

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT**

Date Written	7 <sup>th</sup> January 2021
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Service Area	Neighbourhood Services
Committee Date	18 <sup>th</sup> January 2021

*To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen*

## **OVERVIEW OF PROPERTY SERVICES**

### **1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 This information report gives an overview of the Property Services Department identifying a programme plan and areas for development and improvement.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 That the contents of this report be noted.

### **3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Scrutiny Committee have requested a report to be presented to give them a clear understanding of the Property Services department and have requested that the report also includes a detailed programme plan of the service which identifies the key areas for development and improvement for 2020/21.

### **4.0 OVERVIEW OF THE SERVICE**

- 4.1 The Councils vision is that the property portfolio is aligned to corporate priorities and service requirements, where appropriate investment is made in capital projects and where the portfolio is efficiently maintained, is fit for purpose and meets health and safety requirements. This is set out in the Corporate Asset Management Plan and Property Services recognise that better buildings can help enhance performance and

improve staff motivation. Property Services provides several functions, which are targeted at improving all Council Buildings and ensuring that all statutory regulations are compiled with.

- 4.2 Property Services currently have Service Level Agreements with Schools and Leisure Services to provide support and assistance with the management of their building assets and also provide a corporate service to all service areas.
- 4.3 A programme plan has been provided at Appendix A of this report.
- 4.4 To achieve this Property Services carry out a number of Key Service Elements which include:

#### **4.4.1 Responsive Repairs**

Responsive repairs service is the reaction to failures of building elements whilst the building is in use. Property Services tendered a responsive repairs contract jointly with RCTCBC in line with Public Procurement and Financial Regulations which provides an effective, value for money service. The contract uses the National Schedule of Rates for repairs which give transparency to the costs charged for repairs and can be viewed at Property Services if required. Property Services also operates a responsive repairs helpdesk, which will accept calls during normal working hours with Lifeline providing the out of hours service.

Property Services operates two main contracts for repairs, one for heating repairs, which includes boilers, radiators and leaks from heating systems. The second contract is for building repairs and covers all emergency repairs to buildings, this contract is used for emergency response repairs as well as normal repairs and small planned work requests. Both of these contracts operate a 24 hour call out service.

#### **4.4.2 Statutory Regulations**

All buildings have an element of statutory maintenance, which the Council have a legal requirement to comply with. Property Services has a Statutory Compliance team, which tenders individual contracts for these functions such as Legionella, Asbestos, Lifts & Lifting Equipment, Gas & Boiler and Electrical servicing to ensure that these elements are maintained to the correct standards.

The team also carries out compliance audits to check and monitor that all buildings are compliant and up to date with current regulations. Property Services are also available to provide advice on any compliance issues which may arise, along with changes and updates to legislation.

#### **4.4.3 Planned Maintenance /Capital Works**

Planned maintenance and improvement of buildings is proactive rather than

reactive. It provides for the renewal of building elements before they actually fail preventing costs through consequential damage.

Property Services are responsible for the delivery of many of the Authorities major Capital projects such as The Waste Recycling Depot and Re-Use shop at Unit 20, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century schools programme and many of the smaller school improvement works undertaken during the summer break.

Property Services base the delivery of planned maintenance construction projects upon the RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) Plan of Work and carry out the following roles in relation to building projects:

Client Advisor  
Project lead  
Project manager  
Design Lead  
Construction lead  
Architectural Design  
Landscape Design  
Structural design  
Building Service Design  
Cost Consultancy  
Contract Administration  
Information Manager  
Health & Safety Consultant

Additionally, on request, Property Services will provide technical and contractual advice on all property related matters.

#### **4.4.4 Energy Unit Roles and Responsibilities**

##### **Strategic**

- Develop Energy Strategy/Carbon Management Plans to assist council in working towards Carbon Neutrality by 2030.
- Reply to FOI relating to Energy and carbon emissions in buildings.
- Ensure statutory compliance relating to Display Energy Certificates.
- Welsh Government / Internal KPI reporting relating to carbon emissions and energy Use.
- Develop Business Cases for energy investments.
- Provide specialist support and guidance relating to carbon emissions and energy use.
- To provide by training, user motivation and participation in the field of energy and carbon savings by good housekeeping methods.
- Lead on energy procurement-Contract Management and liaising with National Procurement Service.
- Manage TREND Building Management Systems in MTCBC sites.
  - Input of Holiday settings on sites installed with TREND to ensure energy usage and carbon emissions are kept to a minimum when buildings are unoccupied.

