

# **Housing Scrutiny Commission**

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## **Repairs and Maintenance Service (including Gas and Voids functions) performance update report**

Date of Meeting: 19<sup>th</sup> September 2023

Lead Member: Councillor Cutkelvin

Lead director: Chris Burgin

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## Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
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- Report version number: - V2 – Final

## 1. Purpose of the report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Housing Scrutiny Commission with an update on the performance of the Housing Division's Repairs and Maintenance service and will include the key performance indicators the year ended 2022-23, along with an update on key issues and actions that are being implemented in 2023-24 to drive improved performance into the future.

## 2. Background to the report

The Repairs & Maintenance function carries provides the following services to 19,497 Council owned homes and 1,724 Leasehold properties across the city:

- Day to day responsive repairs to council homes
- Emergency repairs reported outside normal working hours
- Annual gas safety inspections for all gas appliances
- Renovation of Void properties to prepare them for re-letting

Our tenants access these services primarily through the Housing Online portal and where our tenants are unable to access this service, they can contact the Customer Contact Centre (CSC).

Last year we saw a 26% reduction in the number of calls taken by the CSC on the repairs reporting line, due to tenants now being able to report their repair via the Repairs online (ROL) platform.

## 3. Responsive repairs team (excluding gas and Voids)

3.1 There are four main key performance indicators (KPI's) that measure the quality of service within this function.

Indicator	Direction of travel	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 YTD
Percentage of repairs completed at first visit (excludes external works)	Higher is better. Target is 85%.	78%	76.2%	76.3%
% of all outstanding repairs which are out of category (excludes Gas and Voids)	Lower is better.	26%*	19%*	21%
Percentage of repairs completed within target time	Higher is better. Target is 90%	87%	85.7%	82.1%
Percentage of repairs reported where a complaint has been received	Lower is better. Target is <0.5%	0.10%	0.08%	0.08%

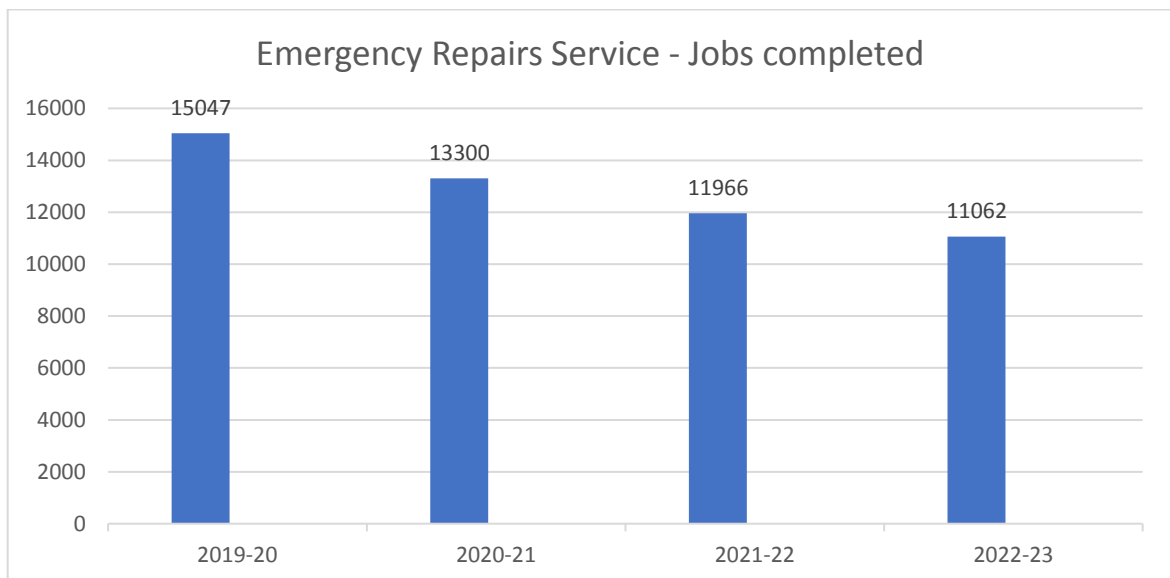
### \*Snapshot at year-end

As can be seen from the table above, whilst performance levels have remained stable, over recent years, we continue to focus on reducing the amount of outstanding repairs and particularly those that are out of category.

Measures we are putting in place to improve performance include the creation of a centralised work planning function, with a dedicated management team to ensure that outstanding work is prioritised effectively. However, it is recognised that more needs to be done, with around 50% of the outstanding jobs relating to external work, including fencing, roofing, and guttering jobs.

### 3.2 Emergency Repairs Service (ERS)

The ERS has continued to see improved performance year on year as we reduce both the number of non-genuine emergency repairs responded to outside of normal working hours and the costs associated with running the service.



### 3.3 Improvement actions underway within this service area

To further improve performance in this area, we have recently implemented new week-day evening working patterns for our staff, with the priority of completing emergency repair work that remains outstanding at the end of the normal working day. These working patterns extend until 6pm each weekday evening and reduce the amount of emergency repairs that get passed to the ERS service outside of normal working hours.

