

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Places Select Commission – 22 October 2024

Report Title

Draft Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy, November 2024

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

Yes

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Ian Spicer, Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The Council is committed to delivering a high quality, value for money repairs service which is customer focused, efficient, and accessible to everyone.

The Draft Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy sets out the Council's approach to delivering a responsive repairs and maintenance service which meets the needs of tenants and leaseholders, and enables the Council to meet its statutory, regulatory, and contractual obligations.

The report also provides an update on the work which has begun to consider the future of the repairs and maintenance service in the context of new consumer regulations.

Recommendations

1. That Improving Places Select Commission provide feedback on the draft Repairs and Maintenance Policy.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Draft Repairs and Maintenance Policy.

Background Papers

- 1) The Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/regulatory-standards-for-landlords>
- 2) The Social Housing (Regulation) Act, 2023 <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3177>
- 3) Tenant Satisfaction Measures
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-the-introduction-of-tenant-satisfaction-measures/outcome/tenant-satisfaction-measures-summary-of-rsh-requirements-accessible>
- 4) Awaab's Law Consultation <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/awaabs-law-consultation-on-timescales-for-repairs-in-the-social-rented-sector>
- 5) Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy
<https://moderngov.rotherham.gov.uk/documents/s142954/Appendix%201%20-%20Damp%20Mould%20and%20Condensation.pdf>
- 6) Housing Fire Safety Policy
<https://moderngov.rotherham.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=98148>

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel
Cabinet – 18 November 2024

Council Approval Required
No

Exempt from the Press and Public
No

REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE POLICY

1. Background

- 1.1 It is imperative that the Council has a robust Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy in place which outlines the approach to delivery of the service in order to ensure that tenants are able to access information on how the service is delivered and hold the Council as 'landlord' to account.
- 1.2 The introduction of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act, 2023, prompted the Council, and social housing landlords nationally, to examine all aspects of its housing service activity. This self-assessment enabled the Council to gauge how well it is meeting the expectations of the Regulator of Social Housing's (RoSH's) consumer standards, to identify gaps in delivery, and focus on areas for improvement.
- 1.3 When assessing housing service's activity against the new regulatory standards, it is prudent for the Council to consider the future delivery of its repairs and maintenance activity; the current contracts commenced on 1st April 2020 and have recently been extended until 31st March 2027, with an option to extend up to a further three financial years.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 The Housing Property Service is responsible for the repairs, maintenance and investment in the Council's housing revenue account assets. This includes:
 - 19,879 residential properties
 - 3,254 garages on 404 purpose-built garage sites
 - 144 garage plot sites
 - 37 boiler houses
 - 45 neighbourhood centres
 - 1 residential tower block over 18 metres
- 2.2 The draft Repairs and Maintenance Policy sets out the Council's overall approach to delivering repairs and maintenance and how it meets its obligations, including the relevant consumer standards. The policy applies to the repair of Council owned housing properties, including the assets listed above as well as communal areas and some equipment such as lifts.
- 2.3 The current service delivery model, encapsulated within the draft policy, is subject to the terms of the existing contracts with the Council's current delivery partners and the current allocated budgets therefore there is limited scope for significant change. However, the draft policy does update the Council's position in respect of decorating allowances.
- 2.4 The existing decoration allowance is as follows:
 - Awards £25 per room damaged,
 - is awarded per habitable room,
 - issues payments by cheque, and

- has no limit to the sum awarded.

2.5 Following a review, the draft Repairs and Maintenance policy proposes that from April 2024, the allowance is amended as follows:

- payment will increase to £50 per room damaged (hall, stairs and landing will count as one room)
- allowance will be awarded for any room within the main envelope of the property and in which tenants carry out their daily lives. This does not include outhouses,
- payment will be made either to the tenant’s rent account or via bank transfer, and
- payments will be limited to £350 per property.

2.6 The draft Policy also includes:

- The types of repairs the Council is responsible for and the responsibilities of tenants.
- How reports are dealt with including prioritisation based upon the type of the repair and the impact upon the tenants’ personal circumstances.
- The repairs categories, including timescales for completion.

2.7 The Council carries out high volumes of repairs: over 6,000 repairs completed each month which is 200 repairs each day.

2.8 The table below shows the minimum numbers of repairs which the Council carries out annually. It excludes contracted capital works, lifts, damp, mould, and cyclical compliance works.

YEAR	NUMBER OF REPAIRS
2023/2024	73,312
2022/2023	70,621
2021/2022	71,989
2020/2021	62,831
2019/2020	75,797

2.9 Demand on the repairs services is expected to continue to increase, and greater agility may be needed when responding to reports of damp and mould. In the future, other Category One Hazards in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, may also have to be prioritised, depending on the outcome of the Government consultation on Awaab’s Law.

2.10 The regulatory context for the delivery of repairs and maintenance services is undergoing a period of change, including new consumer standards, Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), Awaab’s Law, the professionalisation of the sector, and a review of the Decent Homes Standard. The Council needs to evaluate and review the current service model against this changing regulatory environment.

2.11 Currently the majority of work is included within two large repairs and maintenance contracts which are split geographically and by work category.

Specialist work, such as damp, mould and lift servicing, is separately managed within smaller contracts.

