

**Report for:** Cabinet, 17 September 2024

**Title:** Adopting a new Responsive Repairs Policy

**Report  
authorised by:** David Joyce

**Lead Officer:** Jahedur Rahman

**Ward(s) affected:** all

**Report for Key/  
Non Key Decision:** NA

## **1. Describe the issue under consideration**

- 1.1. The Council is transforming landlord services for its own tenants and leaseholders. To support that process, the Council is undertaking a full review of all policies relating to our tenants and leaseholders in our role as their landlord.
- 1.2. The new responsive repairs policy sets out that Haringey Council Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service aim is to deliver an effective, efficient and timely repairs, maintenance and planned improvements service for the homes and communal areas for which the Council is responsible. It includes our service standards to support delivery of the policy and sets out how tenants can hold the Council to account.
- 1.3. This report seeks approval to take this new draft policy, with any suggested amendments, to Cabinet for adoption.

## **2. Cabinet Member introduction**

- 2.1 We are committed to ensuring that our 20,000 tenants, leaseholders, and their families live in safe, well-maintained homes where they can thrive. Our new Responsive Repairs Policy is a crucial step in transforming landlord services and aligns with our broader Housing Strategy 2024-2029 and the Housing Improvement Plan. This policy sets clear service standards for Haringey's Repairs Service, outlining what tenants can expect from our repairs and maintenance services, including response times and accountability measures.
- 2.2 The development of this policy has been shaped by the insights and experiences of our residents, particularly through the input of the Residents' Repairs and Maintenance Continuous Improvement Group. I want to thank this group for their contributions, which ensure that the policy reflects the real needs of our communities and supports our commitment to resident engagement and co-creation in all aspects of housing services.
- 2.3 This policy helps us meet the Social Housing Regulator's standards for safety, quality, and accountability, and ensures that our repairs service is effective, efficient, and provides value for money. I am pleased to recommend its adoption by Cabinet, marking another

step forward in our ongoing efforts to improve housing quality and resident services in Haringey.

### 3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Cabinet is recommended to approve the Responsive Repairs Policy at Appendix 1, having had regard to the Equality Impact Assessment at Appendix 2.
- 3.2 Cabinet is recommended to delegate to the Director of Placemaking and Housing in consultation with the relevant Cabinet member for Housing and Planning any future changes to this policy required by changes to legal or regulatory requirements arising in the three year period before the policy is due for review.

### 4 Reasons for decision

- 4.1 The newly drafted policy will set a new direction that is informed by best practice to underpin an improved repairs services for Council tenants and leaseholders and for their wider households. Instilling higher standards through the policy will also help to avert complaints and disrepair cases from emerging.
- 4.2 The new policy will help the Council meet the Social Housing Regulator's consumer standards, specifically the Safety and Quality Standard and the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard.
- 4.3 Delegating amendments to the policy required by changes to legislation and regulation to the Director of Placemaking and Housing in consultation with the relevant Cabinet member for Housing and Planning would allow for quicker changes to be made if needed to meet any new legal or regulatory requirements introduced during the 3 year period between reviews.

### 5 Alternative options considered

- 5.1 **We could continue to not have a policy in place for this service.** This option was rejected because it would not meet the Council's needs or those of its tenants or leaseholders. Introducing this new policy will assist the Council to meet the Social Housing Regulator's Safety and Quality Standards and our commitment to introduce updated policies in the Housing Strategy 2024 – 2029 and the Housing Improvement Plan 2023.
- 5.2 **We could have prepared a policy without any of the new main features such as service standards, a new urgent priority response timescale or the policy approach to leaks.** This option was rejected because this policy will underpin an improved repairs service for Council tenants and leaseholders and for their wider households which aims to provide effective, efficient and timely provision.

### 6 Background information

- 6.1 In June 2022, the Council brought most of the landlord and housing services back in house that had been run on its behalf by Homes for Haringey, its Arm's Length Management Organisation. The Council immediately began a process of reviewing that service provision and in April 2023 Cabinet adopted a comprehensive Housing Improvement Plan backed by significant financial investment. Amongst many other commitments, that plan committed to reviewing housing policies including repairs.

