



Report of: **Director of Housing and Environment**

Relevant Lead Member: **Councillor Nicola Pryce-Roberts**

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SUBJECT: CUSTOMER FEEDBACK Q3 & Q4 2023/2024 IN RELATION TO WATES PROPERTY SERVICES LIMITED.

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on the Quarter 3 and 4 Customer Feedback data received in relation to the Council's responsive repairs and kitchen replacement contractor Wates, and the actions being taken as a result of the data to improve the service provided.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The update provided in this report be noted.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On the 31st March 2020 the Council entered into a responsive repairs contract with Wates Property Services Limited. The contract includes responsive repairs and maintenance, works to void properties, cyclical decorations, ad hoc planned works, and component replacements. The contact is a 10-year contract with an option to extend for a further 5 years.
- 3.2 On 25th July 2023 the Council agreed a 2-year kitchen replacement contract with Wates.

4.0 REPAIRS DATA

- 4.1 To put the data received via our Customer Feedback Policy into context it is necessary to understand the number of repairs and kitchen replacements that have taken place over Quarter 3 (Q3) & 4 (Q4). Q3 includes data from 1st October 2023 to 31st December 2023 inclusive, and Q4 from 1st January 2024 to 30th April 2024 inclusive.

- 4.2 The number of repair jobs and kitchen replacements carried out by Wates is as follows.

Month	Repairs	Kitchen Replacements	Total jobs carried out by Wates
October	1,581	3	1,584
November	1,323	10	1,333
December	1,097	18	1,115
January	1,284	24	1,308
February	1,159	9	1,168
March	1,581	10	1,591

Wates carried out a total of 4,001 repairs in Q3 and 4,024 jobs in Q4. They carried out 31 kitchen replacements in Q3 and 43 in Q4

5.0 ANALYSIS OF CUSTOMER FEEDBACK DATA

- 5.1 This report analyses the complaint data received via the Council's Customer Feedback Process, along with Voicescape data. Voicescape is a system that sends phone surveys as soon as a repair is completed, allowing us to gain instantaneous feedback from our tenants. Detailed data is shown at Appendix A.
- 5.2 An analysis of complaints received via our Customer Feedback Process in relation to Wates is detailed as follows:

Quarter	Number of complaints received about the repairs & asset service	Number of complaints received in relation to Wates	% of total complaints in relation to Wates	% of complaints in relation to repairs and kitchen replacements carried out
Q3	46	35	76%	0.87%
Q4	60	39	65%	0.96%

Complaints in relation to Wates therefore totalling less than 1% of total repairs.

- 5.3 Analysis of the complaints data shows that the main themes for complaints relate to works not completed in time and contractor failure to complete the job first time.
- 5.4 Voicescape data shows that in each quarter 82% of tenants were satisfied. The main theme of dissatisfaction was works not being completed in time.
- 5.5 Wates record their own satisfaction data in relation to repairs which is derived from their automated text messaging system. The satisfaction target is 95% and has been recorded at October 97.03%, November 95.4%, December 95%, January 92.81%, February 93%, and March 92.2%. The reasons for the lower figures in Q4 (January to March) relate to issues with staffing levels, which is being remedied by additional subcontractors being onboarded and Wates

increasing their internal resources. The annual customer satisfaction recorded by wates for 2023/24 was 95.4% against a target of 95%.

- 5.6 Complaints have been benchmarked against Housemark data. Housemark is the leading data and insight company for the UK housing sector and is jointly owned by the National Housing Federation and the Chartered Institute for Housing. The mid-year data for 2023/24 (1st April 2023 to 30 September 2023) details that the median percentage of tenant satisfaction with the overall repairs service was 77.3%. The median satisfaction with the time taken to complete the most recent repair was 69.0%. Therefore, both the Council's and Wates satisfaction data shows that our tenants are more satisfied than the average benchmarked by Housemark.
- 5.7 Voicescape is not currently collecting feedback data in respect of works delivered via the investment program however, it will begin to do so from June.
- 5.8 In relation to the kitchen replacement program surveys are issued to tenants 3 to 4 weeks following handover of completed works. Upon receiving the returned questionnaire, data is analysed, and any outstanding issues are rectified. Issues directly relating to poor service delivery are discussed with the contractor at progress meetings, with a specific view to identifying lessons learnt to improve service delivery going forward.
- 5.9 A summary of the kitchen replacement feedback for Q3 & Q4 is shown below. It details the customer satisfaction as a percentage out of the number of questionnaires returned.

