

Property Division

Covid19 Service Position
Statement

Community & Regeneration
Scrutiny Committee

13th November 2020

carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Cyngor **Sir Gâr**
Carmarthenshire
County Council



1. What is the purpose of this report?

The purpose of this report is to provide Community & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee with a summary of the impact COVID 19 has had on Property Division's Services over the last 8 months

The Report covers the following areas of the Property Division which are covered by the Community & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee:

- Housing Services
 - New Homes
 - Repairs and Maintenance

A position statement on other Property Division functions will be reported to other relevant Scrutiny Committees.

2. What has been the impact of Covid on Property's services?

The Covid restrictions, in particular the Wales-wide lockdowns and Llanelli Health Protection Zone (HPZ), have had a significant impact on the Property Division's activities. A range of functions were suspended over recent months, as set out below:

Construction of New Homes

Most of our construction sites were closed by our contractors during lockdown because of staffing and material supply constraints. We have been working with the range of contractors to restart each site as soon as possible, to ensure delivery of the projects but also to support contractor cashflow. All contractors are now back on site, but completion dates have slipped as a result and current estimated completion dates are set out below. These dates are subject to change depending on any further Covid-related measures:

Garreglwyd, Pembrey:
January 2021

Dylan, Llwynhendy:
Phase 1: December 2020
Phase 2: February 2021
Phase 3: September 2021

Maespiode, Llandybie:
Summer 2021

Glanmor Terrace, Burry Port:
December 2022 but with earlier handover on a phased basis

Gwynfryn, Ammanford:
Phase 1: June 2021
Phase 2: July 2021

Carmarthenshire Homes Standard Works (re-roofing, re-rendering, bathroom / kitchen renewals and sheltered housing works)

Delivery of our Carmarthenshire Homes Standard works were suspended and have not yet recommenced. The delay in completing these improvements will continue to have an impact on those occupying our homes.

Work previously planned for 2020/21 was suspended in March because of the Lockdown. We are currently preparing to restart the programme as soon as possible.

Tenders for the 2021/22 programme were about to be issued in March and were put on hold. These documents are currently being revisited and reviewed so tenders can be sought as soon as possible

Non-essential Maintenance

All non-essential maintenance works were suspended in March to reduce the risk of Covid infection. At the outset of the first lockdown communication was issued to all tenants to advise that only essential or safety maintenance works would be undertaken and that we would collate any non-urgent works for future implementation. This message was repeated when the Llanelli Health Protection Zone and the recent Fire-break lockdown were put in place. As a result, there was a significant reduction in requests for non-essential responsive maintenance.

The number of non-essential maintenance requests increased in September up until the Llanelli HPZ during October. Despite the long periods of lockdown, Property Maintenance has been able to complete 37.5% (689) of job requests. This leaves a remaining non-essential responsive backlog of 62.5% (1,149) which will be delivered once government restrictions allow. The

graphs below set out the number and category of repairs requested from April to October, for information.

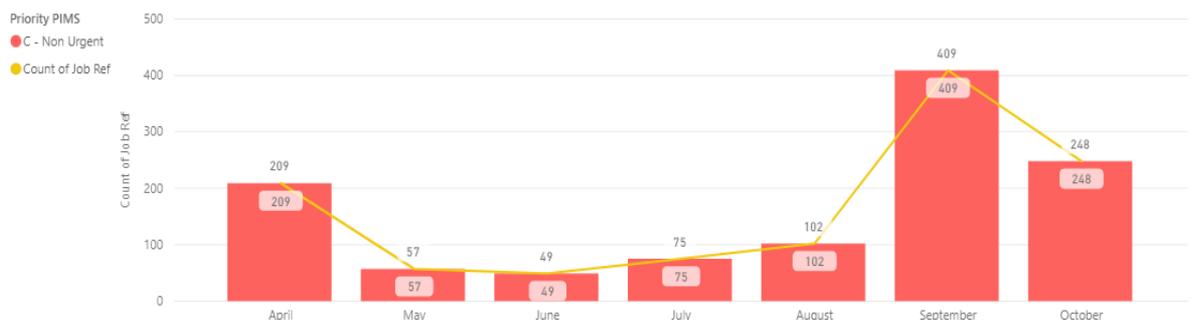


Housing Repairs Demands

Number of Jobs Received
10.75K



Despite the significant impact of Covid on our ability to deliver work, response times for non-essential maintenance that we have been able to undertake currently stands at 15.6 days. We are, however, likely to experience a significant increase in turnaround times in coming months due to starting work on the backlog once restrictions are eased. The graph below shows the non-essential works still in progress and the month they were received. The number of non-urgent jobs is also expected to further increase as tenants start to report more readily, after the current lockdown. The ability and timescales to reduce the backlog will be dependent on the availability of contractors, any future restrictions, and the level of demand for responsive maintenance over the coming winter months.



Property Maintenance overall responsive timescales for urgent and essential work currently stands at an average of 2.6 days. This is currently less than previous years but not comparable due to the reduction of non-essential work demands. This trend is increasing with October data showing 4.2 days due to the current backlog together with increasing non-urgent maintenance requests.

The Building Inspection Team has not been undertaking non-essential inspections so it is anticipated that, once inspections resume, we anticipate that there will also be significant latent maintenance work.

Essential servicing

We continued to deliver essential servicing within tenants' homes. This included the servicing of boilers, solid fuel appliances, smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors and electrical installations. Contractors' safe working practices were reviewed to ensure appropriate measures were implemented as part of the service delivery.

Radon Testing Programme

During January and February 2020, just before the lockdown, we instigated a programme of radon monitoring within council properties. Phase 1 involved placing radon detectors in nearly 500 properties across the county (mainly in the north within higher risk areas). We originally programmed collection of these detectors in May 2020 but, due to lockdown restrictions, this was not possible due to the risk of cross infection. Collection of these detectors is about to commence and will be completed during November and December 2020.

3. What have been the workforce implications?

As lockdown was imposed, a range of Council buildings were closed to the public and staff to encourage home working in accordance with Welsh Government guidelines. Some staff continued to require access to buildings to undertake their work, but this has been closely monitored to ensure access is limited only to those requiring it. To support re-opening of services we introduced an internal independent verification process to ensure that social distancing and other safety measures were in place before any building was

reopened, to ensure the safety of our staff and public. The closure of buildings has significantly reduced the availability of face-to-face service delivery to the public, which has shifted to phone and internet communication.

A range of buildings continue to remain closed and we will be reviewing our property needs for the future. The new ways of working from home are likely to provide an opportunity to reduce our office requirements and focus more fully on buildings that deliver direct services to the public.

Staff have been outstanding throughout the pandemic, in continuing to support people in our communities, and take on challenges that they would never previously have foreseen. For example, Property staff not able to continue with their usual work have been redeployed to help with delivery of food and personal protective equipment (PPE) and in the PPE distribution centre

We are conscious that this has been a hugely difficult time for staff managing both work and challenging situations at home, and staff have been exemplary in the commitment and dedication they have shown.

It should also be noted that tenants, residents, and members have been very understanding during this period, accepting the challenging times we all have faced and the impact this can have on the delivery of the service.