


NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET – TUESDAY, 22 APRIL 2025



Title of Report	HOUSING REPAIRS PERFORMANCE UPDATE 2025	
Presented by	Councillor Andrew Woodman Portfolio Holder for Housing, Property and Customer Services PH Briefed 	
Background Papers	March 25 – Corporate Scrunity Jan 24 – Cabinet Nov 2023 – Corporate Scrunity March 2023 – Corporate Scrunity Report	Public Report: Yes
		Key Decision: Yes
Financial Implications	None directly related to the report, however resources to enable delivery as set out in the current and future years budget.	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	None related to the topic of the report.	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	Staffing recruitment in some areas of the housing service remain an issue and actions are detailed in the report.	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Purpose of Report	To update Cabinet on progress on improving and the impact of the creation of the Housing Improvement Board, as set up by Cabinet in early 2024.	
Reason for Decision	Cabinet is responsible for ensuring that proper arrangements exist for the effective and efficient management of the Council's executive affairs and the delivery of policy and strategy including oversight of the Council's Landlord function regarding Social Homes.	
Recommendations	THAT CABINET: 1) NOTES THE PROGRESS MADE TO DELIVER THE HOUSING RECOVERY PLAN FOCUSED ON HOUSING REPAIRS 2) ENDORSES THE HOUSING IMPROVEMENT BOARD TO CONTINUE ITS WORK.	

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 At its January 2024 meeting, Cabinet received an update regarding the Housing Repairs Service. This was against a background of concern about delivery for tenants. Previous reports set out the challenges that the Service was facing and actions being taken. In summary these were:

- Demand – the Service’s biggest historic challenge was work requests outstripping the ability to deliver. This largely stemmed from the cessation of works during the Covid pandemic of circa 12-18months, which led to a backlog of works.
- Resources - recruitment for the in-house team has always been challenging. The Council is competing for recruitment in a highly contested marketplace which post-Covid has seen significant changes. This has and continues to be recognised as a national and cross sector issue affecting most providers from house building companies through to private and social landlords alike and is not unique to the Council.
- Availability of robust data and knowledge information management –key data and records around tenants and the Council’s properties are required to ensure the smooth planning of non-urgent works. This also applies to the management of the process of repairs reporting, through evaluation, and job booking and delivery. In the past, ensuring that the Council has all of this data in an accessible form has been challenging.
- Policy Updates – ensuring that working practices and policies align with updated regulations.

1.2 This report provides Cabinet with an update on progress to date, addressing the above issues. The report also covers the activity of the Housing Improvement Board formed in early 2024. Corporate Scrutiny received a similar report in March 2025 and Annex A sets out a copy of the draft minute from that meeting.

2.0 PROGRESS SINCE LAST REPORT

2.1 Turning to the areas identified above, this section of the report sets out how these issues are being addressed and what work is still to do in the Service.

Demand

2.2 Significant inroads have been made in the backlog of works for repairs. During the summer of 2024 a ‘Whole Home’ contractor was appointed (Wates) to help address the significant repairs backlog. Following mobilisation in Autumn 2024, the management of aged repairs (Work in Progress – WIP) was split into two areas. Historic WIP – passed in entirety to Wates, and new WIP addressed by the in-house repairs service.

2.3 At its height, historic WIP reached around c.7,000 jobs. These were a mix of actual jobs, duplicate jobs and non-closed work. Since this time, there has been a significant drop in the amount of outstanding work. At the end of Quarter 3 (end Dec 24) WIP stood at around 2,000 jobs. This has been achieved through a combination of completing jobs of work, closing jobs which were completed but had not been tracked as such, and removing duplicate jobs within the system. The relationship with Wates is working well and it is anticipated that the volume of WIP will continue to reduce over the coming months. The aim is to reach a total combined WIP (aged and current) of

around 500-1,000 jobs on the system at any one time which is standard for a similar sized provider.