Prior to the implementation of the evening working patterns, around 15% of emergency jobs raised during normal working hours were being passed to the evening ERS. Recent monitoring of this same performance indicator shows that this has dropped to around 10%. This improvement will further reduce the amount of jobs completed on the ERS and further reduce the cost of providing the service.

We have also seen a decrease in the number of emergency repairs reported as a percentage of all repairs, from around 30% of all jobs in 2021-22, to 25% during 2022-

23. This year we are seeing a further reduction to around 22% in the first quarter of 2023-24. There will be continued focus on this, with closer working relationships between the Housing Division and the Customer Service Centre to support them in providing accurate and relevant training to their front-line staff.

#### 4. Gas Servicing and repairs team

4.1 There are four main KPI's that measure the quality of service within this function.

Indicator	Direction of travel	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 YTD
Annual Service Visit compliance percentage	Higher is better.	99.94%	99.78%	100%
Percentage of gas repairs completed at first visit	Higher is better.	70%	71%	71%
Percentage of all outstanding gas jobs which are out of category	Lower is better.	16.5%*	18%*	17.6%
Percentage of repairs completed within target time	Higher is better.	91%	85%	85%

\*Snapshot at year-end

Like the day-to-day repairs service, performance remains relatively stable, but with a focus on reducing outstanding workloads.

Most non-urgent gas and heating related repairs are raised as Category 2 jobs, giving them a 10-day response target. Many of these jobs remain outstanding beyond 10 days due to the need to order and replace radiators.

#### 4.2 Improvement actions underway within this service area

The Gas team had a challenging 2022-23, with high levels of vacancies for prolonged periods of the year, however, following a successful recruitment drive, the team are nearly back at full establishment, and this will help to further reduce the percentage of outstanding repairs that are out of category.

The team have also re-started installing boilers and heating systems as opposed to using a contractor, during the year 2022-23 we installed 52 boilers, and we expect figure to increase in 2023-24.

We will shortly be moving away from sending appointment letters to tenants and instead doing this by text message and email for those where we have up to date details. This will also link tenants to advice online.

We are already using remote assist technology to remotely triage some repairs, and we are looking to further embrace the use of this technology with a dedicated team, enabling tenants to resolve minor issues themselves, such as applying credit to their gas meter or re-setting their boiler. Additionally, this helps us to effectively triage and respond quicker where needed.

## 5. Voids team

5.1 There are two main KPI's that measure the quality of service within the Voids function.

Indicator	Direction of travel	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 YTD
Void properties as a percentage of total stock (at year-end)	Lower is better.	2.54%	2.45%	2.56%
Rent loss	Lower is better.	£1,687,317	£1,792,656	£478,616

Despite a declining performance over recent years, we are now seeing some signs of improvement. Year to date performance for 2023-24 is showing a reduction in the average re-let times for Void properties and as we embed these improvements further, they will be reflected in reduced rent loss figures over time and a reduced overall percentage of our total stock that is classified as a Void at any one time. .

We are also working to improve the management reporting around the Void journey, to better target those areas where delays occur and to better contextualise the data that we provide. A new Voids management information dashboard has been developed and we are making further improvements to report more accurately on the Void journey overall.

By way of an example, the Void journey of a property may not always be straight forward, and sometimes a major structural problem or other necessary technical work can result in a property unavoidably remaining empty (or Void) for a significant amount of time whilst this specialist work is undertaken. These jobs include major works to walls, roofs and building foundations, where serious faults are found in a property at the initial Void inspection.

In addition to these major structural works, many more Void properties require asbestos to be removed or 'capital' works, such as complete electrical re-wires, or new kitchens or bathrooms to be installed before the routine refurbishment work begins. At present, all this time gets included in the overall Void time and whilst it's true to say that the property has been Void for this time, and that it has incurred rent loss throughout, it does also paint a misleading picture of the performance of the craft workforce carrying out the routine refurbishment work.

Last year, a service analysis of the Voids function identified several areas for improvement, and this resulted in the creation of a service improvement plan, which is now being implemented.

Improvements already delivered include the procurement of a utilities agreement to speed up the transfer of utility supplies once an outgoing tenant leaves. We have moved away from staff using paper-based processes for surveys and ordering of materials to an electronic ordering process. We have re-configured the management team and realigned Void Technicians to better manage performance within the team.

We are also trialling a new service that aims to get a new tenant into a Void property at a much earlier stage and before all the identified refurbishment work has been completed. Essential safety related work will continue to be completed prior to occupation to ensure our new tenants move into a safe and secure property, but for all

other non-essential work, we will provide a 'repairs pledge' which promises to complete all the outstanding work within 6 weeks of the new tenant moving in.

