Cyngor Sir Powys / Powys County Council

Economy, Residents, Communities and Governance Scrutiny Committee
October 2019

REPORT AUTHOR: Head of Housing and Community Development

SUBJECT: Tenant Satisfaction and Customer First Improvement Plan

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REPORT FOR: Health, Care and Housing Scrutiny Committee

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1. Introduction

1.1 In August the Health, Care and Housing Scrutiny Committee considered the outcome of the Tenant Satisfaction Survey conducted earlier in the year.

1.2 The Committee noted that an action plan to address the concerns identified in the 'STAR' survey was being developed and asked that it be presented to a future meeting.

2 Customer First Improvement Plan Description

2.1 The Customer First Improvement Plan (see Appendix A) sets out work already underway to improve tenant satisfaction along with initiatives and future changes to policy and process. It has been developed in consultation with tenant representatives and important stakeholders, including Heart of Wales Property Services (HoWPS), the organisation that provides day-to-day repairs and maintenance to municipal homes. This is important as the area in need of the most improvement is in the field of repairs and maintenance.

2.2 The Customer First Improvement Plan has been discussed at the Strategic Housing Partnership, with an agreement that all members of the partnership will share comparable performance data and examples of policy and procedures that contribute to high levels of customer satisfaction.

2.3 The Customer First Improvement Plan is being led, on behalf of the Housing Management Team, by the Housing Strategy Team Leader. The Housing Strategy team lead on tenant and customer engagement so are well placed to have a first-hand understanding and intelligence of how the Council's housing services are experienced by tenants and indeed, all other users of housing services such as people registering with the council for an affordable home. The plan is being monitored monthly by the Housing Management Team.

2.4 The document attached to this report as Appendix A sets out the current Customer First Improvement Plan. This is a live document and under regular review.

3. Intention of the Plan

3.1 The intention of the Customer First Improvement Plan is to increase customer satisfaction ratings to be among the best in Wales. It will also improve the Council's understanding of how its services, and those of its contractors such as HoWPS and those delivering the Welsh Housing Quality Standard programmes, are received by tenants and residents. This in turn will help increase the value for money that the Council receives from its investment in repairing and maintaining council-owned homes.

3.2 This will be achieved by focusing on ongoing and constant monitoring of service quality and moving away from set-piece tenant engagement structures, such as residents groups, towards a model focused on mass communication and feedback. This is to encourage a high proportion of tenants to share their experiences and ideas for improvements. Housing Service is considering a re-structure, in order to better align the way in which elements of the services are co-ordinated and ensure a more appropriate and efficient response to customer enquiries and requests.

3.3 Joint working with HoWPS will be enhanced with a number of changes already introduced, including for example more quality assurance of the repairs process from service request to completion of work.

3.4 Officers will be encouraged to engage more regularly and closely with Councillors in order to benefit from the local knowledge and insight that Councillors have about their communities.

4 Scrutiny Committee Comments and Observations

4.1 The Housing Service will be taking the Customer First Improvement Plan forward as a live document, which will change in the light of evidence of the impact of work being taken to improve customer satisfaction. Feedback and comments of the Health Social Care and Housing Scrutiny Committee on its content and approach will be a major contribution to the success of the plan.

4.2 The next STAR survey for Powys will be conducted in 2021, in line with good practice which recommends undertaking such surveys once every two or three years. This is to allow time for improved policy and process to have an impact on the customer experience.

Appendix A

Powys Housing Services/Customer First Improvement Plan

Date	*October 7th 2019*

Contacting the Council

STAR 2019 Data: 47% states the service listens and acts upon it

STAR 2019 Comments: 55% related to communication, including difficult to contact, waiting for anything to happen and things not being clear.

Activity	Action	Accountable Officer	Responsible Officer	Progress to Date/Next Steps	Timescale
Call and Enquiry Handling	Consideration to be given to a joint Powys/Heart of Wales Property Services Call Handling Centre	Senior Manager, Landlord Services	Resources Team Leader	Informal discussion has been held with Heart of Wales Property Services (HoWPS) and the principle agreed by Housing Management Team and Tenant Scrutiny Panel.	Proposal to be worked up by 30/12/19
Call and Enquiry Handling	HoWPS - speed up time to answer calls and e-mails, from both tenants and Powys officers	Client Services Team Leader	HoWPS	Regular meetings between Client Services Team Leader and HoWPS established	On-going
Call and Enquiry Handling	Worktrays to be checked daily by all front line officers	All Team Leaders	All Front Line Officers	Team Leaders to use regular monitoring reports of Work Tray activity to help encourage prompt responses.	On-going
Call and Enquiry Handling	Web-chat	Senior Manager, Landlord Services	Resources Team Leader	Discussion held with Powys IT	31/01/2020

