

**SERVICE DELIVERY AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY PANEL REPORTS**

**(1) REVIEW OF HOUSING REPAIRS SERVICE**

- 19 There was submitted a report (docketed) dated 5 September 2002 by the Chief Executive presenting the conclusions of the Service Delivery and Performance Scrutiny Panel on their review of the Housing Repairs Service.

**Decided:**

- (1) that the conclusions reached by the Service Delivery and Performance Scrutiny Panel's Review of the Housing Repairs Service be noted;
- (2) that the Panel's support for the arrangements for housing repairs, piloted in Bellshill, be noted, and
- (3) that the report be remitted to the Housing and Technical Services Committee for consideration.

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

To: <b>POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE</b>		<b>Subject : SERVICE DELIVERY AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY PANEL</b> <b>Review Report : HOUSING REPAIRS SERVICE</b>
From: <b>CHIEF EXECUTIVE</b>		
Date: 05.09.02	Ref: AZG/Corpol/8orgdev	

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report presents the conclusions of the Service Delivery and Performance Scrutiny Panel's Review of the Housing Repairs Service
- 1.2 The Panel is asking the Policy and Resources Committee to note its findings.

**2.0 Background**

- 2.1 When considering the 2001 Quarterly Performance Review for Quarter one, (April to June), the Scrutiny Panel noted that although the time taken to complete housing repairs had dipped slightly below the high standards set by this authority, performance compared favourably with other Scottish Local Authorities during 2000 - 2001.
- 2.2 The Panel then proceeded to investigate various issues looking for ways the Panel could assist the department to maintain a high standard of service.

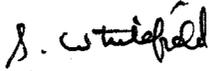
**3.0 The Report**

- 3.1 The report charts the discussions and investigations undertaken by the Panel and the issues which were investigated.
- 3.2 The Panel concluded that initial feedback from the Pilot project which had been initiated at the Bellshill Area Office through Business Change as part of the Modernising Government initiative delivered by the North Lanarkshire Direct Team had been successful. It had achieved significant improvements to the operation and performance of the services delivered by the Area Office.
- 3.3 The Panel did not conclude the review by setting out the means by which the Panel's recommendations could be implemented. Instead its conclusion was to support the new arrangements piloted in Bellshill and to request that they be fully evaluated with a view to extending good practice throughout the department.

#### 4 Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee :-

- 1) Notes the conclusions reached by the Service Delivery and Performance Scrutiny Panel's Review of the Housing Repairs Service
- 2) Notes the Panel's support for the arrangements for housing repairs piloted in Bellshill.



