

HOUSING AND NEIGHBOURHOODS SCRUTINY PANEL	DATE 10 April 2025	ITEM NO
SUBJECT Responsive Repairs and Empty Homes Update	WARD (S) All	
CHIEF OFFICER Director of Housing and Safer Communities	CABINET MEMBER Housing Management, Neighbourhoods and Homelessness	
DECISION CLASSIFICATION Non-exempt Non-key	IS THE FINAL DECISION ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS REPORT TO BE MADE AT THIS MEETING?	

SECTION I

1. Recommendations to decision maker:

- 1.1 To consider the Repairs Update Report and make recommendations to the Executive, if necessary.
- 1.2 To agree that where appropriate, the report and any recommendations be submitted to the Chief Executive.
- 1.3 To note that where possible, the report and responses to the recommendations be presented at the next meeting of the Panel.

2. Links to Our Greenwich Missions

- 2.1 This report relates to the Council's agreed missions as follows:
 - Mission 6 - People in Greenwich have access to a safe and secure home that meets their needs
- 2.2 By providing an improved repairs service we increase tenants and residents satisfaction with the homes they live in.

3. Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

3.1 This report was commissioned as part of the Housing and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel's 2024-2025 work programme to receive an update on the Repairs.

3.2 The commissioned brief for the report was as follows:

- To provide an update on practices, approach and efficiency of repairs across the borough, steps being taken to improve retail quality, speed and responsiveness across the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

4. Repairs Service Update

4.1 The Responsive Repairs and Voids Team have seen significant operational changes over the previous 3 years which has seen restructuring of the teams, new ways of working and a signification transformation programme supporting the service for improvements. The focus for the previous few years has been:

- a) Reducing the number of empty homes within our housing stock.
- b) Reduction the number of overdue responsive repairs jobs within the service.
- c) Improving the processes for the services.
- d) Restructuring the teams to ensure we have a service fit for the needs of our customers.
- e) Ensuring the Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) is on a firm financial footing.
- f) Ensure that Damp and Mould is prioritised and managed well.
- g) Ensure that our Subcontractors are managed well.

Repairs Transformation

4.2 Alongside operational management of the service we have had a significant Transformation Programme in partnership with the Digital team. This Transformation Programme aims to improve, modernise, and transform our service to better meet the needs of both our residents and staff.

4.3 The programme was launched following a deep dive research project where we engaged with 80 residents and staff to understand how we could improve the service. As a result, the priorities and needs of our residents and staff have been central to the design and implementation of the programme from the very beginning and throughout delivery, having conducted a range of research, co-design and engagement activities with 250 residents and over 190 members of staff so far, which have helped us achieve the following:

- a) Designed and implemented a new inhouse damp, mould and condensation (DMC) specialist team into operation, improving the speed at which residents can have these issues dealt. So far, the team is projected to complete 2,700 more jobs this year than last, having completed 3,856 jobs. As part of this, we have designed and implemented a new triage model to ensure our highest priority residents get a faster response, triage and intervention. Since its launch over 750 cases have been raised using our new guidance and call scripts and over 350 high priority cases have been sent directly to the DMC specialist team via our new webform pathway. The new team is also following new service level agreement targets and achieving timescales which go above and beyond industry standards set out in Awaab's Law.
- b) Launched a dedicated 'follow on' phone line service for Plumbing, Carpentry and Plastering jobs to ensure residents know exactly what's happening with their repair next and when we will be back. This decision was based on research with residents and an analysis of complaints data, which revealed that communication gaps causes our residents most frustration. As a result, we have booked 5,000+ follow on jobs that would otherwise have been 'lost', receiving excellent feedback from residents and operational staff, with ~85-90% consistently getting booked in and completed within the month (and other jobs being actively co-ordinated).
- c) Developed and started rolling out a new "outcarding" process for plumbing, carpentry and plastering with clear guidance for staff on how to handle different situations to reduce no access visits. For example, for large jobs booked further in the future, we are measuring the impact of reminder calls to residents the day before their appointment. In

plastering, we are monitoring the impact of tradespeople calling residents before they set off for a property, with a view to reducing outcards and avoidable repeat visits.

