



Internal Audit Report

To: Head of Housing Services
Subject: Housing: Responsive Repairs
Audit report ref: IAR0607-18
Date: 2nd May 2007

Control Objective 1: Tenants have good access to the repairs service.
Risk: Repairs not carried out when required. Reduced tenant satisfaction.

Expected control	Audit findings	Expected control met	Audit recommendation <i>and management response, officer responsible and date for implementation</i>
1.1 The repairs service is easily accessible by tenants.	<p>The service is well publicised, for example in the Tenants Handbook, on the internet, and in magazines for all Gedling households (<i>Contacts</i> and <i>Open Door</i>).</p> <p>Tenants can make contact by phone, in person (at the one-stop shop in the Civic Centre), by fax, email or by letter. Most tenants use the phone. Two Housing Assistants operate the phones and make appointments using a computerised housing management system called <i>Saffron</i>. The one-stop shop also has access to <i>Saffron</i> although it cannot make appointments for contractors to carry out repairs.</p> <p>There are two different daytime phone numbers, respectively for the South and North of the District. There is also a different out-of-hours number for emergencies. However the magazines for residents and tenants (<i>Contacts</i> and <i>Open Door</i>) and the internet give a different out-of-hours emergency number (0800 096 0306) from that in the Tenants Handbook (07850 764913). Also the internet does not provide the daytime phone numbers.</p> <p>Languageline and Minicom are available to help improve the access of non-English speaking and deaf residents, but these methods are rarely, if ever, used to contact the repairs service.</p>	Mainly	<p>The correct out-of-hours emergency number should be provided in all publicity, and the daytime phone numbers should also be publicised on the internet. (Low Risk)</p> <p><u>Management Response</u></p> <p>The report states that the out of hours emergency number for repairs is different in the tenants handbook and that the internet does not provide any daytime telephone numbers, we would like to point out that this is not the case. The current tenants handbook does in fact give the same emergency call out number as other council literature, there are also daytime telephone numbers for repairs shown on the internet site under housing repairs, there is also a copy of the tenants handbook on the internet site which shows the emergency call out number (0800 096 0306) which is the number in other council literature.</p> <p><u>Officer Responsible for Implementation</u></p> <p>N/a</p>

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	<p>The number of repairs generated by each contact method is not monitored. At the time of our audit some work had just started on monitoring the number of incoming phone calls (see 1.2 below).</p> <p>We found satisfactory arrangements to handle tenants who are the source of too many unnecessary requests for repairs. This included visits to address the reasons for this occurring, and the Housing Assistants being aware of which tenants make such requests.</p>		<p><u>Date for Implementation</u></p> <p>N/a</p>
<p>1.2 Staffing levels are sufficient to meet tenants' demand.</p>	<p>Daytime working hours are 8:45 to 17:15, Monday to Thursday, and 8:45 to 16:45 on Friday. Two Housing Assistants operate the phones during the day. Calls can also be answered by other staff in the office and, in a reciprocal arrangement, can also be diverted to the planned maintenance section.</p> <p>Outside working hours, there is a rota to ensure that a Technical Officer is always on-call. Each contractor also always has someone on-call.</p> <p>We were unable to contact the department on two days during our audit because of problems with the Council's phone system. General dissatisfaction with the phone system has led to preparations for a new system in 2007. The IT Support section had recently started to produce statistics to enable the number of missed calls to be monitored. In the week ending 11 November 2006 this report showed 1,050 calls were received, of which 544 (52%) were not answered. Although the phone system is known to be unreliable, our experience, and that of the repairs staff, was not as bad as suggested by these statistics. The accuracy of the statistics is therefore doubted.</p> <p>The department is currently monitoring the number and times of incoming phone calls on Mondays and Wednesdays (Mondays are the busiest day) to identify peak times and help to plan when staffing has to be maximised.</p>	<p>Partly</p>	<p>Reliable statistics for the number of unanswered calls should be obtained.</p> <p>(Medium Risk)</p> <p><u>Management Response</u></p> <p>We acknowledge that there are problems with our telephone system and would like to confirm that the council is currently in the process of procuring an updated system, this should be installed later this year (2007) and will provide the opportunity to monitor all calls and responses in a more effective manner.</p> <p><u>Officer Responsible for Implementation</u></p> <p>Diane Grattage – Property Maintenance Manager</p> <p><u>Date for Implementation</u></p> <p>31/10/07</p>

