
Social Housing Repairs

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Craig Warhurst
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Simon Parry – Interim Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services
Report Author	Job Title: Interim Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services Contact Email: simon.parry@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	Finding somewhere to live; Living independent, active, and healthy lives; and Communities which are safe, well maintained, and Green
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Overview and Scrutiny note the contents of the report.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Within the work programme for Overview and Scrutiny for 2023/4 an item for Social Housing repairs was identified. To provide an update based on a range of key questions. The following sets out those questions and provides a response updating members on progress across Repairs and the wider Housing Revenue Account Capital Investment Programme.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

3.1 What is the process the tenant goes through to report an issue to Repairs and Maintenance Team?

There are multiple ways that a tenant can currently report a repair to their council house including by telephone, email, online, in person. We are also looking to provide a portal for individual tenants that will allow

them to report issues as well as view details about their properties and statements of account including rents.

In order to receive, allocate and manage the requests for service from our tenants, within the Housing Property Services Team, we have the Business Support Unit (BSU). They carry out a range of functions to support the delivery of our repairs, voids and adaptations services including answering telephone calls, monitoring emails, work allocational and scheduling, as well as ordering materials from suppliers. Their primary purpose therefore is to receive the issues raised by tenants through several formats as follows.

3.1.1 ***Telephone***

We have a dedicated telephone number for our tenants to call for repairs including general repairs, gas related repairs and gas servicing queries. Since June 2023 we have had a dedicated, permanent team who have been responsible for call handling and this has seen a sharp increase in performance levels, as well as a significant reduction in complaints, prior to this period, regarding wait times and general poor service.

Tel: **01527 534074**

Our Normal Working Hours are

9-5 Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday

9-4 Wednesdays

In the event of any of Emergency related issues outside of the normal working hours including weekends and bank holidays then the telephone number is **01527 67666**

3.1.2 ***Emails***

We also have a dedicated email address rm.xgates@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk which is monitored by the BSU team and responses given as appropriate based on the request/content.

We clearly also receive emails from advocates including Local Councillors through a range of emails directly to officers or our Housing.enquiries@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk . This latter email is for the use of Members only and should not be given to members of the public. This allows the Housing Team to track individual responses

and to identify any performance issues related primarily to lateness of responses and or trends.

3.1.3 ***Online***

Through our website there are forms that can be filled in for repairs which contains a range of information requests including

- Name
- Address
- Contact Details - Telephone Number and Email
- Details of the repair required
- Dates and times where the tenant is unavailable
- What room is affected
- To underpin this information the tenant can attach photographs

There is a similar form that can be used specifically for gas repairs.

Also, on our website, as you move to the online form, there is a Repairs Handy Hint digital booklet. This provides information to tenants on terminology, to more accurately identify the type of repair required, as well as providing information on tenant's responsibilities and general handy hints.

A link to the "report a repair" page and the digital booklet is here [Report a repair - redditchbc.gov.uk](https://redditchbc.gov.uk)

The website also includes information related to out of hours emergency repairs which include

- **Gas Escapes,**
- **Exposed live electrical cables,**
- **Severe water leaks**
- **Major drainage problems**

3.1.4 ***Other methods***

Whilst tenants could also visit any of our Council Offices and report any repairs in person, all of the above methods will provide a more timely response to the issues raised.

Similarly, a tenant may wish to write a letter, these could be addressed to Crossgates House, Crossgate Road, Park Farm Industrial Estate, Redditch, B98 7SN.

Again, in the interests of ensuring the issue is dealt with as quickly as possible we advocate any of the other methods to provide a timely response.

3.2 How long does it currently take, on average, to respond to repair queries /and then undertake the repair?

The Council has established three categories of responsive repair:

- Emergency 2 hrs
- Urgent 5 working days
- Routine 20 working days

3.2.1 *Emergency repairs*

Those that need to be carried out to avoid serious danger to the health and safety of the occupants or where a failure to carry out the repair could cause extensive damage to buildings and property. The Council, or a suitable appointed contractor, will attend emergency repairs within two hours of receipt of the call.

3.2.2 *Urgent repairs*

Those that impact on tenants if not dealt with in the appropriate timescales including

- partial loss of electric power partial loss of water supply
- total or partial loss of space or water heating between 30th April and 1st November
- blocked sink, bath or basin, tap which cannot be turned
- loose or detached banister or handrail, rotten timber flooring or stair tread
- leaking roof
- door entry phone not working
- mechanical extractor fan in internal kitchen or bathroom not working

3.2.3 *Routine repairs*

These will be assessed and prioritised however these typically do not pose an immediate risk to health and safety nor imminent danger to the structure and will be attended to at a time suitable to the tenant within the parameters of resource availability and the target timescales.