- d) Re-designed and launched two new, user-friendly webforms for residents to report a new repair or request an update, which capture better information for us and signpost residents to the right places, this includes the ability for residents to upload a photo of their problem. We also launched 36 pages of new and improved web content to set clearer expectations about what we can and can't repair, including information about damp, mould and condensation.
- e) Merged the Repairs contact centre into the corporate contact centre and set up a team to re-design our contact centre operating model with the aim of streamlining channels and simplifying the overall resident journey in direct response to feedback from residents.
- f) Built a repairs performance management dashboard to help managers and the service make more informed, real-time decisions and effectively manage performance. This dashboard has improved the quality and accuracy of our data, putting it directly in the hands of the service team. Additionally, we've created other data tools, such as one that helps us better assess the status of overdue jobs and groups residents addresses onto a map of the borough. This tool assists in planning travel routes for our trade workers, allowing them to complete more jobs for residents each day and work more efficiently.
- g) Completed multiple restructures and team changes, throughout this pay parity and equal grades have been addressed, and all job descriptions and specifications have been refreshed including Greenwich Council values and a resident focus, with expectations and responsibilities outlined clearly of our workforce.
- h) Completed research with staff members from the Repairs service to identify key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and establish a long-term vision to attract, retain, and develop an inclusive, future-ready workforce. Next, we will co-design solutions and write up our findings into a workforce strategy and implementation plan to align the service

around a shared mission, ensuring improved services and outcomes for residents.

- i) Recruited and onboarded a Training team responsible for designing and implementing a refreshed department wide training offer and delivering high priority training sessions to ensure the service has access to the skills and knowledge needed to deliver now and into the future.
- j) Completed an initial research phase on our current leaks offer by spending time with residents, trade staff and the wider sector to identify areas of improvement and opportunities. Next, taking a similar approach to our Damp, Mould and Condensation project we will be co-designing a future offer with residents and the service that aims to increase resident satisfaction, reduce Ombudsman cases and damage and costs associated with Leaks.

4.4 Integral to the success of the programme has been strong collaboration and ways of working between Repairs and Digital services with each team within the programme being a mix of Digital and Operations. Operational colleagues have embraced experimental approaches such as pilots and operational trials in tandem with Digital which has empowered them to try new things, take more of a data led approach to decision making and increased collaboration across trades.

4.5 There has been significant governance to oversee delivery progress and risks of the transformation programme with regular updates and scrutiny at the Repairs Improvement Board, Housing and Safer Communities Digital Board and Members Repairs Transformation Board. Alongside this, the team attends the services' monthly management team meetings to provide updates to managers and holds face to face briefing sessions with trade staff when required.

Empty Homes (Voids)

4.6 There has been significant investment into our empty homes which has delivered improvements to both the backlog number of vacant homes and the time taken to make them available for occupation.

4.8 Between 22/23 and 24/25 the number of empty homes has been reduced by approximately half. This has made available much needed housing supply available for let for households in need of alternative accommodation while additionally ensuring that HRA rental income is maximised.

No. of Void Properties at Year End
2022-23: 352
2023-24: 192
2024-25: 174 (YTD to 28/02/25)

% Rent Loss to Void Properties
2022-23: 2.14%
2023-24: 1.59%
2024-25: 1.28% (YTD to 31/12/24)

4.9 Operational efficiencies have also achieved improvements in the void period. Defined as the time in calendar days from the date when the tenancy is ended up to and including the date when the new tenancy starts), the number of days has consistently fallen in the last three years.

Average Re-let Times
2022-23: 87.69 days
2023-24: 86.50 days
2024-25: 61.13 days (YTD Feb 25)