- 2.4 Any new WIP is being dealt with in line with the new Repairs Policy which was agreed by Cabinet in April last year. This has resulted in standard non-urgent work being completed in 20 working days. This has reduced from up to 90 days under the previous policy. Officers are pleased to report that at the end of Quarter 3 2024/25, the service is achieving compliance with this target in 90% of cases.
- 2.5 Whilst the above shows significant improvement, this does not mean that every tenant is receiving the service they deserve. Within the remaining older WIP there are some significant cases of work where tenants have not received an appropriate response. Officers know that these still present significant challenges to the Service to deliver (through in house or contractors), however, the above sets out a considerable improvement in case management and resource availability to address the repair needs across the Council's homes.
- 2.6 By continuing to work in line with the new policy it is anticipated that in the next 12 months there will be further significant improvements in delivery. Part of this work will include a focus on the Council's first point of contact regarding repairs, ensuring that repairs are assessed correctly first time, jobs are managed through to completion and that post inspection confirms the job has been delivered to the appropriate standard.
- 2.7 At the same time, measures to ensure compliance with what is known as 'Awaabs Law' are being introduced. These measures set out stringent delivery targets for a variety of key works to the Council's properties. The first of these are Mould and Damp related. This part of the regulatory change will take effect from Autumn 2025. The Council's approved new Mould and Damp Policy is a key step on this journey and the Service will be considering the exact resource requirements to enable this to be operational to ensure compliance.

Resources

- 2.8 There are two elements that impact on resources which have been discussed by Cabinet in the past – in-house recruitment and those of the supply chain.
- 2.9 Turning to the supply chain first, there have been some notable increases in costs for the provision of some services whilst procuring new contracts. These are in part driven by two main areas. Firstly, as part of the regulatory regime change, officers have been working to improve how works are specified. Whilst this has improved the service in terms of quality it has increased cost. This increase in cost has been factored into the budget for the coming years.
- 2.10 The second area focuses on labour, its supply and the Council's ability to be as attractive as an employer as possible in the marketplace. As previous reports on this topic to Cabinet have highlighted, recruitment for the in-house team has always been challenging. In particular, the Council is trying to recruit some trades in a highly contested marketplace. Post-Covid there have been a number of people leaving the industry, in turn making recruitment harder. This is a recognised national and cross sector issue affecting most providers from house building companies through to private and social landlords alike and is not unique to the Council. It is also impacting on contractors. The Council is often also looking for a particular type of person to work with the Council teams, including the concept of being multiskilled and seeking to work to arguably higher standards in customer service than may be experienced elsewhere. The Council has significant gaps in the Asset Management elements of the Service,

where the more qualified and rarer employees sit and this is holding back progress in some areas.

- 2.11 Two key changes have been introduced in an attempt to address this. Firstly, the Council has corporately been trialling different approaches to recruitment, including joining the nationwide Local Government Association (LGA) led recruitment campaigns, reviewing the recruitment process itself and using external recruitment specialists to undertake direct approaches. This has been successful at Team Leader and Manager level, and this approach is being rolled out to roles that require more technical knowledge.
- 2.12 At the same time, the Council's offer to employees in the trade areas of the team is being revisited. This has arisen from a market assessment exercise, comparing the Council against similar employers in the area. In essence the approach looks to simplify and standardise the pay elements for these employees into an equal or higher base pay and align them to the Council's standard pay scales as with other employees. It also removes the variable bonus payments which are currently in place. This would have the impact of making base pay more easily comparable with others in the marketplace.
- 2.13 In addition to the above, efforts are being made to improve communication with staff, including video messaging, face-to-face meetings and toolbox talks. Improvements to communication are also being developed to ensure that the voice of tenants is reflected in the Council's work, in line with the new regulatory framework. This links to the wider work of Tenant Engagement across the entire service.
- 2.14 The area of recruitment will, however, continue to be a challenge for the Service over the medium term.

Availability of Data and Knowledge Management

- 2.15 As noted above, regarding the repairs and case management, the Service has in the past struggled with ensuring that data is as accurate as possible. At the granular level, errors in data and the way in which this is handled can produce unintended consequences (for example reporting higher than actual repair issues, or insufficient data or knowledge about a property or tenant). To address this several actions are being undertaken:
- Stock condition survey – a complete stock survey on 100% of the housing stock has been undertaken. The overall condition of the stock has been rated as 'good,' with non-decency identified at 13.89%. Minor works required to achieve 100% decency are estimated to cost £300,000 for the 2025/6 financial year. Survey data comprises 81% full internal and external surveys, 14% partial surveys (external only), and 5% cloned data. This brings the Council's records up to date for the vast majority of the stock. At the same time as this being undertaken, any immediate repair needs were also logged – this in part led to the increase in demand covered earlier in the report. This data provides an up-to-date stock condition picture and it is intended to undertake a 20% annual stock condition survey on a rolling basis in future years.
 - Tenancy Audits –all tenants are being visited over a rolling four-year programme. This enables the gathering of data on all tenants to ensure that they are safe in their homes, action any repairs and ensure that they are up to date with the changes to the Service. Coming up to the end of year two, around 55% of tenants have currently been visited. 2,252 audits have been completed.

