



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**



Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

13 July 2023

Report of: Councillor Phil Dilks
Cabinet Member for Housing and
Planning

Housing Repairs & Maintenance Policy

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

To inform the Committee of the new Housing Repairs Policy which sets the framework for the delivery of all aspects of the repairs service to include repairing responsibilities and the processes of delivery of planned, cyclical and reactive repairs.

Recommendations

That the Committee:

- 1. The Committee notes the Housing Repairs & Maintenance Policy is in line with best practice and will ensure clear operational guidance for staff and all customers.**
- 2. The Committee recommends that the Director of Housing make alterations and amendments to the Policy to incorporate comments arising from consultation, for submission and adoption at full Council.**

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?

No

What are the relevant corporate priorities?

Housing that meets the needs of all residents

Which wards are impacted?

All

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 The Housing Repairs and Maintenance spend in 2022/23 was £9.21m against a budget of £8.94m, this included an allocation of £1.3m for the Earlesfield Project, the approved budget for 2023/24 is £7.836m. Due to the significant levels of spend it is important that the Council has a policy in place which clearly sets out the Council and Tenant responsibilities for repairs and maintenance to ensure that value for money is achieved.
- 1.2 Any additional costs incurred by the policy will need to be met from within existing budgets.

Completed by: Alison Hall-Wright, Assistant Director of Finance and Deputy S151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.3 A failure to effectively repair and maintain properties can be subject to legal challenge with a resulting negative impact upon the finances, reputation and image of the Council, leading in turn to a loss of public confidence.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer

Risk and Mitigation

- 1.4 The recording of repairs activity, mitigation of claim risk and the production of performance reports is reliant on the development and maintenance of both the Integrated Housing Management System and Asset Management Data Systems.

Completed by: Tracey Elliott, Governance & Risk Officer

Health and Safety

- 1.1 Failure to provide effective and timely repairs or maintenance to properties could result in an increased risk of injury or ill health related matters to both tenants and employees of SKDC. This failure also carries risk of prosecution, both criminal and civil with associated fines in the event that safety failings and material breaches are identified.

Completed by: Phil Swinton, Compliance and Health and Safety Manager

Diversity and Inclusion

- 1.2 The Policy sets a clear framework to ensure its implementation will be carried out equally. Any requirement to adapt provision as a direct response to a relevant protected characteristic will be addressed on a case-by-case basis, free of discrimination or bias to meet the Council's duty under the Equality Act 2010.
- 1.3 The Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out by the author of the policy and can be seen in appendix 3.

Completed by: Carol Drury, Community Engagement Manager

Human Resources

- 1.5 The Council needs to ensure that adequate resources and its staffing levels are sufficient to implement the Council's policy effectively.

Completed by: Fran Beckitt (Interim Head of HR)

Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

- 1.4 Living conditions of a person's home can have an effect on their mental health and wellbeing. The principles contained in the Policy and the defined framework for delivery will provide transparency and reassurance for our customers.

Completed by: Fran Beckitt (Interim Head of HR)

Climate Change

- 1.6 The policy positively addresses issues of carbon reduction through improved management of resources, selection and standardisation of materials.
- 1.7 The policy provides a framework for the Council to upgrade a property in a way in which improves the Energy Performance Certificate, whilst addressing tenant improvements which may have an adverse effect on the energy rating. This enables the Council to address fuel poverty and reduces carbon emissions associated with the whole housing stock in line with our commitments.

Completed by: Serena Brown, Sustainability and Climate Change Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 The Council has a clear commitment in its Corporate Plan 2020-2023 to provide *“Housing that meets the needs of all residents”*. As a stock-retained local authority, the Council has around 5,900 properties. One of the critical Landlord activities is the provision of an effective repairs and maintenance service.
- 2.2 Following the exhaustive work as a result of the self-referral to the Social Housing Regulator, one of the actions within the Housing Improvement Plan was the creation of a robust and transparent repairs & maintenance policy.
- 2.3 The Housing Repairs & Maintenance Policy (Appendix 1) aims to define, at a strategic level, the guiding principles that underpin repair and maintenance activities. It sets out the framework for delivery together with key performance targets.
- 2.4 Previous policy and guidance have taken the form of a series of protocols which were last reviewed in 2017 and are no longer relevant. The Repairs Policy has incorporated and updated these elements into a transparent policy framework compliant and in line with current legislation and best practice.
- 2.5 Further work will be required to amend the Tenant Repair Handbook and develop Standard Operating Procedures following consultation and adoption of the Repairs Policy.
- 2.6 The Policy indicates the use of the Council’s website to communicate statutory elements of the Councils repairing obligations as a Landlord and the Housing Repairs webpages will need to be updated following adoption of this Policy.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 The Repairs Policy is a critical working document which enables the Council to meet the legislative and regulatory requirements, to respond to tenant’s needs, and improve satisfaction with their homes and the services they receive.
- 3.2 The Council recognises that the efficient and effective repair and maintenance of the housing properties is an important service to tenants and leaseholders, and an essential part of a much wider asset management function.
- 3.3 The Council currently delivers its repairs services through an in-house repairs service and external contractors, whilst it sets out the framework for delivery, the Policy does not aim to define how the service is delivered.
- 3.4 The general principals of managing damp and mould are the same as managing other repair issues, however the Damp and Mould Protocol (Appendix 2) has been added to the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy in response to Awabs Law and the likelihood of additional regulations being introduced.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 Review the existing protocol framework, however this approach means that multiple documents require review on a routine basis with potential inconsistencies as documents are reviewed separately.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 The clarity provided by The Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy, enables staff working in the service to make operational decisions efficiently and consistently. This in turn provides greater transparency and understanding for tenants of the standards and activities the repairs and maintenance service will deliver.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 Consultation has been undertaken within the wider teams in the Housing Directorate. The presentation of this Policy for Scrutiny is a key element in the wider engagement strategy, and we will be undertaking a period of four weeks consultation with tenants.
- 6.2 The consultation period reflects the impact of the Policy.

7. Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix 1 – Housing Repairs & Maintenance Policy
Appendix 2 – Damp & Mould Protocol
Appendix 3 – Equality Impact Assessment