

FINANCE & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6th December 2022
Answers to Questions at the meeting

more details regarding the underspend on HRA for bathroom and kitchen improvements, information regarding the programme for clearing the backlog and whether there was a target deadline to achieve this, (*minute 2022/23 26*).

Officer / Cabinet Lead Member response:

J Tomlinson Ltd has been appointed to deliver the kitchen and standard bathroom programme. Mobilisation is in progress. The bathroom stream has started in the first week of January 2023. The kitchen programme is expected to start in late January 2023.

Kitchens

There are 139 properties from financial years April 2019 to March 2022 and 223 from April 2022 to March 2023 financial year (total 415).

Bathrooms improvements

There are 167 properties from financial years April 2020 to March 2022 and 232 from April 2022 to March 2023 financial year (total 399).

This backlog is expected to be cleared at the end of the financial year 2024-2025..

more details regarding the completion of adaptations under the DFG, some properties had been waiting for multiple years for work to be carried out and should be prioritised, information regarding the programme for clearing the backlog, and whether there was a shortage of contractors to complete the work, (*minute 2022/23 26*).

Officer / Cabinet Lead Member response:

This task involves a significant amount of time and skill and needs to be completed rigorously to ensure our customers' needs are being met and our resources are being used effectively and appropriately.

The average time from application to completion of works during quarter 3 of 2022/23 was 19 weeks, which is within the target of 20 weeks. This is an average which means some individual cases have waited for longer periods.

Factors which have contributed to longer waiting times include:

- Delays in Occupational Therapy assessments which is the responsibility of Leicestershire County Council and there is currently an 11-month delay.
- Disputes about works, resulting in need for reassessments by Technical Officers and/or reassessments by Occupational Therapist and/or negotiations
- Disputes about costs or customer contributions
- More complex cases that take longer to assess and progress
- Delays in Technical Officer assessments due to a vacant Technical Officer post (see below)

The team is currently dealing with 133 cases. 104 of these cases have been allocated

to and assessed by a Technical Officer and there is a waiting list of 29 cases.

The three oldest cases are:

- Application date 3rd September 2020 – The customer's condition has changed and a further assessment by an Occupational Therapist (Leicestershire County Council) is required before the application can be progressed
- Application date 22nd September 2020 – The customer has declined some of the adaptations that were originally recommended and a further assessment by an Occupational Therapist (Leicestershire County Council) is required before the application can be progressed
- Application date 22nd January 2021 – The application was originally for adaptation works for 1 child and it has since been identified that another child in the household also requires adaptation works and a further assessment by an Occupational Therapist (Leicestershire County Council) is required before the application can be progressed.

The principal reasons for the backlog are therefore delays relating to Occupational Therapy Assessments by Leicestershire County Council and the difficulties that we have had in recruiting a Technical Officer.

There are two full-time equivalent Technical Officer posts, one of which is vacant. The Service have put a considerable amount of effort into finding a suitably qualified and experienced replacement. The vacancy was recently re-advertised, multiple applications have been received and interviewing will begin shortly. If the Service fails to successfully fill the post, it will seek to recruit an interim agency staff member and continue to advertise. The vacant post is currently being covered by an existing staff member under an 'acting-up' arrangement. The permanent Technical Officer is focusing on assessments for the more complex cases and the interim Technical Officer is focusing on assessments for the more straightforward cases.

A review of outstanding cases is in the process of being carried out to identify the cases that can be progressed most quickly. Of the 104 cases that have been allocated to and assessed by a Technical Officer, only 6 can be progressed as a further assessment by an Occupational Therapist is required for 98 of these cases. A review of the 33 cases that have not yet been assessed by a Technical Officer is being carried out to identify the cases that have current Occupational Therapy recommendations in place and can be progressed. The cases with current Occupational Therapy recommendations will be prioritised.

The service is aiming to clear the waiting list of Technical Officer assessments by 31st March 2023.

from the Head of Contracts, Leisure, Waste and Environment with respect to undertaking mowing trials in some locations and how this would alter mowing frequencies. (*minute 2022/23 26*)

Officer / Cabinet Lead Member response:

A review will be conducted to identify suitable sites for mowing trials and to determine the revised frequency. The trials would take place on low priority sites (not in parks, cemeteries or sports pitches) and would be focused on increasing the biodiversity of the sites by reducing mowing frequencies to encourage longer grass and wildflowers. Mowing could be reduced to 2 cuts per annum at some sites, although perimeter mowing and informal pathways may still be cut more frequently at the selected sites.