



Wolverhampton Homes Open Board Meeting

11 September 2024

Time 10.30 am **Public Meeting?** YES **Type of meeting** Wolverhampton Homes
Venue The Boardroom, Wednesfield Office, Alfred Squire Road, Wednesfield, WV11 1XU

Membership

Councillor Paul Appleby
Victor Browne
Darshan Chatha
Councillor Sally Green
Christopher Lue
Sazini Malaba
Councillor Rita Potter
Councillor Zee Russell
Hannah Semple
Matthew Tschubenko
Ranjit Kaur
Mark Ansell

Information

If you have any queries about this meeting, please contact:

Contact Business Assurance team
Tel/Email 01902 552956; WHSBusinessAssurance@wolverhamptonhomes.org.uk
Address The Boardroom, Wednesfield Office, Alfred Squire Road, Wednesfield, WV11 1XU

Copies of other agendas and reports are available from:

Website <https://wolverhamptonintranet.moderngov.co.uk>

Agenda

Item No. *Title*

- 1 **Apologies**
- 2 **Declarations of interest**
- 3 **Minutes of previous open Board meeting - 19 June 2024** (Pages 3 - 14)
- 4 **Matters arising**

FOR POLICY APPROVAL

- 5 **Repairs and Maintenance Policy update - Ian Gardner, Director of Property Services** (Pages 15 - 78)

FOR INFORMATION

- 6 **Revenue Budget Forecast 31 July 2024 - Jo McCoy, Finance Business Partner, City of Wolverhampton Council** (Pages 79 - 88)
- 7 **Income Collection Annual update - Angela Barnes, Director of Homes and Communities** (Pages 89 - 104)

M INUTES



Meeting: Open Board Meeting
Date: 19 June 2024 – 09:30
Venue: The Boardroom, Wednesfield Office, Alfred Squire Road,
Wednesfield, WV11 1XU
Time: 9:30am – 11:00am

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: -

Councillor Rita Potter	-	Board Member – Councillor (Acting Chair)
Darshan Chatha	-	Board Member – Tenant
Hannah Semple	-	Board Member – Independent
Hajrija Dergic	-	Board Member – Independent
Councillor Paul Appleby	-	Board Member – Councillor
Sazini Malaba	-	Board Member – Tenant
Victor Browne	-	Board Member – Tenant
Councillor Zee Russell	-	Board Member – Councillor

STAFF IN ATTENDANCE: -

Shaun Aldis	-	Chief Executive
Angela Barnes	-	Director - Homes and Communities
Ian Gardner	-	Director - Property Services
Julie Haydon	-	Director - Corporate Services (Company Secretary)
Nicky Devey	-	Head of Business Services
Sarah Butcher	-	Head of Learning & Organisational Development & Staff Engagement
Jackie Wilkinson	-	Executive Assistant (minutes)
Simon Bamfield	-	Head of Assets and Stock Investment (agenda item)
Steve North	-	Head of Capital Works

STAFF IN ATTENDANCE – CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL: -

Jenny Lewington	-	Deputy Director of City Housing
Jo McCoy	-	Finance Business Partner

STAFF IN ATTENDANCE (OBSERVERS)

Carly Norton - Business Assurance Team Leader
Mandy Woolley - Community Development Manager (check)

BOARD CANDIDATES IN ATTENDANCE (OBSERVERS) X 3

David Guy - Candidate for Board Member
Mark Ansell - Candidate for Board Member
Paul Barker - Candidate for Board Member

1.0	Apologies	
1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Christopher Lue – Tenant Board Member- Councillor Sally Green – Councillor Board Member- Emma Rolinson – Head of People- Joy McLaren – Tenant Board Member	
2.0	Declaration of Interest	
2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Victor Browne – Tenant Board Member <p>Noted: No specific conflict of interest identified.</p>	
3.0	Minutes of the previous meeting – 22 March 2024	
3.1	Minutes of the previous open Board meeting were agreed as a true record.	
4.0	Matters arising	
4.1	Page 9 - Rents and Service Charge annual update – Impact and support mechanisms – Angela Barnes Action: – Julie Manning to include breakdown of arrears by week / month for future reporting.	
4.2	Page 10 - Medium-Term Capital Investment Plan 2024 – 2025 to 2028 - 2029 – Simon Bamfield Action: Simon Bamfield to include summary reporting for how many customers have benefitted from the improvements.	
5.0	Modern Slavery Statement – Emma Rolinson, Head of People – Presented by Julie Haydon	
5.1	Board Members were asked to approve the Modern Slavery Statement for Wolverhampton Homes as presented with further details shared on the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Safer Partnership approach in place which involves liaison with policy and other agencies	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Think Family programme to raise awareness which is led by Homes and Communities on behalf of Wolverhampton Homes. - See it, Report it - pilot scheme launched, and this now forms part of business as usual. - Procurement process - contractors have to meet legislation dependent on size of the company and are required to demonstrate how they will meet WH expectations / legal requirements and where WH set a higher standard, these are included in the Terms and Conditions. - Information is shared on WH website. - Commercial Team in place who undertake contract monitoring including contractual obligations. <p>Resolved: Board members approved the Modern Slavery Statement</p>	
<p>6.0</p> <p>6.1</p>	<p>Equality Monitoring – Annual Report – Emma Rolinson, Head of People – Presented by Julie Haydon</p> <p>Board members were asked to note the content of the Equality Monitoring Annual Report with further details shared in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key findings - in terms of workforce, gender, age which also included information on starters, leavers and grievances. - The ethnicity gap is calculated as a percentage by comparing average pay of white employees against those from ethnic minority groups, which does not mean they are paid less. - In terms of the Senior Management and Leadership tiers, there is an ethnicity gap. - Ethnicity data – currently no legal requirement to publish the ethnicity data, however WH do this, - Continually monitor where improvements are required. - The current gender pay gap is relatively small with the optimum ideal being zero or a negative pay gap –further work to take place. - Reestablished mentoring programme – including the opportunity for reverse mentoring. - EDI targets reset, in line with the city’s objectives, and business priorities. Collaborative work continues with the city EDI team through the SLA. - Community Development – engagement events are planned to develop engagement with customers. - System development through PowerBi for better reporting – to be shared with Board and senior teams. - Continued provision of outreach and face to face services for customers – addressing opportunities for access to services by those unable or unwilling to use digital services. - Fixed, Field and Flexi – review of workstyles in relation to jobs roles and agile working policy. 	

7.2	Positive feedback was provided by Board members on content and detail of the report and how pleasing it is to see the retention of staff and the importance of using staff feedback to improve the offer.	
7.3	Board members offered their thanks for the detailed report, and how the company is managing retention of staff. The You said, We did approach was also commended in supporting staff to having their voice heard.	
7.4	<p>Future reporting to consider including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Breakdown of mentoring candidates e.g. male / female etc. - Evaluation of the effectiveness of the training in terms of performance metrics. 	
7.5	<p>Board members asked a number of questions as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In terms of the competence and conduct standard – what is the level of requirement for WH. 	
7.6	Board was informed that the company is at present working with the information available and around 150 staff will be required to complete the qualification. SMT were notified of proposed numbers, and the required transition time and associated costs. Current work is ongoing with other providers to understand what training opportunities might be. Currently few providers supply the qualification.	
7.7	<p>WH are also considering whether there is an option to accredit the current eLearning Housing and Regulation course. This is in discussion with the University of Wolverhampton.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. In relation to the provision of learning, can the associated costs be passed to staff. 	
7.8	<p>Discussion took place around the importance of staff motivation, and also around the provision for qualifications being a statutory requirement. This makes it difficult to apply a clawback clause, and in addition, this is not a legally recognised process. WH talked about staff to wanting to stay with the business and as such their belonging and inclusion was very much a part of the discussion. Wolverhampton Homes as a large employer in the city, wants to retain its staff in an ever increasing competitive market. Succession planning also forms part of the short and longer term staffing plans particularly where the impact of an ageing workforce is applicable.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Retention of staff / pay levels in comparison to the council. 	
7.9	As Board members are aware, Wolverhampton Homes staff salary grading was set through People Deal and was benchmarked to other	

	<p>similar organisations and not the City Council’s pay and grading structure.</p> <p>Resolved: Board members noted the following</p> <p>How the activity on the people and talent development agenda directly supports Our Future, the People and Organisational Development strategy, the Early Careers strategy, against the Wolverhampton Homes Business Plan</p>	
<p>8.0</p> <p>8.1</p> <p>8.2</p> <p>8.3</p>	<p>Damp, Mould & Condensation activity and mitigation update - Ian Gardner, Director - Property Services</p> <p>Board members were asked to note the content of the report presented. Update provided on all areas of work being undertaken to address Damp, Mould and Condensation with further details shared on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continued demand – increase in requests beyond what has previously been experienced creating further resourcing pressures including staffing and budgets. - Proactive work being undertaken. - System development – use of analytics. - Future reporting requirements. - Introduction of Awaab’s Law - management plan written in line with proposals, which will be edited when the full requirements of the law are confirmed. - KPIs in place to monitor activity. - Healthy Homes Advisors – providing customer service and advice to address and prevent instances of DMC, with more complex cases escalated to technical teams. - Revenue position under pressure – and this continues with the company spending circa 300k a year. - Proactive communication on the subject to increase customer awareness for reporting / prevention and remedial actions. - Disrepair claims – revised process in place and engagement with the City Council Legal team in relation to the new access to homes policy which is working well. <p>Board members offered their thanks for the proactive work in the efforts to address the fundamental issues in properties including early intervention and the increased communications with customers.</p> <p>Board member questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do properties flag up on the system where there are persistent reports of DMC / where there risks such as cohorts of silent customers what is being done to mitigate the risks? 	

8.4	<p>The use of the housing management system and recent developments allows for this data to be profiled. This provides proactive data analytics which can identify properties that are at a higher risk of DMC. Within the dedicated team, this provides targeted information to allow us to support and signpost customers. Legal services also provide support where this is related to access to property to complete remedial or preventative works. Overcrowding of properties also contributes to the instances of DMC.</p> <p>2. Are the figures realistic in regard to predicted DMC costs given the continued demand?</p>	
8.5	<p>The impact of the ageing housing stock / heating systems / weather etc. plays a factor in the severity and occurrences of DMC. The Capital programme is seeking to resolve this in cases where there are remedial works being undertaken. It is important that future planning is driven by digital which will assist in assessing the risk profile including overcrowding / insulation programmes / heating network & ventilation installation etc.</p> <p>3. What is the appetite of WH to dispose of properties that are not fit for purpose?</p>	
8.6	<p>This is delivered in conjunction with the City of Wolverhampton Council as part of the Asset Management Strategy. This is alongside the Capital programme which has seen success stories such as Heath Town and through the analytics system we can follow the heatmap of historical activity.</p>	
8.7	<p>We hope to be able to demonstrate good learning from the retrofit programme which delivered on 500 of the worst performing stock, through a range of measures, external insulation, sensors being fitted which provides real live data.</p>	
8.8	<p>See it, Report it (SIRI) arrangements are in place where contractors or colleagues identify any issues within a customer's home – these can be reported immediately through SIRI.</p>	
8.9	<p>WH are also undertaking proactive stock condition surveys which consider potential hazards in the home which are then fast tracked into the Repairs team.</p> <p>Resolved: Board members noted the following</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The current and planned activity to reduce Damp, Mould & Condensation risks arising for customers and the company. 	

<p>9.0</p> <p>9.1</p> <p>9.2</p>	<p>Capital Programme Out-turn Report 2023 - 2024 - Simon Bamfield, Head of Assets and Stock Investment</p> <p>Board members were asked to note the content of the report. Further details were shared over a number of key areas including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programme on target primarily due to acceleration of some of the larger schemes including a focus on compliance and fuel improvements. - over 100m investment in the council stock achieved. - Void costs and the timescales since the Decent Homes Scheme – this is being reviewed under the longer term asset management, which includes the analysis of the stock / proactive work being undertaken to ensure tenancies are managed. - Consideration of stock disposals where it is better to disinvest and replace and the future proofing of assets e.g. heat pump installation which are being piloted. - Comparisons on increasing void numbers compared to previous years. <p>Future reporting to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual programme - Five year planning - Risks and issues <p>Resolved: Board members noted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The outturn figures and performance achieved in the delivery of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme 	
<p>10.0</p> <p>10.1</p> <p>10.2</p> <p>10.3</p>	<p>Revenue Outturn position 2023 - 2024 - Jo McCoy, Finance Business Partner, City of Wolverhampton Council – presented by Shaun Aldis, Chief Executive</p> <p>Board members were asked to note the content of the report.</p> <p>Board members were advised of the due diligence applied to the company’s finances, particularly to review and challenge spend and predicted spend. Q3 saw the company on target to deliver against a balanced budget, however in contrast Q4 showed an increase in spend impacted by Repairs and Maintenance costs in the main.</p> <p>Due the timing, and the closure of the financial year, the company requested Board to agree to the use of the reserves to balance the budget.</p>	


10.4	Through ongoing discussion with the city's finance team, and through presentation and discussion at the Resources and Finance Assurance Group (RAFAG), WH has discussed the requirement to increase the management fee to enable the delivery of services, as required by the city council.	
10.5	<p>The areas that contributed to the overspend are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasing demand for repairs and maintenance. - Increased Tenant needs and expectations. - Capital programme focused on compliance and infrastructure. - Portfolio of housing is getting older and requiring higher levels of maintenance. - Market price of materials still increasing. - Inclement weather impacts on numbers of reports of damp, mould and condensation. - Additional expenditure of £300k plus for Repairs work as per the customer app. 	
10.6	<p>Further analysis is taking place with the finance team, and has shown that there are several areas that have contributed to a significant swing in Q4, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Factoring in 10% in terms of DMC – which was actually 53% on same quarter from the previous year. - Supply chain completed more repairs than anticipated, which impacted on cash flow. - Some new procurement contracts came in more expensive than originally quoted: waste, pest control. - A trend of properties coming through voids in poorer condition. - Ironmongery window supplier ceased trading – with higher cists coming in to obtain this service. - Compliance issues around water hygiene. - Cost of the biomass boiler failure - no service interruption, but there was lost income from the government subsidy. 	
10.7	Assurance was given to Board members on the close working arrangements under the Finance Service Level Agreement and the regular monitoring meetings that take place, including with CWC Finance, Housing Strategy Team and attendance at the Resources and Financial Assurance Group.	
10.8	A review of potential savings and efficiencies will take place in line with the Our Future Council activity, to identify ways of mitigating additional costs and demands for services.	
10.9	There are continuing regulatory pressures – despite this there is nothing for WH that is reportable to the regulator.	

10.10	Board members offered thanks for the joint work being undertaken with WH and CWC, especially as the budgetary pressures are shared across both the ALMO and the Council.	
10.11	<p>Board member questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is there sufficient financial support from the City council by way of the management fee to cover delivery of the services WH is providing and have the material increases / other areas factored in? 	
10.12	WH advised that the work we are doing on the quality of data, will support us well, as will access to trend data. It is also to be considered, how contractors inform us of their forecasting and spend profile to ensure information is received in a timely manner to allow this to be detailed into budget profiling.	
10.13	<p>JMc advised that when negotiations take place over the management fee, material increases are factored in where possible, however, this has not been sufficient to mitigate the challenges in expenditure.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Request for assurance regarding forecasting and how does this link into the review of the Capital programme. 	
10.14	Stock profile – where 50% of the properties managed by WH are flats, means the Capital programme is heavily focused on the delivery against the Building Safety Act, to meet regulatory requirements and to reduce ongoing maintenance costs. The Decent Homes programme was delivered over 15 years ago and some components are now requiring attention. That alongside the increased numbers of larger families in properties, people working from home, exacerbates wear and tear – these are all unprecedented changes that impact the spend.	
10.15	There is also millions of pounds being spent on infrastructure - £30m on sprinklers, a new energy centre, and these add no value to the stock, and the improvements then create burden in relation to the ongoing and future maintenance costs.	
10.16	WH has a huge challenge ahead. The capital programme is currently skewed towards building safety and compliance – including elemental replacement programmes such. as boiler replacements. In terms of key responsive repairs, there are general wear and tear issues that cause demand, which cannot be funded through a capital programme.	
10.17	Furthermore, maintenance costs come from the revenue account which in turn, adds more pressure which means WH also has to be realistic about what it can deliver and the associated costs.	

