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Building Maintenance Stores and related functions survey 2010

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Introduction

APSE conducted an on-line survey during Spring 2010. A series of questions were asked covering a range of issues of interest to those officers and councillors responsible for building maintenance, repairs and construction, procurement stores and related functions. 43 responses were received from local authorities throughout the UK. This report identifies the key findings of the survey. Not all respondees answered all questions.

The survey questions were complied in conjunction with Dudley MBC where there is a review of the stores, waste management, transport and associated support services activities in process. The information gathered through the survey and noted in this report will inform their review and provide valuable information for others with similar services. A brief explanation of the review in Dudley is included following the survey results.

The intention of this report is to give a flavour of the different contexts within which stores services are provided as well as provide some general information. Some of the questions describe the organisations who have responded. Information from specific respondees or groups of respondees can be obtained by contacting Phil Brennan on 0161 772 1810 or at pbrennan@apse.org.uk. This information should enable specific comparisons to be made with similar types of organisations.

Summary of responses

It is clear that the scale of operation differs immensely between those organisations responding to the survey. However this is not an indication of uniformity within organisations of the same scale as there are wide variations between organisations of a similar size. There are a number of factors which will impact upon the arrangements currently in place and how effective they may be, such as geographical context, historic investment programmes in the store service and in the housing stock, the type, age and design of the housing stock and use of contractors. There is no doubt that significant improvements can be made to the performance of the repairs and maintenance service if the stores service is an effective one. It can result in less stock holdings, fewer resources tied up in stores, less space needed to hold stores, higher turnover in items, procurement benefits, less travelling time for operatives, less fuel usage and ultimately improvements in productivity.

Results from the survey

1) Is your organisation stock transferred, stock retained or ALMO?

Answer Options	Number (%)
Stock transferred	4 (9.3%)
Stock retained	29 (67.4%)
ALMO	10 (23.3%)
Total	43

Although the responses come from organisations with different management arrangements, the operational issues facing them will be similar including pressures in terms of procurement, management information on stocks held, costs, turnaround times, productivity, time spent collecting materials and related issues.

2) Do you have a repairs and maintenance DLO?

Answer Options	Number (%)
DLO – Yes	38 (88.4%)
DLO – No	5 (11.6%)
Total	43

3) How many directly employed operatives do you have (FTE)?

The average figure from 35 responses was 202 operatives. The range was from a high figure of 1,100 to a lower figure of 6 operatives. There were 11 organisations with a number of operatives under 100; 9 between 100 and 200; 7 between 200 and 300; 3 between 300 and 400; 4 between 400 and 500; and one at 1,100.

As with question 1, organisations with or without DLOs will face similar problems and councils will be responsible for the performance of the service irrelevant of who actually delivers it. The scale of the organisation will dictate which alternative stores arrangements are more appropriate for them as will the extent of investment in the service.

4) What is the size of your building stock?

2 respondees maintained public buildings and schools only with one being responsible for 600 buildings. 7 organisations had a housing stock of under 5,000; 9 were between 5,000 and 7,500; 4 between 7,500 and 10,000; 9 between 10,000 and 15,000; 5 between 15,000 and 20,000; and 5 between 20,000 and 32,500. 2 organisations maintained housing stock of houses and public buildings. Once again although there is a significant difference in stock sizes amongst respondees, the operational issues faced will be similar.

5) What is the approximate value of the annual turnover for the Repairs and Maintenance DLO (including external contractors)?

Of the 30 responses, 6 organisations had an annual turnover of less than £2m; 6 between £2m and £5m; 4 between £5m and £10m; 6 between £10m and £15m; 2 between £15m and £20m; 5 between £20 and £25m; and one at £78m.

6) Of the above turnover what % is delivered by external contractors?

There were 33 responses and 10 organisations said the % turnover delivered by external contractors was under 10%; 6 between 10% and 20%; 8 between 20% and 30%; 5 between 30% and 40%; one each at 50% and 70%; and two at 100%.