Pay and Reward

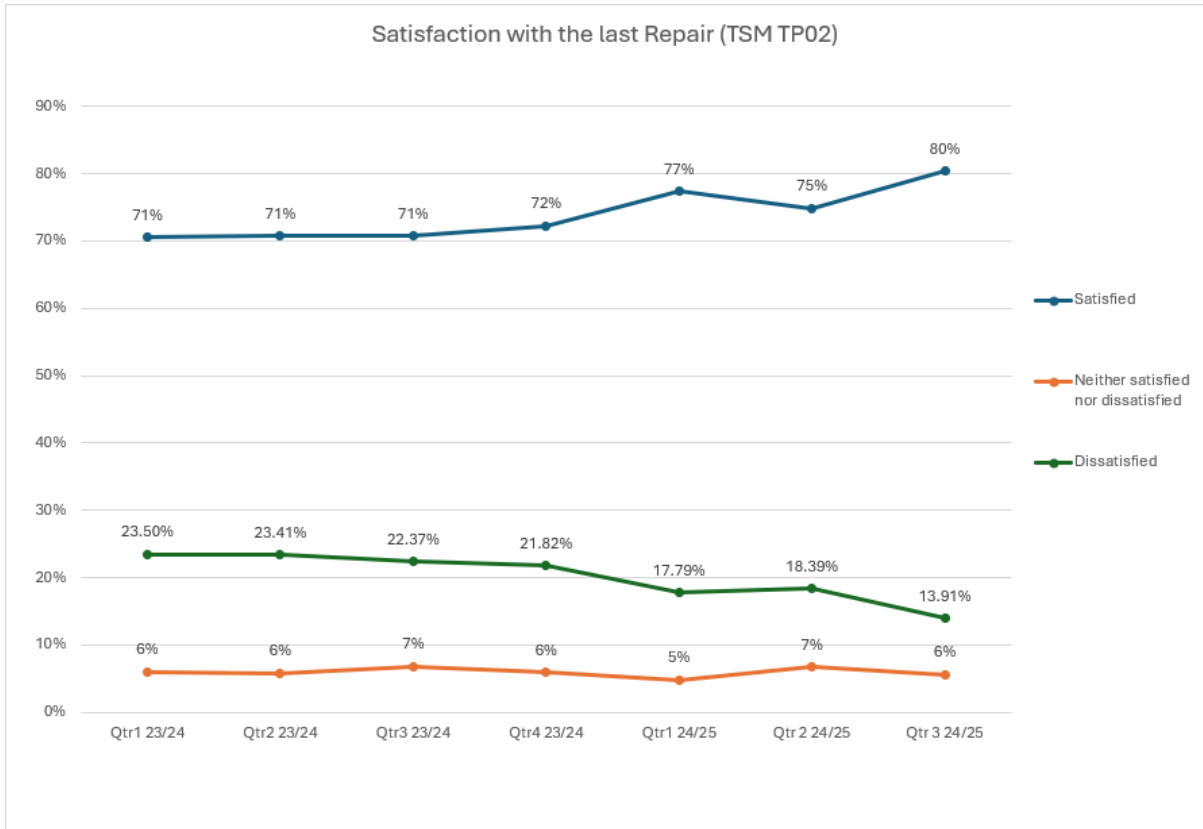
- 4.10 Recently there has been the conclusion of over 12 months of negotiations with Trade Unions over the remuneration for our Trade Operatives within the DLO. This agreement moved staff from a “productivity based” salary scheme to a flat rate salary for trade groups. The agreement will lead to a number of improvements for the service:
- a) Bring salaries closer to the industry standard for the trades we provide, leading to greater value for money for residents and the council.
 - b) Ensure that Trade Staff are not incentivised to close jobs that aren’t complete so they are able to claim the productivity minutes
 - c) Implement structures where more senior positions attract greater salaries than the staff members they manage.
 - d) Allow RBG to position itself in the market as having one of the best, if not the best, overall salary package in England
- 4.11 There are risks to the new agreement which the service is cognisant of and will look to mitigate:
- a) Given that staff may see a pay reduction or stagnation over the coming 3 years we may see a large percentage (estimated as “up to” 30%) leaving the service. 35% of staff are over 55 and would be able to take early retirement, their pensions may be affected by the changes.
 - b) Moving from a productivity-based scheme to flat salary scheme may lead to a reduction in productivity in the short term. “I get paid however many jobs I completed per day”.
- 4.12 To tackle the workforce issue the service have already recruited many apprentices (currently 15 within the services) and are looking to recruit more over the coming years. Equally with the new pay agreement the service will be able to attract experienced Trade Operatives externally as the salary ranges are above the market benchmarks.
- 4.13 The productivity issue will be addressed by strong management of our services, as mentioned under paragraph 4.1 with the support of our dedicated HR business Partner reference below. Key will be that all Trade Operatives are giving targets that they are expected to achieve and will be held accountable for those targets.