- Utilising Systemslink Energy Management Software, identifying avoidable waste and take actions to reduce levels of energy usage and costs.
- Build and maintain relationships with external partners and other local authorities to share best practice and investigate possible partnerships and/or collaborations on energy and sustainability issues.
- Energy audits of council buildings and creation of actions plans to reduce energy usage.
- Manage external consultants and contractors as required in delivery of carbon efficiency projects.
- Keep abreast of current developments in Energy Efficiency.
- Identification of schemes and potential upgrades to improve Energy Efficiency within MTCBC.
- New Builds projects provide design advice relating to mechanical/electrical systems and building fabric to ensure new buildings are considering carbon neutral design and energy efficiency.
- Monthly monitoring and targeting of Energy Consumption and costs to identify excess consumption and minimise overspend and carbon emissions

#### **Metering/Technical**

- Actively increasing the number of smart and HH meters on MTCBC Elec, gas, water supplies.
- Set up new metering supplies (e.g. new school - Service lead supported by energy).
- Investigate, deal, and process Energy and Water invoice queries.
- Review performance of metering (run reports, investigate queries, anomalies) to ensure meters are functioning correctly.(250 meters)
- Deal with meter breakdowns/data logger faults.
- Carry out Monthly bill validation of gas and electricity invoices to ensure accuracy of billing and reduction in overspend (Approximately 7000 invoices per annum).
- Complete, change of tenancy forms, process and finalise/ close accounts.
- Escalating supplier issues from clients to National Procurement Service.
- Updating Display Energy Certificate Tracker.
- Obtain meter reads and process feed in tariff payments for Solar Installations.
- Completion of site addition forms for transferring of energy supplies onto National Procurement Service.
- Updating Systemslink Energy Management-Input of Energy Invoices/Meter Reads/Meter details.

## **5.0 WHERE WE WERE**

- 5.1 Due to budget pressure and efficiency savings the Department has been understaffed for many years and have relied heavily on the assistance of Blaenau Gwent CBC for key major projects.
- 5.2 The team have struggled to hold onto key staff and have lost four technical posts in the last few years.
- 5.3 A lack of IT software has meant the department has been unable to work as efficiently or effectively as possible.
- 5.4 The lack of condition surveys on the Authority's portfolio meant we were unable to prioritise planned maintenance projects.

## **6.0 WHERE WE ARE NOW**

- 6.1 Despite the pandemic we have maintained service operations and have kept our building compliant while still managing to deliver projects.
- 6.2 Although unable to recruit a Project Manager Team Leader we have been able to recruit two new project managers through agency services to assist with delivery of the Capital Programme.
- 6.3 The department still remain short staffed, but a recent capacity exercise identified the lack of IT software and staff shortage. This has meant we are now able to recruit a New Mechanical Compliance officer as well as purchase new IT software.
- 6.4 The purchase of the new RAMIS (Risk Monitor) IT system now enables all compliance and statutory inspections to be handled efficiently on one piece of software.
- 6.5 The Department are looking to put a programme in place to undertake condition surveys of the Authority's building portfolio, which will feed into a maintenance strategy and programme. This is subject to obtaining appropriate budgets.
- 6.6 Property Services have been ranked 16/16 with an overall judgement of good for the last two years in the schools SLA review. The Department have set it as an objective to improve this position next year.

## **7.0 WHERE WE WANT TO BE**

- 7.1 The Department are keen to improve the service it provides to its clients and want to move up the rankings on the Schools SLA.
- 7.2 The Department want to provide a quality value for money service to its clients, understanding the need to constantly strive for improvement on the service provided.
- 7.3 Reduce carbon emissions in all Council Buildings working towards a carbon neutral Merthyr Tydfil.

- 7.4 Ensure Council Buildings remain fit for occupation and provide healthy environments for working, teaching and learning.
- 7.5 Provide the effective delivery of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools programme that will deliver new school buildings that are completed to time, costs and importantly provide 21<sup>st</sup> century learning and teaching environments for our young people.

**8.0 WHAT WE NEED TO DO NEXT**

- 8.1 Complete the recruitment of a new mechanical compliance officer this will give the compliance team additional capacity to keep on top of the current workload.
- 8.2 Purchase additional (National Building Services) NBS IT software to assist with the delivery and contract management of Capital Projects. With such a large capital programme this piece of software is essential in assisting the project managers with their current workloads.
- 8.3 Start work on the Refit programme which is targeted to reduce in the carbon emissions of the Authority’s building portfolio and help with the Welsh Governments 2030 carbon neutral target.

**9.0 CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING OBJECTIVES**

- 9.1 Property Services directly inputs into the Wellbeing Objectives with the reduction of carbon emissions, it also supports education of our young people with the maintenance and upgrade of school buildings.

**JUDITH JONES CHIEF OFFICERS FOR PLANNING AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES**

**CLLR DAVID HUGHES PORTFOLLIO MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES**

<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>		
<b>Title of Document(s)</b>	<b>Document(s) Date</b>	<b>Document Location</b>
<b>Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council’s Constitution?</b>		