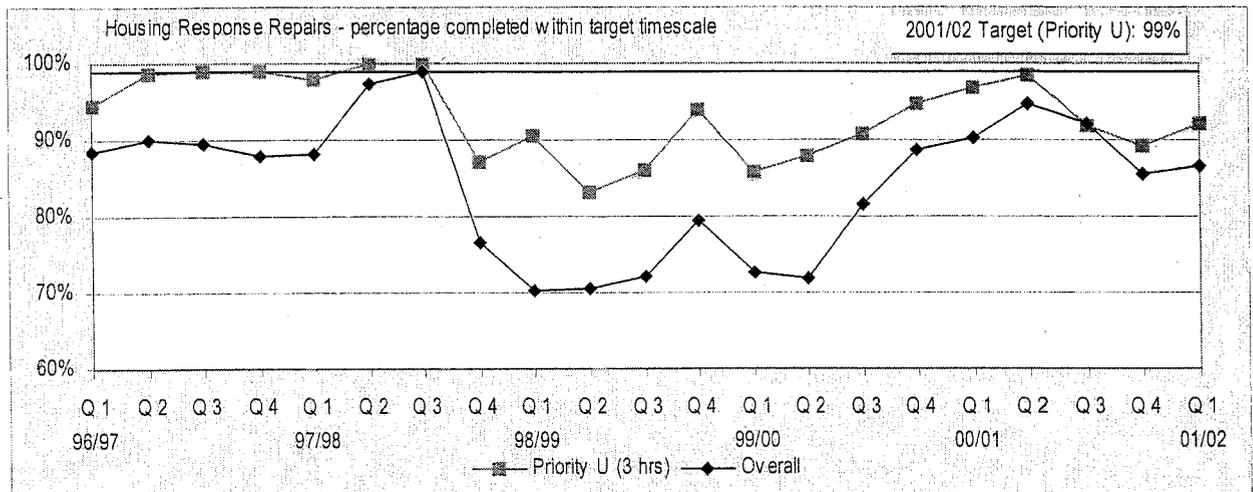
**Chief Executive**

Local Government Access to Information Act For further information on this report please contact Alex Gardiner, Corporate Policy and Performance Manager on extension 2231

## Report on the Review of the Housing Repairs Service – August 2002

## 1 Introduction and Remit

1.1 The Scrutiny Panel previously considered a report by the Chief Executive on Quarterly Performance Review for Quarter one, (April to June) for the financial year 2001/2002. During consideration of the report, the Panel noted that although performance in relation to the Housing Repairs Response Times Indicator had shown a slight improvement during that period, this was a reversal of a downward trend over the previous two Quarters, and which have failed to meet the overall and priority targets set by the Council, as depicted in the chart below:



1.2 Following discussion, the Scrutiny Panel determined to:-

- investigate and identify the reasons for the general decline in the Council's performance for the Housing Repairs Response Times Indicator, which for the first quarterly period in 2001/2002 was 93% of Priority U repairs (3 hours) from a target figure of 99%, and 87% of all repairs completed within the target timescale, and
- identify potential actions to improve the Council's performance in this respect and make recommendations accordingly.

The Scrutiny Panel concluded that the analysis of the recent past performance indicated that the time taken to complete Housing Response Repairs had dipped slightly below the high standards set by this authority

## 2. The National Context

- 2.1 Figures provided by Audit Scotland show that for the financial year 2000/2001 North Lanarkshire Council carried out 195,861 repairs to Council homes. That figure represents the highest number of repairs for any Local Authority in Scotland.
- 2.2 North Lanarkshire Council has the second highest number of council houses in Scotland, with 48,824 (based on year 2000 figures). The only Local Authority in Scotland with more council dwellings is Glasgow City Council.
- 2.3 During that period, the performance of North Lanarkshire Council in undertaking repairs within target times was one of the best in Scotland, completing 90.9% of all repairs within the target timescale, compared to a national average figure of 84.9%. In addition, the Council is credited with completing 94% of repairs on time of a target of 24 hours, compared to the Scottish average of 89.4%. A full analysis of the performance of all Scottish Local Authorities is attached as Appendix 1.

Although the Council's performance in relation to Housing Repairs has fallen short of its own targets, its level of performance compared favourably with other Scottish Local Authorities during 2000/2001.

## 3 Consideration by Scrutiny Panel

- 3.1 The Panel requested that a report be prepared by the Director of Housing and Property Services on the operation of the housing repairs service and that the report should in particular report on:
- Housing repairs inspection procedures
  - Pre-inspection arrangements by Housing Repairs Inspectors
  - The use of Call centres as a central focus for dealing with requests for housing repairs
- 3.2 In due course, the Scrutiny Panel considered a report from the Director of Housing and Property Services on:
- the methods of delivery of the repairs service;
  - the volume and types of work issued;
  - the service providers involved in delivering the service;
  - the performance of the service;
  - current issues affecting service delivery, and
  - planned improvements to the housing repairs service.
- 3.3 The Director of Housing and Property Services was heard further in these matters and provided a presentation which:

- outlined the key facts regarding methods of service delivery, the volume of repairs lines and annual budgets;
  - detailed the operational arrangements between the Council and the three Public Private Partnership companies;
  - provided details on the type of works carried out by private contractors and the value of these works;
  - contained details of actual Departmental performance for specific categories of repair compared to its specified performance targets;
  - compared the performance of the Housing Repairs Service within North Lanarkshire to that of other Authorities, using Audit Commission data;
  - provided details of various methods employed to obtain customer feedback on the Repairs Service, and
  - provided details of a number of significant issues currently facing the Repairs Service
- 3.4 Following the presentation, the members of the Scrutiny Panel identified a number of issues and raised a number of questions on the operation of the Repairs Service, which, it was agreed, would be researched by the Director and appropriate responses provided at the next meeting of the Panel.
- 3.5 The Scrutiny Panel considered a further report by the Director of Housing and Property Services which provided further information on the housing repairs service and contained his responses to the various questions asked by Members at the previous meeting and relating to a diverse range of factors such as:
- The issue of work lines and cases where duplication occurred
  - Repeat complaints about repairs not being undertaken to the satisfaction of the tenant
  - The Departments complaints procedure
  - Repairs monitoring procedures
  - Operational arrangements with the PPPs
  - Housing repairs inspection procedures
  - Pre-inspection arrangements by Housing Repairs Inspectors
  - The use of Call centres as a central focus for dealing with requests for housing repairs

- 3.6 Reference was made to the recent Business Change exercise as part of the Modernising Government agenda which had recently been initiated on the Housing Repairs Service, arising from which a pilot project had commenced at the Bellshill Housing Office and which aimed to improve the delivery and efficiency of the Housing Repairs service. It was agreed to receive a presentation on this matter and to visit Bellshill Housing Office to view the Scheme in operation.
- 3.7 At a meeting of the Scrutiny Panel in February the Panel heard a presentation on the Housing Repairs Pilot Project by the Assistant Chief Executive on the nature of the pilot scheme and the Business Change exercise which was being undertaken by the North Lanarkshire Direct Team.
- 3.8 The Panel then received a presentation by a Project Officer within the North Lanarkshire Direct Team, which:-
- outlined the “Lean Thinking” approach to the review of the housing repairs service, by way of working with Senior Management and staff within the Department;
  - indicated that the first step in the approach was to identify, from a customer’s point of view:
    - the various components that make up the service,
    - the definition of all points of interaction between customers and the Council
    - how information was gathered on “What Mattered to Customers?”, and
    - how well the current process responds to demand;
  - included examples of contacts/demand which were preferred and provided examples of contacts/demand which were unwanted;
  - indicated that customers had identified that “What Mattered Most?” was to
    - only want to phone or visit once
    - have their repair done within a reasonable time
    - have their repair undertaken at a time which suits them, and
    - receive a good quality of repair;
  - intimated that those involved had “walked the process”, recording each step and any associated issues, analysing each step to determine how it affected the flow of work and what impact it had on the customer;
  - advised how the process was examined and redesigned to suit customer requirements, including the removal or re-design of non-value steps in the process, the direction of resources to only do “value” work and ensure that an efficient process was in place for each type of demand;
  - provided examples of typical non-value factors which may affect the flow of work such as badly designed IT systems, working with unreliable information or doing things for internal reasons;
  - provided operational details of the pilot “Lean Thinking” Programme being undertaken at Bellshill Housing Office which included:-
    - a streamlined process with fewer steps;
    - improved information at the start of the process;
    - an increased proportion of directly issued work;

- the identification of a suitably experienced Chargehand at Morrison Property Care to schedule work;
  - improved linkage between the Housing and Property Services Department and Morrison Property Care, and
  - a number of other revised measures;
- indicated that once the redesigned process had been assessed and tested, it could then be rolled out to other areas and, if the results were deemed satisfactory, point of contact services could be transferred to a contact centre, and
  - that it was intended to run with the Pilot Project for a period of eight weeks, after which an assessment would be undertaken of the results and a view taken as to how the housing repairs service could be delivered in the future.

3.9 Following the presentation, the Members of the Scrutiny Panel visited Bellshill Housing Office to witness the pilot exercise in operation.

#### **4 Evaluation of Pilot exercise**

- 4.1 During the eight week Pilot Business Change exercise, significant improvements in the operation and performance of the Housing Repairs service were recorded. The Pilot also reduced "Failure" demand to a minimal level.
- 4.2 As a result of the success of the initial Pilot, similar methodologies and working practices were introduced to the Airdrie and Viewpark area Housing Offices in early July.
- 4.3 The revised working practices have been actively and fully supported by Housing Services and Morrison Property Care management and staff. Management are currently developing IT reports on "end-to-end" times. This is the time from the job being reported by customers until the satisfactory completion of work. This constitutes an essential report, as it will reflect the actual time taken, from a customer perspective, and will hopefully further emphasise the improvements achieved through the new working practices.
- 4.4 Following the production of a further evaluation of the Scheme, it is expected that the process can be "rolled out" incrementally to all other Area Offices.