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Expected control	Audit findings	Expected control met	Audit recommendation <i>and management response, officer responsible and date for implementation</i>
			<p>The unreliability of the phone system should be investigated and corrective action taken to improve reliability. (Medium Risk)</p> <p><u>Management Response</u> As above.</p> <p><u>Officer Responsible for Implementation</u> Diane Grattage – Property Maintenance Manager</p> <p><u>Date for Implementation</u> 31/10/07</p>
1.3 Appointments with tenants are made promptly and conveniently.	<p>Appointments are made, as far as possible, between 8.30 am and 4.30 pm, on weekdays and will only be made if there is an adult in the house to meet the officer or contractor.</p> <p>Weekend and evening appointments are not offered, although we were informed that a small amount of repair work has been carried out on a Saturday morning.</p> <p>For emergency and urgent repairs (priority levels E and A) appointments are made at the time the tenant phones up. For emergency repairs, the tenant is requested to remain at home until the contractor visits to carry out the repair.</p> <p>For lower priority repairs (levels B, C and D) a notification is posted to the tenant showing the target completion date. The contractor will then attend to the job when convenient, arranging the visit by either phoning just before planning to visit, or calling on chance.</p> <p>For these lower priority repairs (levels B, C and D) there are plans to introduce, possibly in early 2007, an appointment</p>	Mainly	<p>Consideration should be given to introducing weekend and evening appointments for tenants – in line with the Audit Commission guidance.¹ (Low Risk)</p> <p><u>Management Response</u> We are currently working with our main partnering contractor to implement a daytime appointment booking system covering morning and afternoon slots for routine repairs.</p> <p><u>Officer Responsible for Implementation</u> Diane Grattage – Property Maintenance Manager</p> <p><u>Date for Implementation</u> 31/10/07</p>

¹ the Audit Commission's 'Housing Repairs and Maintenance Handbook' upon which our audit was primarily based.

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	<p>booking system based on a spreadsheet. Each day will have morning and afternoon slots for carpentry, plumbing and electricians, reflecting the contractor's staffing levels. When a day's appointments are all filled, the spreadsheet will be emailed to the contractor.</p> <p>We found satisfactory arrangements to handle tenants who do not honour appointments. The contractor posts a card through the letterbox and the tenant must phone to rearrange the visit. If the tenant does not respond the job is cancelled.</p>		

Control Objective 2: Repairs are prioritised appropriately.

Risk: Costly priority and emergency work. Work is not targeted at homes with the greatest need.

Expected control	Audit findings	Expected control met	Audit recommendation <i>and management response, officer responsible and date for implementation</i>
2.1 There are definitions for each priority of responsive repair.	<p>The definitions of what type of repairs are included in each of the five priority levels are detailed in the Tenants Handbook, the Housing Assistants' ISO 9001 working procedures and on the internet. However these do not distinguish clearly between repairs in priority levels B (within 7 days) and C (within 14 days).</p> <p>The priority given to jobs does not take into account the vulnerability of tenants, such as the elderly or those with poor health. Information to identify such vulnerable tenants is not included on <i>Saffron</i>. The Housing Assistant will take into account vulnerabilities when prioritising the repair, if they become aware of them. This can be by the tenant informing them of such matters or because they are in a warden-aided complex.</p>	Mainly	<p>See 4.1 below</p> <p>A policy regarding the prioritisation of repairs for vulnerable tenants should be introduced. (Low Risk)</p> <p><u>Management Response</u></p> <p>Wherever possible the vulnerability of the tenants is taken into consideration, especially at the point of contact with the housing assistants. Repairs priorities are often changed to meet the requirements of vulnerable tenants and specific information is provided to the contractor to ensure repairs are carried out promptly.</p> <p><u>Officer Responsible for Implementation</u></p> <p>Diane Grattage – Property Maintenance Manager</p> <p><u>Date for Implementation</u></p> <p>31/10/07</p>
2.2 All staff have clear guidance on prioritisation.	<p>Instructions for answering tenants' requests for repairs are documented in ISO 9001 working procedures which were issued in March 2006. The Housing Assistants are familiar with these working procedures.</p> <p>We sampled 30 jobs issued to contractors during October and November 2006. The sample was evenly divided between the two housing assistants. We found that the correct priority was given to all 30 jobs.</p>		
2.3 Priorities are determined when a repair is requested.	<p>The priority of the repair is assessed during the phone call when the tenant initially makes contact. Although the <i>Saffron</i> system does not provide on-screen guidance for operators on handling the request, such guidance is available in the ISO 9001 working procedures.</p>		