10.18	<p>JMc stated that the sector has to take opportunities to take a case to DHLUC where there is insufficient funds in the HRA account, along with the new burdens of maintenance, fire safety and energy efficiency, with no new funding.</p>	
10.19	<p>JL advised that the council are having to take difficult decisions about services and where the HRA monies are spent.</p> <p>Resolved: Board members noted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The revenue budget outturn position for 2023 – 2024 including the trading position on commercial activities 	
11.0	<p>A.O.B.</p>	
11.1	<p>No items raised.</p>	
12.0	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wednesday 11 September 2024 	

This page is intentionally left blank

Board Report

	Agenda Item 5
	11 September 2024 Repairs and Maintenance Policy update
	Open Report
Status:	Policy Approval
Author and job title:	Ian Gardner – Director Property Services
Contact No:	07971 021420
Recommendations:	Board Members are asked to approve the updated Repairs & Maintenance Policy
Key risks and contentious issues:	<u>Key Risks</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The company has a range of statutory duties under The Health and Safety at Work Act and a wide range of legislation related to the maintenance of the housing assets under its control, as defined within the Management Agreement with the City of Wolverhampton Council. • The company manages a range of assets, that if not adequately maintained, inspected, tested or serviced, may cause injury, death or disease to customers, colleagues or the public. • The company may be vicariously liable for the omissions or failures leading to injury, death or disease of an employee or contractor engaged or managed by Wolverhampton Homes.

	<p><u>Contentious Issues</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some colleagues may require additional training to meet the requirements of new Building Safety legislation and Awaab's Law. • Some customer expectations may not be met where they request shorter repair timescales that can be achieved with available resources.
--	--

Management Summary

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The Repairs and Maintenance policy sets out Wolverhampton Homes' approach to repairing and maintaining the assets, under its management control, to ensure they remain safe and serviceable for its tenants and communities.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 In response to new Building Safety legislation and guidance, the company continually reviews its suite of '*Building Safety Strategy*' related policies. This updated policy is one of five core policies and also links to the Council's Strategic Assessment Management plan. This policy has been reviewed 12 months earlier than planned to incorporate changes in our management of Damp, Mould & Condensation, requirements under Awaab's Law and learning from complaints, including Housing Ombudsman determinations.
- 2.2 Formal customer consultation on the revised draft policy commenced in July 2024 (see Appendix 1). We received 1,062 responses from customers that have assisted the company to refine the final proposed policy. In summary:
- a. Circa 80% of customers agreed with our 'Emergency' repair definitions and additional suggested fault descriptions have been included in the latest version.
 - b. Around a third of customers considered '24-hour' response to be too long. However, this is a maximum timeframe, with the policy stating *Emergency repairs are attended to within 24 hours, but most service requests will receive a same day response and will be prioritised based on risk, i.e. the impact of the repair on the occupant's vulnerability.*
 - c. There was general consensus regarding the definition of a routine repair, with additional suggested fault descriptions now being added to the latest version. There was feedback suggested a shorter 20-day target should be considered.
 - d. There was general consensus regarding the definition of a programmed repair, with additional suggested fault descriptions now being added to the latest policy - 42% disagreed with a 90-day target. Some comments included consideration of the vulnerability of the occupants to prioritise repairs. This provision is included within the policy. However, as the proportion of customers claiming some

vulnerability increases, this may impact on our ability to always prioritise works to the customer's preference.

- e. Opinion was divided regarding response times to investigate and action damp, mould or condensation related service requests. The proposed timescales are compatible with Awaab's Law.
- f. Respondents were overall satisfied with our appointment slots. Some requested a Saturday morning slot.

2.3 The policy has also been reviewed in consultation with service managers and has been benchmarked with similar sized housing organisations, to ensure it meets the foreseeable needs of the business and the Council.

2.4 The final proposed policy balances customers' priorities, within available repairs and maintenance budgets, and ensures compliance with relevant regulatory standards.

2.5 The proposed policy (see Appendix 2) includes a number of updates, summarised below:

- a. Links with the revised Regulatory Framework and Awaab's Law.
- b. Definitions of 'Responsive Repairs' and associated service standards based on risk, including timescales for inspections or surveys.
- c. Methods of reporting repair requests.
- d. Clarifications of Landlord and Tenants Responsibilities, in accordance with their Tenancy Agreement.
- e. Updated definitions and example service requests within repair categories.
- f. Introduction of Demand Lead Replacement Programmes for 'renewal' activity, with timescales dependant on budget availability and not a pre-defined timeframe.
- g. Commitment to address any Category 1 hazards, where properties are pending major investment works or improvements.
- h. Revised policy statement regarding the management of Damp, Mould and Condensation.
- i. Updates regarding access and use of legal action, where required.
- j. Revised policy statement regarding the management of neighbouring property faults that impact on our customers.
- k. Commitment to use data to inform asset investment decisions or targeted intervention.
- l. Updated Empty Homes (Voids) Standard.

3.0 Financial and value for money implications

3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the revision of this policy.

3.2 The policy does set out a number of mandatory requirements relating to minimum competencies, accreditations, quality assurance arrangements and contract monitoring. These arrangements are expected to be met from existing resources.

3.3 Implications relating to the introduction of maintaining 'The Golden Thread of Information' under new legislation is currently being evaluated and will vary by each contract or project.

- 3.4 Existing procurement arrangements will ensure value for money is maintained. Evaluation methodologies will consider qualitative and financial appraisals and tenderers proposals regarding Social Value.

4.0 Legal and regulatory implications

- 4.1 This policy contributes to the company fulfilling its legal obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and a wide range legislation related to the maintenance of the housing assets under its control.
- 4.2 The policy also supports the company's compliance with a wide range of legislation, related to the maintenance of the housing assets under its control, as set out in Appendix D of the policy.

5.0 Human resources implications

- 5.1 Some colleagues may require additional training to meet the requirements of the requirements of new Building Safety legislation and Awaab's Law. Any significant changes to job roles, will require Job Descriptions to be reviewed under existing People Deal arrangements.

6.0 Health and safety implications

- 6.1 The policy underpins Wolverhampton Homes commitment to the health, safety and wellbeing of its customers. It is the company's aim to exceed, where possible, the minimum health and safety legislation and adopt best practice.

7.0 Equalities implications

- 7.1 An Equalities Assessment (see Appendix 3) has been completed and was peer reviewed and endorsed by the Equalities Circle Forum (ECF) on the 28 August 2024.
- 7.2 No adverse effects towards any Equality Groups were identified and no corrective actions were recommended.

8.0 Impact on the environment and community

- 8.1 No significant environmental or community impacts are anticipated by implementing this policy.

9.0 Long term consequences for the company

- 9.1 Implementing this policy will balance customers' priorities, within available repairs and maintenance budgets, and ensures compliance with relevant regulatory standards.

10.0 Impact on business relationships with suppliers, customers and others

- 10.1 No significant impacts on external stakeholders are anticipated by implementing this revised policy.
- 10.2 The policy will be regularly reviewed to ensure it continues to meet the needs of its customers, with opportunities to enhance service standards being considered where reasonably practicable and within available budgets.
- 10.3 The company will provide feedback on the customer consultation exercise when the revised policy is implemented.

11.0 Impact on Wolverhampton Homes' Management System

- 11.1 Once approved, the policy will be available to all colleagues via WHMS.
- 11.2 Once approved by Board members, the updated document(s) will be available on the management system by:

Date: 30 September 2024

Officer responsible: Ian Gardner

12.0 List of Appendices

- 12.1 Appendix 1 - Customer consultation report – August 2024
- 12.2 Appendix 2 - Repairs & Maintenance Policy
- 12.3 Appendix 3 - Equality Analysis

This page is intentionally left blank

Repairs and maintenance policy: Customer consultation report

August 2024

Contents

Emergency repairs 2

A 24-hour response time for an emergency repair is satisfactory 3

Routine repairs 5

A 20-working day response time for a routine repair is satisfactory 6

Programmed repairs 8

A 90-calendar day response time for a programmed repair is satisfactory 9

If an inspection is required, an appointment offered within 20 working days is satisfactory 11

Damp and mould 12

A 10-working day response time to investigate damp and mould is satisfactory 12

If damp and mould is identified, a 20-working day response time to complete any necessary work is satisfactory 13

Appointment times 14

I'm satisfied that the appointment times meet my needs 14

New homes 15

Demographics 16

Area of the city 16

Age group 17

Gender 19

Orientation 19

Disability 20

Consultation response

The consultation opened on Friday 26 July for two weeks, closing at midnight on 09 August. In total, we received 1062 responses.

Of those, 62% completed the entire survey and it took customers an average of just under seven minutes to complete.

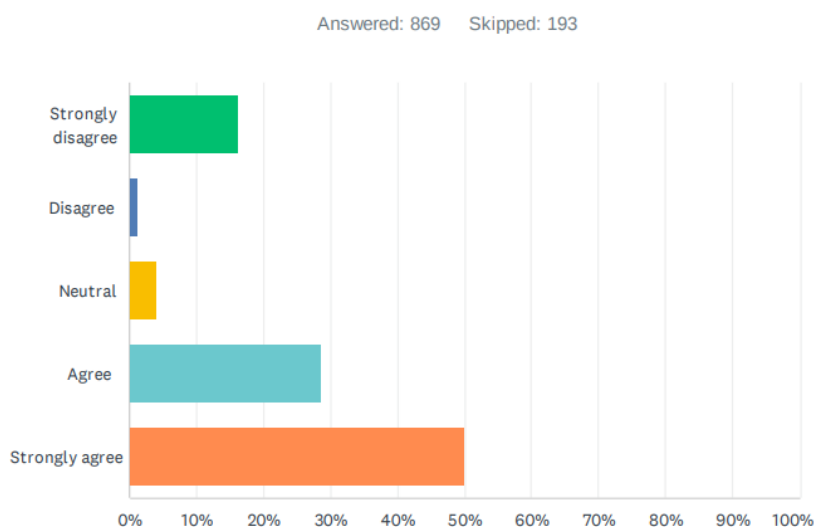
Customers received information via email and it was promoted on social media channels and on the Wolverhampton Homes website.

Emergency repairs

All the following are classed as emergency repairs:

- Blocked flues to an open fire or boiler
- Blocked or leaking foul drains or soil pipes
- Burst pipes or water leaks that cannot be reasonably contained or controlled
- Carbon Monoxide alarm activations
- Exposed live mains (230V) electrical wires, connections, fixtures or fittings
- Faulty smoke alarms, detectors, or safety devices
- Gas leaks
- Insecure (non-latchable) windows, doors or locks
- Toilets not flushing, where no other working toilet is available
- Total loss of electricity – excluding network or metering issues not in under Wolverhampton Homes control
- Total loss of heating or hot water (31 October and 01 May)

Q8 Do you agree that all of the above should be classed as emergency repairs



869 people answered this question.

- **50% (434) of the 869 people who responded to this question strongly agreed that all 11 of the categories should be classed as an emergency repair.**
- **29% (249) agreed.**
- **16% (140) strongly disagreed.**

Several respondents commented that Wolverhampton Homes should prioritise vulnerable customers – such as the elderly or those with disabilities – as well as families with young children.

There were several comments around the need to complete emergency repairs quickly as they would otherwise impact their mental health. Customers write that these are “important to health”, that delaying could “cause problems to other neighbours” or create problems for the household.

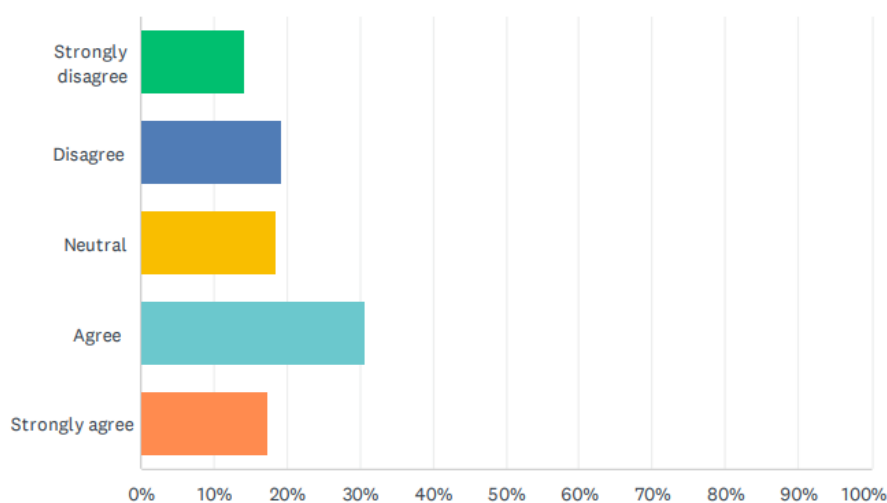
Suggestions for other repairs that could be classed as an emergency included:

- Mould (21 responses)
- Loss of water / broken shower all year round (21)
- Roofs – leaking, loose tiles (16)
- Broken glass (windows and doors) (15)
- Infestations (8)

A 24-hour response time for an emergency repair is satisfactory

Q10 A 24-hour response time for an emergency repair is satisfactory

Answered: 869 Skipped: 193



A total of 869 respondents answered this question.

- **Just over 17% (151) strongly agreed that 24 hours is a satisfactory response time**
- **Just over 30% (266) agreed.**
- **About one third of respondents (290) either disagreed or strongly disagreed that 24 hours was a satisfactory response time.**

There were more than 500 comments on this question. While some people were happy with the 14-hour response, others said:

- Immediate / as soon as possible repairs for the most urgent repairs, such as gas leaks, water leaks and anything that could pose a threat to health and / or safety.
- Some respondents specified shorter response times, with the most popular suggestions being between two and 12 hours.
- Some respondents were understanding about the need to prioritise, saying some responses were more urgent than others – it depends on the type of emergency.

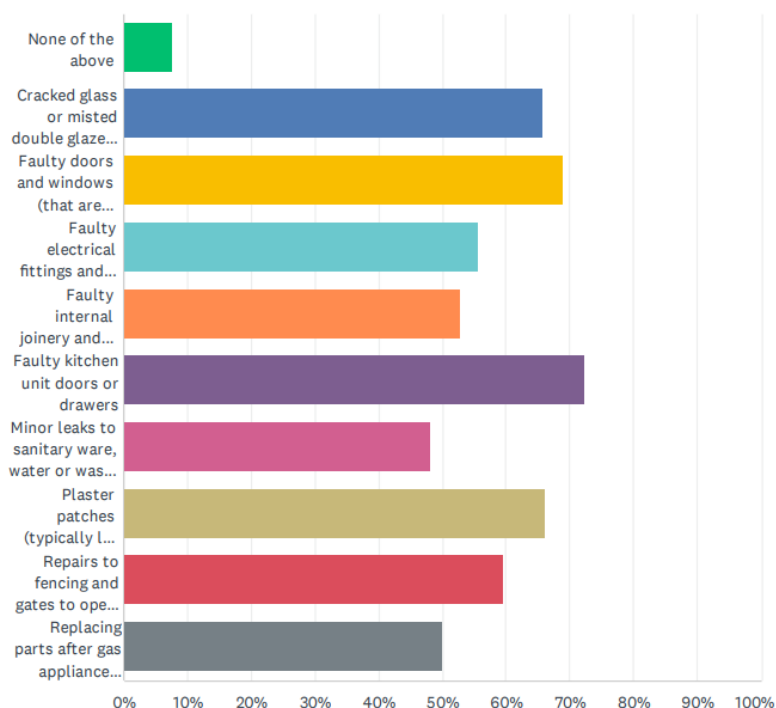
Routine repairs

The below are all currently classed as routine repairs. Respondents were asked to confirm which ones they agreed should be routine repairs.

- Cracked glass or misted double glazed units
- Faulty doors and windows (that are secure)
- Faulty electrical fittings and appliances, that do not pose a shock hazard
- Faulty internal joinery and stairs
- Faulty kitchen unit doors or drawers
- Minor leaks to sanitary ware, water or waste systems
- Plaster patches (typically less than 1 square metre)
- Repairs to fencing and gates, to open land or subject to an existing and up to date service charge
- Replacing parts after gas appliance servicing, where not the primary heat source

Q11 The below are all currently classed as routine repairs. Please tick the boxes of those that you agree are routine repairs.

Answered: 783 Skipped: 279



In total, 783 customers responded to this question.

- Just over 72% of customers (566) agreed that faulty kitchen units, doors or drawers should be classed as a routine repair.
- Nearly 69% (539) said faulty doors and windows that are secure should be classed as routine repairs.
- Almost 66% (518) agreed that plaster patches were a routine repair.