- 2.12 An engagement programme is currently underway aimed at better understanding the views of tenants, elected members, and officers, and focus on the outputs required for future service delivery.
- 2.13 A service review will bring together:
1. The outputs collated from tenants, elected members, and officers,
 2. Legislative and regulatory requirements, including the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Satisfaction Measures and consumer standards, and
 3. Repairs and maintenance data which indicates likely areas of pressure in the future.
- 2.14 Housing Property Services will hold a seminar with elected members, to share an overview of the current delivery of repairs and maintenance. Towards the end of that session, elected members will be asked about the repairs and maintenance priorities they would like to see embedded in the service in future.
- 2.15 An industry specialist will be engaged to overlay the Council's identified requirements against the service delivery options available to the Council.
- 2.16 The outcome of this exercise will enable an informed decision about the future delivery of the Council's repairs and maintenance service, which will be subject to Cabinet decisions as relevant.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 The Repairs and Maintenance Policy, and compliance policies have been identified as key documents needed by social housing landlords under the Regulator of Social Housing's new Safety and Quality Consumer Standard. IPSC are requested to review the policies and provide feedback prior to finalising for Cabinet approval.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 The current service delivery model is subject to the terms of the existing contracts with the Council's current delivery partners and the current allocated budgets therefore there is limited scope for significant change.
- 4.2 The Draft Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy was shared with Tenant Scrutiny Panel on Monday, 15 July 2024 where constructive feedback was shared and included in the draft.
- 4.3 The main point of discussion with Tenant Scrutiny related to section regarding, 'Tenants' Personal Circumstances'. This section addresses the requirement to consider individual resident's needs when assessing the urgency of a repair. It was originally titled 'Tenant Vulnerabilities', but

tenants did not agree with characterising personal circumstances as vulnerabilities.

- 4.4 It is proposed that the future delivery of the repairs and maintenance service is subject to wider engagement with tenants and residents.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 Implementation of the draft policy would follow Cabinet decision on 25 November.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 For the financial year 2024/2025, there is a revenue budget of £24.5m and a capital budget of £29.2m in place to deliver the Council's housing repairs, maintenance and investment services across various contracts.

- 6.2 Any changes to how the service delivers and operates may change the cost profiles. The budgets are reviewed during the HRA Business Planning and budget setting process. Future requirements will be considered, and appropriate budgets set in place based on priority and affordability.

- 6.3 The current repairs and maintenance contracts have been extended until March 2027 with an option to extend for a further three years in one-year increments.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 There are legal requirements for maintaining social housing, keeping it free from hazards and in a reasonable state of repair. The Regulator of Social Housing also provides for Consumer Standards which require social landlords to have an accurate, up to date and evidenced understanding of the condition of their homes. The Regulators' Tenant Satisfaction Measures are a core set of performance measures against which all social providers of housing must publish their performance.

- 7.2 The draft Repairs and Maintenance Policy incorporates the legal and regulatory requirements to ensure compliance with and understanding of the repair and maintenance obligations.

- 7.3 In implementing the policy, the Council will be able to demonstrate adherence to the new Consumer Standards, whilst also minimising the risk of customer complaint and/or legal challenge and/or enforcement action by the Regulator. The Repairs and Maintenance policy will likely require amendment to reflect specific timeframes for repairs to be carried out in the social rented sector once determined.

- 7.4 In due course the government will introduce Awaab's law which will require landlords to fix reported health hazards within specified timescales. The Repairs and Maintenance Policy may require amendment to reflect the criteria within the law.

8 Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no HR implications associated with this document.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 The Council will take into account whether a resident has any particular needs that give a specific repair more urgency than the designated timescales.

9.2 Depending on tenants' needs, and in particular circumstances, the Council will adjust the urgency of a repair if the risk to health, safety and security is increased due to tenants' personal circumstances.

10 Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 The Council supports equality of access for all its tenants, especially those who are at most risk due to their/their household members' needs, those who have difficulties managing their property, and those who struggle to sustain a tenancy. The Council recognises that some groups with protected characteristics are more likely to fall into one of these categories.

10.2 Where appropriate the Council will adapt working practices to ensure tenants do not face additional barriers when accessing services. This includes providing information to tenants in Braille, large print, audio, or alternative languages.

10.3 The Council will record and monitor data to gain insight on satisfaction levels and service outcomes for tenants with protected characteristics and use this information to help improve services.

11 Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 Refurbishment works undertaken by the service improve the thermal efficiency of properties which positively contributes to the reduction of CO₂ emissions and climate change agenda.

12 Implications for Partners

12.1 Should the delivery model change in the future, there will be an impact on the contractors.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 The attached policies reflect the current arrangements which have been in place since 2020.

13.2 Social housing landlords are awaiting the outcome of the Government consultation on Awaab's Law and are keen to understand the range of

hazards against which tenant's personal circumstances need to be taken into consideration when prioritising repair.

- 13.3 The Council has already put in place processes to deal with reports of damp and mould and is working to the timescales laid out in the Government consultation. This has resulted in an increase in reports of damp and mould, to which the Council must respond within 10 days.

Accountable Officer(s)

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This report is published on the Council's [website](#).*