Control Objective 2: Repairs are prioritised appropriately.**Risk: Costly priority and emergency work. Work is not targeted at homes with the greatest need.**

Expected control	Audit findings	Expected control met	Audit recommendation <i>and management response, officer responsible and date for implementation</i>
	<p>The Housing Assistants have a copy of the current programme of planned maintenance work which they can take into account when scheduling a job. For example, requests for heating repairs have been included in a planned maintenance programme instead of being treated as responsive repairs.</p>		
<p>2.4 The allocation of costly emergency work is controlled.</p>	<p>Contractors charge more for emergency work done out of hours and so the amount of such work needs to be controlled.</p> <p>The number of repairs originating from out-of-hours calls is not monitored. Therefore there is no information on how many emergency repairs were carried out-of-hours.</p> <p>The Audit Commission handbook recommends that emergency work should account for no more than 10 per cent of jobs. In the seven months to the end of October 2006, 558 out of a total of 4,053 jobs were emergencies. This is 13.7% which is slightly above the recommended level.</p> <p>The cost of emergency repairs is only monitored on an annual basis after each year-end. We were informed that there is a problem with obtaining such data because emergency repairs can develop into other non-emergency work, the costs of which are added to the same job instead of a new job being created.</p> <p>The Technical Officers who answer out-of-hours emergency phone calls have a manual to guide them. This includes addresses of homes qualifying for repair work, a list of job priorities to identify which are emergencies, and contact details for contractors and housing wardens.</p>	<p>Mainly</p>	<p>Emergency work carried out should be analysed to identify and report work carried out during working hours and work undertaken out-of-hours. (Medium Risk)</p> <p><u>Management Response</u></p> <p>We are currently reviewing our emergency call out system and are issuing a new order for additional works required after an emergency call out, this should enable us monitor the actual call out costs and any additional repairs. However, we would like to point out that the current policy for contractors attending emergency call outs is to make safe and restore services wherever possible depending on the type of repairs required. This helps to limit the premium rate costs charged for emergency out of hours calls.</p> <p><u>Officer Responsible for Implementation</u></p> <p>Diane Grattage – Property Maintenance Manager</p> <p><u>Date for Implementation</u></p> <p>31/10/07</p>

Control Objective 3: Repairs are assessed accurately.**Risk: Delays to the completion of work. Increased cost of work.**

Expected control	Audit findings	Expected control met	Audit recommendation <i>and management response, officer responsible and date for implementation</i>
<p>3.1 Repair-ordering staff have appropriate technical knowledge.</p>	<p>Staff turnover is currently low. The two Housing Assistants have been in post for several years and are experienced and knowledgeable.</p> <p>There is no formal training. On joining, the Housing Assistants were trained by more experienced staff.</p> <p>The level of experience of these staff should assist in the accurate determination of the work to be done. If this cannot be determined during the tenant's phone call, one of the department's Technical Officers must carry out a pre-inspection visit to the home to define the problem before the job is issued to the contractor. The Audit Commission handbook recommends that pre-inspections should be carried out on no more than 10 per cent of jobs.</p> <p>Although we were informed that pre-inspection visits are only carried out when there is a need for them, in the seven months to the end of October 2006, 2,144 out of a total of 6,833 jobs were pre-inspected. This is a percentage of 31% which is much higher than the 10% recommended by the Audit Commission.</p> <p>This total of 6,833 jobs is significantly higher than the 4,053 jobs reported at 2.4 above. The department believes that the higher figure counts variations as separate jobs. The number of variations is a significant problem, as explained at 3.3 below. This might also explain why the pre-inspection rate is so high, although this is subject to confirmation in line with the recommendation made here.</p> <p>Pre-inspection visits are documented on forms. We reviewed a random sample of ten of these and consider that they were for jobs that were appropriate to pre-inspection, where we would reasonably expect the Housing Assistant not to be able to fully diagnose the problem. The ten were as follows:</p>	<p>Mainly</p>	<p>The reason why pre-inspections are carried out for over 30% of repairs should be investigated to determine whether it would be possible to reduce the number carried out.</p> <p>(Medium Risk)</p> <p><u>Management Response</u></p> <p>Our new maintenance-partnering contract that started in April 2007 is based on an average order value system, this allows the contractor more flexibility over what work is carried out and will help to reduce the amount of pre-inspections carried out.</p> <p><u>Officer Responsible for Implementation</u></p> <p>Diane Grattage – Property Maintenance Manager</p> <p><u>Date for Implementation</u></p> <p>31/10/07</p>

