

**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Cabinet – 15 December 2025

**Report Title**

Housing Repairs and Maintenance

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

No, but it has been included on the Forward Plan

**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**

This report fulfils a commitment made as part of the Cabinet item on the Repairs and Maintenance Policy in November 2024, to provide an update in 2025 on the continued work to scope the future delivery model for repairs and maintenance services in Rotherham.

The Council's housing repairs and maintenance service, contracted out since 2010, continues to deliver strong performance and value for money. The current contracts with Mears and Equans have been extended to March 2027, allowing time to assess future delivery options while keeping tenant needs central to decision-making.

This report outlines the work undertaken in 2025 to evaluate long-term delivery models, including an options appraisal and performance review. The findings support maintaining current arrangements while exploring future possibilities, ensuring continuity and alignment with strategic goals. The intention therefore is to extend the contracts to 2030 as permitted within the existing contractual agreements. A further Cabinet report on options for arrangements post 2030 will come back in the spring of 2027, allowing 3 years to implement Cabinet's preferred option.

## **Recommendations**

That Cabinet:

1. Note the outcome of the review work undertaken to date.
2. Note the intention to complete a viability study on future models of delivery and report back to Cabinet in Spring 2027, for a decision post 2030.
3. Approves the extension of the Repairs and Maintenance contracts to 2030.
4. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director of Housing to undertake a 12-week public consultation on the outcomes of the feasibility study.

## **List of Appendices Included**

Appendix 1- Part A - Initial Equality Screening Assessment

Appendix 2- Climate Impact Assessment

## **Background Papers**

<https://www.rotherham.gov.uk/downloads/file/4202/repairs-and-maintenance-policy-2024>

**Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

No

**Council Approval Required**

No

**Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

## **Housing Repairs and Maintenance**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 The delivery of housing repairs, maintenance, and investment works was outsourced in April 2010 following Cabinet approval in June 2009. This decision was taken in response to significant financial deficits and aimed to improve value for money, strengthen governance, and establish more robust contractual arrangements.
- 1.2 Most of the services are delivered through two long term strategic partnership contracts with Equans and Mears. The works are split broadly 50:50 by value, though the workstreams allocated to each contract vary. There are smaller specialist contracts in place for damp, mould and lift works.
- 1.3 Following an evaluation of the contract performance and a constructive discussion with service delivery partners Mears and Equans, it was agreed to extend the existing contracts until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2027. This extension provides the Council with additional time to thoroughly assess future delivery options, ensuring that tenant needs and service quality remain central to any future decisions. It is noted that the current contractual arrangements allow for further extension up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2030 subject to satisfactory performance.
- 1.4 In November 2024, Cabinet approved the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy, which included a commitment to return with a further update on the future of the service in 2025. This report outlines the work undertaken throughout 2025 to explore and evaluate long-term delivery models for the housing repairs and maintenance service.

### **2. Key Issues**

- 2.1 The existing contracts were successfully negotiated with Mears and Equans to provide continuation of service delivery until March 2027. This was a strategic agreement to allow the Council time to fully consider its medium and long-term options, with further continuation of service until 2030 should the Council wish.

#### **Options Appraisal**

- 2.2 In early 2025, Housing Property Services commissioned Lumensol, a multi-disciplinary consultancy specialising in social housing repairs and maintenance, to complete an Options Appraisal on the current repairs, maintenance and investment delivery model to assess its ability to meet service users' and the Council's needs in both the medium (2027-2030) and long term (2030+).
- 2.3 The Options Appraisal reviewed the service delivery model against available performance metrics, assessed delivery priorities, market conditions, economic influences, the strategic and organisational context, corporate objectives, value for money and quality and compared it to the varying

alternative delivery models in both the medium term (up to 2030) and longer term.

- 2.4 It concluded that the current partnerships with Equans and Mears work well in all available cost and quality metrics, perform more positively than most contracts and services in the current market that they have assessed, and should be extended to full term. The Options Appraisal also recommended several improvements to support investment planning, service delivery, value for money and assurance. These include considering the future of the capital investment programme and its delivery, the delivery of the caretaking service and modernising the repairs and maintenance service through improved performance, assurance and governance mechanisms. It also explored options for the longer-term delivery of the repairs and maintenance service. These will continue to be investigated in more detail, with updates provided as more information is available.

