

SUBJECT:	UPDATE ON THE SCHEDULED REPAIRS TRIAL EXTENSION
DIRECTORATE:	HOUSING AND INVESTMENT
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Scheduled Repairs project delivered during the extended trial period.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The extended Scheduled Repairs trial period began on 9th August 2021 and completes on 4th February 2022.
- 2.2 It is considered that there are numerous advantages and benefits for tenants and for the Council in delivering a Scheduled Repairs service, compared to the previous service delivery. These advantages relate to tenant satisfaction, operational efficiency, operational performance, financial savings, and the environment.
- 2.3 A full analysis of the Scheduled Repairs trial extension will be available in March 2022 following the completion of the trial period on 4th February 2022. This report is an interim update on the extended trial from 9th August 2021 until 4th January 2022.

3. Background

- 3.1 Prior to August 2020 Housing Repairs Service operated a Responsive Repairs service whereby all non-urgent repairs were completed within 20 days and emergency repairs within 24 hours. Operatives were assigned to attend repairs anywhere within the city boundary. Repairs were not organised by location and following the completion of a repair operatives were deployed to undertake the next repair job without reference to the geographical proximity of the next repair to be undertaken.
- 3.2 Scheduled Repairs were introduced on 17th August 2020 on a trial basis for 24 weeks to explore whether the new method of delivering repairs would assist in easing the backlog of repairs. Priority repairs continued to be completed within 24 hours and urgent repairs within 3 days. Scheduled repairs are currently being carried out at set times of the year, across four set areas in the city. Via the Scheduled Repairs model repairs for each of the four areas are scheduled every 12 weeks over a 3-week period.
- 3.3 The Four Areas of the City are
- North (Ermine East, West and Newport)
 - East (St Giles and Monks Road)

- Central (Boultham Moor, Bracebridge, Manse and City Centre)
- South (Birchwood and Hartsholme).

3.4 In principle, carrying out scheduled repairs in one geographic area for a concentrated period means that overall a greater number of repairs can be undertaken with the same amount of labour resource. The reasons for this are:

- Customers can block book appointments that are most suitable for them.
- Unproductive travelling time between different areas of the city is minimised as once a repair or batch of repairs in a property have been completed the operatives next repair appointment will be in the same geographic area of the city.
- Material usage can be planned to ensure that the correct materials are delivered or obtained in time for the appointment. This reduces operative standing time as the materials required for a repair will be available on the operative's vehicle or pre delivered to site to enable the repair or batch of repairs to be completed without delay. This also reduces operative visits to Hamilton House, the JPS Managed Stores, and local merchants.

4. Update on the Scheduled Repairs Trial Period Extension

4.1 Since the trial began on 17th August 2020 it is evident that potentially, there are potential advantages and benefits to delivering Scheduled Repairs when compared to service delivery via the previous system. This included:

- Tenant satisfaction
- Operational efficiency and performance
- Financial savings
- Environmental impact
- Housing stock standard

4.2 During the initial trial period which began in August 2020 it was not possible to gather sufficient conclusive data to evidence that the trial was a success. The trial was extended in order to obtain further data that could be used to establish meaningful conclusions on the effectiveness of any increased productivity and efficiency. The data is required in order to carry out a like for like data comparison to a previous comparable period as this was not possible during the initial trial as a result of various factors that influenced and corrupted the data, these factors included:

- The backlog of 1700 non urgent repairs accrued during 2020 lockdowns.
- The impact of lockdowns during the trial period upon the volume of repairs completed.
- A potential decreased demand in repairs reported and completed due to what may be a reluctance for tenants to admit operatives into their homes for non-urgent matters during lockdown.
- The reclassification of repair timescales during the reporting period.