Control Objective 3: Repairs are assessed accurately.**Risk: Delays to the completion of work. Increased cost of work.**

Expected control	Audit findings	Expected control met	Audit recommendation <i>and management response, officer responsible and date for implementation</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gutter leaking (3 cases in the sample of 10) • Garage roof leaking (2 cases in the sample of 10) • Kitchen ceiling leaking from flat above • Pantry walls damp • Tiles fallen off the roof • Internal door dropped and scraping on floor • Plaster loose on landing. 		
3.2 The contractor is given sufficient flexibility to amend the diagnosis on site if required.	<p>Within the partnership contractual arrangements due to commence in April 2007, the department intends to develop procedures to allow the contractor flexibility to decide the work carried out. There will be limits to this flexibility but these have not yet been determined.</p> <p>The contractor will be multi-disciplined and carry a wide variety of stock. This will increase its ability to repair a problem which it re-diagnoses.</p>	Yes. Also scope to develop	<p>Procedures to allow contractor flexibility over the work carried out should be developed. Limits to this flexibility could be based on the total value of work, or the amount by which work could exceed the anticipated job costs. (Medium Risk)</p> <p><u>Management Response</u></p> <p>This has been implemented from April 2007.</p> <p><u>Officer Responsible for Implementation</u></p> <p>Diane Grattage – Property Maintenance Manager</p> <p><u>Date for Implementation</u></p> <p>Implemented</p>
3.3 The level of variations is monitored and controlled.	We were informed that the current level of variations to work, which have to be requested by the contractor and then ordered by the department, is a significant problem causing extra work and inefficiency. The department intends to address this in the new partnership arrangements, which are expected to eliminate variations for all but unusual work. Under the new arrangements, payments to the contractor will be based on the actual cost of the work done, whatever work is required. Control over costs will be through using targets to reduce average actual costs for different types of work. Because of the significant changes to be made to the system, we did not enquire further about the current level of variations and the system for processing them.	N/A	This aspect was not pursued because the system will be subject to significant changes in the new partnership arrangements that are due to commence in April 2007, and are expected to bring improvements.

Control Objective 4: Repairs are completed within target time scales.

Risk: Repairs not carried out when required. Reduced tenant satisfaction.

Expected control	Audit findings	Expected control met	Audit recommendation <i>and management response, officer responsible and date for implementation</i>
4.1 Response times are appropriate.	<p>There are five categories of response time. This is in accordance with the Audit Commission handbook which recommends a maximum of five.</p> <p>The Tenants Handbook, ISO 9001 working procedures and internet site list the response times for different types of repair. However the Tenants Handbook combines emergency and urgent repairs (priority levels E and A). Also all three combine priority levels B and C, which are for routine repairs within 7 and 14 days respectively.</p> <p>Response times are set in law by the Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994. We compared this to Gedling's response times.</p> <p>The regulations fully cover emergency and urgent repairs (Gedling priority levels E and A) and include a further three that have to be done in within 7 days (Gedling priority level B). We found that the Gedling response times were generally in line with the regulations, but make the following observations:</p> <p>The regulations classify the following types of repair as emergencies (to attend to within 1 day). The department's ISO 9001 working procedures wrongly classify these as priority level A (urgent, to attend to within 3 days).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blocked or leaking foul drain, soil stack, or (where there is no other working toilet in the house) toilet pan. Toilet not flushing (where there is no other working toilet in the house). Incidentally one of our sample of 30 repairs reviewed at 2.2 above was a toilet not flushing which had been correctly prioritised as an emergency. <p>The above discrepancies only apply to the ISO 9001 procedures. They are correctly classified on the website and, as already noted, the Tenants Handbook does not distinguish between emergencies and urgent repairs.</p>	Partly	<p>The prioritisation criteria for each type of repair should be checked against the Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994 and clarified. (Medium Risk)</p> <p><u>Management Response</u></p> <p>We are currently reviewing our ISO9001 procedures for responsive repairs and will amend classifications to the appropriate priority.</p> <p><u>Officer Responsible for Implementation</u> Diane Grattage – Property Maintenance Manager</p> <p><u>Date for Implementation</u> 31/10/07</p> <p>The repair categories and associated criteria should be published consistently in all methods of communication. (Low Risk)</p> <p><u>Management Response</u></p> <p>As above.</p> <p><u>Officer Responsible for Implementation</u> Diane Grattage – Property Maintenance Manager</p> <p><u>Date for Implementation</u> 31/10/07</p>