### **Current Service Performance**

- 2.5 The current contracts are delivering high levels of tenant satisfaction and performance. In quarter 1 of 2025/26, the percentage of 4-hour responsive repairs attended within timescale was at 99.92%, above the minimum level of accepted performance of 98%. Similarly, the percentage of non-urgent responsive repairs completed within timescales in quarter 1 of 2025/26 was at 99.63%, above the minimum level of accepted performance of 94%.
- 2.6 In 2024/25, all property-related satisfaction measures were either sustained or improved. Satisfaction with well-maintained homes rose marginally to 77.7%, and satisfaction with home safety remained high at 81.0%, reflecting only a slight decrease of 0.1 percentage points. More significantly, satisfaction with the overall repairs service increased from 74.1% to 78.6%, and satisfaction with the time taken to complete the most recent repair rose from 72.1% to 77.6%.
- 2.7 The mid-year position for 2025/26 shows a slight decline in satisfaction with home maintenance, falling by 0.8 percentage points to 76.9%. However, satisfaction with home safety improved to 81.5%, and both repairs-related measures continued to rise: satisfaction with the overall repairs service reached 78.9%, and satisfaction with the time taken to complete repairs increased to 79.5%. Compared to the 2023/24 baseline, these represent gains of 4.8 and 7.4 percentage points, respectively, highlighting sustained improvement in service delivery.
- 2.8 Housemark is a leading data and insight company serving the UK housing sector which benchmarks data against other housing providers. Their data from a 2024 benchmarking exercise confirms Rotherham not only have strong performance but also have an overall cost profile which is comparatively lean, with the average cost per unit being 30% lower than that of its bespoke peers and the sector average.

## **Options Appraisal Recommendations**

- 2.9 Lumensol produced a series of recommendations in the medium term (2027-2030) and long term (2030+).
- 2.10 In summary, Lumensol were largely complimentary of the Council's repairs and maintenance service. The demonstrated strong performance, high tenant satisfaction across key service areas, and comparatively low cost suggests that the Council's current outsourced model offers a favourable balance between value for money and service quality.
- 2.11 Awaab's Law was implemented in October 2025 which places new legal duties for social landlords to respond swiftly and effectively to health hazards in tenants' homes — particularly damp and mould, with further hazards being introduced in 2026 and 2027. The implementation of any new delivery model in the medium term could impact the Council's performance and preparation for the legislative changes above, therefore it is imperative that the next steps are considered carefully and with wider reforms of the Housing Service in mind.
- 2.12 Lumensol recommended that the existing contracts and delivery model are retained and maximised until 2030, and during this period the Council is committed to embarking on a period of service transformation to further enhance the delivery offer whilst investigating and deciding upon the long-term offer. This includes service modernisation, improving available performance information and repairs data.
- 2.13 Lumensol produced options for long term delivery models which compare all viable delivery options (insourced, outsourced and a hybrid model) against the delivery priorities of the Council.

## **Delivery Model 2027-2030**

- 2.14 The current model demonstrates strong performance, marked by operational stability and value for money. The model consistently delivers high-quality outcomes, with contracts structured to provide a favourable balance between cost and service quality.
- 2.15 A transition to an alternative delivery model prior to 2030 would require significant investment, and extensive change management which carries a high risk of performance disruption. Maintaining the current approach ensures continuity and supports the strategic goals of the directorate.
- 2.16 This stability aligns with the council's plan to develop a 5-year capital investment programme following completion of 100% stock condition surveys, enabling effective planning and delivery without the added complexity of structural change. It also allows time to strengthen internal capacity, ensuring readiness for future service evolution.
- 2.17 In the context of increasing service pressures, including compliance with Awaab's Law and the upcoming Regulator of Social Housing (RSH)

Inspection, the current model supports the council's ability to respond effectively while maintaining tenant trust and satisfaction.

- 2.18 Additionally, the current arrangements provides a buffer against market volatility, helping to mitigate risks associated with workforce availability, inflationary pressures, and supply chain disruption.