3.3 How can the Council improve its repair turnaround times?

Within Housing Property Services there are a number of actions taking place and planned to further improve service delivery to ensure that we deliver a modern, efficient, customer focussed repairs service. The service needs to be accessible by all users, easy to contact, responsive and to provide updates/information about our tenants repairs current status. The key actions identified cover a range of areas including recruitment, training, review of processes, implementation of new systems and performance measures in order to improve service delivery.

3.3.1 *Recruitment*

Currently there is a round of recruitment being undertaken which will see, as with the Business Support Unit, a range of roles being recruited into on a permanent basis. This covers our trade operatives, supervisors, management and administrative support for the teams. This will allow us to further build on the progress that has been made regarding morale, output and standards. As part of this we want to ensure we have a committed workforce who treat our customers and their homes with respect, are tidy and undertake their work to high standards.

3.3.2 *Training*

We are also developing a robust training programme for the team so that individual's skills are improved reducing the need for follow up trades or more than one operative to be booked for a job. We will undertake a skills matrix when all recruitment is complete in order to establish current skills sets and identify areas for further development and or training.

3.3.3 *Systems*

We currently operate a diary system for our trade operatives which is labour intensive and has limited flexibility. We are working with our partner Total Mobile Solutions to configure their Mobilise and Connect ICT systems. These systems will provide each of the operatives with the ability to work in a more mobile way, receiving their jobs via a mobile device, rather than the current paper-based systems. This functionality will allow real time updates for each job to understand when it was completed, if there is a need for follow up works or there was no access. The system will then provide updates and reports on individual performance as well as the whole team.

This in turn will increase productivity by removing the need for manual intervention and updates to systems that currently exists which will

then create greater capacity to deliver services. This system will also provide timely updates to our customers by alerting them, via contact details held, that the operative is on the way, has arrived, finished or was unable to access to complete the works. Where the latter exists the system will provide a new appointment date and time which the tenant will receive via their preferred communication route.

The Connect software allows us to have a comprehensive job management system delivered via a dashboard. It will allow more automated systems for our materials management including the material kept on the vans from which our operatives work, minimising the impact of not having the right materials on the van at the time of carrying out the work.

3.3.4 *Review of processes*

There are ongoing reviews of the various processes in operation to deliver the service, some will be remodelled as a consequence on the implementation of the Total Mobile Solution however in the interim we are working with the teams to understand how we can remove duplication. One such area is the volume of pre inspections undertaken. At the start of the repairs process it is imperative to gather as much information upfront from tenants in order to schedule more accurately the time required to undertake works rather than our current over reliance on pre inspections by one of our senior tradesperson or operatives.

Our Senior Trades who undertake a range of tasks including supervision of the operatives, will be undertaking more post work inspections in order to ensure that the quality of work is to the required standards.

With access critical to the success of our service we want to minimise the number of visits needed to complete the repair.

3.3.5 *Data review*

We are looking to undertake more data analysis to understand from our systems the number of times that repairs have been undertaken to properties in order to establish key course of actions including, instead of multiple repairs, whether an element e.g. a roof, requires replacement. We have stock condition data that assists us with this and will be shortly commencing a rolling programme of stock condition surveys that will see 20% of our stock reviewed each year in order to update data that assists in creating our planned programmes of capital investment.

3.3.6 *Customer Feedback*

We are looking to work on developing our systems to enable a customer satisfaction for each repair to be undertaken in order to use this data to influence our service delivery.

In September 2022 the RSH launched a 'Tenant Satisfaction measures' (TSM) document which places a responsibility on all social housing landlords in England to return performance information, so that each provider can be assessed for how well it is providing good quality homes and services. This is part of the strategy to improve services for people living in social housing that is covered by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.

The TSM document sets out 22 measures covering 5 themes.

1. Keeping Properties in good repair
2. Maintaining Building Safety
3. Respectful and helpful engagement
4. Effective handling of complaints
5. Responsible neighbourhood management

Of the 22 measures they are split between those that the landlord is required to measure directly (10 No.) and those that are measured by tenant perception surveys (12 No.)

These tenant perception surveys will be sent out to all tenants that have provided us with a mobile phone number to undertake this short survey. We will also be providing hard copies for those tenants that wish to undertake the survey in those way and will also be asking customers who contact the council to assess if they would undertaken the survey over the phone. For those with internet access our website will have a link to the survey that our tenants can also complete.