Human Resources Support

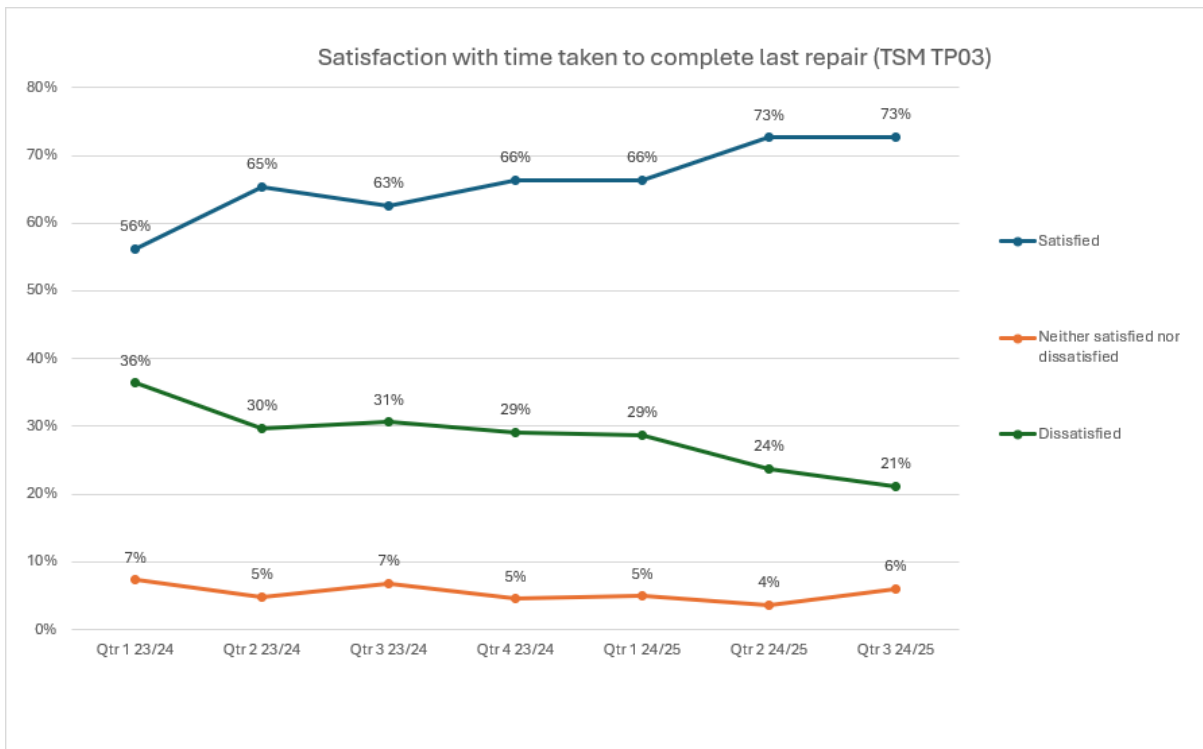
- 4.14 One of the initiatives which has really helped improve the Repairs Service over the previous 18 months has been having a direct HR Business Partner on site within Birchmere for the service. Working with Corporate HR services, Repairs and Investment expressed the need for support for our management and supervisors in being able to progress sickness, employment and performance issue for their staff. Many of the managers over the years had been promoted for their skills in trades and not necessarily their administrative abilities.
- 4.15 Having a HR Business Partner directly on site has allowed for supervisors and managers to have support in managing their teams and led to many long term sickness and performance issues being addressed and managers now having a greater understanding of HR Processes. This has led to a significant culture change within the teams.
- 4.16 Some of the outcomes we have seen are:
- a) 105 Stage one sickness meetings
 - b) 45 Stage Two sickness meetings with 9 leading to “employee at risk” conversations, 2 dismissals, 3 pending Stage Three reviews.
 - c) 8 Ill health retirements in progress
 - d) 10 Verbal Warnings
 - e) 1 dismissal for disciplinary
 - f) 5 performance improvement plans (increasing regularly)