- 6.2 The Regulator of Social Housing's Standards requires that Registered Providers of Social Housing (RPs) must demonstrate that they understand the following:
- a) The Safety and Quality Standard requires RP's to provide an effective, efficient and timely repairs, maintenance and planned improvements service for the homes and communal areas for which they are responsible.
  - b) The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard
- 6.3 The Council has included thorough research into best practice in social housing, and engagement in an interactive process of policy development with key stakeholders across the Council.
- 6.4 Council officer service leads from Haringey Repairs Service, Building Safety, Housing Management and Feedback and Resolutions were all involved in the development of this policy.
- 6.5 Council tenants and leaseholders were engaged in the design of the policy content as part of the new resident engagement structure, which is overseen by the Resident Voice Board (RVB). The RVB is the resident forum that assists the Housing Service by providing strategic influence on customer-facing housing strategy and policy as well as giving a resident perspective on the quality of housing services with the aim of improving customer satisfaction and organisation performance (housing services).
- 6.6 The Council's commitment to engagement means that residents' input into all aspects of housing services is the aspiration. Therefore, a series of subgroups to the RVB have been created. These are called Continuous Improvement Groups (CIGs) and ensure that residents can work directly with Heads of Services to help improve what is delivered and co create with them any improvements or changes to those services.
- 6.7 So far, there are CIGs in Tenancy Management, Leasehold Services, Supported and Wellbeing Service, Repairs, Resident Engagement and Estate Parking.
- 6.8 The CIG for Repairs inputted to the development of this policy from an early stage with broad outlines and approach agreed in February 2024 at the Group. Proposals for the policy generated a range of feedback and recommendations that have been incorporated into the policy. This included:
- Recommending that an improved repairs service clearly informs tenants what they can expect when they report a repair. The policy seeks to address this by outlining a commitment from Haringey Council Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service to clear communication, transparency and accountability to tenants by adding service standards to the policy.
  - Recommending that the policy should clarify the support provided by Haringey Council Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service to vulnerable tenants by covering how the service responds when a vulnerable tenant needs a repair carrying out. The policy seeks to address this by stating that vulnerable tenants and leaseholders are prioritised and receive an enhanced service. This links in with two other Council

policies by stating that this approach is detailed further in the Council's Vulnerable Tenants and Leaseholders Policy and the Vulnerable Residents' Repairs Policy.

- 6.9 In April 2024, the Resident Repairs and maintenance CIG reviewed and approved the newly developed policy incorporating their recommendations.

### **Key provisions of the draft Responsive Repairs Policy**

- 6.10 The draft Responsive Repairs Policy is the overall guide to what the Council will deliver on repairs and maintenance, what tenants can expect from the service and how it will be delivered. The policy sets out how Haringey Repairs Service's delivery of the Council's repairs, maintenance and planned improvements to homes and communal areas will be informed by the needs of tenants, carried out to a good standard and provide value for money.
- 6.11 The draft policy sets out the Haringey Repairs Service standards which highlights what Haringey Repairs Service will aim to deliver. This includes arranging an appointment to assess or carry out the repair on the day the issue is reported and carrying out 5% of post inspections on works to ensure the quality of work and service provided.
- 6.12 It sets out the timescales for responding to repairs based on the urgency of the case according to whether it's an emergency, urgent, routine or planned repair. A significant change that the draft policy introduces is a new urgent repairs category. These are repairs which are not classed as an emergency (which means they won't put a person or property at risk), but which could result in the loss of a basic facility, or where further damage will be caused if the problem is not dealt with urgently. The policy states that Haringey Repairs Service will attend urgent repairs within 7 calendar days effective from March 2025.
- 6.13 It clarifies what the council, tenant and leaseholder repair responsibilities are and confirms that the Council adheres to the 'right to repair' legislation.
- 6.14 It includes a section on the policy approach to delivering repairs for vulnerable tenants with linkages made to the Council's vulnerable tenants and leaseholders' policy and our vulnerable residents' repairs policy.
- 6.15 Other sections to note include the policy approach to leaks, which are treated as an emergency repair and how that means Haringey Repairs Service will aim to visit the property, inspect the damage and repair affected areas if needed within 24 hours if the leak is discovered in the property that reported the leak.
- 6.16 The policy also confirms in a section on rechargeable repairs that the Council may charge the tenant for damage to Council properties that they or members of their household, their pets or visitors have caused to a Council housing property that is not the result of normal wear and tear.
- 6.17 A section on alterations and improvements confirms that secure tenants have rights to make certain home alterations or improvements to their property, with written consent from the Council and Appendix A provides examples of the types of improvements that require permission.

## **7 Contribution to the Corporate Delivery Plan 2024-2026 High level Strategic outcomes**

- 7.1 The recommendations in this report will support the Corporate Delivery Plan's theme 5, "Homes for the Future", and in particular its commitment to provide *reliable, customer focused resident housing services and to undertake a full review of all policies relating to our tenants and leaseholders in our role as their landlord.*
- 7.2 The recommendations in this report will also support the 2024-2029 Housing Strategy's second strategic objective, *improving housing quality and resident services in the social housing sector*, in particular commitments around *transforming services to our tenants and leaseholders, and designing those services with them*

## **8 Carbon and Climate Change**

- 8.1 The recommendation to adopt this new policy may contribute to the delivery of the Affordable Energy Strategy (Objective 2) by improving housing energy performance to reduce fuel poverty, cold homes and overheating when carrying out repairs and maintenance to the Council's housing stock. The policy may also support delivery of healthy and comfortable homes for tenants and as such should help the Council's commitments in its 2021 Climate Action Plan.