TP - Measured by doing tenant perception surveys
TP01: Overall satisfaction
TP02: Satisfaction with repairs
TP03: Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair
TP04: Satisfaction that the home is well maintained
TP05: Satisfaction that the home is safe
TP06: Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them
TP07: Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them
TP08: Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect
TP09: Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints
TP10: Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained
TP11: Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods
TP12: Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour

3.3.7 Performance

More robust performance reporting for individuals and teams will be provided through the new systems being implemented and will be used through formal, regular meetings undertaken with operational managers.

3.4 What is the system for prioritising repairs so that more urgent repairs are given priority and attended to?

The priority of repairs is as set out above at 3.2 and is a standard that is used commonly across the Social Housing Sector.

3.5 Policy details regarding damage caused to Council properties – including for damage caused by tenants, the Repairs and Maintenance Team and the contractors?

3.5.1 Damage Caused by tenants

The Council approved a new Rechargeable Repairs Policy which sets out Housing Property Services. This policy sets out RBC's approach to recharging for repairs in and clearances from within the property, its boundary, gardens, and any communal spaces and are deemed by

RBC to be the responsibility of the licensee, tenant, lessee, or former tenant due to:

- Neglect
- Wilful damage
- Hoarding
- Termination or transfer of tenancy

The tenant will be provided with opportunity and a reasonable amount of time to either undertake the repair themselves to a satisfactory standard to RBC or elect to have RBC complete the repair at the current rate.

Repairs will always be recharged in accordance with the current National Schedule of Rates (SOR) plus a fair and reasonable administration charge as agreed in Fees and Charges.

In an emergency situation (defined by an incident requiring emergency repairs to be undertaken because there is a risk to life, of serious injury or any effect on health and safety or property or persons) and it is deemed by RBC that such a situation has been caused by the agreement holder knowingly failing to report a repair, or giving access in accordance with Repairs Policy, then RBC will recharge all the costs to the responsible agreement holder, including gaining entry and / or repairing the property or properties to the responsible agreement holder.

When a tenancy is legally terminated by either party to the agreement, the ending tenancy procedure will usually be followed. This would usually include a recorded inspection or inspections of the entire property and communal areas by RBC officers within the legal notice period, to identify repairs and / or clearances that are or would have been the agreement holder's responsibility, again giving the agreement holder the opportunity to rectify the identified potentially rechargeable repairs themselves, to RBC satisfaction, or elect for RBC to complete and recharge during the notice period or after moving out.

RBC reserves the right to charge and will always attempt to secure payment in advance, in full for some repairs deemed to be rechargeable before they are undertaken.

However, RBC acknowledges that some agreement holders will be too vulnerable or not in a financial position to pay in advance in part or in

full. Where this is deemed to genuinely be the case and / or further damage might be caused to the neighbours or their property, the Housing Revenue Team will be notified promptly to raise the outstanding charge and pursue it in accordance with the Housing Revenue Management Policy.

Examples of the items that are rechargeable are included in the table below:

Trade	Work detail
General	Gain Entry or where a warrant is required
General	Call out charge or make safe + the repair work undertaken
General	Boarding up window or door - Small, Medium & Large
Glazing	Replace single glazed 6mm thick glass pane – S, M or L
Glazing	Replace 28mm double glazed unit - window or door (all sizes)
Plumbing	Unblock sinks, wash basin, bath, or WC
Plumbing	Replacing plugs and chains to baths, sinks and wash hand basins
Plumbing	Replace wash hand basin- Inc. fixtures & fittings
Plumbing	Replace WC pan & cistern - Inc. fixtures & fittings
Plumbing	Replace bath - Inc. fixtures & fittings (not Inc. bath panel)
Plumbing	Replace bath panel
Plumbing	Replace stainless steel sink Inc. F&F
Plumbing	Blocked drainage systems and soil stacks
Plumbing	Replace toilet seat
Carpentry	Replace keys and locks to doors, windows, and garages if they are lost or stolen
Carpentry	Replace lost or stolen key fobs
Carpentry	Replace kitchen unit draw or door
Carpentry	Replace cupboard latches and handles
Carpentry	Repair kitchen unit draw or door
Carpentry	Replace internal doors - none fire door 110/door
Carpentry	Replace external doors (UVPC) - None Fire Door
Carpentry	Replace Wooden door - Fire door Inc. Intumescent strips
Carpentry	Replace door handles and latches (internal doors only)
Electrics	Replace florescent light fitting and tubes/starters
Electrics	Re-fix or renew electrical accessories - switch, sockets, pendant
Electrics	Replace damaged/broken 240v smoke alarm + new test certificate
Electrics	Disconnect/remove illegal wiring & electrical accessories & reinstate wiring + Tests
Electrics	Carry out electrical test certificate
Gas	Turning gas on following capping
Gas	Rehang radiator

