

**REPORT TO:** SHAREHOLDER SUB COMMITTEE

**DATE:** 1 JULY 2021

**TITLE:** HTS (PROPERTY AND ENVIRONMENT) LTD  
EMERGING FROM LOCKDOWN

**LEAD OFFICER:** ANDREW MURRAY, HEAD OF  
HOUSING (01279) 446676

**RECOMMENDED that:**

- A** To note the report, and the progress HTS (Property and Environment) Ltd have made during the lockdown.
- B** Delegations for the portfolio holders for Housing and Environment to monitor and manage delivery of the recovery plan, and to raise any matters arising. Progress will be reported to the Shareholder Sub Committee

**BACKGROUND**

1. Following the Government's four step "Road Map" published in March 2021, a Road map for council services and activities reopening was produced.
2. HTS (Property and Environment) Ltd have produced a Road map to drive recovery of the Environment and Housing work streams following the easing of restrictions.
3. During the lockdowns, HTS (Property and Environment) Ltd has taken government advice into account at each stage and have reviewed services to safely deliver and to limit any risk of spreading the virus to residents, operatives, and council staff. The HTS Recovery Plans is outlined in Appendix1.
4. The attached Road map in Appendix A, builds on service changes made already and seeks to align service recovery with the latest Road map dates.
5. A comparison of work in progress for responsive repairs between March 2020 and March 2021 illustrates an increased Work In Progress (WIP) at the end of lockdown period. This equates to an increase in the value of WIP by £471,241 with the number of jobs increased by 644. A comparison of WIP between the years shows a large increase in the following Carpentry, Electrical, Gas, Gas Breakdowns, Plumbing and Roofing. It is expected these are the initial areas that HTS (Property and Environment) Ltd will focus to reduce the backlogs.
6. HTS (Property and Environment) Ltd have carried out an in-depth analysis of the jobs included in WIP and have identified the number of jobs in each work type that had already exceeded their target date due to Lockdown restrictions. Significant progress has been made in clearing the oldest jobs. Their operational

teams are using these reports to tackle the oldest outstanding jobs first and where to allocate the various trade operatives by the volume of jobs. It is anticipated that the backlog of standard priority jobs will take a further two to four months to clear. This will be monitored through the performance management processes.

7. Planned priority works are of a less urgent nature and HTS (Property and Environment) Ltd have developed a two tier phased plan. It is anticipated that the back log of planned works will take in the region of twelve months to clear.

## **ISSUES/PROPOSALS**

### **Capital and Repairs**

8. Internal capital works to tenants' homes have restarted from April 2021 and all programmed properties will be prioritised for completion in 2021 programme. External works programmes (reroofing) recommenced in May 2021. Work continued during lockdown for compliance activities and it can be reported the 2021 programme has been completed. Works to the Council's garage stock consisting of refurbishment and demolition recommenced in April 2021.
9. Following when restrictions are further eased, a mobilisation period will continue to be required with the need to employ additional resources to deliver the remainder of the 2021 programme alongside the 2021/22 programmes.

### **Environment**

10. Most environmental services have been maintained through lockdown, aligned to Government guidelines for this type of working. Some environmental services (void clearance mobile caretakers) have continued to operate with reduced productivity due to social distancing. Grounds maintenance services in key locations and areas commenced in late March 2021. The tree service has been delivering an emergency response only, but good progress is now being made to reduce the number of outstanding jobs.

### **Budget**

11. During the pandemic, HTS (Property and Environment) Ltd managed to secure savings in a number of areas. Whilst there have been increased costs in other areas such as purchasing, PPE and lateral flow testing kits, they have been able to return £945,000 back to the Harlow Council accounts as well as an additional £502,000 from further savings to the Annual Service Charge which they will carry forward to accommodate the increased WIP value.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### **Place (Includes Sustainability)**

None specific.

**Author: Andrew Bramidge, Head of Environment and Planning**

**Finance (Includes ICT and Property and Facilities)**

As contained in the report and appendices.

**Author: Simon Freeman, Head of Finance and Property and Deputy to the Managing Director**

**Housing**

As contained in the body of the report.

**Author: Andrew Murray, Head of Housing**

**Community Wellbeing (Includes Equalities and Social Inclusion)**

As a key employer in Harlow it is positive to see HTS undertaking activity that will support the local economy including supporting the local supply chain, and providing employment and training opportunities through Kickstart and work experience opportunities.

**Author: Jane Greer, Head of Community Wellbeing**

**Governance (Includes HR)**

As contained in the report.

**Author: Simon Hill, Head of Governance**

**Appendices**

Appendix A – HTS emerging from Lockdown.

**Background Papers**

None.

**Glossary of terms/abbreviations used**

WIP – Work In Progress