Control Objective 4: Repairs are completed within target time scales.**Risk: Repairs not carried out when required. Reduced tenant satisfaction.**

Expected control	Audit findings	Expected control met	Audit recommendation <i>and management response, officer responsible and date for implementation</i>
	<p>Gedling offers an enhanced time period for a leaking roof, classifying this as an emergency whereas the regulations allow 7 days.</p> <p>The regulations classify the following two types of repair as to be attended to within 7 days (Gedling priority level B). However, as noted above, because there is a lack of distinction between category B and C repairs, it is not always clear whether Gedling would respond to these within 7 or 14 days:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mechanical extractor fan in internal kitchen or bathroom not working.• Door entryphone not working. <p>The internet site however does state that the latter will be completed within 7 days.</p> <p>The regulations classify a tap which cannot be turned as an urgent repair. The ISO 9001 procedures and the website limit this to a tap which cannot be turned off. It should also apply to a tap which cannot be turned on. The description in the Tenants Handbook is correct.</p>		
4.2 Performance against all response time standards is monitored.	<p>Monthly performance reports are distributed to appropriate management. These report on the percentage of repairs done within their response times in three categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• all repairs.• priority levels E and A repairs.• priority levels B, C and D repairs. <p>Although this does not analyse performance separately for each of the five priority levels, such information is available within the department if required. This information can also be analysed by contractor.</p> <p>Further monitoring of performance will be achieved in future by the inclusion of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the new</p>		

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Expected control	Audit findings	Expected control met	Audit recommendation <i>and management response, officer responsible and date for implementation</i>
	<p>partnership contractual arrangements (see also 4.3 below).</p> <p>The Audit Commission handbook suggests that response times for multi-trade jobs should be monitored separately. The department does not do this because, apart from repairs to void properties (see section 6 below) which are multi-trade, the <i>Saffron</i> system does not allow multi-trade jobs to be separately identified. If a job is multi-trade, <i>Saffron</i> will allocate the whole job to the budget heading of the highest value element of the job. However we concur with the department's view that any significant potential problems with performance on multi-trade jobs are addressed by the use of a multi-disciplined contractor (see 3.2 above).</p>		
4.3 Arrangements with the contractor encourage the timeliness of repairs.	<p>The department informs the contractor of emergency and urgent jobs by phone (followed up by fax confirmation of the job order). The contractor visits the department each day to collect less urgent job orders. These arrangements are expected to continue into the new partnership contractual arrangements, enhanced by the introduction of an appointment form for less urgent jobs that will be emailed to the contractor as described at 1.3 above.</p> <p>Each Tuesday the contractor sends the department a list of the jobs that should have been completed in the previous week, with explanations for those that were not completed. The Housing Assistants enter this information onto <i>Saffron</i> and this produces a 'missed targets exception report.' The example that we obtained during our audit showed that 12 jobs missed their targets during the 4-week period ending 27 November 2006. The Responsive Maintenance Manager discusses these with the contractor at a weekly meeting and, more formally, a monthly Contractor Progress Review meeting.</p> <p>The new partnership contract will include Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to encourage the timeliness of repairs. At the time of our audit these indicators were still being negotiated. The invitation to tender document which preceded this contract stated that performance against these KPIs will be reviewed each month. Any not achieving targets will require a programme</p>		