- Knowledge Information Management Audit – the regulator and ombudsman have issued a number of reports on this topic. The Council has recently undertaken a self-assessment against these reports and is in the process of bringing this together into an action plan which will form part of the service plan. This topic is sometimes linked to complaint handling, and all of this information is being pulled together to ensure that it is being used in the best way possible to manage engagement with tenants and their properties in the most responsive way.
- Tenant Satisfaction Measures – as part of the regulatory regime the Council is held accountable via a number of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) (more details on these can be found here - [National Tenant Survey - GOV.UK](#)). Officers are now assessing the TSMs every quarter and at the end of Q3 half of those measures are showing a statistically relevant improvement with the remaining broadly static. Those showing progress are all related to the broad concept of tenant engagement and communication, the services work in neighbourhoods and actions around Anti Social Behaviour (ASB).
- Regulator and Compliance - As part of the regular engagement with the Housing regulator a significant level of activity has been focused on compliance. The Council is achieving high levels of compliance across the 'big six' topics (Gas, Asbestos, Fire, Electrical, Water Hygiene, and Lifts), with the vast majority in the very high 90's% or 100% compliance and all are above 90%. Where compliance is lower, this is due to interlinked dependant works and will be addressed as particular work areas conclude (for example fire door replacement following major works to a block which is still undergoing renovation). All areas of below 100% have actions plans in place and interim mitigation plans.

- 2.16 In summary, all of the above topics still require work. However, delivery and performance for tenants is improving. There is a drop in complaints regarding newly undertaken works; there are increases in compliance, recording of events and in Tenant Surveys; and speedier repair times for new repairs works. There is also still more work to be done. When reporting on this topic in the past, officers have been open that it is likely to take years to address all the areas needing improvement. Whilst it is evident that significant improvements are being made to the Repairs Service, there are elements that continue to require focus over the coming months.
- 2.17 In March 2025, Corporate Scrutiny received a very similar report to this Cabinet report. An extract of the draft minute is set out in Annex A. Various questions were raised and discussions took place at the meeting, however, no substantive points or comments were made that impact on the report before Cabinet.

3.0 HOUSING IMPROVEMENT BOARD

- 3.1 Part of the structure that Cabinet has put in place to ensure delivery of improvements across the entirety of the housing service is the creation of an Housing Improvement Board ("HIB"). This is made up of the deputy leader, portfolio holder and opposition lead for Housing. Its purpose is:

- To create and then deliver the full Housing Improvement Plan;
- To provide oversight, guidance, and rigour to the improvement of the Housing Service and hold the Service to account for delivery against the Housing Improvement Plan;
- To ensure there is a sufficient focus and resources within the Housing Service to drive forward the changes needed to deliver the Improvement Plan; and

- To monitor risks within the Board's remit and to help in providing assurance on delivery of the planned improvements.

3.2 In its first year of its operation, the Board has:

- Considered a new monitoring regime for the service, reported quarterly to the board;
- Reviewed policy and or intervention areas such as Void Management, ASB, Tenant Satisfaction Measures and complaint management; and
- Worked with officers to help focus the work of the service on addressing the new regulatory regime.

3.3 At its coming meetings the HIB will consider an updated Action Plan as well as any further policy updates coming through the policy review process.

3.4 Cabinet is asked to re-endorse the continuation of the HIB as part of the recommendations of this report.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no new financial implications of this report. Actions are already planned for and funded by the agreed budget for the HRA.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communities and housing - A well-run council
Policy Considerations:	None directly – however a range of housing specific policies have been renewed or are due for renewal during the next year.
Safeguarding:	None specific – but a key issue for the service as a whole
Equalities/Diversity:	None specific – but are considered where necessary – for example Policy update
Customer Impact:	The changes highlighted in this report are positively impacting on customer delivery
Economic and Social Impact:	None direct – but the service attempts to seek local contractors etc where possible in line with the Council's procurement rules
Environment, Climate Change and zero carbon:	The Housing Asset Management Plan is key to the delivery of the Council's Climate Change and Zero Carbon commitments. Actions set out in this report all are assisting to deliver the Housing Management Plan and improvements to our overall housing stock and tenants' day to day lives.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	None specific – however, in development of the proposed policy tenant engagement will be undertaken
Risks:	The actions outlined in this report will assist in mitigating the risk of noncompliance with current legislation/regulation and will ensure that a good

	service is being delivered to tenants.
Officer Contact	Andy Barton Strategic Director of Communities Andy.Barton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk