

# **ADULT SOCIAL CARE & HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

## **Agenda Item 37**

Brighton & Hove City Council

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Housing Repairs and Improvement Partnership Progress Report</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> November 2010</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Strategic Director, Place</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Glyn Huelin</b>	<b>Tel: 29-3306</b>
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<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>No</b>		
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

### **FOR GENERAL RELEASE**

#### **1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1. The Housing Repairs & Improvement Partnership with Mears Group Limited commenced on the 1st of April 2010. The partnership is central in delivering better value for money to enable the council to invest more in the maintenance and improvement of the homes it manages.
- 1.2. This progress report covers the first six months of the partnership from April to September 2010.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (1) That members note progress made on delivering the new Repairs & Improvement Partnership.

#### **3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS**

##### **3.1. Background**

- 3.1.1. The Repairs & Improvement Partnership with Mears Group Limited commenced on the 1st April 2010. The partnership covers the whole city and delivers responsive repairs, empty property refurbishments, and most planned works (such as kitchen, bathroom and door replacements). The partnership also provides a repairs desk for residents to report repairs.

3.1.2. As well as aiming to provide better value for money, and improve customer service and the quality of works, the partnership will bring significant added value benefits in this city. These include:

- 200 apprenticeships over the 10 years of the partnership (twice the industry average)
- A variety of other training and work experience opportunities
- A kitchen assembly workshop
- A training academy

3.1.3. The information below provides an overview of the partnership at this stage in the contract.

## 3.2. **Contract Management**

3.2.1. A robust contract management structure has been established that ensures residents are actively involved in monitoring the partnership and in decision making. The partnership is managed by a Core Group that is made up of BHCC officers, Mears officers and residents. The Core Group is responsible for the overall management of the partnership, monitoring of performance and finance and making sure the aims of the partnership are delivered.

3.2.2. A Partnership Group has also been established and reports into the Core Group. This group is responsible for reviewing operational and technical performance, managing risks and resolving any issues that arise.

3.2.3. The first six months of the partnership has seen residents fully involved in the Core Group. Four residents sit on the Core Group, two representatives from the Repairs & Maintenance Monitoring Group and two members of the Asset Management Panel. Over the next three months the council will be working with both the Repairs & Maintenance Monitoring Group and the Asset Management Panel to ensure there is additional resident involvement in the Partnership Group.

3.2.4. In May and June of this year the Audit Commission carried out an inspection of the Partnership's contract management arrangements. This inspection was positive about the improvements made. In their report the Audit Commission identified that *"the housing management service has made good progress over the last 18 months"*. They felt that the partnership *"is working effectively with a clear commitment from all partners to deliver improvement in the repairs and maintenance service for Council residents. There is collective ownership from members, partners and the senior managers to deliver the improvements needed and to maximise value for money."*

3.2.5. The Audit Commission also noted that *"There is a clear commitment to, and focus on, robust management and monitoring of the new repairs and maintenance contract to achieve the Decent Homes Standard target by 2013"* and that *"the Council is setting up a rigorous approach to monitoring and challenging performance. A robust framework is in place to address underperformance quickly, decisively and effectively."*

### **3.3. Resident Involvement and Customer Service**

- 3.3.1. Residents continue to be directly involved in the monitoring and management of the partnership. Officers and residents are also reporting progress to both the Repairs & Maintenance Monitoring Group and the Asset Management Panel, attending Area Panels and deliver regular updates on the Repairs & Improvement Partnership to Housing Management Consultative Committee.
- 3.3.2. Residents have supported the development of the partnership through undertaking a mystery shopping exercise on the Repairs Desk in June and July. Overall results from this were positive, the mystery shoppers indicated that the telephone answering time is quicker than it was when they previously tested the service in September 2009 before the start of the new partnership and there has been a great improvement for customers getting through to the repairs desk on the first attempt.
- 3.3.3. Some issues have also been identified by the mystery shoppers. These include some customers experiencing a longer wait to get through over lunch times, and that Mears need to ensure that repairs desk staff have access to clear information on alternative ways that customers can report repairs or access other relevant council services. A full action plan was agreed by Core Group in August 2010 and will be monitored over the coming months.
- 3.3.4. A further mystery shopping exercise will now be carried out by residents on the out of hours service. The results of this will be reported to the Core Group and to Housing Management Consultative Committee in the next progress report.
- 3.3.5. The repairs desk is now operating an extended local service for residents calling with repair enquiries. During the week the service will run until 6pm and on Saturday mornings it will run from 9am until 1pm.
- 3.3.6. Mears are surveying residents by telephone following the completion of works to their homes. Over the first six months of the partnership 2,556 residents were contacted and 2,467 of these, or 96.5% of residents, were satisfied or very satisfied with the service.
- 3.3.7. These surveys also identified that some operatives and sub-contractors were not wearing Mears uniforms or not presenting their identification card. This has now improved and the 97% of residents surveyed in August said that operatives wore a uniform and presented their identification card. This improved again to 98% in September. A copy of the detailed information collected so far is attached as Appendix 1. Residents should expect all operatives, including sub-contractors, working on the partnership to be wearing a Mears uniform and to present their identification card.