Control Objective 4: Repairs are completed within target time scales.**Risk: Repairs not carried out when required. Reduced tenant satisfaction.**

Expected control	Audit findings	Expected control met	Audit recommendation <i>and management response, officer responsible and date for implementation</i>
	<p>of action. Consistent and repeated failure will require more robust action.</p> <p>The contractor selected to be the new partner is one of the department's existing contractors, and in the department's experience the contractor has sufficient staff available to meet the workload. About 8 of its staff currently work on responsive repairs.</p> <p>Other aspects of the new contract that will contribute to repairs being carried out efficiently are that it is a multi-trade contract; and it requires the contractor to support the continuing professional development and training of its staff.</p>		

Control Objective 5: Checks are carried out on work done.

Risk: Unsatisfactory quality of repairs.

Expected control	Audit findings	Expected control met	Audit recommendation <i>and management response, officer responsible and date for implementation</i>
<p>5.1 A minimum level of checks is required. Checks focus on highest risk areas.</p>	<p>Post-inspections of work done are carried out by the department's Technical Officers. When the contractor's invoices arrive the Responsive Maintenance Manager and Technical Officers select a sample of them for post-inspection. Sampling is judgmental, to review a cross-section of types of work, but focusing on the more expensive or complicated jobs. Payment of these invoices is prevented by Saffron until the post-inspection is successfully completed.</p> <p>The post-inspection is documented on a form. We reviewed the 50 most recent forms, completed over a period of 33 days up until the time of our audit.</p> <p>There are two types of post inspection. 37 of the 50 involved a visit to the home for a physical review (although the department was unable to obtain access to three of these homes) and the remaining 13 involved a desktop review.</p> <p>There is no fixed rule for the amount of jobs that are post-inspected. 215 post inspections were carried out in the seven months to the end of October 2006 out of a total of 4,053 jobs. This is a percentage of 5.3%. In our opinion, this level of inspection is satisfactory.</p> <p>Our review of the forms identified that boxes to confirm that the inspection has been done and the contractor's work was acceptable were not always properly completed.</p>	<p>Partly</p>	<p>A formal target should be set for the percentage of jobs subjected to post-completion inspections. In addition, guidelines for selecting a representative sample of jobs to be checked should be provided. (Medium Risk)</p> <p><u>Management Response</u></p> <p>The new partnering contract will enable us to be more pro-active in respect of monitoring the contractors and carrying out quality control checks, we are aiming to carry out approximately 10% post inspections from specified representative samples.</p> <p><u>Officer Responsible for Implementation</u> Diane Grattage – Property Maintenance Manager</p> <p><u>Date for Implementation</u> 31/10/07</p> <p>All boxes on the post-inspection forms should be completed fully to confirm that the inspection has been carried out and that the contractor's work has been assessed. (Low Risk)</p> <p><u>Management Response</u></p> <p>As above.</p> <p><u>Officer Responsible for Implementation</u> Diane Grattage – Property Maintenance Manager</p> <p><u>Date for Implementation</u> 31/10/07</p>

Control Objective 5: Checks are carried out on work done.**Risk: Unsatisfactory quality of repairs.**