Performance

- 4.17 The Regulator of Social Housing’s Consumer standards set out expectations for social housing providers to ensure quality services and compliance. Part of these suite of standards involve a set of tenant satisfaction measures (TSMs) that social housing landlords must report on, with the intent to make landlords’ performance more visible to tenants and help them hold their landlord to account. For the Repairs service the key TSMs are: Satisfaction with your last repair in the last 12 months; and Satisfaction with the time taken to receive the repair. Below are the results for the period Qtr 1 23/24 to Q3 24/25:



4.18 Satisfaction with the last repair has improved over the second year of TSM and a reduction in tenants feeling dissatisfied.



4.19 There has been a demonstrable increase in the levels of satisfaction with the time taken to complete tenant's repairs. Driving this will be the operational measures the service has implemented including a greater understanding of repairs at a trade by trade level, increased management focus, and use of additional DLO resource for high demand trades.

4.20 TSMs enable comparisons of RBG's performance against the regulator's data for London landlords, both Council and Housing Association, RBG is in the top quartile for all measures except for complaints handling and maintenance of communal areas, which are in the second quartile. Comparing the performance measures at the end of year 23/24 to Q3 2024/25 shows a continued progression, with the Repairs Service itself deemed to be performing well and representing the biggest driver of positive resident sentiment, at 80.4%

RSH - All London Landlords

	TP01- Overall Sat	TP02- Repairs Service	TP03- Time Taken	TP04 - Well Maintained	TP05- Safe	TP06 - Listen	TP07- informed	TP08 - Treated Fairly	TP09 - Complaints	TP10 - Communal	TP11 - Neighbourhood	TP12 -ASB
RB Greenwich Q3 2024/25	68.6%	80.4%	72.7%	68.3%	78.7%	58.7%	74.6%	76.1%	31.0%	66.1%	71.8%	62.4%
RB Greenwich 23/24	63.5%	71.1%	62.6%	64.9%	70.6%	52.6%	71.2%	71.1%	28.7%	65.5%	68.8%	60.4%
Upper Quartile	65.1%	67.7%	63.5%	65.7%	71.6%	57.4%	71.7%	74.7%	31.2%	70.4%	69.0%	61.2%
Regulator Median	59.7%	63.2%	60.2%	60.8%	67.3%	51.4%	66.0%	70.2%	26.9%	63.3%	62.2%	57.8%
Lower Quartile	53.2%	56.7%	55.2%	55.1%	62.7%	45.5%	61.7%	61.7%	22.3%	57.5%	55.6%	51.3%

4.21 Comparing RBG's Q3 TSM performance specifically against other London Councils, RBG performs even more favourably, with just communal areas remaining the lower quartile. The repairs service continues to be the best performing area, followed by providing a safe home, which is closely linked to the quality of the repairs service.

RSH- All London Councils												
	TP01- Overall Satisfaction	TP02- Repairs Service	TP03- Time Taken	TP04 - Well Maintained	TP05- Safe	TP06 - Listen s	TP07- informed	TP08 - Treat ed Fairly	TP09 - Compl aints	TP10 - Com mual	TP11 - Neighbo urhood	TP12 -ASB
RB Greenwich Q3 2024/25	68.6 %	80.4%	72.7 %	68.3%	78.7 %	58.7 %	74.6%	76.1%	31.0%	66.1%	71.8%	62.4 %
RB Greenwich 23/24	63.5 %	71.1%	62.6 %	64.9%	70.6 %	52.6 %	71.2%	71.1%	28.7%	65.5%	68.8%	60.4 %
Upper Quartile	64.3 %	67.0%	63.5 %	64.9%	71.5 %	55.8 %	71.7%	73.7%	28.7%	67.5%	69.5%	60.6 %
Regulator Median	60.3 %	63.5%	61.7 %	60.9%	66.8 %	51.4 %	66.7%	70.1%	26.0%	62.4%	62.5%	58.3 %
Lower Quartile	52.8 %	58.1%	54.9 %	55.0%	62.9 %	44.4 %	61.8%	61.7%	21.9%	57.5%	57.9%	52.9 %

4.22 Satisfaction scores captured in Transaction survey results, which are completed after residents have had a recent repair in their home, show a higher score and have been broadly consistent over the past three years.