Kitchen Programme Q3/Q4 - 23/24 Overall Customer Satisfaction					
Questionnaire Issued	Questionnaire Received	Poor	Good	Excellent	No Comment
74	19	1%	5%	16%	3%

The main reason for dissatisfaction related to the works taking longer than expected or that the contractor failed to arrive when they said they would.

6.0 IMPROVEMENTS BEING MADE TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS

- 6.1 The Council has been working with Wates to improve the service provided to tenants. In Q3 and Q4 a number of away days were held. These involved managers and operatives from Wates, along with Council officers, discussing the management and handling of customer feedback. The away days focussed on how the overall customer journey and standard of service could be improved. The feedback and improvement opportunities identified have been incorporated into a service improvement plan which is being implemented.
- 6.2 A complaints working group and associated action plan has been introduced. The purpose of this working group is to identify recurring themes, actions to improve the service provided, and to undertake an analysis to evidence that the actions implemented are having a positive impact on tenants.
- 6.3 Wates have recently appointed a dedicated Repairs Liaison Officer who contacts customers once a complaint is made, manages the complaint through to

resolution, and monitors the improvements required to stop reoccurring complaint themes.

6.4 A significant proportion of complaints relate to repairs not being carried out quickly enough, however in a proportion of these cases Wates are still within the contract timescales for completing the works. A review of the repair timescales is being undertaken to ensure that they better meet the needs of tenants. Tenants were consulted on the revised repair priorities on 25th March 2024, and based on the feedback provided changes are being made. Work is now underway to assign new priorities to all repair categories.

6.5 Further improvements identified as a result of feedback include:

- Development of an asbestos leaflet to ensure tenants are aware of the Council's requirements to undertake asbestos testing and the importance of this. This will enable tenants to better understand the impact that testing may have on timescales for the completion of repair work.
- Introduction of a damp script for the Council's Customer Services Team to support them when triaging reports of damp and mould.
- Introduction of a patch structure for surveyors to enable them to build relations with tenants in each patch area and provide tenants with easier access to surveyors. Drop-in sessions with surveyors will be promoted to enable tenants to understand how and when they can contact their patch surveyor.
- Procurement of an additional framework of contractors, without any guarantee of work, to enable the Council to complete work in a timely manner, in the event that Wates are not able to provide a specific trade operative.
- The recruitment of additional contractors and in house operatives by Wates to reduce the length of time a tenant waits for a repair to be completed.
- Introduction of regular face to face meetings between Council Officers and Wates contractors to build better relationships. Along with a shared working space to support collaborative working to resolve issues as soon as they arise.

7.0 COMPLIMENTS

7.1 Wates also received a number of compliments throughout Q3 & Q4. 8 were received in relation to the quality of work, the professionalism of Wates operatives and how thorough the scheduling team are.

8.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no significant sustainability impacts associated with this report and, in particular, no significant impact on crime and disorder.

9.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 A more effective repairs service and relationship with repairs contractors will ensure that that resources are used more effectively and reduce costs.

10.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

10.1 This report is for information only and does not require a separate risk assessment.

11.0 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

11.1 An improved repairs service will promote good health and wellbeing, enable people to flourish, and enable us to more effectively repair issues which can lead to ill health.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this report.

Equality Impact Assessment

No decision is required. The report is for information only.

Appendices

A – Customer Feedback Data