- 3.3.8. There were a total of 90 complaints received over the first six months of the partnership giving an average of 15 per month. This is at the same level as 2009/2010 when complaints averaged 15 per month.
- 3.3.9. The number of complaints has improved from the last quarter of 2009/2010 when there were 55 complaints received. In the first quarter of this year 37 complaints were received and in the second quarter 53 were received.
- 3.3.10. The amount of time taken to respond to complaints has improved this year with complaints being answered in an average of 8.5 days compared to 10.8 days last year. Complaints have been for a variety of reasons with 29 relating to delays in carrying out repairs. The complaints information is included in partnership performance reports so that regular monitoring is available to the core group.

#### **3.4. Performance Information**

- 3.4.1. Detailed performance information has been produced for the partnership since April 2010 and is reviewed at each Core Group meeting. The August 2010 performance report is attached as Appendix 2. The report details year to date results for each performance indicator and uses a traffic light system to show whether performance is on target (green), just below target (amber) or significantly below target (red).
- 3.4.2. The partnership is now completing repairs quickly and has reduced the time taken to complete non-urgent repairs to 9 days (HLPI R2). Emergency repairs are also being completed quickly with 98.5% of repairs being completed within 24 hours (HLPI R3).
- 3.4.3. Performance on urgent repairs (HLPI R4) was below target in the first month of the partnership but following good scrutiny and action by the partnership the performance has now improved with over 97% of urgent repairs completed within 3 days in June, July and August. This means that so far this year 94.31% of urgent repairs were completed within three days. This continued improvement means that overall performance for the year to date is expected to reach the 97% target by the end of the next quarter.

#### **3.5. Planned Works and The Decent Homes Standard**

- 3.5.1. The planned works and decent homes programme includes replacing kitchens, bathrooms, doors and carrying out other works to residents homes such as rewires, external repairs and decorations.
- 3.5.2. Over the first six months the partnership has delivered a 6.13% improvement in decent homes which means that 66.7% or 8,198 of our 12,300 properties now meet the Decent Homes Standard. Progress in improving homes is a key objective for the partnership and Mears and BHCC are working together to ensure that we achieve our target of having 74% of our homes decent by the end of 2010/11.
- 3.5.3. During the first six months 225 new kitchens and 101 new bathrooms have been fitted in resident's homes. The door installation programme has seen

306 new front doors installed and 316 new boilers have been fitted. Current performance on delivery of Decent Homes remains 2.3% behind the estimated target for this point in the year however September saw the biggest improvement in decency since the partnership commenced in April. Programmes have taken additional time to set up and the partnership initially experienced difficulty in accessing resident's homes to undertake surveys. This has resulted in some changes to how the programme is delivered including the following improvements, which have led to much improved access rates:

- Clearer communication in initial survey letters
- Streamlined process focused on the resident
- Instantly informing residents if their kitchen/bathroom will be replaced or not
- Talking to local resident representatives about planned works
- Carrying out workshops explaining decent homes work to residents

3.5.4. The partnership has also made further improvements to communication such as setting up providing regular estate based updates, providing residents with fact sheets about kitchen and bathroom installations and developing a partnership newsletter. In particular the partnership is looking to clearly communicate what residents should expect from the service and is developing a "local offer" for resident's homes.

### 3.6. **Housing Centre**

3.6.1. In March 2010 planning permission was achieved for a centre to house the partnership in the Fairway Trading Estate on Moulsecoomb Way. Following a period of negotiation with the landlords, a twenty year lease has been agreed and signed for the property. This is an exciting opportunity to develop the partnership with Mears and one that brings significant benefits to the council and residents, as well as 'added value' benefits to the wider community and city.

3.6.2. Detailed plans have been completed for the Housing Centre project and a programme has been agreed by the Core Group. The building is currently mainly empty warehouse space and the construction works are extensive and complex. The works to be undertaken include:

- Replacing the roof
- Building and fitting extensive mezzanine floor to house the first floor offices
- Fitting a sustainable heating / cooling system, rainwater recycling system and solar panels
- Fitting electrical and ICT cabling
- Installing a zonal security system

3.6.3. Mears national project team have been brought in to oversee the development of the building through to completion and construction commenced on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2010. It has taken longer than anticipated to get to this point, but the partnership is now confident that the building will be ready for occupation in March 2011.

- 3.6.4. A series of site visits were carried out in October for the Repairs & Maintenance Monitoring Group, Asset Management Panel, local resident representatives, Councillors and staff. These visits explained the plans for the building, the construction process and the key benefits of the project.