Satisfaction with Repairs	
2022-23	89.25%
2023-24	85.48%
2024-25 (up to Jan 25)	87.40%

4.23 The politeness and helpfulness of repairs staff, homes being left clean and tidy after repairs and the quality of the repair score highest from these surveys.

Areas requiring continued focus

4.24 The Repairs service has invested in reducing the backlog of outstanding repairs. Over the past three years the number of overdue, outstanding responsive repairs (not including gas and electrical) has continued to reduce from c11,800 in March 23, to c8,000 in March 24 to c4,800 in March 25. While this reduction represents a key achievement of recent progress made, it is recognised that some residents are still waiting far too long for their repair to be completed. This is reflected in in the satisfaction scores, with the length of time taken before works are started the key driver of resident dissatisfaction. The other key driver of

dissatisfaction is the ease of reporting the repair including works started but not finished, which requires the resident to have to follow up to have this remaining work completed. Addressing this a key focus for the service.

- 4.25 The need to address the length of time taken to complete repairs is also reflected in the percentage score to completing non-urgent repairs. While the repairs service delivers well in completing emergency repairs, performance of non-emergency repairs, is not at the desired levels.

Urgent Repairs Completed Within Target Time	Non-urgent Repairs Completed Within Target Time
2022-23: 94.81%	2022-23: 67.42%
2023-24: 95.78%	2023-24: 57.20%
2024-25: 94.08%	2024-25: 66.83%

- 4.26 As the repairs service works through the backlog there is a consequential impact of the performance of non-urgent repairs as those jobs are completed outside target. Of particular note is plumbing and leak work orders, which represent the largest volume of outstanding works orders, followed by plastering and roofing related works.

Contact Centre Performance

- 4.27 Supported by the training teams at both Contact Centres, pools of Tech admins and Contact Centre agents have undergone cross-training and shadowing. By sharing expertise across teams and standardising what training staff get, residents should receive a similar level of service, whoever they call.
- 4.29 The transformation team and staff at Birchmere have been tackling callbacks, with a view to increasing the number of queries that technical administrators (who answer the responsive repair line) can answer first time. By implementing easy to follow training and processes and building in continuous feedback loops with staff across the service, together we

reduced callbacks by almost 30% (from 843 to 592) in our first month – and they continue to reduce.

4.30 This can be seen reflected in the Avaya data for Responsive Repairs. For example, in October 2024 the responsive repairs line saw 198 more calls than in the year previous. This is mirrored by looking at February 2025 compared with February 2024, where we saw 392 fewer calls to the responsive repairs line.

Responsive Repairs performance - This year 01/04/2024 - 31/12/2024

Responsive Repairs	Total Calls	Total Abandoned	% Abandoned	% Handled	Ave Wait To Answer	Maximum Wait to answer
Year to date	50,503	6,257	12.4%	87.6%	04:31	00:57:51
Last Month (December 2024)	4,954	973	19.6%	80.4%	07:46	00:39:24

Members Repairs Board

4.31 Following the initial “Deep Dives” completed in the service in 2022 and presented to Members that year a “Members Repairs Transformation Board” was created and chaired by Cllr Slattery to continue to monitor the progress of the Repairs Transformation Programme. To date there have been at least 9 of these Boards. Each Board consists of a general overview of the transformation programme and a deep dive into specific areas of improvement within the repairs service. Members have helped to shape the future service offer and have been asked to provide feedback on areas such as Damp and Mould, the Workforce Strategy, Website and Webforms and use of Data.

4.32 The Board is a consultative board helping to shape the future of the repairs service and giving their feedback and opinion, from experience, of where improvements are needed within the service.

Capital Programme

4.33 A new Asset Management Strategy has been written and will be presented to the council's Cabinet in the coming months. This strategy will be supplemented with a delivery programme whereby Members and resident will be able to see what Capital Programmes are being completed within their blocks and homes over the coming 3 years. This strategy has been built using previous years repairs data so we are able to prioritise ongoing and recurring issues for Capital investment. This should lead to a reduction in the requirement for responsive repairs with our homes and an overall saving to the Housing Revenue Account.

