



Cabinet

7th November 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 seek approval from Cabinet of the adoption of the new Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy which sets the framework for the delivery of the repair service.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the adoption of the new Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy.
2. Delegates authority to the Chief Executive to make minor alterations and amendments to the Policy post adoption as required by changes to regulations and expectations by the Regulator for Social Housing.

Decision Information

Is this a Key Decision?	No
Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?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, Deputy Director (Finance and ICT) 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

Human Resources

- 1.4 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 (HR Manager)

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.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 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.
- 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 to clarify the Councils response to this issue.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 Continue without an adequate policy or procedure.

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 The draft Repairs and Maintenance Policy was presented to the Housing Scrutiny and Overview Committee on 13 July 2023.
- 6.2 Tenants have had the opportunity to comment on the draft Policy which was published on the website, hard copies have were made available on request and posters have been used to promote the consultation.
- 6.3 Two workshops were held to give tenants the opportunity to feedback directly to the Repairs Team and give their thoughts on the Policy.
- 6.4 Tenants were happy that the Policy provided clarity on the service delivery and met the needs of both Landlord and Tenant.
- 6.5 There were some common themes arising from the consultation around the delivery of the repairs service and communication and these will be taken into consideration with the ongoing development of the service.
- 6.6 A copy of the draft Policy has been provided to the Housing Ombudsman, although no feedback has yet been received.

7. Appendices

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