Report to the Cabinet

28 July 2025

Wards: All

Introduction of a Repairs & Maintenance Policy for Neighbourhoods & Housing

Report of the Director of Legal Services and Partnerships

Report Status:
This item is not exempt
Therefore exempt reasons are not applicable

This is a key decision. The matter is in the Forward Plan

0024/25

1. Purpose of the Report and Summary

1.1 The Neighbourhoods & Housing Service (N&H) are required to introduce a Repairs Policy to formalise its duties and meet current legal requirements. Both the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) and Housing Ombudsman (HO) expect the Council to have a policy in place.

1.2 The consequence of failing to comply with RSH and a HO requirement may involve receiving financial penalties, a detrimental inspection rating by the RSH and reputational damage.

1.3 Therefore, it is proposed that the attached Repairs & Maintenance Policy is approved/adopted, and that agreement is given for **delegated** authority to be granted to the Assistant Director Neighbourhoods & Housing in conjunction with the designated Portfolio Holder for future revisions.

2. Recommendations

2.1 To formally approve/adopt the Repairs and Maintenance Policy.

2.2 To agree that **delegated** authority be granted to the Assistant Director Neighbourhoods & Housing, in conjunction with the designated Portfolio Holder for future revisions of the Repair & Maintenance Policy where required for legal or regulatory compliance or where required for operational efficiency and best practice in delivering the repairs service to council tenants.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 A Repairs and Maintenance policy is essential for several key reasons. Firstly, it provides clarity and accountability for landlords and tenants, ensuring that both parties understand their obligations. The policy should help drive tenant satisfaction, with regular communication with residents ensuring landlords continue to improve service quality and tenant relations.

3.2 A well-defined repairs and maintenance policy helps ensure compliance with regulatory compliance and requirements, which can include property safety checks and timely repairs, as well as property condition and suitability of homes.

3.3 By establishing clear processes and guidelines, the policy should aid in the efficient allocation of resources for repairs and maintenance. This is particularly important in the context of rising maintenance costs and the need for budget protection.

3.4 In summary, a repairs and maintenance policy is crucial for social housing providers as it enhances clarity, ensures tenant satisfaction, maintains regulatory compliance, preserves property conditions, and optimizes resource management.

3.5 The proposed Policy reflects existing / established processes and in the main does not bring any significant changes to current practices or tenant/landlord responsibilities as the Policy is reflective of the standard Tenancy Agreement which has been in place since 2011.

3.6 The Policy, includes existing service standards relating to Repairs & Maintenance. The key exception is the introduction of new repair category as part of improvements intended to reduce existing high levels of Emergency orders. Up until June 2025, all repairs reported fell into two repair categories – an Emergency Repair (within 24 hours) or a Routine Repair (within 28 calendar days). A refresh to the repairs system brings the introduction of a new ‘Urgent Repair’ category which was introduced on 2 June 2025, whereby Urgent Repairs are now undertaken within 5 working days.

3.7 Delegated authority to the Assistant Director Neighbourhoods & Housing in conjunction with the designated Portfolio Holder for future revisions is also being requested, since N&H will have a number of planned changes to Repairs & Maintenance which will need to be reflected in this Policy. These changes include (but are not limited to):

- A revised access procedure for the Repairs & Maintenance Service
- A further review of repair timescales, including the introduction of a Planned Repairs Category
- Improvements to how identified vulnerabilities will impact on repair timescales, and introduction of vulnerability risk factors/indicators
- A review to include the requirements of Awaab’s Law which is being brought into force in October 2025.

- A review of repair related Risk Assessment processes
- Revised Compliance and Monitoring Arrangements

3.8 There are no financial implications as a result of implementing this Policy.

4. Key Organisational Impacts

4.1. Impact on other Executive Committees (including Area Committees) and decision makers:

4.1.1 No anticipated impact due to no current changes in process or procedure at this stage (with the exception of the introduction of an Urgent Repair Category) however, the potential changes detailed in 3.7 will be assessed on an individual basis.

4.2. Contribution to the delivery of the Community Plan, the Council Plan and/or Area Plans:

4.2.1 This decision supports the following Community Plan ambitions:

Ambition 1: Safe and Welcoming Neighbourhoods

Provide opportunity for community engagement and financial investment that puts residents, their homes and their neighbourhoods first.

