

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON HOUSING SERVICE STATUS

DIRECTORATE: HOUSING AND INVESTMENT

REPORT AUTHOR: ANDREW MCNEIL, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, STRATEGY AND INVESTMENT

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update the Housing Scrutiny Committee on the current services provided by the directorate for Housing and Investment taking into account the restrictions required in response to the current national lockdown requirements as a consequence of Covid – 19.

2. Background

- 2.1 Following the initial advice and guidance by the Government to the emergence of Covid 19 in spring 2020 the services provided by Housing and Investment have responded to maintain services in an appropriate and safe manner. During 2020 with the easing of restrictions Housing and Investment moved to increase the services being delivered.
- 2.2 In December 2020 further restrictions were announced following the introduction of a tiering system for local authority areas in England. In December Lincoln was placed into Tier 4. In advance of the move to a higher tier we reviewed the scope of services that could be delivered taking into account potential increases in covid response restrictions.
- 2.3 This preparation enabled a swift move by Housing Services to the current lockdown requirements. In all cases we have looked to maintaining services delivering them in a way that is within the current government requirements and looks to ensure the safety of our residents and staff.

Current Service Status

3. Assistant Director Investment

- 3.1 Construction and repair activities can continue to operative within the Government guidance issued. We have decided to prioritise our service delivery to ensure that the most essential repairs and maintenance is carried out and our staff, customers and properties remain safe.

A summary of each key service is as follows:

3.2 **Housing Repairs Service**

HRS have moved to delivering emergency and urgent repairs. We will constantly keep these definitions under review as we may need to understand individual circumstances when deciding whether a repair is needed immediately. Risk assessments and method statements for staff are as a matter of course constantly reviewed and this will continue.

3.3 **Voids**

Void repairs will continue to be delivered under the revised Covid Risk and Method Statement (RAMS). This means that no more than three people can work in a property at any one time.

3.4 **Aids & Adaptations**

This service will continue in line with the customers consent and with a priority on enabling customers to remain independent or return to their home after a hospital stay.

3.5 **Aaron Services**

Aarons have moved to delivering emergency and urgent repairs. Gas servicing will continue to be carried to ensure compliance and safety is maintained. Boiler installations will be delivered to ensure the repairs to heating systems are limited voids.

3.6 **Kier**

Kier will be limited to 8 open elements only, with a maximum of 1 element per property. Operatives have been formed into bubbles

3.7 **Miscellaneous Work Streams**

External Doors, Windows, external environmental work, automatic door openings, external decoration can all continue to be delivered

Major incidents surveys, Gen/Oil servicing, TV Aerial, Lift repairs, lightning conductors, Fire alarms (Service/test/repairs) including automatic opening vents (service/test/reactive) and Emergency Lighting (service/test/reactive) will all continue.

Fire door inspections along with maintenance/repairs will continue.

3.8 **Hamilton House**

Open but with restricted staff and reviewed Risk Assessments and Method Statements/cleaning/Personal Protective Equipment. Office staff within Maintenance and Investment will continue to work from home where possible. We have a limit of 30 in place at Hamilton House.

3.9 Material and PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)

The Managed store will remain open to continue to provide materials and PPE. We have increased our stocks of key PPE to ensure we can continue our service delivery.

4. Assistant Director of Strategy and Investment

The majority of services in this area are delivered remotely and this continues to be the case. On site works for the Extra Care development at De Wint continues as does support for asbestos surveying and works where appropriate

4.1 Safety Assurance Team

Mix of working from home and safe office working where required. Contractors still providing survey testing and removal services. Fire Safety Manager at work and co-ordinating response and support to Housing Repairs Service.

4.2 Resident Involvement

Staff to return to remote working. Continue with remote LTP meetings. Monitor IT capabilities of LTP members. Switch engagement to enhance digital capacity.

4.3 Strategic Housing Function - Delivering De Wint Court

Working groups planning for allocations, finance and communications continue with remote working. Site works continue with management by contractor. Assurances given on contractor safe working.

4.4 Strategic Housing Function - Sincil Bank Neighbourhood Renewal

City of Lincoln Council (CoLC) staff working remotely on community engagement. Office open to support community testing

4.5 Strategic Housing Function -

Delivering NSAP (Rough Sleeper move on accommodation)

First tranche on properties identified. Still visiting empty properties for viewing and establishment of work schedules

4.6 House Purchases – use of RTB receipts.

Working remotely. Viewings currently on empty properties. Purchases continuing.

5. Assistant Director Housing

5.1 As members are aware, we deliver several frontline, essential services on a 24/7/365 basis. Since March 2020 we have followed Government guidance and carried out risk assessments to ensure that we keep staff safe and services running for our customers, many of whom are vulnerable.

5.2 In this current lockdown, with the exception of the Rough Sleeper Team, on site Independent Living Co-Ordinators, LinCare operators, Caretakers and Cleaners, and Voids Support Officers, all staff are working from home and are continuing to replace face to face contact with telephone contact. Staff who are working in the community and LinCare operators work in bubbles to avoid any Covid infection spreading throughout the team so that services can be maintained.

5.3 Officers cover on a rota basis, the Out of Hours service. Officers will work primarily from home and will only carry out home or onsite visits in an emergency.

5.4 A summary of each key service is as follows:

5.5 **Rough Sleeper Team**

Staff members work from home and City Hall in distinct bubbles. Staff work in pairs and are provided with full PPE.

5.6 **Homelessness Team and Temporary Accommodation**

Working from home. Visits/appointments will be made in exceptional circumstances.

5.7 **Housing Solutions Team**

Working from home.

5.8 **Tenancy Services**

Working from home. Will carry out visits in pairs in an emergency. Mutual exchanges are being approved in exceptional circumstances in line with guidance and risk assessments. Full PPE provided where visits are required.

5.9 **Caretaking Service**

Work either on site at a multi storey block or in a mobile 'bubble'. Full PPE provided. The night caretaking service is currently suspended due to the risk of lone working at night. Onsite cover is currently provided until 9pm on Thursday to Sunday.

The mobile service is currently focusing cleaning on higher risk blocks and carrying out fire safety checks.

5.10 **Voids Support**

Officers are still carrying out sign ups and viewings. This is limited to two officers and full PPE is provided.

5.11 **LinCare**

Team members work in bubbles and either work from home or on a rota covering at City Hall. This delivery model is unchanged since March 2020 as it offers maximum protection for the staff and continued service delivery.

5.12 Supported Housing

All non-emergency visits are suspended and replaced by telephone contact and contact using the monitoring equipment.

Specific officers cover the supported housing schemes. Full PPE is provided. Communal rooms remain closed and all visitors to the scheme (housing repairs staff, carers etc.) need to wear face masks on site and adhere to Government guidelines.

5.13 Housing Business Support

Essential support services such as the rents team, Housing IT, continue to work from home

5.14 Safeguarding

Officer continues to work from home assisting and supporting staff across the service and Council and preparing for the Section 11 Audit in the Spring.

6. Organisational Impacts

6.1 Finance

The services outlined above are being delivered within the current Department for Housing and Investment budget.

6.2 Legal Implications

All current services are being delivered following government guidance.

7. Recommendation

7.1 To note the report and provide any comments.

Is this a key decision? No

Do the exempt information categories apply? No

Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply? No

How many appendices does the report contain? 0

List of Background Papers: None

Lead Officer: Andrew McNeil, Assistant Director, Strategy and Investment.