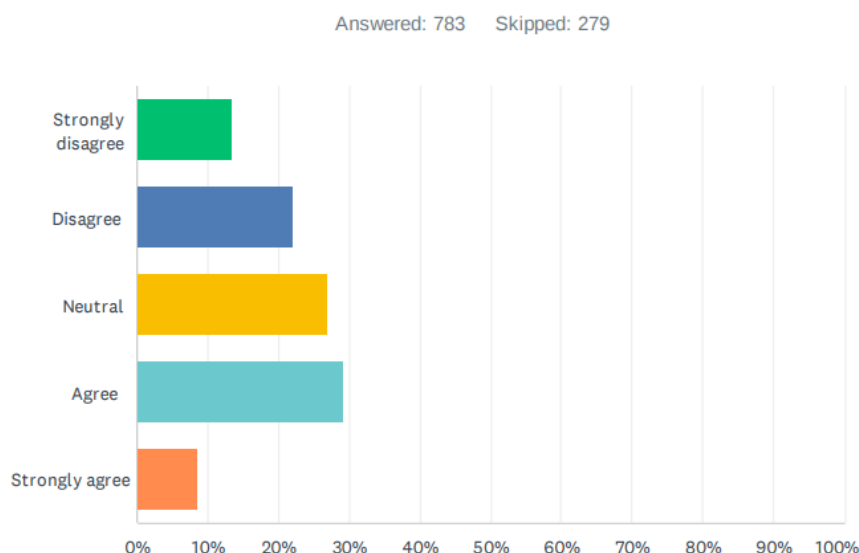
Only two of the suggested routine repairs had fewer than half of respondents agreeing with the routine repair classification:

- Minor leaks to sanitary ware, water or waste systems
- Replacing parts after gas appliance servicing, where it is not the primary heat source

Sixty people (7.66%) ticked “none of the above”.

A 20-working day response time for a routine repair is satisfactory

Q12 A 20-working day response time for a routine repair is satisfactory



This was answered by 783 customers.

- **Just over 35% (277) disagreed or strongly disagreed that a 20-day response was satisfactory**
- **Almost 38% (296) agreed.**
- **Nearly 27% (210) gave no preference, indicating they were “neutral” about the 20-day response time.**

There were 95 comments about what else could be classed as a routine repair, including:

- Broken paving / slabs
- Damp and mould
- Intercoms
- Door and stair repairs
- Lift maintenance
- Blocked sinks and baths
- Outside bin locks

- Garage doors
- Gutter cleaning
- Faulty door handles
- Hallway lighting
- Insect / rodent infestation

381 respondents offered comments on this question. While some agreed 20 days was reasonable other comments included:

- In most cases, where someone is disabled or a pensioner all, if not most, repairs should be treated as a matter of urgency.
- Faulty stairs should be dealt with more quickly, especially where there is a disabled tenant living at the property.
- if you are a wheelchair user any routine repair can be an emergency
- A person-centred approach is needed to determine what is considered routine. It won't be the same for everyone!
- Repairs need prioritising based on the damage outcome, i.e.: minor water leak can be catastrophic to a property if left too long.
- Cracked glass could deteriorate and become a safety risk. Anything relating to gas and electricity should be resolved in less than 20 days
- For those of us who are elderly and live alone such a delay could cause considerable distress.

Others commented that a shorter timescale of between five and 15 days would be more acceptable. Some people said they had waited longer for a repair.

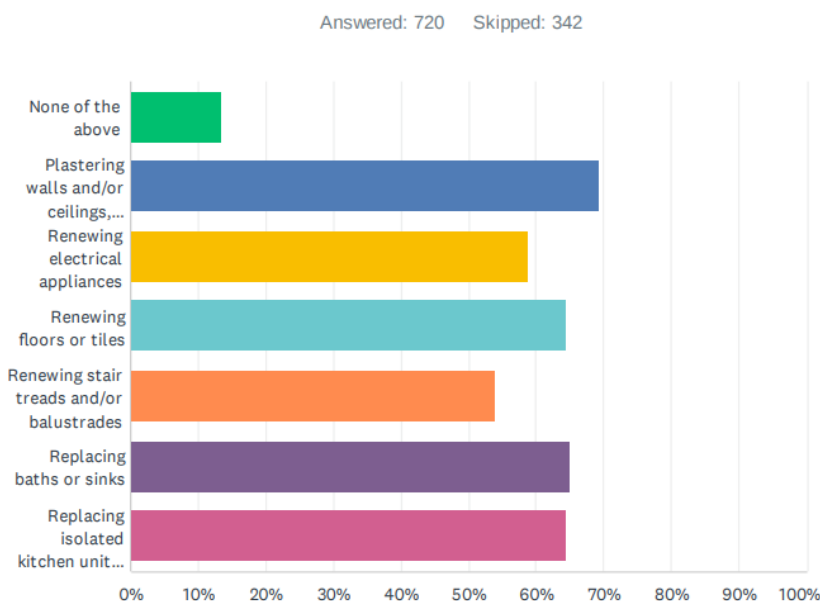
Programmed repairs

The below are all currently classed as programmed repairs. Respondents were asked to confirm which ones they agreed should be programmed repairs.

Programmed repairs include, but are not limited to:

- Plastering walls and/or ceilings, causing significant inconvenience
- Renewing electrical appliances
- Renewing floors or tiles
- Renewing stair treads and/or balustrades
- Replacing baths or sinks
- Replacing isolated kitchen units or worktops

Q13 The below are all currently classed as programmed repairs. Please tick the boxes of those you agree are programmed repairs. They include, but are not limited to:



720 respondents answered this question.

All the named programmed repairs received at least a 54% positive response from customers, which indicates all of them are broadly accepted under a programme of works.

Those receiving the lowest levels of agreement are:

- Renewing stair treads and / or balustrades (almost 53% - 388 people)
- Renewing electrical appliances (almost 59% - 424 people)

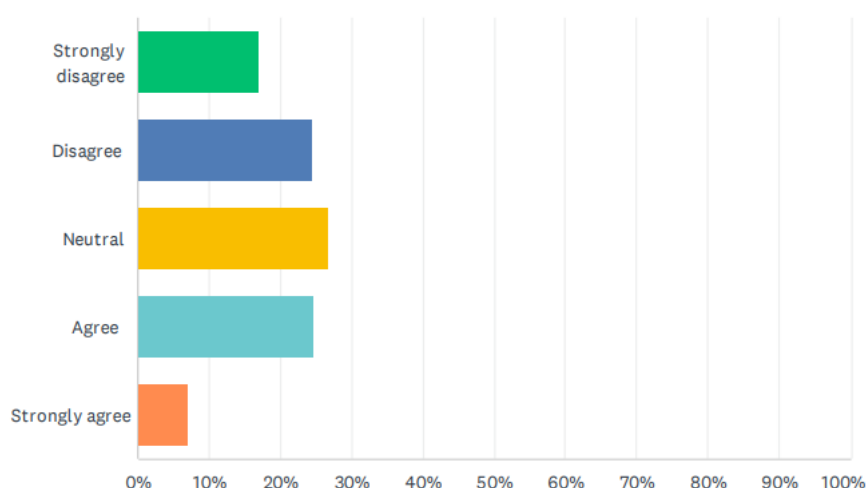
There were 91 comments about what else should be classed as a programmed repair, including:

- Floorboards
- Windows
- Renewing/ replacing internal doors
- Loft insulation and roof inspections
- Fencing
- Skirting boards
- Exterior work, such as checking gutters, chimney flashing and roof tiles, replacing fascias and painting
- Renewal of broken door handles
- Replacing boilers
- Patio slabs
- Roof repair
- Asbestos
- Outside taps

A 90-calendar day response time for a programmed repair is satisfactory

Q14 A 90-calendar day response time for a programmed repair is satisfactory

Answered: 720 Skipped: 342



There were 720 respondents to this question.

- **Just under 25% (178) agreed that 90-calendar day was a satisfactory response for a programmed repair,**
- **Just under 7% (50) strongly agreed.**

- **Just under 25% (177) disagreed**
- **17% (123) strongly disagreed.**
- **27% (192) had no strong opinion and were neutral.**

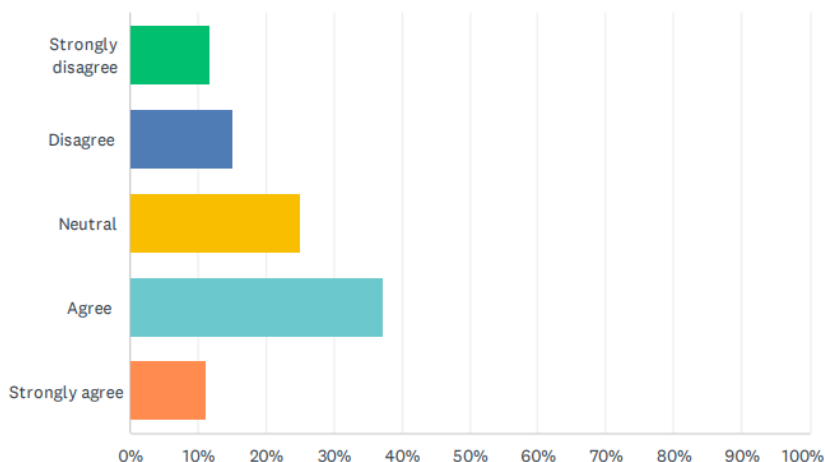
More than 300 customers provided feedback on the 90-day timescale. Many commented that 90 days was too long, particularly for sink / bath repairs, and some suggested 30 or 60 days was sufficient. Some customers commented that vulnerable residents, elderly and those with young children should be prioritised. Others said they had waited longer than 90 days.

“90-day response time would be good if it’s adhered to. Too many times I have had to chase it and that’s not easy in itself. Not everyone can check the app, for whatever reason.”

If an inspection is required, an appointment offered within 20 working days is satisfactory

Q15 If an inspection is required to undertake a detailed survey and to schedule the scope of required works, an appointment offered within 20 working days is satisfactory.

Answered: 705 Skipped: 357



A total of 705 respondents answered this question.

- **Just over 48% (341) either agreed or strongly agreed that the appointment offer within 20 working days is satisfactory.**
- **Almost 27% (188) respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.**
- **25% (176) had no strong opinion and ticked “neutral”.**

While some respondents agreed the 20-day timescale was reasonable, others were more critical.

Comments included:

“Prolonging getting job done: 20 days for routine call out, 20 days for inspector plus 90 days for scheduled work.”

“This is very inconvenient because you’ll have to wait up to 20 days plus another however long for repairs to actually take place.”

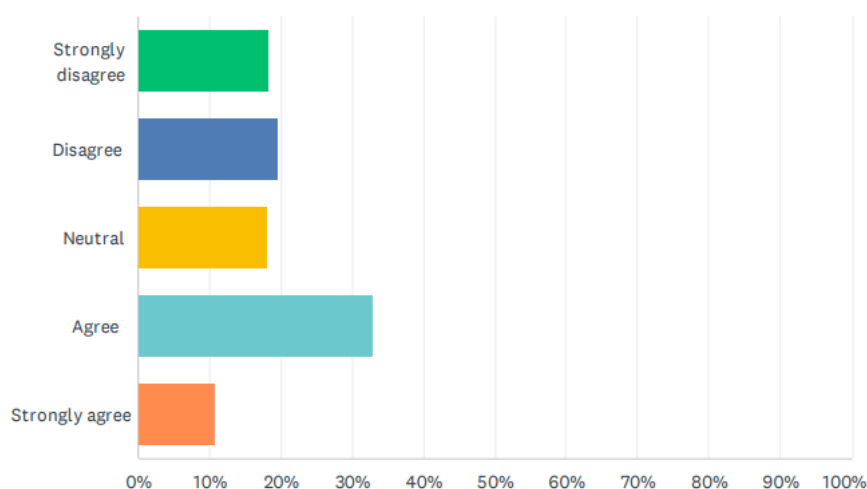
“Some of the 'programmed repairs' are of a dangerous nature such as stair repairs, electrical appliance repair etc. These should be done in a more timely manner.”

Damp and mould

A 10-working day response time to investigate damp and mould is satisfactory

Q16 A 10 working day response time to investigate damp and mould is satisfactory

Answered: 697 Skipped: 365



In total, 697 respondents answered this question.

- **Almost one third (229) agreed**
- **Almost 11% (76) strongly agreed.**
- **Amost 20% (137) disagreed**
- **Just over 18% (128) strongly disagreed.**
- **Just over 18% (122) were neutral.**

More than 300 customers provided additional information about their answer, including:

“If there are children in the property or elderly, it should be sorted sooner.”

“Damp and mould needs to be seen asap due to health issues.”

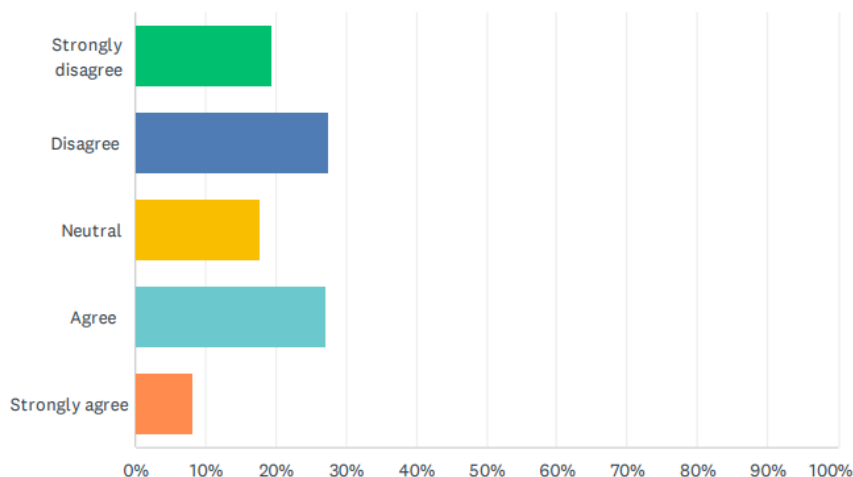
“Damp & mould causes serious long-term health challenges, this is something that needs addressing with haste.”

Some customers say they have waited a long time and / or had long-standing DMC problems that are not resolved.

If damp and mould is identified, a 20-working day response time to complete any necessary work is satisfactory

Q17 If damp and mould is identified, a 20 working day response time to complete any necessary work is satisfactory

Answered: 697 Skipped: 365



In total, there were 697 responses.

- **Just over 35% (246) agreed or strongly agreed**
- **Nearly 47% (327) disagreed or strongly disagreed**
- **Nearly 18% (124) were neutral**

More than 300 customers commented on this question. Comments focused on length of time, with some accepting the 20-day response, but others echoed the answers on the previous question that a 20-working-day response is too long.

Comments include:

“Mould is detrimental to the health and well-being of residents and therefore should be treated as urgent. Especially where children are resident, as this can affect their growth and development.”

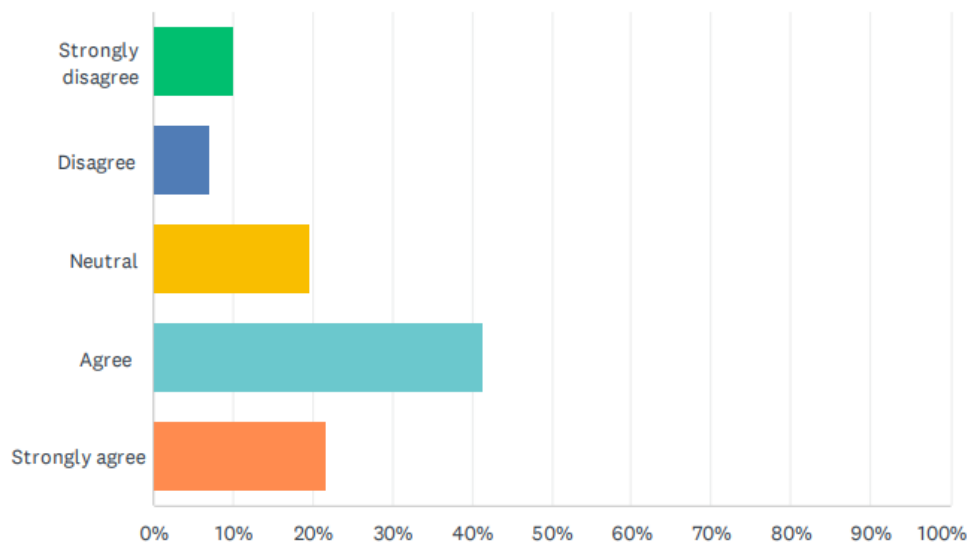
“Working together with tenants to prevent mould from occurring in the first place could be a practical solution to the issue.”

Appointment times

I'm satisfied that the appointment times meet my needs

Q18 I'm satisfied that the appointment times meet my needs

Answered: 691 Skipped: 371



In total, 691 respondents answered.

- **Almost 22% (151) strongly agreed**
- **Over 41% (286) agreed**
- **Almost 10% (69) strongly disagreed**
- **Just over 7% (49) disagreed.**

The overwhelming majority of respondents seem to be happy with how Wolverhampton Homes deals with appointment times.

Out of the respondents who answered the question, 266 provided further comments, including:

“More precise times would be helpful. I have waited all day and no one has turned up.”

“I think a 4-hour time slot should be given. This prevents loss of earnings due to time lost at work.”