5. Consultation

5.1 We consult with residents through various approaches to help shape our services, tailored to the area of improvement, user group and specific context. These include both formal and informal activities, such as:

- a) Presentations and research at the Borough-Wide Housing Panel events
- b) Presentations and research at the Resident Housing Performance and Improvement Panel
- c) Spending time in community spaces, conducting pop up research and testing sessions across the borough to get quick feedback from residents on their experiences or our work in progress such as prototypes and design concepts.
- d) Offering paid research opportunities for residents to take part in 30-60 minute interviews and attend workshops eliciting their ideas, experiences and feedback.
- e) Arranging to speak with residents while shadowing trade operatives to hear what matters most to them.
- f) Collaborating with charities and organisations across the borough to help reach residents with access needs to ensure our improvements meet accessibility standards and are inclusive.
- g) Written updates in Talk Housing.
- h) Channelling updates through the Neighbourhood community champions and putting messages on our webform and Contact Centre/responsive

repairs phone lines asking residents to sign up to upcoming research opportunities to expand our reach.

5.2 As a result of these methods and our ongoing engagement with residents, we are focusing on the areas they consider most important and co-designing solutions with them throughout our delivery process. A clear example of this approach is our transformation programme, where (as previously mentioned) we've engaged with 250 residents so far.

6. **Next Steps**

6.1 The Chair will set out closing remarks and make recommendations to the relevant decision maker as required at the meeting and these will be published as an appendix. The Relevant decision maker will respond to the recommendations in a separate published appendix and both will be brought back to the next meeting of the Committee/Panel.

7. **Cross-Cutting Issues and Implications**

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<p>Legal including Human Rights Act</p>	<p>The purpose of the report is to i) consider the Repairs Update Report and make recommendations to the Executive, if necessary; ii) agree that where appropriate, the report and any recommendations be submitted to the Chief Executive; and iii) note that where possible, the report and responses to the recommendations be presented at the next meeting of the Panel.</p> <p>The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 requires the Council to keep properties in good repair, include the structure, exterior and essential services.</p>	<p>Karen Mitchell, Assistant Head of Legal Services, 28th March 2025.</p>

	<p>The Housing Act 2004 introduced the Housing Health and Safety Rating System to assess potential hazards in residential properties. The Council has an obligation to adhere to and ensure the enforcement of these standards.</p> <p>The Council is obligated to comply with the established under the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018.</p> <p>The Regulator of Social Housing has set the consumer standards relating to Home Standard; Tenant Involvement and Empowerment and Neighbourhood and Community with which the Council is required to comply.</p> <p>The report details the actions undertaken by the Council to ensure compliance with these requirements.</p>	
<p>Finance and other resources</p>	<p>The report requests the Housing & Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To consider the Repairs Update Report and make recommendations to the Executive, if necessary. • To agree that where appropriate, the report and any recommendations be submitted to the Chief Executive. • To note that where possible, the report and responses to the recommendations be 	<p><i>Joanne Stark</i> <i>Head of</i> <i>Accounting &</i> <i>Business Change</i> <i>17/03/2025</i></p>

	<p>presented at the next meeting of the Panel.</p> <p>As this is an information report, there are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations.</p>	
Equalities	<p><i>The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no apparent equality impact on end users.</i></p> <p><i>This report makes no contribution to the Council's Equality and Equity Charter.</i></p>	<p>Richard Parkin – Senior Assistant Director of Repairs and Investment 17/03/2025</p>
Climate change	<p><i>This report is an update report so has no climate change implications</i></p>	<p>Richard Parkin – Senior Assistant Director of Repairs and Investment 17/03/2025</p>
Community Engagement	<p><i>Community engagement can be seen in the "Consultation" section of this report.</i></p>	<p>Richard Parkin – Senior Assistant Director of Repairs and Investment 17/03/2025</p>

8 . **Report Appendices**

8.1 There are no appendices for this report.

9. **Background Papers**

9.1 No background papers

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