Gas	Replace TRV thermostat
Building	Repair Plastering
Building	Repair of walls/patio's
Environmental	Garden maintenance
Environmental	Garden rubbish removal – small
Environmental	Garden rubbish removal - large (skip load/van load)
Environmental	Bulky Waste removal
Environmental	Loft clearances
Environmental	Property Clean - Easy Clean
Environmental	Property Clean - Deep clean
Environmental	Pest control TBC
External	Non Standard Fencing dividing gardens (other than privacy panels)
External	Gate and shed latches, bolts and catches

3.5.2 *Damage caused by the Repairs and Maintenance Team*

Where the Council has either undertaken a repair and or not undertaken a repair that has been requested, and is the Council's responsibility, and there has been an impact on the personal effects of the tenant, then this would be investigated either through the Complaints process or via our claims team. In order to make a complaint, this can be verbally or in writing/email then this will be logged on our systems and investigated by relevant officers at Stage 1. If there is dissatisfaction with the outcome at this stage, then a tenant can progress to a Stage 2 where a senior manager reviews the case and responds accordingly. Should there still be dissatisfaction then the Housing Ombudsman Service will investigate independently.

[Housing complaint or enquiry - redditchbc.gov.uk](https://redditchbc.gov.uk)

Where the case is referred to our Insurance team the link below contains the initial details required to establish a case and for it to be investigated accordingly.

[Submit a claim against the council - redditchbc.gov.uk](https://redditchbc.gov.uk)

3.5.3 *Damage Caused by a contractor*

Where works have been undertaken by a contractor, working on behalf of the Council, and damage is caused directly or indirectly by the works that they have undertaken then the details of the claim will be passed to them to investigate and determine the outcome.

3.6 Details of specific repairs / upgrades to council properties that the council is prioritising at the moment?

3.6.1 The case and inquest into the death of Awaab Ishak has heightened Damp and Mould cases across the sector and has resulted in consultation and the imminent release of stringent targets regarding these cases. As a consequence of this case over the last 12 months we have undertaken a review of current practices and covered a range of issues included a review of capacity to deliver the works, the products used by our operatives, guidance shared with our tenants and training for staff in identifying mould and damp issues.

3.6.2 Work has been undertaken to carry out mould treatment works to affected properties previously identified. New cases continue to be reported and works are booked in for operatives currently 4 weeks in advance.

3.6.3 Where more complex cases are presented then we utilise mould specialist contractor Quality Eradication Services Today Limited (QUEST) who receive requests to undertake surveys together with associated remedial works.

3.6.4 We have reviewed the training requirements and the treatment that we have traditionally applied in order to ensure it is fit for purpose. Our treatment of properties is principally the removal of mould using anti fungicidal treatments including thereafter the use of anti-fungicidal paints. Moreover, an assessment of ventilation is made regarding trickle vents in windows and also extraction fans. The extractor fans have a humidistat fitted and are activated where humidity levels reach certain levels.

3.6.5 We await the timescales that will be laid down by government in Awaab's Law and will review our operating processes etc at that time to ensure compliance. Whilst we are reliant on our tenants requesting repairs and reporting such cases the stock condition surveys, that are about to commence, will assist in identifying cases that we may be unaware of currently and therefore we will remedy these in due course.

- 3.7 At its meeting in March 2023 the Council approved a new 30 year Business plan for the Housing Revenue Account. Also included within this report were the Housing Asset management Strategy and a Housing Capital Programme covering 2023-2027. A stock condition survey covering 20% of the Council's housing stock has been commissioned and is due to start shortly as part of refreshing our data to inform future investment requirements
- 3.7.1 The Housing Capital Programme set out a range of Budget lines to improve our Social Housing Stock. This £40m programme was built up of a range of projects and contracts, the following provides a brief overview of some of the key projects and budget lines.
- 3.7.2 The Internal Refurbishment contract has two contractors operating in defined geographical areas (East/West). The scope of works are all 4 main internal elements, Kitchens, bathrooms, Rewires and Gas Central Heating. The works will be individualised based on the stock condition information and surveys undertaken and will contain any combination of these four key elements. Works have progressed well with the new contractors having recently passed the 100th Kitchen to be replaced.
- 3.7.3 Over the last 3 years the Gas Team have reviewed the boilers we have in our housing stock and identified many boilers that were over 10 years old, inefficient and with parts hard to acquire. Over this time more than 1,000 boilers have been replaced for more efficient boilers to assist our tenants with their heating bills.
- 3.7.4 To improve the energy efficiency of our housing stock, Housing Property Services has been successful in attracting external government funding (Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund - SHDF) of over £1.6m to move property Energy Performance Certificate ratings to C or above by undertaking insulation measures including loft, cavity and external wall insulation where applicable.
- 3.7.5 In order to improve security across our low-rise blocks of flats a programme of door entry replacement has been undertaken in the Batchley area with an ongoing programme of replacement continuing across the Borough.