4.3 Since 9th August 2021 until 4th January 2022:

- The number of repairs orders raised = 9736
- The number of repairs orders attended out of area = 1342
- The number of repairs orders attended in area = 5584
- Repairs orders cancelled = 1100
- The number of follow-on repairs = 202
- The number of no access appointments = 332
- The number of jobs raised and attended out of hours = 1159
- For information purposes the number of repairs orders completed in area (First Time Fix) = 4649 (Please note that this total is included in the number of repairs orders attended in area = 5584)

4.4 Issues encountered during the trial period extension:

- Labour issues

Joinery and Electrical capacity have been affected by early retirement, resignations, and long-term sickness. Five new joiners have now been recruited in what is a difficult labour market. We have continued to struggle to recruit electricians.

- Material issues related to follow on referrals

Core stock levels at the JPS managed stores as well as delays on special orders have had an impact upon follow on's. Both issues have now improved. Some of the issues were national material shortages within the construction sector, areas affected were timber, loft insulation and plastering products. If materials were not available during the scheduled repair area this has then resulted in repairs not being carried out during the agreed 3-week period and has resulted in them being rebooked potentially out of the scheduled repair areas.

The rebooking of repairs outside of the areas not only impacts upon the tenant but impacts the resources that are then available to complete the works in the next scheduled repairs area.

Early in November 2021 a communication was released on our websites and social media platforms to advise of the ongoing material shortages and potential impacts upon the service.

- Booking in of repairs

Our current process for scheduled repairs is that our planning team review all

reported repairs within the 9-week reporting period and then schedule these in with the tenant via a telephone call. While there are benefits of being able to review the appointments prior to scheduling, this has led to several issues.

Some Tenants have called back multiple times to see when their repair is going to be booked and to check we haven't forgotten about them as some will be waiting potentially up to 12 weeks from reporting to be given an appointment confirmation. This creates an increased workload for customer services and resource planners. We have also noted that sometimes this also leads to customer services raising duplicate jobs creating a larger workload for the planners to review the appointments.

On some occasions tenants not always answering their phones when trying to schedule in the repairs, as well as incorrect contact numbers, has led to a number of reported appointments then having to be cancelled. Planners consequentially send out letters and if no further contact is received then the repairs are cancelled. This creates further work for customer services as does the raising of orders when these tenants do get in contact.

The DRS test system is currently being configured to test if we can set the system up to automatically allocate the correct 3-week timeslot based on trade and area. This will enable customer services to offer the tenant an appointment at their first point of contact with alleviating the above issues.

We continue to operate with operatives not on a PDA device, which is causing more manual checking of when jobs are completed or need reallocating.

4.5 Developing the Scheduled Repairs Service

The Scheduled Repairs trial has identified several improvements that could be introduced to further refine service delivery. These include:

- Limiting the number of inspections per repair and encouraging enhanced forward planning from the Resource Planners and Team Leaders to ensure that all relevant appointments stay within the relevant geographic areas.
- Tasks carried out previously by the Customer Services Team such as outgoing calls to tenants are now carried out by HRS Resource Planners, there may be an opportunity to create an HRS Customer Services Team resourced by people with experience of carrying out repairs.
- A Tenant Satisfaction call process could be implemented.
- Any future excess resource deployed on Scheduled repairs could be redeployed to support other work streams such as minor aids and adaptations and voids.
- Under the proposal, repairs for each of the four areas would be scheduled in every 12 weeks over a 3-week period. As further data becomes available the 3-week period may require adjusting and potentially reducing.
- Resource Planners to seek more repairs advice from HRS operatives.
- Keeping tenants informed by sending regular reminders about appointments and how they can cancel them in advance if required.
- Increase the use of text message reminders.