Expected control	Audit findings	Expected control met	Audit recommendation <i>and management response, officer responsible and date for implementation</i>
<p>5.2 Tenants are consulted on the quality of work done.</p>	<p>The department sends a 'satisfaction form' to the tenant after every job. This asks six questions covering satisfaction with the appointment, the goods, the work and the contractor, and invites comments or suggestions. The tenant can return this by freepost. This form is a fairly new development and replaces satisfaction cards that were previously sent. We were informed that the response rate has improved notably since the forms replaced the cards, although the response rate was not known.</p> <p>As described at 1.2 above the department is currently monitoring the number of phone calls received on Mondays and Wednesdays. At the time of our audit, in November 2006, the department had just commenced an exercise to sample some of these where the phone call was to request a repair, and phoning the tenants to ask a number of questions about the repairs. The questions asked are different from, but cover similar subjects to, the satisfaction form.</p> <p>As the satisfaction form and phone calls are new developments, the department is still to determine how the replies are monitored and acted upon. Forms that contain adverse comments are kept in a complaints folder, although the department has not yet developed a system to address these or respond to the tenant.</p>	<p>Partly</p>	<p>The monitoring of responses to the satisfaction forms and phone calls should be improved by calculating the response rate and analysing the responses.</p> <p>(Medium Risk)</p> <p><u>Management Response</u></p> <p>We are currently working with our partnering contractors to provide tenants with a joint satisfaction form and will be monitoring the response rate and feedback to see where improvements to the service can be made, we are also reviewing how complaints are responded to and what feedback is provided to tenants.</p> <p><u>Officer Responsible for Implementation</u></p> <p>Diane Grattage – Property Maintenance Manager</p> <p><u>Date for Implementation</u></p> <p>31/10/07</p> <p>The questions on the satisfaction form and phone call scripts should be aligned to enable all responses to be collated and analysed.</p> <p>(Medium Risk)</p> <p><u>Management Response</u></p> <p>As above.</p> <p><u>Officer Responsible for Implementation</u></p> <p>Diane Grattage – Property Maintenance Manager</p> <p><u>Date for Implementation</u></p> <p>31/10/07</p>

Control Objective 5: Checks are carried out on work done.

Risk: Unsatisfactory quality of repairs.

Expected control	Audit findings	Expected control met	Audit recommendation <i>and management response, officer responsible and date for implementation</i>
			<p>Complaints about repairs from all sources, including the satisfaction form and phone calls, should be addressed and feedback provided to tenants.</p> <p>(Medium Risk)</p> <p><u>Management Response</u></p> <p>As above.</p> <p><u>Officer Responsible for Implementation</u></p> <p>Diane Grattage – Property Maintenance Manager</p> <p><u>Date for Implementation</u></p> <p>31/10/07</p>

Control Objective 6: Repairs to void (empty) properties are carried out efficiently.**Risk: Reduced housing stock and rental income whilst void properties await repair. Work not targeted at the homes with the greatest need.**

Expected control	Audit findings	Expected control met	Audit recommendation <i>and management response, officer responsible and date for implementation</i>
6.1 Repairs to void properties are co-ordinated with demand for housing.	<p>The section liaises with, and co-ordinates work on void properties with, the tenancy management staff in the Housing Team.</p> <p>No spare keys to homes are kept at all, except for communal areas, as this would be perceived to affect the tenant's privacy when the house is occupied. So, at the commencement of work on a void property, the contractor affixes a key safe to the home in which the house keys are kept. The safe can only be opened by a code. This arrangement enables all authorised staff to access the home during the period that it is being worked on.</p> <p>Non-essential repairs can be left until later if the Housing Team requires the home to be occupied urgently. This only happens occasionally but we were informed of a recent example where a window was replaced after the new tenants had moved in.</p>		
6.2 Repairs to void properties are carried out promptly.	<p>The Tenants Handbook explains actions to be taken by the tenant on terminating the tenancy. These include actions that facilitate the prompt commencement of repair work on the home, such as removing belongings, clearing up and returning the keys. The keys are usually brought to the one-stop shop at the Civic Centre. The department has considered sending a Housing Officer to visit the tenant before they leave to reinforce these requirements, because of problems with tenants leaving items which they should remove, such as carpets and the contents of lofts and sheds.</p> <p>A Technical Officer then visits the home and completes a detailed 'void property inspection form' which describes the home's internal and external condition.</p> <p>The department considers there to be little scope for speeding up commencement of work on the void property by completing this inspection before the tenant leaves. The inspection must take account of whether the tenant has left items such as carpets and rubbish, as these affect the amount of work the contractor needs to do. Also some problems, such as with floorboards, are easier to detect when the home is empty.</p>		<p>Consideration should be given to visiting tenants before they vacate properties to identify the actions that need to be taken when terminating the tenancy. (Low Risk)</p> <p><u>Management Response</u></p> <p>We are considering the possibility of a housing officer visiting tenants when a tenancy termination notice is received to confirm to the tenant what they need to do before vacating the property, we are also looking at issuing a checklist to tenants to re-affirm their obligations.</p> <p><u>Officer Responsible for Implementation</u></p> <p>Diane Grattage – Property Maintenance Manager</p> <p><u>Date for Implementation</u></p> <p>31/10/07</p>