7) What are your current stores arrangements?

Answer Options	Number (%)
Partnering arrangements	3 (8.6%)
In house	31 (88.6%)
Outsourced	1 (2.9%)
Total	35

In house stores

8) What is the value of materials purchased in 2008-09 for in house stores?

There were 26 responses and 5 organisations said the value of materials purchased for in house stores was under £500,000; 8 between £500,000 and £1m; 4 between £1m and £1.5m; 2 between £2m and £2.5m; 2 between £2.5m and £3m; one between £3m and £3.5M; two between £3.5 and £4m; and one each at £4.9m and £5.4m

9) What was the value of non stocked items (i.e. items delivered straight to site) purchased in 2008-09?

There were 22 responses and 3 organisations said the value of non stocked items delivered straight to site was less than £50,000; 3 between £100,000 and £250,000; 4 between £250,000 and £300,000; 1 between £300,000 and £350,000; 4 between £500,000 and £600,000; one between £800,000 and £900,000; 3 between £1m and £2m; and one each at £2.5m, £5m and £10.9m.

10) Are you able to estimate the savings made as a result of keeping the stores in-house rather than establishing alternative arrangements?

From the 20 responses received some authorities estimated savings of up to £500k per annum by maintaining their stores in-house, whilst others found it difficult to quantify.

Partnering arrangements

11) Which company is your council in partnership with and for how long?

There were 2 responses to this – Travis Perkins for 2 years and Wolseley (acting as subcontractor to responsive repairs contractor) for 4 years.

12) Can you estimate savings generated per annum as a result of these arrangements being in place?

When asked about savings the responses from the 2 respondees were £20,000. One would expect a service which has entered into a partnership to be able to identify savings as a result of the new arrangements. These may not always be financial savings but may be savings in terms of efficiency, productivity or quality.

General

13) What are the staffing levels for providing a stores service, delivery of stores to operatives and collection of DLO related waste/rubbish? (Please state number of staff for each role)

Answer Options	Number of staff					
	Stores Service	Stores Mgmt	Admin	Drivers	Waste Coll'n	Other
1	3	1	2	5	0	2
2	8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
3	4	1	1	4	n/a	n/a
4	5	3	1	1	n/a	n/a
5	3	1	1	n/a	n/a	n/a
6	3	2	1	3	0	n/a
7	7	1	1	1	1	n/a
8	3	1	1	0	0	n/a
9	2	1	0	0	0	n/a
10	20	5	10	0	0	n/a
11	3	1	0	5	0	n/a
12	9	2	0	0	0	n/a
13	4	2	3	4	3	n/a
14	3	1	1	0	0	n/a
15	6	1	2	n/a	n/a	n/a
16	4	1	1	6	0	n/a

On average there are 3.5 staff per manager in stores services with a range of 7 staff per manager to 1.5 staff per manager. Smaller stores will have lower ratios of managers to staff.

14) What is the composition of the vehicle fleet used in the repairs and maintenance process?

Answer Options	Type of vehicle					
	LGV	Pick ups	5 tonnes	Box vans	Transits	other
1	n/a	4	n/a	13	15	n/a
2	1	22	1	2	83	119
3	15	4	n/a	n/a	95	n/a
4	n/a	1	n/a	4	18	18
5	n/a	10	n/a	n/a	94	19
6	10	38	0	1	37	7
7	3	28	n/a	1	140	60
8	0	3	0	n/a	55	n/a
9	n/a	5	n/a	n/a	39	n/a
10	50	80	0	0	500	12
11	20	0	5	0	80	0
12	10	3	11	1	0	6
13	2	5	5	6	173	n/a
14	n/a	n/a	n/a	23	n/a	n/a
15	32	n/a	15	7	82	n/a
16	1	15	0	0	10	50

Different organisations will have different approaches to fleet management. On average, the organisations responding have 9 LGVs; 14 Pick ups; 2 5 tonnes; 4 Box vans; 88 transits; and 18 other vehicles.