“I believe that night shift workers should have some other kind of time frame.”

“Should include Saturday mornings.”

“It would be good to have Saturday for repairs.”

“If it's possible to give a 2-hour slots for waiting this would be better.”

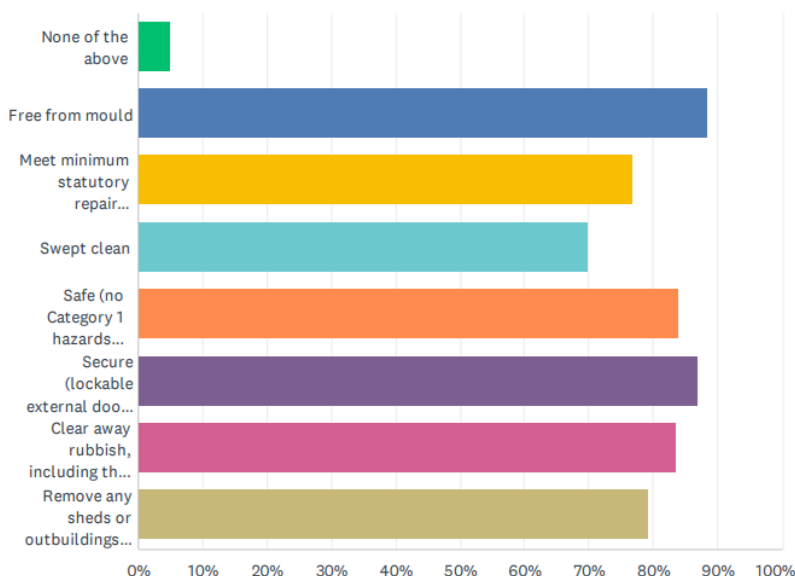
New homes

The below are all included within our new home standard. Please tick the boxes you believe meet the standard.

- Free from mould
- Meet minimum statutory repair standards
- Swept Clean
- Safe (no Category 1 hazards present)
- Secure (lockable external doors and latchable windows)
- clear away rubbish, including that in gardens, outbuildings and communal areas
- remove any sheds or outbuildings that are unsafe or in very poor condition

Q19 The below are included within our standard to create a new home. Please tick the boxes of those that you agree meet the standard.

Answered: 684 Skipped: 378



684 respondents answered this question. Only one suggestion – that the property should be swept clean – received less than a 70% response.

The highest scoring response at 89% (605) was that the property should be free from mould.

Out of the respondents, 141 provided feedback on what else could be included. There was no overwhelmingly popular suggestion but several mentioned:

- Paint all walls
- Check for leaks – roof / toilets / pipework
- Replacing poor conditioned kitchens & bathrooms
- Replastering where it's needed
- Remove wallpaper and check standard of plastering
- Check windows / glass and make sure keys to windows are included
- Replace fencing if it is in bad condition
- Replace broken internal doors

Demographics

Area of the city

Of the customers who supplied a correct postcode, we found respondents live in the following wards:

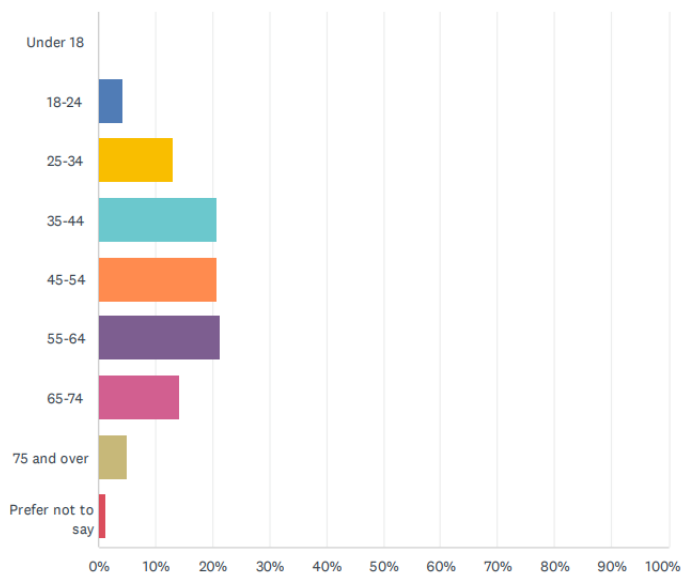
Ward	Responses
Bilston East	91
Bilston North	63
Blakenhall	1
Bushbury North	53
Bushbury South & Low Hill	42
East Park	79
Ettingshall	68
Fallings Park	61
Graiseley	31
Heath Town	93
Merry Hill	58

Oxley	33
Park	4
Penn	4
Springvale	41
St Peters	44
Tettenhall Regis	13
Tettenhall Wightwick	35
Wednesfield North	57
Wednesfield South	37
Total	908

Age group

Q2 What is your age group?

Answered: 1,054 Skipped: 8

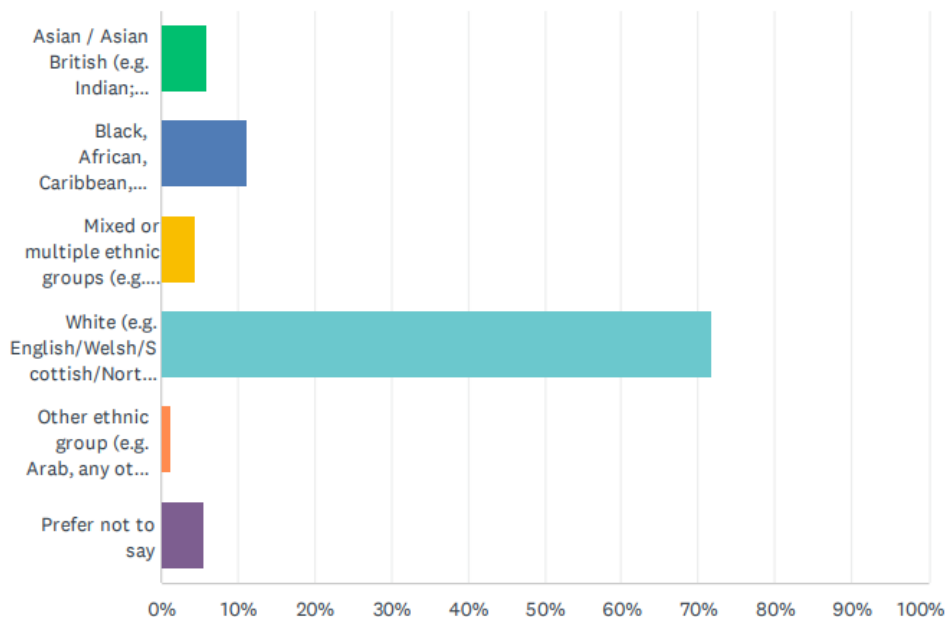


1014 respondents answered this question. Of these, 660 (53%) were between the ages of 35 and 64. The response rate among 35-64-year-olds was more evenly spread compared to the 2022 survey, which had more 45-54-year-olds responding.

Ethnicity

Q3 What is your ethnicity?

Answered: 1,052 Skipped: 10



1052 answered this question, of whom:

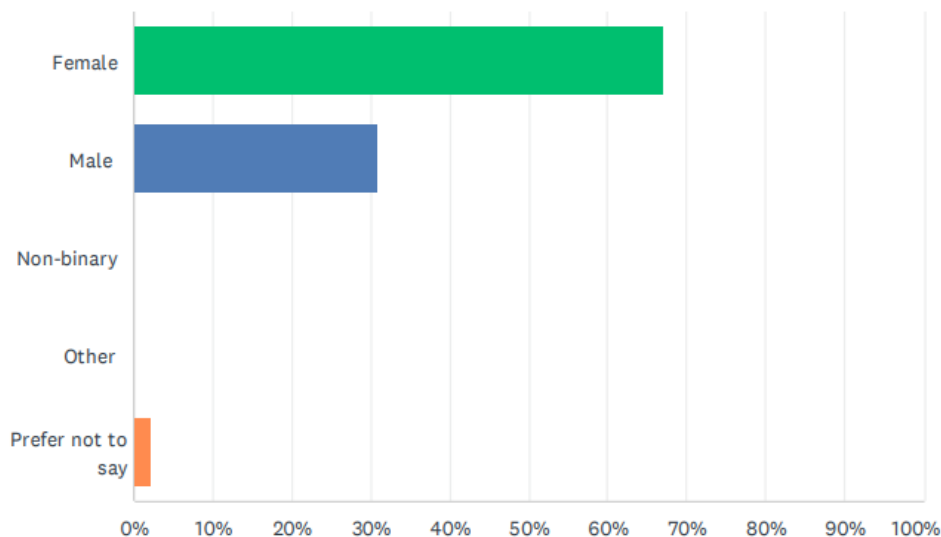
- **72% (754) were white**
- **11% (116) were Black**
- **6% (63) were Asian**
- **4% (46) were mixed or multiple ethnic groups.**
- **1% (14) were “other ethnic groups”.**

In this survey, we received more responses from the Black community compared to 2022, when 8% of respondents described themselves as Black.

Gender

Q4 What best describes your gender?

Answered: 1,050 Skipped: 12



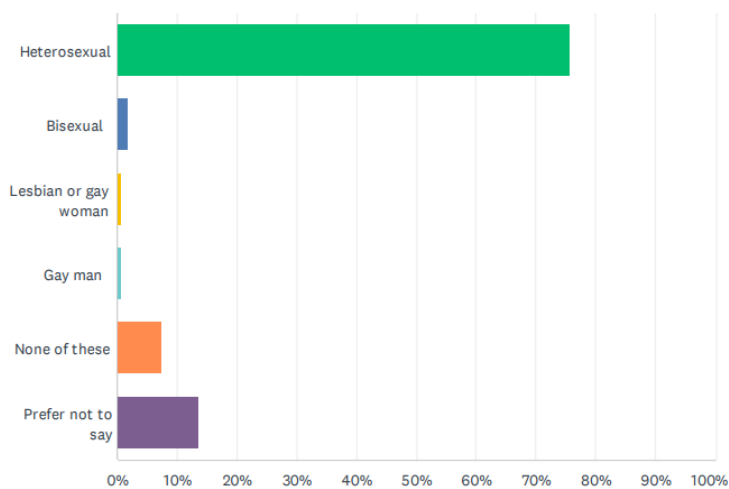
Of the 1050 respondents:

- **67% (702) were women**
- **31% (324) were men.**

Sexual orientation

Q5 What best describes your sexual orientation?

Answered: 1,040 Skipped: 22



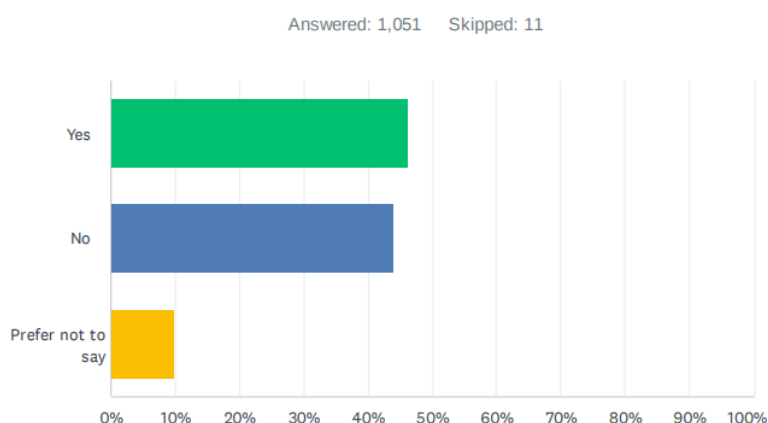
- **76% (788) described themselves as heterosexual.**

- **2% (18) described themselves as bisexual.**
- **<1% (7) described themselves as lesbian / gay woman**
- **<1% (6) described themselves as a gay man.**

This is broadly in line with the 2022 survey responses.

Disability

Q6 Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?



Of the 1051 customers who answered this question:

- **47% (487) said they had conditions or illnesses that are expected to last more than 12 months.**
- **44% (461) said they did not.**

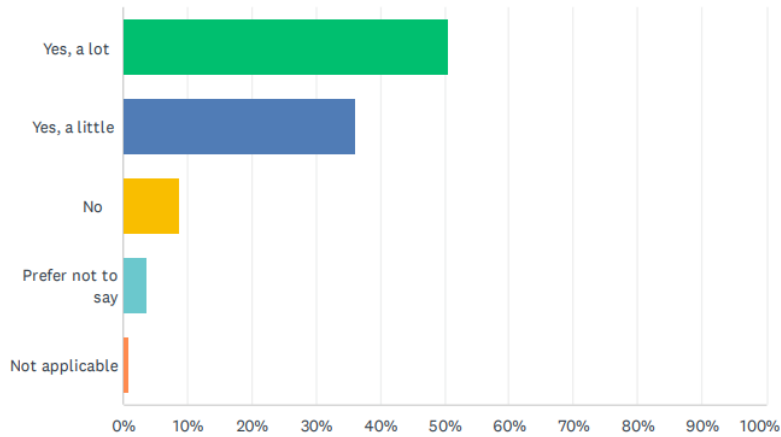
According to our data, more than 72% of our customers have at least one condition that affects their day-to-day life, and 41% of customers have three or more conditions.

The 2021 Census data states that 27.3% of Wolverhampton households include someone living with a disability as set out in the Equality Act.

The Office of National Statistics says: 'a person is considered to have a disability if they have a self-reported long-standing illness, condition or impairment that causes difficulty with day-to-day activities.'

Q7 Does your condition or illness reduce your ability to carry out day to day activities?

Answered: 486 Skipped: 576



Of the 486 who answered this:

- **51% (246) said their condition or illness reduced their ability to carry out day-to-day activities a lot.**
- **36% (175) said their condition or illness reduced their ability to carry out day-to-day activities a little.**
- **9% (43) said their condition or illness did not reduce their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.**

Repairs & Maintenance Policy

2024 - 2027



Monitoring and review

Document owner	Approved by	Authorised by	Effective date	Review date
Title: Head of Housing Maintenance	Title: Director – Property Services	Title:		
Name: Neil Causer	Name: Ian Gardner	Name:		

Document History

Version	Summary of changes	Document Status	Date
V1.0	Draft for consultation	Archived	April 2024
V2.0	Post Customer Consultation	Archived	August 2024
V3.0	Final	Pending	September 2024

Contents Page

- 1.0** Background
- 2.0** Statement of Intent
- 3.0** Scope
- 4.0** Requesting Repairs
- 5.0** Landlord and Tenant responsibilities
- 6.0** Prioritising Repairs and Inspections
- 7.0** Completion at First Visit and Right First Time commitments
- 8.0** Decorations
- 9.0** Right to Repair
- 10.0** Service Standards
- 11.0** Voids (Empty Homes)
- 12.0** Interdependences and related policies
- 13.0** Monitoring
- 14.0** Equality Analysis
- 15.0** Appendix A – Fencing Protocols
- 16.0** Appendix B - Right to Repair (statutory timescales)
- 17.0** Appendix C - Empty Homes (Void) Standard
- 18.0** Appendix D - Statutory Instruments relating to this policy

1.0 Background

This policy sets out Wolverhampton Homes' approach to Repairs and Maintenance and how the company will fulfil its responsibilities and duties to ensure the homes and assets, under its management control, remain safe and serviceable for its residents, communities and colleagues.

This policy forms part of a suite of documents that underpins the company's Building Safety Strategy, as below;



The scope of this policy includes all areas of repairs and maintenance to existing assets and components, that are the responsibility of Wolverhampton Homes to maintain.

The Strategic Assessment Management Plan and the City of Wolverhampton Council's investment programmes set out investment priorities where key components have reached the end of the expected lifecycle and/or are beyond uneconomical repair. In addition, separate programmes or policies may exist where homes or estates require major improvements, upgrading or demolition.

2.0 Statement of Intent

Wolverhampton Homes considers health and safety as paramount and takes its responsibilities seriously. This policy outlines the company's responsibilities and legal obligations prescribed within the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and associated specific & themed regulations and guidance documents, with the aim of eliminating risks where reasonably practicable and managing any residual risks to all affected persons.

This policy demonstrates the company's commitment to ensure compliance with all legal, regulatory and statutory requirements associated with the repairs and maintenance with all homes, communal areas and assets managed by Wolverhampton Homes.

Wolverhampton Homes will endeavour to carry out effective repairs at the time agreed with the tenant in a safe and effective manner.

All colleagues and contractors working within the field of repairs and maintenance will be competent to effectively manage and deliver each area of activity within the scope of this policy.

3.0 Scope

This policy sets out how property repairs and maintenance related service requests, submitted by tenants or colleagues or partners, will be managed to meet statutory & regulatory standards. The policy balances the efficient delivery and maintains value for money to meet the needs of the tenant(s) and ensure homes are appropriately maintained, remain safe, secure and functional.