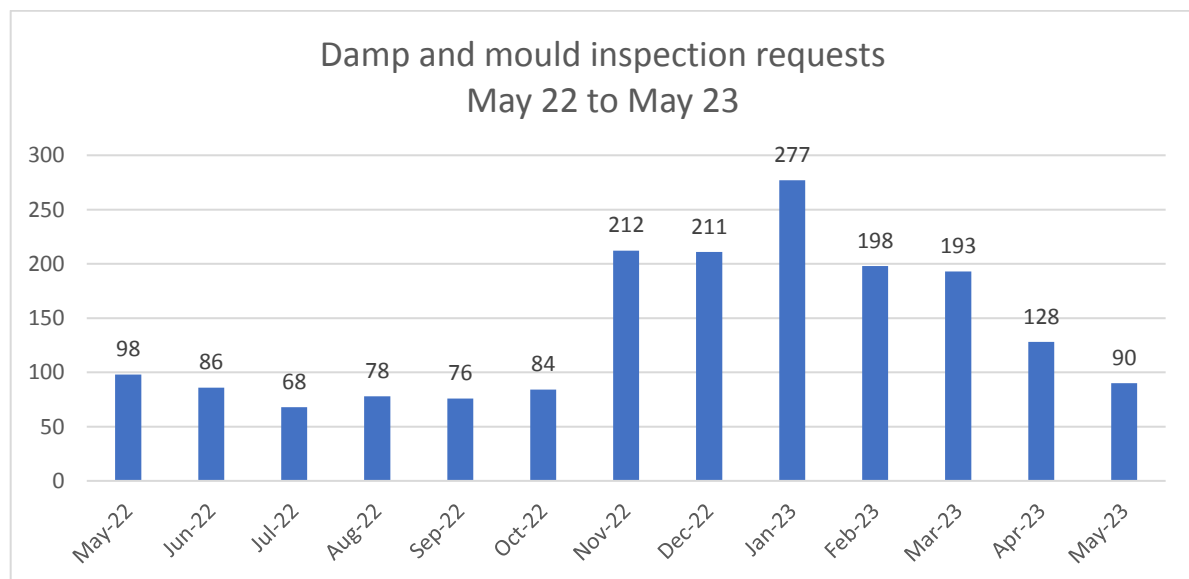
Early indications are that this is being well received by our tenants and this will have a significant impact on the length of time a Void property remains outstanding and will also reduce the amount of rent loss associated with that Void.

## 6. Key issues impacting on the Repairs and Maintenance Service

### 6.1 External focus of repairs relating to damp and mould



As result of tragic death of Awaab Ishak in 2020, resulting from problems associated with damp and mould, we have recently seen a significant increase in the number of reported cases of damp and mould in our properties where an inspection has been requested. Whilst the initial spike is behind us now, it has created a backlog of inspection work that will inevitably lead to an increase in the number of damp and mould related repairs we will have to respond to.



To manage the increased demand, we have bolstered the resources allocated to this work and moved the whole workflow into a new centralised planning area to remove

some of the previous barriers with cross team multi-discipline work types. Damp and mould repairs are now being planned in a way which keeps all tasks grouped together to ensure everything is complete in a timely manner and at the least inconvenience to the tenant.

## 6.2 Recruitment of craft staff

Despite some successes during 2022-23, craft recruitment continues to be a challenge, with 15 full time vacancies that we are trying to fill. Maintaining our establishment is essential as we see the demand for our services increase, due to increases in damp and mould repairs and to deal with the backlog of outstanding jobs. We have now linked up with local trade suppliers, Travis Perkins, and B&Q, and will be running some targeted craft job fairs during July and August; we hope to be able to report back some successful appointments following these events. We also have three apprentices who will be joining our craft teams as full-time employees in the coming months.

## 6.3 Financial pressures

As with all services, we have felt the increasing financial pressures with the Repairs and Maintenance team, with increased costs to run buildings and vehicles, staff wage increases, and significant material cost increases. Despite driving efficiencies within the service, we still face a challenge to ensure that can deliver our services across the city, without overspending and so we are continuously looking at ways of working better with the resources we have and focusing on recruiting good, reliable staff.

# 7. Other improvement actions underway to improve performance

## 7.1 Stores new operating model

Late last year, it was agreed that rather than out-source our Stores operation we would retain the 'in-house' team. This was great news for our staff, who had experienced several years of uncertainty about their future.

Since then, work has begun on delivering two major strands of our new operating model.

The first is the procurement of a new framework agreement to secure a single supplier for all our core materials and provide a one-stop-shop for most of our materials needs.

The second is the procurement of a materials inventory management system (IMS), to better control the ordering, storage, and issue of materials and to make sure we reduce the overall amount and value of stock we hold at any one time.

With these improvements in place, we can then focus on making the Stores service even more efficient and cost effective when delivering its services to the wider business.

## 7.2 Use of drones within the Repairs & Maintenance function

Previously we reported that we were looking at the potential use of drones to assist in surveying repairs at heights.

We have taken advice from various sources, looking at the legal, insurance, cost and health and safety implications of using drones and have concluded that for the day-to-day reactive repairs service in tenanted properties, the business case for the use of drones does not add up. However, we will continue to consider the use of drone technology where it is appropriate, for example, on major projects covering large numbers of properties, where the business case is more obvious.