15) How many operatives use their own vehicles in the day to day jobs?

5 of the 16 respondents said that operatives use their own vehicles for work with the number of operatives in each organisation ranging between 1 and 40.

16) Does the Stores Section manage the transport function (MOTs, servicing/operators licence/tachographs, etc)?

Only 1 respondent managed the transport function whilst 1 managed it in conjunction with the corporate centre. In all 13 other cases the transport function was outside the remit of the repairs and maintenance function.

17) What is the value of the stock used for imprest stock held in vans on an annual basis?

The average, from 10 replies, is just over £80k with the range being between £500,000 and £3,000.

18) What percentage of stock is collected from stores or delivered to site.

Answer Options	% of stock	
	Collected from stores	Delivered to site
1	75%	25%
2	60%	40%
3	50%	50%
4	100%	0%
5	100%	0%
6	95%	5%
7	85%	15%
8	100%	0%
9	34%	55%
10	100%	0%
11	83.30%	16.70%
12	80%	20%
13	30%	70%
14	45%	55%
15	80%	20%
16	30%	70%

The average figures from the above responses reflect an approximate 70/30 split although there are some extremes in both approaches.

19) Do you or your partner offer kerbside deliveries?

Out of 15 responses, 7 did offer kerbside deliveries and 8 did not. The types of materials delivered include some capital works items delivered direct to site by the suppliers (kitchens and central heating kits), heavy side materials such as blocks and aggregates, heating and bathroom contracts, bulky materials and larger items such as doors, garage doors, baths, etc.

20) Do you or your partner deliver materials which are left overnight for operatives to start work first thing in the morning?

Out of 16 replies, 6 organisations do leave materials overnight whilst 10 do not. Of these, one organisation will leave any materials, one leaves kitchens, others leave materials only at secure sites or in void properties whilst another leaves materials for major refurbishment contracts.

21) What notice period must be given for delivery of materials?

Of 9 responses, 6 said only 1 days notice was required, 2 said only 2 days notice was required and another said 7 days notice was required.

22) Who collects the rubbish/waste generated by the DLO?

There were 18 responses to this question with a 50% split between an in house collection service and an external contractor.

23) How much rubbish/waste is collected (tonnage)per annum?

The 13 responses to this question highlighted a range of answers including 2 who said they did not know. The largest estimate was 11,000 tonnes and the smallest 30 tonnes with an average of 2,700 tonnes.

Answer Options	Type of vehicle Waste collected (tonnes)	% collected in skips	% recycled
1	120	50%	Estimate 12.5%
2	988	0	90
3	3,645	40% by weight (not volume -most inert waste is collected by skip e.g. excavations, rubble etc)	
4	162	100%	79
5	3,435	49%	55%
6		90%	
7	30	90%	60
8	11,000	90%	60
9	3,750	100%	0%
10	Depends on separated scrap value & recycling	90%	40%
11	2400	30%	60%
12	Unable to define to R&M ops as we operate a dept WMA	100% streamed waste via our WMA	9500 collection for all activities pa of which approx 655 recycled
13	1925	60%	78%
14	n/a	n/a	80%

24) What are your arrangements for delivery and rubbish/waste collection?

Of the 11 responses about delivery of stock, 10 organisations used one driver to deliver whilst 1 organisation had a 2 operative team.

For collection of rubbish/waste, 8 out of 12 responses said they used 1 person to collect whilst 4 said they use 2 people.

25) How many suppliers do you deal with?

The response to this question was varied between 1741 and 15. The average from 16 responses was 280.

26) How many stores sites are there?

Of 16 responses, 12 have a single stores site, whilst 2 have 2 stores and 2 have 3 stores. Organisations with 2 sites keep 15% or 20% of stock at the second store. Of those with 3 sites only about 5% of stock is kept at these sites.

27) How do you arrange stock replenishment (e.g. paper based systems)? If you use IT systems please state the software system used.