The main aims of the policy are to:

- Meet minimum housing standards and regulatory requirements, particularly the Home Standard of the Regulatory Framework
- Ensure compliance with statutory instruments for housing including, Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018, Housing Act 2004, etc.
- Maintain properties to the Decent Homes Standard
- Meet contractual requirements set out in the Tenancy Agreement or Lease
- Deliver a cost effective and customer focused service
- Undertake as many repairs as possible as planned or packaged work to deliver improved value for money
- Allocate requests for repairs to a category based on information provided by the tenant, but at the final discretion of Wolverhampton Homes

The Regulator of Social Housing defines the 'Consumer Standards'. Its role is to intervene where failure to meet the standards has caused, or could have caused, serious harm to tenants. This policy sets out how Wolverhampton Homes will ensure compliance with the Safety and Quality Standard.

Responsive Repairs Definition

Responsive Repairs are defined as service requests made by the tenant to existing elements/components of the property (their dwelling or common areas to the block there are residing within).

Responsive Repairs are not part of:

- Planned cyclic maintenance, e.g. lift maintenance, electrical testing, gas servicing or cyclical painting.
- Planned work, e.g. external painting, guttering or paving repairs
- Planned and programmed work, e.g. plastering, guttering, extensive roof repairs, paving etc.,
- Planned improvements, e.g. new kitchens, bathrooms, rewiring, heating upgrades, or insulation
- Void Refurbishments (work to empty homes).
- New Aids or Adaptation works to support occupants continuing to live in their homes
- Repairs to assets under the control of others, i.e. neighbours, utility providers, statutory authorities
- Surface water drainage

- Garden maintenance, including landscaping, planting and ground water drainage
- Replacement of components for cosmetic purposes only (subject to the component remaining functional for its intended purpose and creates no safety hazard)

4.0 Requesting Repairs

Tenants will be offered a range of ways to make requests for repairs including:

- Via telephone, calls received outside normal office hours will process emergency service requests only.
- Via self-serve on Wolverhampton Homes Website
- Via self-serve mobile applications
- Via webchat via Wolverhampton Homes Website
- Via e-mail
- In writing to Wolverhampton Homes head office

Tenants will be encouraged to use digital channels to make service requests for repairs, however a range of communication methods will be available to meet the needs of our diverse communities.

5.0 Landlord and Tenant Responsibilities

The Landlord and the tenant have different responsibilities in relation to repairs.

The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 Section 11 (1) states that the Landlord (City of Wolverhampton Council) is responsible for keeping the following in repair and proper working order:

- The structure and exterior of the dwelling and the building containing the dwelling (including drains, gutters and external pipes).
- The installations for the supply of water, gas and electricity and sanitary installations (including basins, baths and W.C.s).
- The installations for the supply of space heating (i.e. gas fires / central heating) and water heating.

Section 11 does not require the landlord to:

- Carry out repairs necessary because the tenant failed to use the property in a tenant like manner
- Rebuild or reinstate the property after destruction or damage by fire, flood or storms
- Repair or maintain anything the tenant is entitled to remove from the property

It will be communicated to the tenant at the time they request a repair whose responsibility it is, based on the information provided. This is subject to change if the information provided is inaccurate. Repairing responsibility will be determined in accordance with the Tenancy Agreement.

Where a repair is the tenant(s) or Leaseholder's responsibility, they may be signposted to the City Council's Trading Standards Approved Traders schemes. Any works undertaken would be at the tenant's own expense. Alternatively, Wolverhampton Homes may undertake the work and recharge the resident in accordance with the Chargeable Works Policy.

Landlord responsibilities include the structure and elements of the exterior, and components that have been installed by the Landlord.

The law implies a condition into every Tenancy Agreement that the tenant must use their home in a 'tenant-like manner'.

Using a home in a tenant-like manner generally means:

- doing minor repairs
- keeping their home reasonably clean
- not causing any damage to the property and making sure their visitors do not cause any damage
- using any fixtures and fittings properly, for example, not blocking a toilet by flushing something unsuitable down it.

Under their Tenancy Agreement, tenants are responsible for keeping the interior of their homes in good order and well decorated. Tenant responsibilities include items they have installed themselves and completing minor repairs, for example;

- Reglazing windows and doors where damage has not been caused by a crime
- Lock changes when keys are lost or misplaced;
- Replacing lost keys and fobs and the cost of getting into your home if you are locked out;
- Clearing blockages in the toilet pan or waste traps;
- Replacing electric fire elements, fire effect bulbs and gas fire radiants;
- Cleaning of chimneys;
- Replacing all standard domestic lamps, bulbs and light fitting starters;
- Replacing electrical fuses and the resetting of Master Circuit Boards (fuse boards) and Trip Switches (fuses);
- Replacing plugs and chains to waste pipes in sinks or baths;
- Replacing shower hose and shower head;
- Replacing shower curtain and rail;
- Replacing toilet seats;
- Replacing clothes lines;
- Maintaining the gardens including trees shrubs and clearing rubbish;
- Any repair to installations or improvements you have made. The Council or its agent may repair some gas and electrical appliances for safety reasons but may charge any excess costs over the Landlords normal requirements.
- Maintaining internal decoration, including central heating radiators (Noting that new textured coatings and polystyrene tiles or coving is not permitted);

- Maintaining Electric Vehicle Chargers installed by the tenant or their agent;
- Maintaining appliances provided by the tenant, e.g. washing machines, showers, pumps, etc
- Maintaining outbuildings provided by the tenant, e.g. sheds, greenhouses, car ports, etc

Where Wolverhampton Homes is required to undertake works that are 'tenant's responsibility' these will be subject to a recharge under the Chargeable Works Policy.

The Landlord will maintain paving from the highway to each main access door (front and rear, where applicable) to the property.

The Landlord is not responsible to provide or maintain;

- Assets under the control of others, i.e. neighbours, utility or telecoms providers, statutory authorities
- TV aerials or signal receiving equipment (unless part of an existing communal system)
- Surface water drainage
- Garden maintenance, including landscaping, planting and ground water drainage

Tenants are responsible for maintaining the gardens, including trees, (except in circumstances outlined in the Tenancy Agreement), shrubs, garden paths (not providing access to the home), patios and clearing rubbish.

The Landlord is not responsible to provide or maintain fencing between properties. Tenants are responsible, under their Tenancy Agreement to;

82) You agree not to allow, permit or cause any animal to create a nuisance, annoy or frighten other people. You agree to ensure that any animal is kept under control at all times. You are responsible for providing and maintaining any fencing specifically required for control of the animal at your own expense. Further you agree to pay us or our contractors the cost of any remedial work necessary to fencing as a result of the animal's behaviour.

The Landlord will maintain fencing that;

- backs onto open land
- is next to a main 'A' road
- borders an alleyway, canal or railway embankment
- backs onto a garage site or car park
- surrounds communal areas to all flats in a building
- subject to an existing and up to date fencing service charge

Arrangements where the Landlord may provide discretionary fencing between properties can be found in Appendix A.

Requests for general property improvements, e.g. installing additional electric sockets and repairing damage to a property caused by the occupants will normally be considered as tenant responsibility.

Tenants who wish to make alterations or improvements to their home will normally be required to seek permission from Wolverhampton Homes in advance. Any specialist surveys or inspections that may be required to facilitate a tenant own improvement, may be chargeable. The Landlord is not responsible for maintaining or replacing current for former tenants own improvements or alterations, examples include kitchens, bathrooms, outbuildings, porches, canopies, lead to glazing, fireplaces, built in wardrobes, cupboards and loft spaces.

Permissions may be granted subject to conditions or declined. Unauthorised alterations or improvements may be removed or rectified by Wolverhampton Homes and any costs incurred will be recoverable from the tenant(s).

Where the fault is not an emergency and has occurred as a result of tenant damage, neglect or abuse the tenant(s) will be required to pay the cost of repair before any work is undertaken.

Tenants are responsible for reporting any repairs, defects, damp, excessive mould or damage to Wolverhampton Homes as soon as reasonably practicable.

Tenants are responsible for undertaking regular testing of smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors within their home and report any faults to Wolverhampton Homes. The Landlord will provide guidance and instruction how to test alarms within their home.

The Landlord is responsible to undertake maintenance, servicing and inspection of equipment it has installed in its homes and common areas, these include, but are not limited to gas appliances, smoke or fire detection, fire sprinklers, lifts and hoists, electrical installations and appliances, emergency lighting, water temperature control, etc. Tenants are responsible to cooperate with the Landlord, or its agents, and provide access, with reasonable notice, to facilitate any inspection and testing required.

Leaseholders have a range of duties and responsibilities under their Lease, including maintaining and servicing appliances at their own cost. They also have a duty to cooperate and provide access to undertake fire safety inspections.

Wolverhampton Homes will respect the tenant's Right to Quiet Enjoyment. Section 9A (8) of the Landlord & Tenant Act 1985 addresses when a landlord or contractor can enter a tenant's home. Unless in the case of an emergency, such as a flood or fire, entry is only permitted at a reasonable time and with at least 24 hours' written notice provided to the tenant. Tenants can request a more convenient appointment but must allow the landlord or contractor access once the appointment is agreed upon. The Right to Quiet Enjoyment is not a right to complete silence or living in a perfectly peaceful neighbourhood.

6.0 Prioritising Repairs and Inspections

Timescales and service standards only apply to repairs under the Landlord's control, i.e. excluding issues relating to private properties that may affect tenant's homes, neighbours, utility or telecoms providers, statutory authorities, etc.

Requests for repairs that are the Landlord's responsibility will be prioritised as follows:

6.1 Emergency Repairs

Emergency Repairs are a repair that creates an immediate health and safety risk and/or creates a serious inconvenience to the occupants, neighbours or the public or if serious damage occurring to the property is likely.

Emergency repairs are attended to within 24 hours, but most service requests will receive a same day response and will be prioritised based on risk, i.e. the impact of the repair on the occupant's vulnerability.

Emergency repairs include, but are not limited to;

- Blocked flues to an open fire or boiler
- Blocked or leaking foul drains or soil pipes
- Broken glass (excluding cracked where secure)
- Burst pipes or water/roof leaks that cannot be reasonably contained or controlled
- Carbon Monoxide alarm activations
- Exposed live mains (230V>) electrical wires, connections, fixtures or fittings
- Faulty smoke alarms, detectors, or safety devices
- Gas leaks
- Insecure (non-latchable) windows, doors or locks
- Toilets not flushing, where no other working toilet is available
- Total loss of electricity – excluding network or metering issues not in under Wolverhampton Homes control
- Total loss of heating or hot water (31st October and 1st May, as defined under Right to Repair Regulations)

Wolverhampton Homes will normally be unable to fully complete an Emergency Repair at the first visit. The property will be made safe and additional visits may be required. Wolverhampton Homes will advise the tenant of the relevant timescales for any additional visits that may be required, based on the scope of work or materials required.

6.2 Routine Repairs

Routine Repairs are day to day repairs that do not present an immediate health & safety issue for the occupants.

Routine repairs include, but are not limited to;

- Cracked glass or misted/condensed double glazed units (where secure)
- Door entry systems
- Faulty doors and windows (that are secure)
- Faulty electrical fittings and appliances, that do not pose a shock hazard
- Faulty internal joinery and stairs
- Faulty kitchen unit doors or drawers
- Garage doors
- Infestation (where landlord's responsibility)
- Minor leaks to sanitary ware, water or waste systems
- Minor repairs to paving/slabs
- Plaster patches (typically less than 1 square metre)
- Repairs to outbuildings/stores
- Repairs to fencing and gates, to open land or subject to an existing and up to date service charge
- Replacing parts after gas appliance servicing, where not the primary heat source

Wolverhampton Homes aim to complete all routine repairs within 20 working days with a pre-agreed appointment. These will normally be started and completed the same working day. However, on occasions additional visits may be required. Wolverhampton Homes will advise the tenant of the relevant timescales for any additional visits that may be required, based on the scope of work or materials required.

6.3 Programmed Repairs

These are larger repairs that normally require renewal of existing major components, but they are delivered on a batched and programmed manner to improve efficiency and workforce planning.

Programmed repairs include, but are not limited to;

- Any works that that require asbestos removal
- Plastering walls and/or ceilings, causing significant inconvenience
- Renewing electrical appliances
- Renewing floors or tiles
- Renewing stair treads and/or balustrades
- Repairs to rainwater goods (guttering/downpipes etc)
- Replacing baths or sinks
- Replacing isolated kitchen units or worktops
- Reviewing internal joinery
- Roofing, including chimneys

Wolverhampton Homes aim to complete programmed repairs within 90 calendar days from the property inspection.

Components will not be replaced for cosmetic purposes only, subject to the component remaining functional for its intended purpose and creates no safety hazard, they will remain. Individual replacement kitchen doors/drawer fronts or tiling may differ in colour from the remaining due to obsolescence, pending future renewal under planned investment works.

6.5 Demand Lead Replacement Programmes

Some repair requests may identify components that have reached the end of their economic life and require complete renewal. Examples include, kitchens, bathrooms, plastering to complete rooms, joinery, heating systems, paving or hard standings etc. In these circumstances, the tenant will be advised of estimated timescales (where known) for the Landlord's Demand Lead Replacement (DLR) Programme to complete the required works. Timescales will vary depending on approved budgets. The property, however, will be maintained in accordance with minimum habitation standards and any Category 1 hazards will be remedied until the DLR programme(s) is completed.

Works will normally be deferred to the Landlord's DLR Programmes, where;

- Asbestos removal is required
- Building Control, Building Safety Regulator or Planning consent is required
- Specialist access equipment or work at height planning is required
- Specialist or structural works are required
- The project's value exceeds £1,500
- To communal areas or common parts

Wolverhampton Homes will keep residents informed of future planned investment programme(s) and timescales (where known) determined by the City of Wolverhampton Council's Planned Investment Programmes.

Where tenants have submitted a Right to Buy Application, Programmed Repairs and any planned investment programme(s) may be postponed, where the works will impact on the property's valuation. Repairs subject to The Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994 will continue to be undertaken.

6.6 Property Inspections

Wolverhampton Homes aim is to allocate all service requests for repairs based on the information provided by the tenant at the first point of contact. Most repairs will receive an initial visit from a trades person or contractor.

Due to the nature of the service request, an inspection by a competent surveyor may be necessary to obtain more information or to undertake a more detailed investigation, determine the scope of the work and safely plan delivery of the works.

When an inspection is required, an appointment will normally be offered within 20 working days. Where a specialist or external/independent surveyor is required, additional timescales may apply.

Non-emergency repair works orders or instructions for work will not be raised until the inspection has taken place. Any resulting repairs will be raised for the appropriate timescales or programmed into future Planned Investment Programme(s).

6.7 Reports of Damp, condensation and/or Mould (DMC)

Homes can experience dampness and/or condensation for a range of reasons, including building defects (e.g. leaking pipes or roofs), poor construction design, (e.g. concrete construction or low levels of insulation), inadequate heating and/or ventilation or high internal humidity levels. These scenarios can create environments that exacerbate condensation forming and mould spores to grow.

Wolverhampton Homes adopts a '*fabric first approach*' and initially assumes reports of dampness, water penetration and/or mould growth relate to a property related defect.

Where tenants report dampness, water penetration and/or mould growth, where this is not considered requiring an emergency response, i.e. burst pipes, an inspection by a competent person will be undertaken within 10 working days.

A DMC risk assessment will be undertaken by a competent person. Timescales for rectifying traumatic damp and mould will be evaluated & prioritised according to the results based on the extent of the DMC and careful consideration of customer vulnerabilities. Wolverhampton Homes will make all reasonable endeavours to abate the hazard and undertake any remedial works as quickly as possible.

The competent person may also provide the tenant with advice to minimise the effects of condensation, where appropriate.

Works identified as DMC 'root-cause' related, will be raised against the appropriate Routine or Programme repair timescales. These estimated timescales and a summary of the works to be undertaken will be conveyed to the customer within 48 hours of the completion of the DMC inspection.

The customer will receive a follow-up contact within six weeks of the remedial works being undertaken. This is to ensure no recurrence of DMC and any employed measures are effective. A physical follow-up visit will be requested by Wolverhampton Homes, where the risk assessment scored high for any potential reoccurrence or specific risk due to the vulnerability of the customer.

Condensation within double glazing units will be processed as a Routine Repair as this does not constitute a hazard to health.

Wolverhampton Homes will be proactive and take reasonable steps to prevent atmospheres occurring that propagate mould growth through its use of materials & specifications and by analysing property data and patterns of service requests. Colleagues and contractors will also be encouraged to look for signs of dampness, water penetration and/or mould growth when undertaking home visits, for any reason, and report these to Wolverhampton Homes for action.