## **9. Statutory Officers comments (Director of Finance, Procurement, Head of Legal and Governance, Equalities**

### **Finance**

- 9.1 The Responsive Repairs policy, on its own, does not give rise to any financial implications, but the implementation of it will require finance resource.
- 9.2 The resource required to implement the policy is already contained within the Housing Revenue Accounts (HRA) approved budget and MTFS.
- 9.3 Any additional financial implication resulting from future review/amendment of the policy will be considered as part of Council's HRA Medium-Term Financial Planning.

### **Procurement**

- 9.4 Strategic Procurement note the contents of this report and confirm there are no procurement related matters preventing Cabinet approving the Recommendations stated in paragraph 3 above.

### **Assistant Director of Legal & Governance**

- 9.5 The Assistant Director for Legal and Governance has been consulted in the preparation of this report and comments as follows.
- 9.6 The Council has a range of statutory and contractual repairing and maintenance obligations in relation to the properties for which it is the landlord. The statutory

obligations are set out at paragraph 23.1 of the Responsive Repairs Policy and the contractual obligations are set out the relevant leases and tenancy agreements.

- 9.7 The Responsive Repairs Policy sets out how the Council will comply with those obligations and the Service that residents can expect. It also demonstrates to the Social Housing Regulator how the Council will deliver the consumer standards, specifically the Safety and Quality Standard and the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standards. The Council should have regard to the Consumer Standards Code of Practice (April 2024) when assessing whether the outcomes of the standards are being delivered.

There is no legal reason why the Policy at Appendix 1 should not be adopted.

## **Equality**

9.8 The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and people who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not

9.9 The three parts of the duty apply to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex, and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty.

9.10 Although it is not enforced in legislation as a protected characteristic, Haringey Council treats socioeconomic status as a local protected characteristic.

9.11 The policy considered here will apply to Council tenants and leaseholders. Haringey Council's tenant population shows the following characteristics compared to the wider borough population:

- a significantly higher proportion of young people (under 24) and older people (over 50).
- a significantly higher proportion of individuals who have a disability under the Equalities Act.
- a slightly higher proportion of individuals who report their gender identity as different from sex registered at birth.
- a significantly lower proportion of individuals who are married or in a registered civil partnership.
- a significantly higher proportion of individuals who identify as Muslim, and slightly higher proportion of individual who identify as Christian, Buddhist or another religion. This is countered by a significantly lower proportion of tenants who don't associate with any religion or identify as Jewish, Hindu or Sikh.
- a significantly higher proportion of female individuals.

- a significantly lower proportion of individuals who report their sexual identity as something other than Straight or Heterosexual.

9.12 A full analysis of the impact of the policy on people with protected characteristics is contained in the Equality Impact Assessment found at Appendix 2.

9.13 The Responsive Repairs Policy recognises that:

- Some council housing tenants are vulnerable and at greater risk of harm because of their vulnerability in relation to disrepair or damage to their home. The policy is clear that the Council prioritise these repair cases in line with the Council's vulnerable tenants and leaseholders' policy and the vulnerable residents' repairs policy.
- Tenants' need's change over time and encouraging tenants to confirm about any circumstances such as a hearing impairment or mobility restriction when reporting a fault so that the repair case can be prioritised appropriately.
- Vulnerable tenants may face unique challenges with fuel poverty. The policy makes links to the Council's Affordable Energy Strategy and the tailored support and advice available from various organisations, to help tenants manage their energy bills and reduce utility debt.
- Language should never be a barrier to accessing services by linking to the Council's translation and interpretation policy, this should also have a positive impact on the protected characteristic of race.

9.14 The policy will have a positive impact on the protected characteristics of age, disability, race, religion and socio-economic status. It will have a neutral impact on those with other protected characteristics.

## 9 Use of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Responsive Repairs Policy

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment of the Responsive Repairs Policy

## 10 Background papers

- **Haringey Housing Strategy 2024 – 2029:**  
[https://new.haringey.gov.uk/sites/default/files/202405/haringey\\_housing\\_strategy\\_2024 - 2029.pdf](https://new.haringey.gov.uk/sites/default/files/202405/haringey_housing_strategy_2024_-_2029.pdf)
- **Housing Services Improvement Plan:**  
<https://www.minutes.haringey.gov.uk/documents/s138660/Appendix%201.pdf>