Control Objective 6: Repairs to void (empty) properties are carried out efficiently.**Risk: Reduced housing stock and rental income whilst void properties await repair. Work not targeted at the homes with the greatest need.**

Expected control	Audit findings	Expected control met	Audit recommendation <i>and management response, officer responsible and date for implementation</i>
	<p>The work that is required is determined from the 'void property inspection form' and entered on <i>Saffron</i> and a job order is created. The contractor collects the keys from the department together with the job order.</p> <p>The Property Maintenance Manager informed us that at one time the contractor carried out the void property inspections instead of the department's Technical Officers. The cost of work was fixed at three different rates, for a flat, a 2 bedroom house, and a 3 bedroom house. The department intends to return to this method as it was considered to be more efficient.</p> <p>The contractor has a separate, dedicated team for carrying out work on void properties. When the contractor has completed the work and cleared and cleaned the home, responsibility is handed back to the tenancy management team for them to re-let the home. There is a performance target to re-let homes within 24 days of the end of the previous tenancy. In October 2006 the year-to-date performance was an average of 27 days. This performance excludes 'difficult to let' voids (DTLs). There is no standard national definition of DTL properties, which is judgemental and includes two main elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individual homes repeatedly rejected when offered to tenants (Gedling uses the criteria of 5 repeated rejections).• Categories of low demand homes (Gedling has identified types of homes such as bedsits in warden-aided flats, and homes in certain areas, as being such categories).		
6.3 Repairs to void properties improve houses to an appropriate cost effective standard.	There is a national Decent Homes Standard to which homes have to be maintained. Gedling works to a slightly higher standard than this. Some parts of the borough are less attractive to tenants and the homes can be difficult to let. In such cases there are 'area based initiatives' which attempt to improve the desirability of the area. A recent one included a week of action in November 2006 in Netherfield. Matters addressed included fly tipping, graffiti, damaged street furniture and untidy land.		

Control Objective 6: Repairs to void (empty) properties are carried out efficiently.**Risk: Reduced housing stock and rental income whilst void properties await repair. Work not targeted at the homes with the greatest need.**

Expected control	Audit findings	Expected control met	Audit recommendation <i>and management response, officer responsible and date for implementation</i>
	<p>The Responsive Maintenance Manager informed us that there may typically be two such weeks of action per year, and the next one is expected to be in Carlton in early 2007.</p> <p>Because void properties are empty, contractors can work more efficiently than in occupied homes. Access is unrestricted, and there is no need to clear up every day. Because of this, there is currently a cheaper schedule of rates for work on void properties.</p> <p>In the new partnership contractual arrangements, payments will be based on actual cost. There will be a target average cost for different categories of work, one of which will be work on void properties which should reflect that contractors can work more efficiently on such homes. The contract will include incentives for the contractor to meet, or even under-cut, the target costs.</p>		

Control Objective 7: Lessons learned from the responsive repairs programme inform the planned improvements programme.

Risk: A lack of planning causing inefficient over-reliance on responsive work.

Expected control	Audit findings	Expected control met	Audit recommendation <i>and management response, officer responsible and date for implementation</i>
<p>7.1 The main problem areas requiring responsive repairs are identified and, if appropriate, inform planned improvements.</p>	<p>There are plans to batch some types of non-urgent repair work and carry them out in single exercises, although this is not happening at present. The most advanced aspect of these plans is for communal lighting. Quotations have been obtained from electrical contractors and a 2-yearly replacement programme will be developed. This should reduce the number of visits required to change single lights.</p> <p>It is planned to extend such programmes to fencing and guttering. The condition of the fencing and guttering will then be monitored so that the next batch of replacements can be scheduled at the optimum time.</p>	<p>Scope to develop</p>	<p>Plans to transfer some non-urgent responsive repair work to the planned replacement programmes should be developed.</p> <p>(Medium Risk)</p> <p><u>Management Response</u></p> <p>We have already started to transfer some non urgent responsive repair works to cyclical programmes, for example Lighting, Guttering Clearance and Electrical inspection testing.</p> <p><u>Officer Responsible for Implementation</u></p> <p>Diane Grattage – Property Maintenance Manager</p> <p><u>Date for Implementation</u></p> <p>31/10/07</p>