Wolverhampton Homes will use data from contacts, in-home monitoring sensors, service requests, repairs activity, complaints and stock condition information to inform future planned investment programmes.

Where homes are identified for planned investment programme(s) or disposal, Wolverhampton Homes will closely liaise with the tenant(s) to ensure their home remains safe and habitable. Wolverhampton Homes will continue to undertake essential repairs and maintenance, based on the individual needs of the occupants. Temporary repairs may be undertaken prior to the major improvements or rehousing of the tenant(s) occurring, where appropriate.

Wolverhampton Homes will use appropriately trained colleagues to record and investigate reports of dampness, water penetration and/or mould growth, schedule remedial works or provide appropriate advice to tenant(s). Wolverhampton Homes will utilise external independent specialists to investigate or arbitrate, where appropriate.

Wolverhampton Homes will regularly communicate with tenants to raise awareness of the effects and causes of dampness, water penetration and/or mould growth and provide advice & guidance reduce occurrences. Wolverhampton Homes will support tenant(s) by providing specialist advice or connecting them to appropriate support networks.

6.8 Appointments

Individually agreed appointment timeslots will be offered to tenants for all routine and programmed repairs and inspections, where access inside or to the rear of the home is required. For communal area responsive repairs and external works, where no tenant-controlled access is required, appointments will not normally be made.

Wolverhampton Homes will endeavour to keep all appointments made or give the tenant prior notice if this is not possible and a new appointment will be agreed. Appointments will normally be offered for Monday to Friday (excluding Bank Holidays) for AM, PM, all day or all-day avoiding 'school run' slots.

Where appointments need to change due to unforeseen circumstances, Wolverhampton Homes will provide as much notice as reasonably practicable to the tenant. Similarly, if tenants need to change an appointment Wolverhampton Homes request as much notice as possible to enable us to make new appointments for other customers. If a pre-arranged appointment is missed due to tenant unavailability or refusal to allow us access, the repair call order will be closed and the tenant will need to contact Wolverhampton Homes for the repair to be rebooked. Rebooked repairs will be treated as a new repair for calculating repairs timescales.

Where the service request may relate to a Category 1 hazard (as defined under the Housing Health & Safety Rating System) Wolverhampton Homes will make further access attempts and consider Legal action under its Access to Homes Policy.

7.0 Completion at First Visit and Right First Time Commitments

Wolverhampton Homes is committed to providing value for money services and maximising tenant satisfaction. Wolverhampton Homes are committed to providing a repairs service that completes as many repairs during the first visit to the tenants home, wherever possible, and completed works are 'right first time' i.e. the repair undertaken is of satisfactory quality and free from defects.

Some repairs cannot be completed in one visit for technical reasons, where repairs are adjacent to private properties, requiring scaffold or where specialist equipment or materials may be required, or may be subject to additional timescales or included in future Planned Investment Programmes.

Wolverhampton Homes will advise the tenant of the relevant or estimated timescales for any additional visits that may be required, based on the scope of work required.

To manage the quality of repairs, quality inspections, audits or surveys may be undertaken. Tenants can also report concerns or defects to Wolverhampton Homes for further investigation.

The Repairs and Maintenance Policy sets out target timescales for most day-to-day repairs to tenants' homes. Faults with neighbouring homes, that are not under the management of Wolverhampton Homes, can affect our properties and tenants. In these circumstances the Landlord's service standards do not apply, as it is normally the responsibility of the neighbour or their Landlord to resolve any defects. These are commonly leaks affecting the home or garden, but other faults can impact on Wolverhampton Homes' tenants. Wolverhampton Homes' will inform the neighbouring household of the fault and request they complete the repair in a reasonable timeframe, considering the severity and inconvenience the defect may be causing. Wolverhampton Homes' will monitor the rectification of the defect and keep any Wolverhampton Homes' affected tenants informed of progress and when the repair is likely to be completed by others.

In circumstances where neighbouring households do not respond satisfactorily to Wolverhampton Homes' requests for action, Wolverhampton Homes will make all reasonable attempts to resolve the issue affecting the tenants, which may include Legal action being taken against the neighbouring owner occupier or Landlord.

Wolverhampton Homes has no right of access to homes not under its management control. If the fault is very serious and makes the home uninhabitable (typically affecting two or more habitable rooms) or it creates a serious safety hazard, the tenant may be offered temporary accommodation until the property can be made safe.

8.0 Decoration

Internal decoration is normally the tenant's responsibility. Care will be taken to minimise damage to any decoration resulting from repair work undertaken by Wolverhampton Homes or its contractors. Where decorations have been substantially affected, Wolverhampton Homes will offer;

1. Decoration vouchers for the tenant to purchase materials for their application, or
2. Decoration works to be undertaken by Wolverhampton Homes or their appointed contactor.

9.0 Right to Repair

Wolverhampton Homes will meet its legal requirements under the Right to Repair.

The Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994 gives the right to tenants to have small emergency or urgent repairs carried out with prescribed timescales. The relevant statutory timescales are set out in Appendix B.

10.0 Service Standards

Wolverhampton Homes aims to;

- Attend Emergency repairs within 24 Hours
- Complete Routine/non-urgent day-to-day minor repairs or inspect (where applicable) and schedule works within 20 working days of report
- Complete Programmed Repairs within 90 calendar days after inspection
- Where these timescales cannot be met, the customer will be informed with reasons for the delay and any revised estimated timescales
- Provide estimated timescales (where known) for any future Planned Investment Programme(s) determined by the City of Wolverhampton Council's investment programmes.

11.0 Voids (Empty Homes)

All new homes (excluding Mutual Exchanges) will; be;

- Be free from mould
- Meet minimum statutory repair standards
- Be Swept Clean
- Be Safe (no Category 1 hazards present)
- Be Secure (lockable external doors and latchable windows)
- Have rubbish cleared away, including that in gardens, outbuildings and communal areas
- Have any sheds or outbuildings that are unsafe or in very poor condition removed

12.0 Interdependences and related policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following company documents and statutory instruments (see Appendix D).

- Access to Homes Policy
- Asbestos Management Plan
- Asbestos Policy
- Asset Compliance Policy
- Chargeable Works Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Control of Contractors Policy
- Damp, Mould and Condensation (DMC) Management Plan
- Fire Safety Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Strategic Asset Management Plan

13.0 Monitoring

Exception reporting will be presented to the senior management team, Audit and Business Assurance Committee and/or Board as required.

Performance against the service standards defined within this policy will be reported to tenants via Wolverhampton Homes Annual Report and within the relevant Tenant Satisfaction Measures.

This policy will be regularly reviewed, at intervals no greater than 3 years and adapted accordingly to respond to future legislative or regulatory changes.

14.0 Equality Analysis

This policy sets out how the company will comply with existing housing repairs related legislation, regulatory standards and best practice.

The policy applies equally to all tenants' homes and communal areas, regardless of the resident's age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Property related risks will consider the vulnerability of the occupants in accordance Housing Health & Safety Rating System.

Due consideration will be given to tenants who require different forms of communication and we will take account of individual needs and preferences to ensure all tenants have access to our services.

An Equality Analysis was reviewed by the Equalities Forum on 28 August 2024 and the policy was endorsed.

Appendix A

Fencing Protocols

1. The Landlord is not responsible to provide or maintain fencing between properties. Tenants are responsible, under their Tenancy Agreement to;

Clause 82) You agree not to allow, permit or cause any animal to create a nuisance, annoy or frighten other people. You agree to ensure that any animal is kept under control at all times. You are responsible for providing and maintaining any fencing specifically required for control of the animal at your own expense. Further you agree to pay us or our contractors the cost of any remedial work necessary to fencing as a result of the animal's behaviour.

2. The Landlord will maintain fencing that;
 - a. backs onto open land
 - b. is next to a main 'A' road
 - c. borders an alleyway, canal or railway embankment
 - d. backs onto a garage site or car park
 - e. surrounds communal areas to all flats in a building
 - f. subject to an existing and up to date service charge
3. Arrangements where the Landlord or Wolverhampton Homes may provide discretionary fencing between properties are subject to these protocols.
4. For new fencing installations or replacement between properties (regardless of ownership) Wolverhampton Homes operates a discretionary budget to undertake a limited number of fencing installations, subject to any benefitting tenants contributing via a weekly 'fencing service charge (FSC)' and any owner occupiers or third-party Landlords providing a lump sum contribution. The discretionary budget is reviewed annually and will determine the number of new fencing installations or replacements to be available.
5. The FSC is a set charge and is reviewed annually for inflation. The FSC is a fixed amount and does not vary based on the length or height of fence or scope of works undertaken. The FSC continues indefinitely. Wolverhampton Homes will maintain or renew the fence, as required, where the FSC continues to be paid and is not subject to arrears.
6. The FSC applies to all new fencing installations or replacements, excluding fencing that;
 - a. backs onto open land
 - b. is next to a main 'A' road
 - c. borders an alleyway, canal or railway embankment
 - d. backs onto a garage site or car park
 - e. surrounds communal areas to all flats in a building
 - f. subject to an existing and up to date fencing service charge

7. The FSC is applied to all properties that benefit from the erected fence.
8. Exceptional circumstances may apply where Wolverhampton Homes are liable to provide a fence or barrier due to specific health & safety issues, e.g. falls from height. These cases will be assessed on a case by case basis and the implementation of the FSC charge will be at the Director of Property Services discretion.
9. The implementation of the charge is activated if the total fencing/boundary works sum is £500 or more.

Repairs to Existing Fencing subject to the FSC

10. Wolverhampton Homes will undertake Repairs to/or replacement of existing fencing, where the FSC continues to be paid and is not subject to arrears.
11. Fencing will be repaired, where possible, and only replaced if substantially defective. Individual panels may be replaced, where required, therefore resulting in different style or aged panels/boards in the same fencing line being present.
12. Where fencing has been damaged due to deliberate or negligent acts, repairs may be subject to an additional recharge to the tenant(s) or owner occupiers, subject to the Chargeable Works Policy.

Requests for new Fencing under the FSC

13. Fencing requests, where a Wolverhampton Homes property adjoins an owner occupier property and a Wolverhampton Homes that is not subject to an existing FSC, will be processed as the Sale/Property Deeds specify and any defined responsibility split contribution from the owner occupier will be collected before the works commence.
14. These protocols provide fencing to owner occupier boundaries also apply to leaseholder - tenant boundaries. Where the boundary adjoins two leaseholder properties and Wolverhampton Homes has no obligation to provide a fence, then the required work should be sourced by the respective leaseholders, with no interest from Wolverhampton Homes.
15. Where there is an obligation for Wolverhampton Homes to provide a fence to a Leaseholder boundary that does not adjoin a Council property, then the cost of the fence shall be recovered from the Leaseholder as per outlined in the Sale Deeds, subject to Section 20 Consultation.
16. Where tenants who have erected their own fence, such fencing should be left in-situ where it is safe and of a satisfactory standard and where it reflects the boundary line.
17. Where tenants request to have their own fencing replaced by Wolverhampton Homes they will become subject to the FSC (subject to budget availability).

18. No compensation for any remaining life of the previous tenant's fence will be paid by Wolverhampton Homes.
19. All tenants who have new fencing or repairs to existing fencing costing £500 or more, will be subject to the FSC.
20. The FSC will not apply to medium or high-rise flats where the fencing forms the perimeter of the block, or low-rise blocks with no designated gardens and these properties.
21. The removal of obstacles, rubbish or shrubbery from the existing garden and any 'no man's land' to facilitate the installation or repair of a fence under the FSC is the responsibility of the tenant and/or owner occupier.
22. Should the tenant and/or owner occupier or third parties not undertake the required preparation/clearance works, Wolverhampton Homes may undertake the ground preparation works under exceptional circumstances, that may be subject to an additional recharge to the tenant(s) or owner occupiers, subject to the Chargeable Works Policy.
23. If it is deemed that a fence requires replacing, but both tenants do not wish to participate in the FSC or wait for any future budget availability and agree to carry out/arrange themselves, then they have the option to do so.
24. Both tenants are required to agree to the FSC, for fencing works to be undertaken. Should one or more tenant not agree to the FSC, then no works will be undertaken and the boundary should be maintained by the tenants in accordance with their Tenancy Agreement.
25. Any works to boundary fencing should seek to reinstate the fence on the original line as defined on the GIS, where financially viable. If the original boundary line cannot be attained, then consultation with House Sales should be sought on where the new boundary can be located. Following the installation, Wolverhampton Homes will not carry out any alterations works should there be any dispute on the attained boundary line.
26. Wolverhampton Homes will not recommend the replacement of fencing or removal of existing boundaries if they are:
 - a. Safe
 - b. Secure
 - c. Have at least an estimated 18 months' life remaining

Owner Occupiers

27. In order to facilitate works to fences that adjoin owner occupiers, Wolverhampton Homes will seek to recover 50% of the costs from the owner occupier by issuing a '*Precedent Letter – Party Walls Fences and Hedges*'.

28. Wolverhampton Homes assume all boundaries to be party. It is for the owner occupier to provide evidence of the covenant to prove the contrary. NB - Even if recommended by Wolverhampton Homes, there is no right to remove a fence or hedge if it belongs to the owner occupier and is not presenting a health and safety risk to the tenant.
29. Where remaining life is estimated to be more than 18 months, the boundary should remain for owner occupier and tenant to maintain.
30. The responsibility for removing foliage, rubbish from their existing garden and any 'no man's land' territory is the responsibility of the owner occupier. Should the owner occupier or third parties not undertake the required preparation/clearance works, Wolverhampton Homes may undertake the ground preparation works under exceptional circumstances, that will be subject to an additional recharge to the owner occupier, subject to the Chargeable Works Policy, being paid in advance.
31. Consultation with owner occupiers should take place prior to works starting to inform them of proposed works and ensure the new fence is erected on the correct boundary line. The Fencing Approval Form must be signed by the owner occupier prior to works commencing. Small scale works of less than £500 will not require the completion of the form.
32. This Protocol only applies to the installation of Wolverhampton Homes standard specification fencing, any deviation at the owner occupiers request must have consent from the Repairs Manager and will be solely funded by the owner occupier.
33. Owner occupiers have the right to opt out of the scheme and install their own fences. Wolverhampton Homes cannot enforce a specification of fencing for joint boundaries, e.g. in terms of height and fencing material / specification. However, what is being proposed must constitute a reasonable boundary in legal terms, be installed to a reasonable standard and be safe.
34. Where acceptance has not been made and/or the standard of fencing is deemed inadequate or of poor quality/workmanship, legal advice shall be sought regarding a remedy.
35. Any new fence shall be deemed a gift to the owner occupier and Wolverhampton Homes accept no future responsibility for repairs, maintenance or replacement of the fence.
36. Wolverhampton Homes deems that the Party Wall Act 1996 does not apply to fencing works as stated in the Party Wall Act Guidance Notes on wooden fences. Consent to the works will be attained from the owner occupier via the Fencing Approval Form.

Financial Contributions from Wolverhampton Homes to Owner Occupiers

37. Owner occupiers may decide to accept the standard of any fencing offered as specified by Wolverhampton Homes, but they may wish to either install fencing themselves or use their own contractor to do so. For Wolverhampton Homes to agree to contribute (up to 50% of the replacement fencing cost) the owner occupier must obtain and provide three independent contractor quotations.
38. Wolverhampton Homes may contribute up to 50% of the replacement fencing cost based on the lowest priced quote, subject to the specification not exceeding Wolverhampton Homes standard fencing specification.

Part Fencing

39. These protocols apply part fencing, i.e. where it is only essential that only part of a fencing run to be replaced.

Recovery of cost from Third Parties

40. These protocols apply to cost recovery from third parties, including utility companies, highways agencies etc.

Fencing Approval Form

I, the owner (name).....of (address).....consent to the fencing works outlined in this letter and agree to the attached stated conditions, including boundaries and costs.

Signed

Print name

Date

The completed form will be collected in person by the Wolverhampton Homes designated officer.

Wolverhampton Homes contact officer details;

Name.....

Telephone.....

Email.....

Appendix B

Right to Repair (statutory timescales)

Qualifying repairs and timescales are set out in the table below.

Repairs type	Prescribed period (in working days)
Total loss of electric power	1
Partial loss of electric power	3
Unsafe power or lighting socket, or electrical fitting	1
Total loss of water supply	1
Partial loss of water supply	3
Total or partial loss of gas supply	1
Blocked flue to open fire or boiler	1
Total or partial loss of space or water heating between 31 st October and 1 st May	1
Total or partial loss of space or water heating between 30 th April and 1 st November	3
Blocked or leaking foul drain, soil stack, or (where there is no other working toilet in the dwelling-house) toilet pan	1
Toilet not flushing (where there is no other working toilet in the dwelling-house)	1
Blocked sink, bath or basin	3
Tap which cannot be turned	3
Leaking from water or heating pipe, tank or cistern	1
Leaking roof	7
Insecure external window, door or lock	1
Loose or detached banister or handrail	3
Rotten timber flooring or stair tread	3
Door Entryphone not working	7
Mechanical extractor fan in internal kitchen or bathroom not working	7

Extract from; <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1994/133/made>

Appendix C

Empty Homes (Void) Standard

All new homes (excluding Mutual Exchanges) will meet the following minimum standards upon possession or within agreed timescales with the incoming tenant(s).