### **Delivery Options 2030+**

- 2.19 To ensure alignment with governance arrangements and enable a smooth transition beyond the current delivery model, the service will require a formal decision on proposed delivery options for the post-2030 period by 31st March 2027. This timeline is critical as it allows sufficient lead-in for business development, procurement, strategic planning, and any preparatory work required to support future service delivery. Early clarity will also help mitigate risks associated with procurement delays, market uncertainty, and operational disruption, ensuring that the council remains well-positioned to maintain service continuity and quality for tenants.
- 2.20 The Council is considering whether there may be merit in exploring alternative or complementary service delivery options to enhance the current outsourced model. One such option could involve assessing the feasibility of introducing an internal delivery mechanism for selected service areas. This would require careful consideration of potential impacts on performance, cost, and operational resilience. The service will begin work to further explore future delivery models. This will support the service to understand and prepare for delivery options post 2030, providing a high-level overview of potential structures, financial and resource requirements, implementation considerations, and an assessment of the associated opportunities and risks. The evaluation of an alternative delivery model will require external specialist consultancy advice due to the size, magnitude and complexities of implementing an alternative delivery model.
- 2.21 The Council has recently commenced a comprehensive programme of stock condition surveys across its housing portfolio. As these surveys are in the early stages, there is currently insufficient data to provide a fully informed view of future capital investment needs. Extending the current contractual arrangements through to 2030 will allow time for the completion of these surveys and the collection of robust, representative data. This approach will ensure that future capital programme requirements are based on a thorough understanding of the condition of the housing stock, enabling more effective planning and investment decisions post-2030.

### **Tenant Engagement**

- 2.22 Staff, tenant, and member engagement activities taken place in late 2024 and early 2025 have highlighted a mix of strengths and areas for improvement in the housing repairs and maintenance service. While many aspects of the service are valued, feedback consistently pointed to opportunities to enhance communication, responsiveness, and clarity across processes. Suggestions focused on improving user experience, streamlining

reporting and follow-up, and ensuring services are inclusive and adaptable to tenant needs. These insights will help inform future service planning and delivery.

- 2.23 Tenant engagement and consultation will be a core part of the future landscaping of the repairs and maintenance service, included in key decision-making processes. Subject to approval, the service proposes to undertake a 12-week consultation period to provide tenants and other key stakeholders with the opportunity to contribute to the development of the potential future delivery model, following the conclusion of the viability study.

### **3. Options considered and recommended proposal**

- 3.1 Option One: That Cabinet notes the outcome of the work undertaken by Lumensol and approves the extension of the contracts to 2030 which will provide time to complete a viability study which further explores the feasibility of alternative service delivery models. A further update on this work will be presented to Cabinet in spring of 2027. Following the conclusion of the viability study, Cabinet is asked to delegate authority to the Assistant Director of Housing to approve the commencement of a 12-week public consultation, providing tenants and other key stakeholders with the opportunity to contribute to the development of the potential future delivery model. This approach ensures that future decisions are informed by robust evidence and meaningful stakeholder engagement, supporting the delivery of an efficient, high-quality, and value-for-money service post-2030. **This is the recommended option.**
- 3.2 Option Two: That Cabinet does not approve the viability study and continues with the existing outsourced service model without further exploration of alternatives or stakeholder engagement. **This is not recommended.**

### **4. Consultation on proposal**

- 4.1 In 2025, an engagement exercise was carried out with staff, tenants, and council members to gather feedback on Rotherham's repairs and maintenance service. The findings demonstrate that the service is built on strong foundations, with particular strengths in emergency response, safety compliance, helpful and proactive operatives, flexible appointments, and positive tenant experiences, all underpinned by a clear commitment to engagement and continuous improvement. While some challenges remain, overall feedback is encouraging, highlighting a service that is responsive and valued by its users, and well positioned to make further improvements that will enhance satisfaction and outcomes for tenants, staff, and the wider community.
- 4.2 Subject to approval tenants will be offered opportunities to participate in engagement activities as part of the service's future planning process, particularly when delivery options beyond 2030 are being considered. This will help ensure tenant views inform decision-making and support the development of a responsive and inclusive service model.

## **5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

- 5.1 The service will initiate negotiations to extend the current contracts through to their full term in 2030, ensuring continuity of delivery while future options are considered.
- 5.2 Additionally, should Cabinet endorse the development of an alternative delivery model, preparatory work will commence to support its procurement and evaluation.