- 3.7.6 Ensuring our tenants feel and remain safe within their homes is an important issue and therefore we have been undertaking a series of projects covering gas servicing, electrical installation checks, smoke detection and carbon monoxide detection installations across the Borough.
- 3.7.7 We have a programme of fire prevention upgrades including fire stopping measures and fire door replacements. These works have been focused on our previous sheltered housing schemes where some of our most vulnerable customers live. Ongoing works across various blocks also includes freshening and modernising the decorations and carpeting in the communal areas of these blocks.
- 3.7.7 One of our key priorities over the last 18 months has been to ensure that tenants identified through Occupational Therapist assessment have the adaptations to allow them to live independently. Working with both our internal team and an external contractor we have delivered all category 1 adaptations i.e. those with an immediate need. These works have primarily involved level access showers alongside other measures such as grab rails, second stair rails, stairlifts, ramps and door widening where identified.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The budgets within the Housing Revenue Account and HRA Capital Programme form part of the budget setting programme.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The HRA consists of expenditure on Council owned assets, primarily its Housing. There is a statutory requirement that the Council is obliged to keep its Housing Revenue Account separate from other housing activities in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (as amended).
- 5.2 The Council has a duty to disclose specified information in relation to the HRA and its operation under the Housing Revenue Account (Accounting Practices) Directions 2016.
- 5.3 In November 2020 MHCLG (now DLUHC) published guidance on the operation of the Housing Revenue Account ring-fence and highlighted the need to be fair to both tenants and council taxpayers and that there

should be a fair and transparent apportionment of costs between the HRA and General Fund.

- 5.4 The Localism Act 2011 introduced a system of Council Housing finance which replaced the HRA subsidy system with self-financing arrangements.
- 5.5 In October 2018 the HRA borrowing cap was abolished allowing local authorities the opportunity to borrow against expected rental income in accordance with the CIPFA Prudential Code 2021 (as amended).

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 6.1 The contents of this report support the following strategic priorities.
- Finding somewhere to live;
 - Living independent, active, and healthy lives; and
 - Communities which are safe, well maintained, and Green

Climate Change Implications

- 6.2 The Government's Clean Growth Strategy 2017 and Heat and Buildings Strategy 2021 sets a target for social housing providers to achieve a minimum Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of C by 2030 for all fuel poor properties together with a target to make all homes 'net zero carbon' by 2050.

Improving the Energy Efficiency of our Housing Stock, together with lowering the impact on the climate, are key drivers within the Asset management Strategy with a target of ensuring all of our properties meet a minimum Energy Performance Certificate Rating of C.

- 6.3 The Capital Programme is established to ensure our properties remain compliant with the Decent Homes standard as well as providing thermal comfort through increased Energy performance.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.4 Understanding the profile and needs of tenants will give greater insight into how specific requirements can be addressed and funded. The ongoing implementation of the new Housing System will assist in the development of a robust and detailed tenant profile, in conjunction with planned tenant engagement and wider local demographic data.

- 6.5 There are positive equalities implications resulting from the plan of works being delivered including the focus on heating, thermal efficiency, and window replacement, which will benefit physical health and wellbeing, those with long term conditions or disabilities and people in fuel poverty or struggling with the cost of living. The provision for aids and adaptations will also support people with a disability to remain, and remain independent, in their properties.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 A large proportion of the works identified to improve our council housing stock is reliant on the capacity and performance of contractors. Good Contract and performance management will allow us to understand and manage this risk.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Overview and Scrutiny
2024meetingdatedm**

14th March

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Warhurst	01/03/2024
Head of Service	Guy Revans	04/03/2024
Financial Services	Peter Carpenter	06/03/2024
Legal Services	Nicola Cummings.	06/03/2024
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	N/A	
Climate Change Team (if climate change implications apply)	N/A	