The property will be clean.

Wolverhampton Homes will:

- wipe sinks, toilets, baths and wash basins
- clear away any rubbish, including that in gardens, outbuildings and communal areas (during periods of inclement weather this may be undertaken after the tenant has taken moved in)
- remove any sheds or outbuildings that are unsafe or in very poor condition
- sweep all floors
- treat any areas of mould growth

The property will be safe.

Wolverhampton Homes will:

- check for asbestos and take action to remove it or manage its presence in accordance with current regulations
- complete gas (where applicable) and electrical safety checks and provide a copy of the safety certificates
- ensure existing patios, driveways or paths to gardens are free from trip hazards or are removed (NB paved areas not within the Landlord's repair responsibilities, may be gifted to the tenant or removed)
- ensure internal doors latch shut
- ensure there are no visible signs of infestation and undertake treatment where appropriate
- ensure there is satisfactory paving from the public highway to external doors
- offer options of keeping any alterations if they can be made safe, provided the tenants assumes any ongoing maintenance liability
- remedy any identified leaks
- remove alterations or fixtures and fittings that we think pose a health and safety risk
- remove garden ponds, unless there is an environmental need to keep them or the incoming tenant specifically requests they remain
- remove polystyrene ceiling tiles
- repair or replace missing or damaged handrails
- repair or replace missing or unsafe flooring and floor treads on stairs
- replace missing or damaged glazing (some cracked glass or misted double glazed units may be undertaken after the tenant has taken moved in)
- undertake plaster patching where necessary

The property will be secure.

Wolverhampton Homes will:

- change main entrance door locks (wherever possible) and provide at least two keys for all locks, including any lockable windows
- ensure at least one smoke alarm is located on each storey of the home, where there is a room used as living accommodation
- ensure a carbon monoxide alarm is located in any room, used as living accommodation that contains a fixed combustion appliance (excluding gas cookers).
- any existing rear/side gates are safe and securable with a bolt
- repairs to fencing that forms a boundary between the property and open land, such as railway lines or canals. Unsafe boundary fencing or gates between homes may be removed and not replaced (please refer to Wolverhampton Homes Fencing Protocols)

The property will be in a reasonable state of repair.

Wolverhampton Homes will:

- ensure doors and windows open and close correctly
- ensure kitchen and bathroom fittings are serviceable and fit for purpose
- maintain washable floor coverings in kitchens and bathrooms, if already provided
- ensure that there is a gas and/or electrical cooker supply
- supply washer connections and locations for washing machines, where reasonably practicable
- ensure all plumbing is working correctly
- ensure gullies and drain grids are clean and free from obstruction
- explain how to operate the heating system (upon occupation)
- ensure visible plaster work is in a serviceable condition and can accept decoration, (i.e. wallpaper)
- ensure that the property is wind and weather tight
- ensure any gardens are provided in a reasonably tidy condition, i.e. overgrown gardens are cut back to within 100mm and cleared to enable maintenance with common domestic garden tools/equipment (during periods of inclement weather this may be undertaken after the tenant has taken occupation)

NB components will not be replaced for cosmetic purposes only, subject to the component remaining functional for its intended purpose and creates no safety hazard, they will remain. Individual replacement kitchen doors/drawer fronts or tiling may differ in colour from the remaining due to obsolescence, pending future renewal under planned investment works.

Appendix D

Statutory Instruments relating to this policy include, but are not limited to;

- Building Act 1984
- Building Regulations 2010
- Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015
- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Electricity at Work Act 1989
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Fire Safety Act 2021
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 201
- Housing Act 2004 – Housing Health & Safety Rating System
- Landlord & Tenant Act 1985
- Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment regulations 1998
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Occupiers Liability Act 1984
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Safety and Quality Standard
- Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994
- Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023

This page is intentionally left blank

Equality Analysis

Repairs and Maintenance Policy

August 2024

Equality Analysis Template

The Equality Analysis (EA) may relate to a service, function, policy, procedure.

1. Officer completing the Equality Analysis (EA) Ian Gardner	Directorate: Property Services
Title: Repairs & Maintenance Policy	
Is the EA being completed for: The assessment of an existing updated Policy	dd/mm/yyyy completed: 19 August 2024

Page 72

2. What are the aims of the service, function or policy you are analysing?

The Policy is a governance document that sets out Wolverhampton Homes' approach to repair and maintaining homes and domestic assets under its management control, to ensure they remain safe and serviceable for its tenants and communities.

This Policy demonstrates the company's commitment to ensure compliance with all legal, regulatory and statutory requirements associated with the repairs and maintenance with all homes, communal areas and assets managed by Wolverhampton Homes (WH).

3. What Impact will or does the service, function or policy have on different equality groups at the moment on: - Race, Disability, Sex, Gender Re-assignment, Age, Religion or Belief, Sexual Orientation, Maternity/Pregnancy, Marriage/Civil Partnership and other Socially Excluded Communities or Groups)?

The application of this Policy will not have any direct impact on WH colleagues, its tenants or communities

The Policy forms part of a suite of standards that ensure compliance with regulatory & statutory requirements and published guidance associated with the repairs and maintenance, including the management of health & safety. Landlord and tenant responsibilities remain unamended as set out in their respective Tenancy Agreements with the City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC),

WH colleagues and contractors are engaged by the company to undertake a range of repairs and maintenance services and works. These activities are determined by WH and CWC to undertake legal, regulatory & statutory requirements, the landlord's management & maintenance services and capital improvements.

This EA reviews the revised overarching Repairs & Maintenance Policy only.

WH will regularly communicate with residents and advise them of the resources employed on behalf of the company and, or the City of Wolverhampton Council, to undertake Repairs & Maintenance activities.

WH will provide a range of effective communication channels for residents to raise any concerns or comments about the safety of their building or any works being undertaken by the company or its contractors.

Effective resident engagement is at the core of WH's Building Safety Strategy. Communication methods employed by WH and its contractors will consider the diversity of our residents, communities and colleagues and will be available in a range of formats to improve dissemination and understanding and will be contract specific

4. What does the equalities data or evidence you hold tell us about the people or groups who will be affected by the service, function or policy? (positive or negative impact)

What evidence/data already exists about the service and its users? (in terms of its impact on the 'equality groups', i.e. race, disability, sex, gender re-assignment, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, maternity/pregnancy, marriage/civil partnership and other socially excluded communities or groups) and **what does the data tell you?** For example, are any groups not using or under-using the service?

The WH company's customer profile, as at August 2024, is summarised below;

- 65% declare their Ethnicity as white British, with over 30% declaring a wide range of other minority ethnic backgrounds
- 61.6% describe themselves as female, and 38.3% as male
- Of the 65% of tenants who have disclosed their sexuality, 60% describe themselves as being heterosexual
- Customers aged 35 to 64 years are the most common age ranges
- Of the 63% of tenants who have disclosed their religion, Christianity (35.8%) is the largest representative group
- Of the 56% of tenants who have disclosed their first language, English (41%) was the most common, followed by Kurdish and Lithuanian. A further 41 languages are spoken by our customers across 108 nationalities.

Customer consultation commenced on 26 July 2024 for two weeks. We received 1,062 responses. Of those, 62% completed the entire survey and it took customers an average of just under seven minutes to complete.

Customers received information via email and the consultation was promoted on social media channels and on the Wolverhampton Homes website.

Respondents EDI data is included within the report (Appendix 1), this is summarised below;

- 72% declare their Ethnicity as white British, with over 22% declaring a wide range of other minority ethnic backgrounds
- 67% describe themselves as female, and 31% as male
- 76% describe themselves as being heterosexual, circa 4% described themselves as being LGBTQ+
- Respondents were typically (53%) aged between 35 to 64 years
- More than 72% of our customers have at least one condition that affects their day-to-day life, and 41% of customers have three or more conditions. It is noteworthy, the 2021 Census data states that 27.3% of Wolverhampton households include someone living with a disability as set out in the Equality Act.

5. Engagement and consultation - If we do not hold equality data relevant to this proposal, consultation will help to inform the impact of the proposed service, function and policy? If consultation has taken place, who have we consulted?

Extensive customer consultation has been undertaken with customers and colleagues, please see findings within attached Appendix 1.

As a direct result of the consultation, a number of changes were made to the draft Policy (Appendix 2), including;

- Including training and triaging with the Homes Direct Team to identify vulnerable customers to provide a same day response for emergency repairs
- Prioritising repair based on customer vulnerabilities and advised household risks
- Standardise our response to reports of total loss of heating or hot water all year round
- Prioritising repairs to heating appliances, where they are the primary heat source
- Commitment to reducing repair timescales and seek to continually improve service standards
- Introducing a messaging service from appointment bookings and reminders
- A range of communication methods will be employed to ensure inclusivity

Page 75

6 Identifying the impact - from the data you have gathered, and the consultation undertaken to date to inform your decisions, can you please set out below details has to whether the impact or the potential impact is positive and or negative. Where a negative impact is identified, please outline solution to mitigate.

Equality Themes Protected Characteristics	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts identified	Solutions (ways in which you could mitigate the negative impact)
Age (including children, young people and older people)	Repair prioritisation will consider a customer’s vulnerability based on risk	Some customers, without a vulnerability, may wait longer for a repair	Service requests are prioritised based on the advised or identified health & safety risk. Risks will be assessed using the principles set out in the Housing Health & Safety Rating System and Awaab’s Law.

Disability (including carers)	Repair prioritisation will consider a customer's vulnerability based on risk	Some customers, without a vulnerability, may wait longer for a repair	Service requests are prioritised based on the advised or identified health & safety risk. Risks will be assessed using the principles set out in the Housing Health & Safety Rating System and Awaab's Law.
Sex (male, female, trans, non-binary)	None	None	
Race (including Gypsies & Travellers and Asylum Seekers)	None	None	
Religion or Belief (including people of no religion or belief)	None	None	
Gender Re-assignment (those that are going or have gone through a transition: male to female or female to male)	None	None	
Pregnancy and Maternity	Repair prioritisation will consider a customer's vulnerability based on risk	Some customers, without a vulnerability, may wait longer for a repair	Service requests are prioritised based on the advised or identified health & safety risk. Risks will be assessed using the principles set out in the Housing Health & Safety Rating System and Awaab's Law.
Sexual orientation (including gay, lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual)	None	None	
Marriage and Civil Partnership	None	None	

Human Rights	To feel safe in one's home is an inherent human right, and there may be concerns over building safety (whether real or perceived)	None	The application of this policy and the planned wider Resident Engagement Strategy will ensure we will be transparent about those issues that could potentially affect building safety, and honest with regards to the timeframe and proposals for remediation.
---------------------	---	------	--

7. What changes have been made, or are proposed to the service, function or policy after implementing the mitigating solutions above, is the service, function or policy more accessible and inclusive?

As set out in section 5, a number of changes were incorporated into the latest draft following customer and colleague consultation.

8. Monitoring - How are you going to monitor the resulting service, function, policy or procedure?

The policy will be regularly reviewed, at intervals no greater than 3 years and adapted accordingly to respond to future legislative or regulatory changes.

9. Action Plan

Barrier	Improvement Action Required	Responsible Officer	Date for completion
N/A			

Page 78

10. Equality Analysis approved by:


Director – Property Services; Ian Gardner	Date: 21 August 2024
--	-------------------------

Please keep a copy of the signed EA with the report for future updates, reviews etc.

11. Date of review

28 August 2024

Board Report

	Agenda Item 6
	11 September 2024 Revenue Budget Forecast 31 July 2024
	Open Report
Status:	For Information
Author and job title:	Jo McCoy, Finance Business Partner, City of Wolverhampton Council
Recommendations:	Board Members are asked to note the revenue budget outturn position for 2024 - 2025.
Key risks and contentious issues:	<p>The revenue forecast for the year as at 31 July 2024 is an overspend against budget of around £2.3 million.</p> <p>With cash reserves currently at around £0.7 million, WH does not have the option of supporting the budget position from reserves.</p> <p>Wolverhampton Homes is required to work with the council to ensure it can deliver cost effective services. Where WH is unable to meet its operating costs, additional funding is requested via the Shareholder the City of Wolverhampton Council.</p>

Management Summary

1.0 Purpose

1.1 This report is to inform the Board of the revenue forecast for the 2024 - 2025 financial year. The forecast is for the position at 31 July 2024 to present the Board with the most up to date information. The Senior Management Team received a report detailing the Quarter 1 position and the forecast remains in line with that position.

2.0 Revenue Forecast 2024-2025

2.1 WH set a balanced budget for 2024-2025. The management fee from the council is £48.7 million. This is an increase of £3.7 million (8.2%) over 12 months, which included an uplift of £1.5 million during 2023 - 2024 to support repairs pressures and then a further £2.2 million approved for 2024 - 2025.

2.2 However, the outturn position for 2023 - 2024 was for an overspend against the budget of £1.5 million, demonstrating that expenditure by the end of the year had already reached a level where the management fee increase was unlikely to be sufficient to meet further cost increases in 2024-2025 such as cost of living pay awards, energy tariff increases and contract price increases.

2.3 The forecast to date for 2024-2025 is for an overspend of around £2.3 million, which WH do not have sufficient reserves to fund. Discussions through regular meetings with the city's Resources and Financial Assurance Group (RAFAG) about the potential for additional increases to the Management Fee from the Housing Revenue Account for 2024-2025 financial year are ongoing. The position is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1 – Income and Expenditure Budget Forecast at 31 July 2024

Income and Expenditure	2024-2025 Budget £000	2024-2025 Forecast £000	2024-2025 Variance £000
Expenditure			
Employees	31,262	31,802	540
Non-Pay Costs	28,288	29,855	1,567
Total Expenditure	59,550	61,657	2,107
Income			
Management Fee	(48,700)	(48,700)	-
Trading Income	(8,891)	(9,019)	(128)
Other Income	(1,959)	(1,659)	300
Total Income	(59,550)	(59,378)	172
Net Budget overspend	-	2,279	2,279

2.4 The salaries budget is forecast to overspend by £540,000, which is an impact of the pay award and the vacancy factor. The budget included provision held corporately of a pay award of 3% and then a 5% vacancy factor was applied, based on prior year experience.

Currently service budget vacancies cumulatively amount to 3.5% of the budget and the pay award is anticipated to be around 0.6% higher than budgeted (based on the employer offer, which has not so far been accepted by the Trade Unions).

- 2.5 In a continuation to the trend seen since 2022 - 2023 onwards, repairs spend continues to increase, due to customer demand for repairs, the impact of damp, mould and condensation has not diminished, and has actually increased in year due to it being highly publicised. In addition, the additional pressure of inflation, and the increased difficulties to recruit qualified trades operatives.
- 2.6 Response Repairs and void repair non pay costs are forecast at £2.5 million higher than budget, however an additional £1.3 million of income is forecast from capitalisation of programme repair and replacements. These are provided for in the approved HRA Capital programme.
- 2.7 The total overspend forecast for repairs and voids including salaries underspends of £455,000 is forecast to be £885,000 above budget.
- 2.8 There is saving forecast of £350,000 to the budget for fencing, the programme will be funded from the income generated from the fencing charge going forward.
- 2.9 The budget for facilities costs is forecast to underspend by around £116,000, this is due to efficiencies from office rationalisation now being realised – reduction to running costs, business rates and rent and service charges.
- 2.10 The cost of the Service Level Agreement with the council ICT services is forecast to be around £400,000 higher than the budget, based on projections from CWC provided for forecasting purposes. The service specification would benefit from review and meetings are taking place to progress this. Discussion are underway to review the additional increase and to consider any areas that would benefit from further analysis.
- 2.11 The income forecasts for trading income budgets are anticipated to be £128,000 higher than forecast. This includes the increased income from capitalisation of programme repairs of £1.3 million referred to in 2.5 above.
- 2.12 However, trading income from Adaptations is expected to be £900,000 lower than budget. This is due to an increase in repairs to existing adaptations which is a further pressure on the revenue budget and reduces the capital income stream generated by installing new adaptations. Some offsetting reductions in costs are anticipated from materials and contractors but the net budget position is a forecast overspend of £400,000. It is expected that moving staff to repairs activities will enable a further reduction in costs of subcontractors going forward.
- 2.13 The income generated from recovery of district heating energy costs is forecast to be under budget by £279,000 due to retrospective nature of setting the rate to customers after new energy price tariffs take effect. There is a partial offset in reduction to forecast gas and Biomass fuel costs of around £219,000.