An evaluation of the initial Pilot Business Change project recorded significant improvements in the operation and performance of the Housing Repairs service at Bellshill Housing Office and has now been extended to two further Area Offices on a trial basis.

#### **5 Recommendations**

- 5.1 The Scrutiny Panel are asked to note the success of the Business Change pilot project and the resulting improvements in performance/response times which may result in a "roll out" of the process to all other Area Offices, and
- 5.2 The Scrutiny Panel are asked, given that the matter of Housing Repairs Response Times is under active consideration as part of the Local Government Modernisation Agenda, to agree that no further action be taken meantime, pending the finalisation of that Review.

Should any Member require further information on the foregoing, please contact Alex Gardiner, Corporate Policy and Performance Manager at Ext. 2231 or Tom Gaffney, Chief Committee Services Officer at Ext. 2342

Table 3: Repairs to council houses

COUNCIL	Total number of repairs	Percentage of repairs that were due to be completed within 24 hours	Percentage of repairs completed within target times		Number of repairs per dwelling	
			All	Within 24 hours	All	Within 24 hours
Aberdeen City	108,408	30.5	86.0	96.8	4.0	1.6
Aberdeenshire	88,729	26.4	83.8	88.1	3.0	0.8
Angus	23,450	22.7	78.5	86.7	2.4	0.5
Argyll & Bute*	20,376	28.9	74.5	80.6	3.0	0.9
Clackmannanshire	26,843	41.9	86.7	95.5	4.3	1.8
Dumfries & Gallopway	51,376	41.2	84.7	88.2	4.0	1.7
Dundee City	96,854	36.0	84.7	96.3	5.0	1.8
East Ayrshire	78,150	43.8	56.7	57.5	4.4	1.9
East Dunbartonshire	51,885	34.3	82.6	93.2	8.5	2.9
East Lothian	37,159	28.3	67.4	88.4	3.8	1.1
East Renfrewshire	11,997	33.0	86.0	80.0	2.9	1.0
Edinburgh, City of	143,580	37.3	83.0	81.3	5.0	1.9
Eilean Siar*	4,027	44.4	85.1	88.9	2.0	0.9
Falkirk	67,404	31.8	91.1	96.8	3.2	1.0
Fife	188,610	24.8	85.7	87.8	4.8	1.2
Glasgow City	167,830	35.7	92.8	87.0	1.9	0.7
Highland	50,474	28.2	93.7	97.5	2.9	0.8
Inverclyde	48,001	39.0	79.1	90.7	4.6	1.8
Midlothian*	20,373	35.3	67.9	73.1	2.7	1.0
Moray	19,039	16.9	78.0	93.6	2.7	0.5
North Ayrshire*	40,931	34.1	70.8	85.6	2.4	0.8
North Lanarkshire	195,851	37.5	90.9	94.0	4.2	1.6
Orkney Islands	1,844	21.9	83.7	87.6	2.0	0.4
Perth & Kinross	26,929	25.5	81.4	91.8	2.8	0.7
Renfrewshire	102,546	20.3	87.9	94.7	5.2	1.1
Scottish Borders	20,741	8.1	90.8	96.1	2.8	0.2
Shetland Islands	6,891	25.8	79.7	93.0	3.9	1.0
South Ayrshire	45,944	32.1	81.0	88.7	4.4	1.4
South Lanarkshire	124,512	34.1	95.1	96.7	3.6	1.2
Stirling	36,556	33.5	88.7	92.8	4.6	1.8
West Dunbartonshire	60,363	31.0	73.7	94.9	4.2	1.3
West Lothian	60,736	16.3	93.0	96.2	3.7	0.6
All Scotland	1,990,358	32.5	84.9	89.4	3.6	1.2