### **3.7. Community and Added Benefits**

- 3.7.1. The partnership with Mears provides a number of opportunities to deliver additional benefits to the community. The Housing Centre project has considered several innovations to ensure the building is sustainable. The building will benefit from rainwater recycling, a sustainable heating and cooling system and solar panels.
- 3.7.2. The Housing Centre plans also include an area for residents with resources and meeting space, training facilities and an on-site kitchen assembly area bringing additional employment opportunities to the city.
- 3.7.3. Apprenticeship positions are now being established through the partnership. Mears and the council are also working with the city college to provide additional opportunities for students to carry out work to a number of long term empty properties within the city. These properties provide an opportunity for students to learn skills in a safe and supervised environment and carry out essential work to properties.

### **3.8. Next Steps**

- 3.8.1. The partnership will continue to develop with a focus on ensuring that the good level of performance demonstrated in the first six months of the partnership is maintained and further improvements are delivered in communicating programmed work and delivering a high quality repairs service.
- 3.8.2. The Core Group will monitor the objectives set out in the Partnership Development plan and continue to ensure progress on the Housing Centre project.
- 3.8.3. The partnership will work to deliver the actions identified by residents in the recent mystery shopping exercise and the recommendations identified by the Audit Commission in their report.
- 3.8.4. A twelve month review of the partnership will be undertaken by the Partnering and Performance team and reported to the Core Group and Housing Management Consultative Committee.

## **4. CONSULTATION**

- 4.1. Residents have been actively involved through the Asset Management Panel and Repairs & Maintenance Monitoring Group. Residents attend the Core Group meeting which oversees the strategic direction and operational

effectiveness of the partnership. Residents will also be involved in the Partnership Group.

- 4.2. Regular progress reports are presented to the Repairs & Maintenance Monitoring Group and the Asset Management Panel as well as Housing Consultative Committee.

## **5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

### Financial Implications:

*[Address all capital and revenue financial and property implications arising out of the report proposals. This section to be completed by relevant finance officer]*

- 5.1. The costs of the Housing Repairs and Improvement Strategic Partnership have been included in the 2010/11 HRA Revenue Budget and the three year Capital Programme as approved at Cabinet on 11 February 2010. Financial monitoring against these budgets are reported to Core Group on a monthly basis. As at the end of August no variations to budgets have been reported.
- 5.2. Future savings targets will be monitored and driven through the Partnership Cost Reduction Plan and incorporated into future budget reports.
- 5.3. An update on financial forecasts against budgets for the current financial year will be included in the HRA Revenue Budget 2011/12 report which will be presented to the Housing Management Consultative committee in January 2011.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Susie Allen*

*Date:14 October 2010*

### Legal Implications:

- 5.2. There are no substantive legal implications arising from this update report which is for noting only. However, it is important that contract monitoring continues, to ensure performance against specification, and that monitoring takes place to ensure the planning permission referred to in 3.6.1 above is correctly implemented

*Lawyer Consulted: Oliver Dixon*

*Date:25 October 2010*

### Equalities Implications:

- 5.3. An equalities impact assessment (EIA) has been completed as part of the procurement and mobilisation process. A further EIA will be completed now that the partnership has commenced.

### Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4. A new contract of this size has potential to impact on the city's environment

and carbon emissions. The partnership will aim to minimise its impact on the environment by reducing waste and minimising carbon emissions from its operations.

- 5.5. The partnership will also aim to help residents cut down on energy and water bills by the provision of energy advice and information packs. The partnership is also looking to improve properties by participating in schemes that will improve the energy efficiency of homes and utilise renewable energy sources.
- 5.6. The partnership is committed to re-furbishing the Housing Centre building to a high sustainable standard to minimise its carbon emissions. The refurbishment will include fitting a sustainable heating/cooling system, rainwater recycling system and solar panels. The proposal for an onsite kitchen assembly workshop has the potential to bring sustainability benefits in terms of material use, reduced transportation and local employment.

#### Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.7. The partnership will bring added value benefits which provide community and regeneration benefits to the city. The provision of apprenticeships, onsite training academy and kitchen assembly workshop will bring employment and training opportunities for local people including those that are not in education, employment or training.

#### Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.8. A comprehensive risk register is overseen by the partnership Core Group.

#### Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.9. The contract has the potential to bring significant benefits to the city and its residents. It is also important that a contract of this size does not have a negative impact on established local businesses.

### **6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

- 6.1. This report provides an update on progress with the partnership.

### **7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1. The new partnership enables Housing Management to meet the key objectives of the Procurement Strategy which was agreed in April 2008. The new contract is key to enabling the council to have a sustainable 30 year Business Plan for the housing stock and bring the maximum number of homes to the Brighton & Hove Standard (exceeding the Decent Homes standard).



## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

1. Responsive Repairs Customer Satisfaction Information (April to September 2010)
2. Repairs & Improvement Partnership Performance Report (April to August 2010)

### **Documents In Members' Rooms**

None

### **Background Documents**

None