3.0 Key areas of pressure

- 3.1 Local authorities across the country are facing unprecedented financial challenges. WH is not immune from these challenges where we are facing significant cost increases, couple with demand on services - with repairs and maintenance being a particular challenge. There are also increased costs pressures in relation to pay, the increased demand for services, the impact of damp, mould & condensation, and the increased legislative requirement such as the Building Safety Act and the upcoming introduction of Awaab's Law.
- 3.2 A report was presented by the council to its cabinet on the 24 July 2024, detailing a £32.6m deficit in its revenue budget by 2026-2027. In response, the council has launched the Our Future Council programme to transform the way their services are delivered, making necessary savings whilst delivering essential services for the city.
- 3.3 Against this challenging environment, WH have continued to manage the budget effectively with support from reserves and increases to the management fee. However, with pressures on the position of reserves, and the national impact on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), WH requires a robust approach to continue to identify and deliver further recurring savings. This will continue under the Our Future programme with the development of savings plans.
- 3.4 The council have confirmed that they will provide financial support for at least the next 12 months to enable Wolverhampton Homes to meet its liabilities as they fall due.
- 3.5 Key significant risks have been previously identified to the board and reiterated as part of the 2023-2024 outturn report presented to Board in June 2024 so remain relevant and include:
- current wider economic challenges and high levels of inflation.
 - customer needs and expectations with an increased intensity of demands with a number of customers with an increasing range of complex support needs.
 - in year pay award costs (yet to be determined).
 - increasing energy, supply chain operating and material costs.
 - additional support requirements for customers to maintain their tenancies.
 - increased adaptations to housing stock (meaning increased repair, servicing and maintenance requirements).
 - new and emerging regulation requirements including Building Safety Act 2022, Fire Safety Act 2021 and the Charter for Social Housing Residents.
 - additional burden of maintenance of sprinkler systems as the High-Rise capital works programmes progress.
 - enhanced management of tree risks in dwelling gardens.
 - increased levels of scrutiny by the Housing Ombudsman alongside new and emerging regulation and scrutiny of services.
 - carbon reduction targets.

4.0 Summary of Financial Position at 31 July 2024

- 4.1 For the financial year 2024-2025 – this will be another financially challenging year with an overspend of £2.3 million against the budget being forecast. Wolverhampton Homes continues to experience unprecedented high demand for services and the pressures of inflation.
- 4.2 With reserves being down to around £0.7 million, the company does not have the option to use reserves to support the budget position and discussions are ongoing with the council about an increase to the management fee to fund the expenditure pressures and contingency provision from the Housing Revenue Account.

5.0 Mitigating actions being taken by Wolverhampton Homes

- 5.1 The Wolverhampton Homes savings and efficiencies plan is targeted across a number of areas including:
- Driven by digital – providing customers with the ability to manage their tenancy / contact via digital methods. This includes joint implementation of the Omnichannel system to improve customer contact and access mechanisms.
 - Managing demand, including the impact of policy reviews and service offers.
 - Targeting specific service areas to review value for money and productivity.
 - Prioritising spend into core service areas.
 - Deliver efficiencies and robust contract management.
 - Value and process engineering with our supply chain.
 - Using data to inform business decisions, and using a measured approach to how this aligns to various plans and strategies.
 - Knowing our numbers – understanding demand and providing right first time approach to remove duplication of effort.
- 5.2 Specific reviews are underway to analyse underspends and examine the use of reserves in comparison to the increased demand and expectations.
- 5.3 Responding to increased quality standards:
- Maintaining decency, set against an aging stock and accelerating component failure.
 - Net zero targets and milestones place an additional financial burden, i.e. fleet costs.
 - Increasing compliance and servicing costs, i.e. maintenance of fire suppression systems and fire safety inspections.
 - Inflation – current economics operating environment, despite us trying to suppress construction and supplier costs.
 - Procurement – despite CPI reducing, new supply and service contracts are typically higher cost.
 - Potential use of local SME's, Wolverhampton Pound, larger number of contracts may require additional contract management resources to ensure effective contractor oversight.

6.0 Financial and value for money implications

6.1 Financial implications are detailed within the report.

6.2 As previously reported to Board, Wolverhampton Homes is committed to driving efficiencies by implementing new ways of working with a focus on delivering fit for purpose core services to meet customer needs while demonstrating a value for money approach.

6.3 WH is also reviewing the financial management arrangements along with the Council's Finance Team to further improve the accuracy of projecting costs. This will include enhanced use of financial intelligence from the Commercial Team, increasing the level of works liability information held within NEC Housing and improving the sensitivity of our trend analysis.

6.4 Further areas of active review include.

- Value for money assessments, by work stream, to optimise deployment of direct trades teams and contractors.
- Options to insource stock condition and disrepair surveys.
- Zero based budget review of Heat Network Tariff setting.
- Active tenancy management to reduce void and repair costs and maximise recharges.
- Cost and service provision benchmarking of in-house team services and materials supply.
- Recent review of the Repairs and Maintenance Policy to provide greater flexibility to manage 'responsive' demand within available revenue budgets.
- Availability of supervision and performance management to improve productivity of in-house teams.
- Increase the use of Data Analytics to determine future Capital Programme delivery to reduce response repairs.
- Review budget lines to ensure accurate forecasting / approach to Value for Money.

7.0 Legal and regulatory implications

7.1 Wolverhampton Homes is governed by its legal and regulatory responsibilities.

7.2 Wolverhampton Homes is subject to a number of increased regulatory requirements which impacts on resource allocation and demand in relation to:

- Charter for Social Housing Residents (2021) – Regulator of Social Housing
- Fire Safety Bill (2021)
- Domestic Abuse Act (2021)
- Building Safety Bill (2021)
- Housing Ombudsman requirements
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- CWC Climate change and sustainability targets
- Consumer Standards
- Tenant Satisfaction Measures

- 7.3 The revision of the Consumer Standards, including a further standard due for consultation in relation to Competence and Conduct Standard, which will bring into consideration, the government's request for housing professionals to hold a housing qualification.
- 7.4 The impact of increasing regulation is across the business in responding to the increased requirements for example the creation of an inhouse Fire Safety Team and Health and Safety Team.
- 7.5 Formal consultation has recently concluded on 'Awaab's Law', with this new secondary legislation expected to take effect by early 2025. As Board and CWC are already aware, the draft proposals, if unamended, with further increase costs associated with property repairs and the provision of temporary accommodation.

8.0 Human resources implications

- 8.1 As part of the redesign of services and new ways of working, Wolverhampton Homes continues to learn from experience in the reimagination of its services. Refocussing the services the company delivers could have an impact on the structure of the organisation and establishment head count.
- 8.2 Fit for purpose structures and services that are managed in line with its budget aim to deliver first time resolution for customers.
- 8.3 There is a dedicated action plan to support the company in growing our own resources. Where there are specific vacant posts that can be difficult to recruit to, the decision is taken to consider the entry skills levels to allow for wider applicants to be able to apply and develop their skills and qualifications while working on the job.
- 8.4 Action is taken to reduce absenteeism with early intervention and robust management.
- 8.5 The effective management of people performance and productivity continues to ensure that resources are utilised effectively. The use of clear goals and progress tracking, help to inspire colleagues, enhance quality and cut costs. Additionally, effective performance management practices help us to pinpoint areas needing improvement and uncover potential underperformance and risk.

9.0 Health and safety implications

- 9.1 As part of the company's service delivery, Health and Safety requirements are included in the budget forecasting.

10.0 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion activity implications

- 10.1 Has an equality impact assessment been carried out? **No**
- 10.2 Explanation: Not applicable.

11.0 Impact on the environment and community

- 11.1 Wolverhampton Homes will continue to work with the City of Wolverhampton Council to provide adequate access to high quality green space for the local community.
- 11.2 Wolverhampton Homes will embed corporate social responsibility as part of its procurement considerations.

12.0 Long term consequences for the company

- 12.1 Robust control and regular monitoring of budgets continues along with the finance team at the city council. Getting the best use of our cash reserves is essential to ensure the company has the ability to utilise invest to save measures, with discussions continuing with the city council regarding the provision of the management fee in light of the increased pressures outside of the control of either the city, or WH.

13.0 Impact on business relationships with suppliers, customers and others

- 13.1 Careful financial planning is required to ensure the company can continue to provide more efficient service delivery to its customers, and to support local suppliers.

14.0 Impact on Wolverhampton Homes' Management System

- 14.1 Will any new policy or policy updates have an impact on the management system? Not applicable.

15.0 List of Appendices

- 15.1 Appendix 1 - Income and Expenditure Outturn 2024 - 2025
- 15.2 Appendix 2 – Budget outturn by Service

Appendix 1 - Income and Expenditure Outturn 2024 - 2025

	2024-25 Budget £000	2024-25 Outturn £000	2024-25 Variance £000	Comment
Expenditure				
Employees	31,262	31,802	540	Vacancy factor and pay award
Repairs and Maintenance	20,192	20,991	799	Response repairs and voids non pay spend - contractors
Facilities	784	668	(116)	Saving against budget for office costs after rationalisation
Transport	1,162	1,186	24	
Supplies and Services	4,164	4,679	515	Response repairs and voids
Support Services	1,986	2,331	345	ICT Service level agreement
Total Expenditure	59,550	61,657	2,107	
Income				
Management Fee	(48,700)	(48,700)	-	
Trading Income	(6,407)	(6,535)	(128)	
Capitalised salaries	(2,484)	(2,484)	-	
Investment Property Income	(164)	(199)	(35)	
Other Income	(1,795)	(1,460)	335	
Total Income	(59,550)	(59,378)	172	
Budget deficit	-	2,279	2,279	

Appendix 2 – Budget outturn by Service

Division	Service	Budget £000	Forecast £000	Variance £000	Reasons for Variance
Corporate Services	Business improvement	1,573	1,514	(59)	Bank interest
	Central provision for pay award	(501)	1,056	1,557	Provision for 5% vacancy reduced by 3% pay award. Forecast is expected pay award cost
	Customer experience	4,711	4,894	183	IT SLA, net of salaries underspends
	Governance and Exec Support	279	264	(15)	
	Human Resources	597	529	(68)	Salaries
	Skill Development	1,664	1,880	216	Salaries
Property Services	Building Solutions	4,532	5,298	766	Voids, adaptations
	Construction	6,026	5,718	(308)	Facilities (office rent) and fencing works
	Property Directorate	208	223	15	
	Repairs	15,166	15,611	445	Contracts and materials
	Stock Investment	2,914	2,855	(59)	Communal fuel, net of salaries underspend
Homes and Communities	HM Directorate	267	201	(66)	salaries
	Housing Operations	744	751	7	
	Income	1,966	1,777	(189)	Tenants home contents insurance
	Tenancy and Community	6,071	5,926	(145)	
	Homelessness prevention and Assistance	938	815	(123)	Financial assistance payments
	Housing Improvements	2	(35)	(37)	Trading income
	Housing Outreach	117	202	85	Salaries
	Housing Support	285	207	(78)	Income – offset by grant funding
	Lettings	911	1,041	130	Salaries
	Temp Accommodation	230	252	22	Salaries
	Total	48,700	50,979	2,279	

Income Collection Annual update – performance and support mechanisms

11 September 2024



Income Collection

- Effective management of rent collection has a number of strands:
 - rent policy
 - effective rent / arrears collection processes
 - clear communication to tenants of expectations
 - preventative measures
 - former tenants' arrears
 - legal action
 - bad debt write off



Income Collection

Wolverhampton Homes Income Policy aims to:

- ensure that we recover all monies due
- provide support and advice to customers to maximise personal income and to enable payment of rent and/or arrears
- maximise the Council's income which funds the housing service
- contribute to the Council's wider strategic objectives

[Income Policy 2023.docx \(sharepoint.com\)](#)



The tenancy agreement

- Rent is payable weekly - with the first payment being due upon the tenancy start date. Any rent outstanding when the tenancy ends should be paid by the termination date.
- The tenant is responsible for the payment of any rent due including service charges, heating charges and any other charges as shown on the rent statement.
- The tenant will also be responsible to pay any monies outstanding from any previous tenancy and applied to the rent account of this agreement in accordance with Clause 5.
- The tenant may pay charges fortnightly or monthly by agreement, but these payments must be made in advance
- Credit balances on rent accounts may with the agreement of the tenant be used to clear or offset any housing related debts payable to the Council or its agent before being refunded



Rent payment methods

		2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024
Universal Credit	No. of cases	8025	8665	9938
	No. of cases on direct payments	1566	2179	2537
	% of cases on direct payments	19.51%	25.15%	25.53%
Housing Benefit	% of customers in receipt of HB	33.52%	30.35%	28.01%
	% of customers of full HB	21.30%	19.34%	17.98%
	% of customers on partial HB	12.22%	11.01%	10.03%

Arrears / legal action

	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024
No. customers in arrears	3651	5612	5738
Total arrears owed (rent roll)	£1.5m (2.24%)	£1.96m (2.13%)	£1.98m (2.05%)
No. of customers 7+ weeks in arrears	958	973	888
No. of court entries	166	332	244
No. of Evictions	22	21	29

Comparisons with other local organisations

2023/24

Organisation	Stock	Balance outstanding	% of rent debit
Solihull Community Housing	9,759	£1.49m	3.22%
Sandwell	28,500	£4.66	4.00%
Dudley	21,500	£2.02	2.10%
Walsall Housing Group	21,466	£3.06m	2.63%
Nottingham	24,155	£3.63m	3.05%
Milton Keynes	11,500	£2.29m	3.55%
Wolverhampton Homes	20,149	£2.07m	1.96%

Challenges

Low-income households are unsurprisingly the most at risk of arrears; beyond this category the key groups identified as liable to accumulate arrears are:

- Young people (particularly single men under 25)
- Households who are unemployed / under employed
- Families with young children
- Those with a history of rough sleeping
- People previously in institutional accommodation

The pressure on rent arrears has been exacerbated owing to:

- Welfare reform and benefit cuts particularly since the 2012 Welfare Reform Act
- The 'cost of living crisis', caused by rising energy and food costs.

Further challenges

- Levels of unemployment and personal debt – Wolverhampton Homes have very effective rent collection processes to be able to respond
- More tenants are on Universal Credit so receive a single payment intended to help with all living costs. Customers on Universal Credit are likely to receive more intensive support and intervention to help them sustain their tenancies.
- Activity related to rent verification - capacity with team to manage this process

Building sustainable tenancies

Universal support / approach:

- Rent First approach at all touch points
- Pre-tenancy to ensure customers are 'tenancy ready'
- Sign up – months' rent in advance
- Early intervention
- Robust income / arrears case management
- Income Officer / Tenancy & Leasehold Officer
- Energy & Climate Change Officer
- Restorative practice - building resilience not reliance
- Credit refunds

Specialist Support:

- Temporary Accommodation Support Team
- HIA Specialist Support Workers
- Domestic Abuse Team
- Young Persons Team
- Money Smart Team

Money Smart Team

- Money Smart works to support to build financial resilience, not reliance.
- Works in conjunction with Income Officers
- Use WH Hardship Fund - £95k for 2024/2025
- Fund:
 - Assists customers who have severe debt issues in relation to the payment of money owed to WH
 - Used to reduce housing related debts
 - Encourages taking responsibility for financial issues and develop financial capability
 - Used to help households downsize due to being impacted by the Spare Room Subsidy (bedroom tax)
 - Assists with the purchase of essential goods and services



Money Smart

Page 100

	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2023 - 24
No. of Money Smart referrals	4875	4819	4441
No. of Food Bank referrals	944	1104	532
No. of customers supported with Household Support fund (via CWC)	1562	2825	971
Value of Household Support fund	£293,582.05	£320,035.51	£140089.96

WH Hardship Fund

	2021 – 2022	2022 – 2023	2023 - 2024
Nos. Hardship Fund cases	205	969	1217
Total Hardship Fund spend	£75,966	£120,028	£94,999
Average amount per household	£370.00	£123.87	£78.06

Additional funding

- The HRA (Housing Revenue Account) Financial Inclusion fund - £300k
- CWC asking WH to deliver for all Council tenancies across the City, targeted approach with emphasis on:
 - support for tenants transitioning into work.
 - young people aged 18 - 24.
 - Households experiencing higher than average utility cost increases.
 - Households who are under occupying and wish to downsize – plays into key agenda of making best use of stock.
 - Supporting customers affected by shortfall on Universal Credit housing cost payments, due to the 53 financial year 2024-25 and those transitioning onto Universal Credit
 - Households experiencing higher than average utility cost increases.



Any questions?



This page is intentionally left blank