service Team members would be able to better communicate with residents to get more information about requested jobs.

Officers confirmed that the Customer Service Unit would still be moving out of the current base in Selby town centre to the Council Offices, but that the requirements for the space had changed due to the pandemic, with more services moving online. For residents and vulnerable customers that needed face to face support, an appointment system would be put in place. The Chair requested that Officers give an update to all Members by email, or as part of the Chief Executive's next bulletin as to these plans for the Customer Service Team.

The Committee asked whether inspections took place prior to work being done to clarify what was required. Officers confirmed that there were supervisors who occasionally attended properties prior to works being started by tradesmen, particularly if the report or request that comes through from the Customer Services Team seems complicated.

Lastly, in relation to apprenticeships, Officers explained that a review of the capacity of the Trades Team had taken place to understand what was required; the new structure was awaiting sign off at present. There would be three apprentice posts in the new structure. Members noted that if there was more capacity for support there would be more apprentices in the team and were very pleased to hear that one of them had been recently awarded Apprentice of the Year.

RESOLVED:

Members noted the presentation and asked that:

- a) Officers investigate if non-Council tenants could join the contract for gas checks; and**
- b) an update on the move of the Customer Services Unit be sent to all Councillors by email or as part of the Chief Executive's next bulletin to Members.**

5 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the work programme for the 2021-22 municipal year.

Officers asked Members to suggest topics for the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner to cover when he attended the November meeting of the committee; these could be sent to Officers by email.

Members were also advised that they could send any other suggestions relating to the rest of the work programme to Officers after the meeting, should they so wish.

RESOLVED:

To note the work programme for 2021-22.

The meeting closed at 6.19 pm.