4.3. Impact on other key strategies/business plans:

4.3.1 This decision will also support the Neighbourhoods and Housing Business Plan 2021-2026. In particular;

- supporting with the management of customer expectations when it comes to repairs and maintenance
- setting out landlord and tenant responsibilities
- clarifying service standards.
- Treating people with courtesy and respect
- Creating safe and warm places to live that meet the decent homes standard

4.4. Equalities Impact Information

4.4.1 A full Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out and is attached to this report.

5. Consultation

5.1 The Policy reflects existing established processes, therefore stakeholder engagement has not taken place. Where changes were introduced consultation did occur.

5.2 Consultation has taken place around the introduction of the new Urgent Repair category, with the Tenants Forum and Repairs Project Group on 22 October 2024. This is also supported by the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Commission.

6. Background

6.1 As part of a recent complaint escalated to the HO for review, the HO ordered the Council (specifically N&H) to implement a Repairs Policy, on the back of existing, service standards, which were already promoted and available to access on the Council Website As such, the proposed Policy reflects these existing established processes and does not bring any changes to current practices or tenant/landlord responsibilities other than the introduction of an Urgent Repair (5 working day) Category which came into place on 2 June 2025.

7. Issues for Consideration

7.1 The Council needs to introduce a Repairs and Maintenance Policy, as per 3.1 in the report, failure to do so could result in financial and reputational damage to the Council.

8. Options and Risk Assessment

8.1 N&H require a Repairs and Maintenance policy as this is a regulatory requirement. However, it is important to note that the content of the new Policy is using existing practices and wording in the current procedure which have been agreed in various arenas i.e. Tenants Forum. Therefore, there are no known risks. however, the potential changes detailed in 3.7 will be assessed on an individual basis.

9. Comments of the Monitoring Officer (Town Clerk)

9.1 The Council is legally obliged under s11 of the Landlord and Tenancy Act 1985 to structurally maintain its rented stock and to carry out repairs within a reasonable period of being on notice of the need for repair. In addition. as a landlord, the Council is required to meet the consumer standards set by the Housing Regulator with regard to repairs and maintenance of properties and how it treats its tenants in carrying out these duties.

9.2 The proposed policy articulates the formal arrangements by which these duties are fulfilled and meets current legal requirements. (SL)

10. Comments of the Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance and Transformation)

10.1 The Director of Finance and Transformation notes and supports the proposal to implement a written repairs policy.

11. Comments of the Assistant Director OD & HR and compliance with the Equality Duty

11.1 The content of the report is noted. There are no staffing issues arising from this decision. The completed Equality Impact Assessment and related action plan identify areas requiring improvement. KH

12. Comments of Overview and Scrutiny

12.1 This report is due to be considered by the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Commission on 24 July 2025. Any comments or recommendations agreed at the meeting will be tabled at Cabinet for consideration alongside the final report. Ref: Sc8691 [MK].

13. Comments of the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Housing

13.1 The Housing Ombudsman has stated the need for the Council to have an repairs policy and I am happy to approve the adoption of this first official version which is based on long standing written individual procedures.

Contact Officer: Brad Smith Telephone No.: 01482 615471

Officer Interests: None

Background Documents: -

- Equality Impact Assessment

Our values People First Respect Learning Ambition Partnership

Implications Matrix

This section must be completed and you must ensure that you have fully considered all potential implications

This matrix provides a simple check list for the things you need to have considered within your report

If there are no implications please state

I have informed and sought advice from HR, Legal, Finance, Overview and Scrutiny and the Climate Change Advisor and any other key stakeholders i.e. Portfolio Holder, relevant Ward Members etc prior to submitting this report for official comments	No No Implications
I have considered whether this report requests a decision that is outside the Budget and Policy Framework approved by Council	No No Implications
Value for money considerations have been accounted for within the report	No No Implications
The report is approved by the relevant Director/Assistant Director	Yes
I have included any procurement/commercial issues/implications within the report	No No Implications
I have considered the potential media interest in this report and liaised with the Media Team to ensure that they are briefed to respond to media interest.	No No Implications
I have included any equalities and diversity implications within the report and where necessary I have completed an Equalities Impact Assessment and the outcomes are included within the report	Yes
Any Health and Safety implications are included within the report	No No Implications
Any human rights implications are included within the report	No No Implications

I have included any community safety implications and paid regard to Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act within the report	No No Implications
I have liaised with the Climate Change Advisor and any environmental and climate change issues/sustainability implications are included within the report	No No Implications
I have considered how the decision may contribute or impact on culture and heritage within the city.	No No Implications
I have included information about how this report contributes to the Community Plan/ Area priorities within the report	Yes
I have considered the impact on air quality, carried out an appropriate assessment and included any resulting actions or opportunities necessary to improve air quality in the report.	No No Implications