There are a range of systems used to replenish stock including the following – IBS (x3); Capita Open House; ROCC Uniclass; CEDAR EFIN; Oracle reports; Servitor (x2); Agresso; COMIS; Integra; Contractor Plus; and Proactis.

Another response stated that they forecast based on historic data (considering the previous 12 weeks) and minimum and maximum levels are set accordingly. Another reponse noted they use a paper based system.

28) How do you arrange stock control (e.g paper based systems)? If you use IT systems please state the software system used.

The systems and arrangements in place are essentially the same as above with the addition of Datastox.

29) Do you use bar coding?

5 of the 15 responses received use bar coding and 4 of these use Datastox with the remaining organisation using an in house system.

30) Do you use hand held devices to order stock

Of the 16 responses received only 2 use hand held devices to order stock – one uses IBS and the other Pervasic.

Building Services, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council Stores and Transport Review

Building Services delivers a full repair, maintenance and improvement service to the 23,000 domestic homes owned by Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council and are responsible for the public sector housing capital and revenue programmes - approximately £50 million per annum. It is a stock retained authority and has an in house DLO – Building Services Construction (BSC).

In 2008 Building Services Senior Management Team commissioned a review in order to ensure that Building Services Construction (DLO) demonstrated maximum value for money and efficiency with positive prospects for continuous improvement in readiness for any future Audit Commission Inspection. We asked an external consultant to review the organisation with a similar approach used in an Audit Commission Inspection, to compare and contrast BSC operating methods and value for money with 'best in class' service providers.

Consultant's findings and recommendations

The findings were generally positive, identifying much good practice within BSC. They identified a number of operational areas for improvement and in addition, value for money concerns lead to a recommendation that a strategic review of stores, waste management, transport and associated support services activities should be undertaken.

Aims and objectives of the review

The aim of the review is to provide a highly efficient, modernised, value for money service consistent with industry best practice whilst meeting Audit Commission expectations.

Areas for consideration in the Review

- Identifying best practice organisations and methods.
- Suitability, logistics and layout of storage and depot accommodation.
- Number of operating depots.
- Volume and levels of stockholding.
- Procurement arrangements/optimum size of supply chain.
- Suitability, number and type of transport fleet and operation.
- Delivery of materials to craft operatives on site.
- Rubbish collection and removal methods.
- Management of Waste Transfer Station.
- Purchasing and invoicing arrangements.
- ICT solutions to modernise re-ordering and update stock records.
- Double handling of materials.
- Operational pre-planning of material requirements so stores get more notice and operatives are on site to receive deliveries.
- Structural arrangements.

Timescales

It is envisaged this will be an in depth and detailed project with an overall timeframe for review and implementation of all recommendations of up to two years (June 2011).

If you would like more information you can contact: Narinder Toor on 01384 815090 or email narinder.toor@dudley.gov.uk

The Association for Public Service Excellence

APSE member authorities have access to a range of membership resources to assist in delivering council services. This includes our regular advisory groups, specifically designed to bring together elected members, directors, managers and heads of service, together with trade union representatives to discuss service specific issues, innovation and new ways of delivering continuous improvement. The advisory groups are an excellent forum for sharing ideas and discussing topical service issues with colleagues from other councils throughout the UK.

Advisory groups are a free service included as part of your authority's membership of APSE and all end with an informal lunch to facilitate networking with peers in other councils. If you do not currently receive details about APSE advisory group meetings and would like to be added to our list of contacts for your service area please email enquiries@apse.org.uk.

Our national advisory groups include:-

- Efficiencies, procurement and service transformation
- Building cleaning
- Citizen engagement
- Local authority, police and fire authority partnerships
- Community safety and security
- Housing, building maintenance and construction
- Parks, horticultural and ground maintenance
- Roads, highways and street lighting
- Social care
- Leisure management and community venues
- Vehicle maintenance and transport operations
- Waste management, refuse collection and street cleansing
- Workforce strategy and employee relations