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<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Report Track:</b>	<b>HPDC 20/1/2014</b>

**HOUSING POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
20 JANUARY 2014  
OUT OF HOURS REPAIRS SERVICE REVIEW**

**1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To review the out of hours emergency repairs service.

**2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the Housing Policy Development Committee review the out of hours emergency repairs service and identify any potential improvements for consideration by Cabinet.

**3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendation**

- 3.1 This report presents information regarding the Council's out of hours emergency repairs service to inform a review by the Housing Policy Development Committee.
- 3.2 The Committee are requested to consider the information and identify any potential improvements for consideration by Cabinet.

**4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 The provision of an out of hours emergency repairs service contributes to the service aim to "maintain and improve the facilities and energy efficiency of the Council's housing stock", which forms part of the Housing Portfolio section of the agreed 2013-14 "Place" Priority Delivery Plan.

**5 Report Detail**

- 5.1 The Council undertakes, as part of its responsive repairs service, emergency repairs “outside of normal office hours”.
- 5.2 Whilst the service has been the subject of continual improvements over many years, it has not been subject to any formal review. As a result, the Housing Policy Development Committee on 12 August 2013 agreed to review the out of hours repairs service as part of its work programme for the 2013-14 municipal year.

**The Out of Hours Repairs Service**

- 5.3 The out of hours repairs service operates from 5.00 p.m. to 8.00 a.m. Monday to Friday and during weekends and Bank Holidays.
- 5.4 The service covers emergency repairs “which involve a risk to the household’s health and safety or serious damage” to the property, details of which are attached as Appendix 1.
- 5.5 Tenants needing to report an emergency repair out of normal office hours continue to use the Council’s normal telephone number. Upon calling, they receive a pre-recorded message which provides the option of being transferred to the Council’s Central Control who receive all out of hours repairs requests.
- 5.6 The Central Control operative determines whether the repair is included within the “emergency repair category” and whether it is necessary to arrange for a repair operative to visit the property.
- 5.7 A decision whether or not to undertake an out of hours repair therefore rests with the Central Control operative, who will use their discretion in certain circumstances. It is the Council’s policy to undertake all emergency repairs within 24 hours and as a result some emergency repairs reported at 10.00 p.m. on a Sunday would not be undertaken out of hours, whereas the same emergency repairs if reported on a Friday evening would be undertaken out of hours.
- 5.8 In cases where a visit by a repair operative is deemed necessary, this is undertaken by:-
- (i) P.H. Jones where emergency repair request relates to a gas or solid fuel heating appliance.
  - (ii) The Housing Maintenance Section in relation to all other emergency repair requests.
- 5.9 Both P.H. Jones and the Housing Maintenance Section operate a rota system of repair operatives who are on “standby”, outside normal office hours. A Gas Maintenance Engineer (with the facility to “call out” further Engineers if required) is available through P.H. Jones, whilst four multi-skilled operatives are available through the Housing Maintenance Section, covering the following trades:-

- (i) General plumbing
  - (ii) Electrical works
  - (iii) Carpentry (including glazing)
  - (iv) Drainage emergencies
- 5.10 The number of gas engineers and repair operatives on standby is increased during bad weather periods.
- 5.11 Where a repair operative is required to attend a property, it is the Council's policy that the works undertaken are limited to those to make the repair problem safe. A full repair is then undertaken as soon as possible within normal office hours. Minor repairs are, however, usually fully rectified as part of the emergency callout.
- 5.12 On occasions, fire or flood damage may result in a property being uninhabitable. In cases where the household cannot make alternative temporary arrangements themselves, the out of hours Homelessness Standby Officer will be contacted in order that temporary accommodation is secured.
- 5.13 Where a heating system cannot be repaired, tenants are offered temporary heating facilities in the form of electric fan heaters. These heaters are "gifted" to the tenant as the cost collecting and "testing" the heaters (if returned) exceeds their cost. Temporary hot water heating facilities can also be supplied in cases where the property does not have an alternative method of heating water through an electric immersion heater.

**Repairs undertaken "Out of Hours"**

- 5.14 The number of repairs which have been undertaken out of hours are set out below:-

	<u>2012-13</u>	<u>2013-14</u> <u>(to 31/12/13)</u>	<u>Total</u>
P.H. Jones (Heating repairs)	1,030	543	1,573
Housing Maintenance Section (other repairs)	1,381	967	2,348
	2,411	1,510	3,921

- 5.15 The cost of out of hours repairs undertaken by P.H. Jones are included within the "fixed fee" which is paid for each of the Council's properties through the Gas and Solid Fuel Servicing and Maintenance Contract. There are therefore no additional costs regardless of the number of out of hours repairs undertaken.
- 5.16 However, the cost of out of hours repairs undertaken by the Housing Maintenance Section is determined by a "schedule of rates" which includes a "premium" for repairs undertaken out of hours. There is therefore an additional cost which increases with the number of out of hours repairs undertaken.

5.17 Customer satisfaction is not monitored separately for the out of hours repairs service but is incorporated within satisfaction for the overall response repairs service. Current satisfaction rates are:-

- (i) Satisfaction with the quality of repair - 98%
- (ii) Satisfaction with the overall response repairs service - 93%

5.18 Consideration is being given to providing separate satisfaction figures for the out of hours repairs service, as part of the implementation of the replacement housing IT system.

#### **Future Action**

5.19 This report presents information regarding the Council's out of hours repairs service to inform a review by the Housing Policy Development Committee. The Committee are requested to consider the information and identify any potential improvements for consideration by Cabinet.

## **6 Implications**

### **6.1 Financial**

The out of hours repairs service is funded from the following budgets within the Housing Revenue Account:-

- (i) Gas and solid fuel maintenance (as part of the Maintenance Contract held by P.H. Jones).
- (ii) Responsive repairs.

Provision to continue the current service standard has been made within the proposed HRA budgets for the period 2014-15 to 2016-17 which will be considered by Cabinet on 30 January 2014.

### **6.2 Legal**

Section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 requires the Council to keep specified parts of its rented dwellings in repair and proper working order.

### **6.3 Human Resources**

The provision of standby allowances and callout rates for employees within the Housing Maintenance Section forms an appendix to the Council's Pay and Grading Structure for Craft Employees.

### **6.4 Section 17 (Crime Prevention)**

A number of emergency out of hours repairs are undertaken by make a property secure after vandalism or a "break in".

**6.5 Human Rights Act**

None

**6.6 Data Protection**

None

**6.7 Risk Management**

Out of hours emergency repairs are undertaken where there is a risk to the household's health and safety or serious damage to the property.

**6.8 Equality & Diversity**

None

**6.9 Best Value**

None

**7 Appendices to the Report**

Appendix 1: Out of Hours Emergency Repairs

**Previous Consideration**

None

**Background Papers**

None

**OUT OF HOURS EMERGENCY REPAIRS**

- Gas escapes, fumes and CO detector activation.
- Total failure of central heating system.
- Failure of only form of heat in living room – for vulnerable tenants.
- Boiler/central heating overheating.
- Water excessively hot.
- Total loss of power.
- Unsafe power or lighting socket.
- Total loss of water supply.
- Temporary repair to leaking roof <sup>\*1</sup>
- Blocked or leaking foul drain, soil stack or toilet pan (where there is no other working toilet in the property).
- Toilet not flushing (where there is no other working toilet in the property).
- Leak from water pipe, tank or cistern.
- Insecure outside window door or lock.

Note <sup>\*1</sup>: Operatives do not undertake external roofing work during inclement weather as a result of health and safety.