Direction of Calls and Enquiries	Quality of information passed to officers to be more comprehensive, to allow them to make rapid and informed responses to clients	Resources Team Leader	First Contact Officers	Resources Team Leader undertaking a refresh of First Contact Officers' guidance to ensure that calls go to the Work Tray of the right person, first time, every time. Straplines will include contact number and brief description of the call	31/10/2019
Direction of Calls and Enquiries	More accurate direction of enquiries to the right person or department, to allow for quicker and 'right first time' responses to clients	Resources and Client Services Team Leaders	First Contact Officers	Powys First Contact Officers to be given a set of key questions to help make sure that calls are directed to right officer or department. To help improve repairs and maintenance responses, a shared Building Manual to be introduced for both First Contact Officers and HoWPS call handlers.	30/11/2019
Direction of Calls and Enquiries	Clarity for tenants calling regarding previously reported repairs	Resources Team Leader	First Contact Officers	First Contact Officers asked to advise tenants that in cases where the tenant feel HoWPS has not responded to their satisfaction to reported repairs, the tenant should contact Heart of Wales directly to encourage a prompt response. Tenants are able, if necessary, to lodge a formal complaint with HoWPS at complaints@howps.co.uk. Any such calls will be recorded by the Council to support	30/09/2019

				additional quality assurance of HoWPS services.	
Direction of Calls and Enquiries	Social Services to be advised to report repairs and complaints directly HoWPS	Resources Team Leader	Senior Manager - Mental Health & Disabilities	Senior Manager - Mental Health & Disabilities contacted and asked to inform all staff.	Completed
Direction of Calls and Enquiries	Councillors to be advised to report repairs and complaints directly to Heart of Wales Property Services	Senior Manager Landlord Services	Member Support Services Manager	Message passed to Member Support Services Manager for circulation to Members	Completed
Self-service	HoWPS Customer Portal Development	Client Services Team Leader	Heart of Wales property services	Kier are working on the portal to address the need to allow for on-line service requests reporting.	01/03/2020
Self-service	Review of how user friendly Abritas (Homes in Powys ICT system) is for users	Housing Strategy Team Leader	Engagement Officers (South)	User Group to be set up to understand user experiences of Abritas and accessing Homes in Powys	30/11/2019
Being There	Make sure that people are always available to liaise with clients	Housing Management Team	Team Leaders	All Powys staff to keep calendars up to update; line managers to be responsible that all absence is covered.	On-going

Repairs and Maintenance

STAR 2019 Data: 54% satisfied with repairs and maintenance; 32% was very or fairly dissatisfied with the service and 15% neither satisfied or dissatisfied
STAR 2019 Comments: 52% related to repairs and maintenance. The majority were about waiting for repairs.
Satisfaction Monitoring Powys May 2019: 26 phoned about repairs and maintenance. 19 were not satisfied with the outcome.

Activity	Action	Accountable Officer	Responsible Officer	Progress to Date/Next Steps	Timescale
Quality Assurance	Triannual Home MoT to improve relationships with tenants, gather service feedback and encourage preventative repairs & maintenance and Capital Investment	All Team Leaders	Service Improvement Officer and Housing Management Team Leader (Newtown)	Develop format and follow-through for Tri-annual Home MoT, for trial in Q4 2019-2020 and, if successful, roll-out in 2020-2021	31/03/2020
Quality Assurance	Improve knowledge of customer experience of the complete Repairs & Maintenance process by First Contact Officers calling clients to share their repairs service experience	Resources Team Leader	First Contact Officers	HoWPS advised that Powys First Contact Officers will be undertaking QA calls.	01/10/2019 subject to shared ICT capability being in place
Quality Assurance	Improve knowledge of customer experience of completed Repairs & Maintenance works by increasing number of job satisfaction surveys	Client Services Team Leader	HoWPS	HoWPS Key Performance Indicator H/QA/1 (Number of customer satisfaction surveys completed as a percentage of jobs completed) was increased from 15% to 35%, effective August 2019	Completed
Quality Assurance	Cancelled, abandoned or uncompleted repair & maintenance jobs to be monitored and challenged	Client Services Team Leader	HoWPS	Full details from HoWPS of all cancelled and uncompleted jobs to be shared with immediate effect.	31/10/19