- Technical training for Resource Planners and Customer Services to improve their technical understanding of repairs. This will enable Customer Services to pre-load appointments and use inspect codes for applicable works such as plastering and roofing.
- Re-introduce the diagnostic repairs process for customer service, resource planners and for our customers.
- An enhanced methodology for Team Leaders to review the accuracy of completion times, SOR codes and job descriptions with operatives prior to scheduling appointment durations.
- Operatives given the ability to schedule in follow-on work themselves.
- Increase the level of Team briefings and Team Leader/ operative discussions and feedback sessions including the receipt of briefing information electronically.
- Up to date contact details for tenants are required in order to assist in further reducing “No access appointments”.
- Correct resource allocation and SORs will allow automatic scheduling of repairs, tenants will be able to receive an appointment when first reporting their repair instead of having to wait for a call back.
- New online repairs reporting trial (in progress) including the facility for tenants to report repairs online and choose/ amend appointments at a time that’s convenient for them. Tenants will have the option to receive regular updates regarding their appointment by email or text message, this will reduce any potential ‘no-access’ visits. Tenants will be able to attach photos of repairs when reporting online, this will ensure accurate scheduling of resources for the works and increase the first-time fix rate. To enable this the Customer Service Team will require diagnostic software.
- A new mobile working IT platform will ensure that operatives will have instant access to job tickets via their mobile working device, this not only removes the need for paper-based systems but also allows jobs to be updated and amended by the operative whilst on site. This will ensure that all repairs are closed off with the correct completion status allowing HRS to accurately report on performance.
- Because repairs for each area are planned in the 3 weeks leading up to HRS starting work in the area, any jobs that require pre-inspections (i.e., plastering and glazing works) are now often completed in advance to ensure that the actual works are scheduled in the correct areas.
- Increase the information available for ‘DIY’ videos and review the repairs carried out by the service in line with the repairs policy.

5. Strategic Priorities

5.1 Let’s deliver quality housing

Scheduled Repairs are aligned with the Councils strategic priorities.

- Let’s improve housing standards for all.

Scheduled Repairs should mean better maintained housing stock as repairs are being completed in a more efficient way for the Council, which increases HRS repair capacity as well as enabling a tenant centric service.

5.2 Let's enhance our remarkable place.

Scheduled Repairs are aligned with the Councils strategic priorities.

- Let's preserve the unique character of our city.

The development of the localised welfare unit for operatives on Greetwellgate has been delivered in a way which blends in with the existing historic surroundings and buildings and enhances the aesthetic of the area. The site, which was formerly a poorly maintained garage block, now visibly enhances its location. The presence of maintenance Team Leaders on site and at the welfare unit provides an opportunity for them to undertake regular walkabouts and area inspections so that any visible issues such as fly tipping can be resolved and reported in a timely manner. Further local welfare units are being planned at present.

5.3 Let's reduce all kinds of inequality.

Scheduled Repairs are aligned with the Councils strategic priorities.

- Let's improve the health and quality of life of people living in Lincoln.

Scheduled Repairs should provide an increased repairs capacity to deal with repairs that, if delayed could impact upon health and wellbeing. In addition, the delivery mechanism reduces tenant inconvenience.

5.4 Let's address the challenge of climate change.

Scheduled Repairs are aligned with the Councils strategic priorities.

- Let's ensure our development approach reduces our carbon footprint.

Scheduled repairs will decrease fuel consumption and carbon emissions as fewer journeys need to be made by operatives and the length of journeys that do need to be made are reduced.

6. Organisational Impacts

6.1 Finance (including whole life costs where applicable)

In principle the delivery of Scheduled Repairs will reduce the amount of money the council spends on these types of repairs and enable labour resource to be re-directed. This means:

- A reduction in fuel consumption and spend.
- Labour resource generated through more efficient processes can be redirected to other HRS projects.
- That subcontractor spend is minimised via increasing the capacity for works to be carried out in house with the existing labour resource.

6.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules

N/A.

6.3 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

The Public Sector Equality Duty means that the Council must consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

It requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

6.4 Human Resources

N/A.

6.5 Land, Property and Accommodation

N/A.

6.6 Significant Community Impact

N/A.

6.7 Corporate Health and Safety implications

N/A

7. Risk Implications

7.1 (i) Options Explored

N/A. Scheduled Repairs have been delivered since 17th August 2020 and the Scheduled Repairs service has the potential to operate in a more efficient manner than would be the case if the previous repairs delivery process was utilised.

7.2 ii) Key Risks Associated with the Preferred Approach

It is not considered that there are any risks associated with delivering Scheduled Repairs as opposed to the system used previously.

8. Recommendations

Members to note the contents of the report and agree to receive a further report at the end of the pilot process

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? None

List of Background Papers: None

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