## **6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications**

- 6.1 For the financial year 2025/26, there is a revenue budget of £27.7m and a capital budget of £37.2m 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 intention to extend until 2030 is within the scope of the procurement undertaken to award the contracts and is therefore compliant with procurement legislation (Public Contracts Regulations 2015 as the legislation that these arrangements were procured under).
- 6.4 Financial resource is required to complete the viability study whether this is undertaken by a specialist external consultant or via internal resources. This is a significant piece of work that cannot be contained within existing resource. This is being considered in the update of the HRA Business plan and budgets for 2026/27. Any costs incurred in 2025/26 will be funded by current underspends on the HRA.
- 6.5 If there is a need to engage external consultants to support the viability study as described in this report, this must be procured in compliance with relevant procurement legislation (Procurement Act 2023 or the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 dependent on the route to market) as well as the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules.
- 6.6 The outcome of the viability study will determine future procurement implications.

## **7. Legal Advice and Implications**

- 7.1 The Council provides its housing stock pursuant to Part II of the Housing Act 1985. The Council has obligations both implied by statute and set out within tenancy agreements to maintain its stock in a reasonable state of repair and amongst other duties in respect of the provision of housing, under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, a property must be fit for human habitation and free from health and safety hazards. Local authorities (as landlords) must also keep the structure and exterior of dwellings in good repair and



maintain installations for water, gas, electricity, sanitation, heating, and hot water.

- 7.2 The contractual arrangements set out in the body of the report describe how the Council undertakes the repairs and maintenance necessary for its housing stock. These arrangements allow for extension of the contract until 2030 as referred to in the Recommendations. Further, undertaking a viability study as recommended, will inform the Council's future decision making as to the most appropriate arrangements to implement, post 2030.
- 7.3 The official title of Awaab's Law referred to above, is the Hazards in Social Housing (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2025, made under the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. Pursuant to these Regulations Local authorities (as social landlords) have statutory duties to respond quickly and effectively to serious housing hazards — such as damp, mould, and emergency risks. Contractual arrangements are in place with the two providers referred to above to ensure that the Council complies with the new duties set out in Awaab's Law.
- 7.4 If the Council fails to comply with Awaab's Law, not only could they face tenant dis-satisfaction and reputational damage, but also legal sanctions including significant fines and restrictions on letting properties.

## **8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**

- 8.1 At present, there are no human resources implications, however any change to delivery models from 2030 onwards will have an impact on staff who are working for the contractors and TUPE arrangements may apply.
- 8.2 Recruitment to key roles within the Housing Property Service has been difficult due to salary disparities within the private sector and housing associations.

## **9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

- 9.1 The Council will ensure that all decisions regarding the future delivery of the repairs and maintenance service consider the diverse needs of tenants and residents.

## **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.
- 10.4 An Initial Equality Screening Assessment has been completed and attached as Appendix 1.

## **11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change**

- 11.1 The future delivery model for housing repairs and maintenance, as outlined in the Cabinet Report, carries significant implications for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and climate change. The report recognises that any change to the delivery model will directly influence the Council's ability to manage and reduce its carbon footprint.

## **12. Implications for Partners**

- 12.1 Any changes to delivery models will have a significant impact on current contracting partners. The extension of contracts with Mears and Equans provides stability and continuity, but partners must also be prepared for potential changes post-2030.

## **13. Risks and Mitigation**

- 13.1 Risks associated with changes to the delivery model for repairs and maintenance include potential disruption to service continuity, increased operational costs, and challenges in maintaining current levels of tenant satisfaction and performance. Transitioning to a new model, such as a Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) or a hybrid approach, would require significant investment and extensive change management, which could introduce uncertainty for both the Council and its contracting partners. There is also a risk that performance could decline during the transition period, impacting the Council's ability to meet legislative requirements, such as those introduced by Awaab's Law, and to respond effectively to regulatory inspections.
- 13.2 To mitigate these risks, the intention to maintain the current model until 2030 will provide a stable environment for the Council and its partners which will allow time for comprehensive evaluation and strategic planning. Early engagement with partners, clear communication, and robust procurement processes will be essential to ensure a smooth transition should a new delivery model be adopted. The Council also plans to strengthen internal capacity and embark on service transformation work during the extension period, which will help to manage risks associated with market volatility, workforce availability, and supply chain disruption, ensuring that service quality and tenant trust are maintained throughout any future changes.

## **14. Accountable Officers**

Sarah Clyde, Assistant Director of Housing

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	<b>Named Officer</b>	<b>Date</b>
Chief Executive	John Edwards	27/11/25
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	25/11/25
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	24/11/25

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