Quality Assurance	Improve knowledge of long term customer experience of completed Welsh Housing Quality Standard works	Planned Maintenance and Improvement team Leader	Resident Liaison Officers	Research programme and questionnaire to be developed	31/12/2019
Contract Management	Encourage better performance by contractors	Client Services Team Leader	Housing Solicitor	Contracts being review to see where there is scope to work more effectively with contractors to improve performance	31/12/2019

Listening to Tenants and Clients

STAR 2019 Data: 47% stated the service listens and acts upon it
STAR 2019 Data: 78% finds staff approachable and friendly

Activity	Action	Accountable Officer	Responsible Officer	Progress to Date/Next Steps	Timescale
Understanding	Deeper understanding of, from tenants perspective, how services can be improved	Housing Strategy Team Leader	Engagement Strategy Officer	Tenant Scrutiny Panel reviewed the survey results in September and support the need for improvement.	On-going
Understanding	Continuous and extensive understanding of service and housing needs to inform development of policy and practice	Housing Strategy Team Leader	Engagement Strategy Officer	Engagement team to refocus activity on gathering, interpreting and analysing intelligence and feedback from as wide a range of clients as possible. Repairs Surgeries to have a wider emit as Housing Surgeries. Pop-up Powys full	Pilot to begin 1/10/19 and to be reviewed 01/2020

				trial (using Library Service vehicle)	
Understanding	Engage with disabled people	Housing Strategy Team Leader	Service Improvement Officer	Current status is that initial conversations took place with 'Break Down Barriers' group and two level access groups. Next step is to agree how best to take this further forward.	30/11/2019
Responsive	Make sure service standards are in line with expectations and available resources	Housing Strategy Team Leader	Service Improvement Officer	01.04.19: Draft Customer Experience Standard published. Tenant Scrutiny Panel preferred at that time to retain the current suite of Service Standards. Further discussion with the Panel is needed as part of taking forward this Customer First Improvement Plan	Customer Experience Standard simplified the current suite of standards.
Responsive	Making Careline responsive to the needs of clients	Tenancy Services Manager	Housing Management Team Leader Brecon	Consultation with all Careline clients taking place in Q2 and Q3 2019-20 to find out real demand for the service. This will inform renewal programme in 2020-2021	31/03/2020

Responsive	Tailoring decoration of voids to tenant needs and capabilities	Client Services Team Leader	Senior Housing Surveyors	New voids policy introduced more bespoke decorating options, with greater use of vouchers and decorating packs to allow tenants to choose their own approach to décor (where void properties need decoration)	31/12/2019
Quality Assurance	Understand why new tenants report after a year in their new home, higher levels of disatisfaction than more established tenants	Housing Strategy Team Leader	Engagement Strategy Officer Service Improvement Officer	Satisfaction survey of new tenants asking about allocating and condition of property and general home-finding service provided by Housing Services.	31/10/2019
Quality Assurance	Understand why tenants aged under 35 years old report higher levels of disatisfaction than older tenants	Housing Strategy Team Leader	Engagement Strategy Officer Service Improvement Officer	Meet with 20 families with young children to hear what they have to say about our services. Analyse statistics in more detail and keep Tenant Scrutiny Panel informed.	31/12/19
Culture Club	Rolling programme of customer care training and development to encourage a helpful culture	Resources Team Leader	All members of Housing Services	Phase One Development Days successfully completed. Second session January 2020 for those unable to attend the summer 2019 sessions. Phase 2 to be developed IN Q4	31/03/2020
Caring	Smoke alarm checks on all visits to demonstrate customer health & safety care for all clients	Housing Management Team	All officers visiting tenanted properties	'Scarlet Pointernels' and Selfie Sticks issued and all visiting officers required to undertake checks.	On-going

Accountability	Accountability to Councillors to encourage Housing Services to improve customer care	Senior Manager Landlord services	Housing Strategy Team Leader	STAR Survey reported to Scrutiny Committee. Update report and Action Plan to be presented to Scrutiny Committee October 2019	

Keeping Everyone Informed

Activity	Action	Accountable Officer	Responsible Officer	Progress to Date/Next Steps	Timescale
Keeping Members Informed	Any events organised to be notified to relevant ward members	Housing Strategy Team Leader	Engagement Officers		On-going
Keeping it local	Officers to engage regularly with Councillors about housing services	Tenancy Services Manager	All Team Leaders		On-going
Regular and relevant communications to all tenants	Review efficacy of Open House and WHQS Newsletter	Housing Strategy Team Leader	Engagement Strategy Officer	Options under consideration: on-line only or retain printed edition; merge Open House and WHQS or retain separate editions?	31/12/2019