

# Roofing and Major Repairs to Council Houses – Final Report



**Report to:** Scrutiny Committee

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**Lead Officer:** Neil Euesden, Interim Director of Housing (01279) 4446416

**Contributing Officer:** Wendy Makepeace, Assistant Director – Housing (01279) 446342

## **Recommended that** the Committee notes:

- A** Improvements to the business process, following the reviews of both the major works and roofing referral processes.
- B** The completion of the 2022/23 Housing Capital Roofing Programme and clearance of the backlog of roofing projects.
- C** The increased allocation within the HRA Business plan 23/34 for capital roofing work £2.3m and a further £3.4m allocated to HTS to reduce the backlog of responsive repairs, which includes roofing repairs.

## **Background**

1. The Council seeks to maintain its stock to current Government decent homes standards through a combination of planned inspections, annual programmes of work and reactive approaches where required. The Council takes a proactive approach as part of the approved Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan Housing Investment Programme which includes works packages to address stock condition issues and address any building failures identified.
2. Due to a significant backlog of roofing replacement works Scrutiny Committee requested officers review both the business processes associated with Major Works roofing referrals and financial requirements to keep up with the increased demand for new roofs. A task and finish group was established and has reviewed both process and financial allocation with key changes being made to both.

## How are roofing repairs identified

3. Each year, it concludes the amount of resources it has available and sets budgets for capital and planned maintenance over the Business Plan period within resources forecasted. Continued review of these assumptions is made aligned to available resources, as well as wider town priorities.
4. The Council's Housing Investment Programme centres upon establishing a set of internal, external and compliance related work packages. These programmes have reached over 8,000 homes to date illustrating the continued ambition and ongoing scale of delivery. The revised HRA Business Plan (2022-2052) was approved at Cabinet and Council in February 2023.
5. Historically roofing works had been dealt with through the Housing Capital Programme, as part of the external Housing Investment Programme, which focused primarily on total flat block refurbishment. One-off roofing projects for individual street properties was delivered on an ad-hoc basis through the externals programme. Individual properties requiring major works are delivered through other work streams contained within the Housing Capital programme an example of this is properties with structural defects.
6. The Council tracks responsive repairs works and currently identifies trends/hotspot areas through the monthly Annual Service Charge financial reports at joint operational meetings with HTS. The monthly reports tracks progress of completed works, work in progress against a flat line monthly projection based on the previous year's activity within each work stream.
7. In recent years three specific work streams had seen a year-on-year increase in backlog of works being recorded as WIP (work in progress). These were roofing, fencing, and plastering. Roofing was a particular issue due to the increased cost associated with undertaking temporary repairs and the associated costs of scaffolding required to undertake the repairs.
8. During late 2021 and early 2022, the Council noted a significant increase in the volume of cases being referred for new roofs. A programme was developed and a budget of £1million was allocated within the Housing Capital Programme for 2021/22. Due to the ongoing demand for new roofs a further £400,000 was allocated as part of the 22/23 programme with a further injection of funding to keep up with demand of £500,000 in December 2022. Again in 23/24 the allocation of funding was increased to £2.3m to deal with the demand.
9. A new robust process for surveying and identifying referrals from HTS to the Council has been agreed and commenced back in March 2023. Initially there were delays associated with the inspection/referral process to the Council which ultimately led to a delay in processing properties through the system. This was primarily due to staffing capacity within HTS and the use of sub-contractors to survey works. HTS now have a dedicated resource and properties are referred immediately at the point where it is determined a

new roof is required. The Council continues to review each property referred to ensure properties are prioritised according to need.

10. As a result, in the increased number of roofs failing across the stock the Housing Capital Programme was reviewed. This was aligned to the Asset Management priorities to take account of the failure rate in the last three years, having considered the following factors:
  - a) The age of stock;
  - b) Costs associated with repairing a roof which took the cost beyond economical repair;
  - c) Escalating costs associated with scaffolding;
  - d) Material availability; and
  - e) Climate change.

### **Issues/Proposals**

11. Business Process review – HTS and the Council have a robust process in place for referrals with regular audits in place to monitor performance. The roofing referral list and programme list are now discussed monthly as the ASC meeting with HTS and Council staff in attendance. In addition to this, weekly audits are undertaken on the lists held by both parties to ensure that performance is on track and that there are no discrepancies in the works programmes.
12. Weekly performance reports on progress are provided and reviewed by Senior Management. All works associated with the 22/23 programme of roofing works have now concluded following the release of additional funding in late 2022, with all 55 properties reported as backlog to Scrutiny Committee in February having been completed. Roofing projects continue to be referred with 28 properties having been referred within this financial year. Good progress has been made with 7 properties having been completed already. Work continues at a pace with properties at various stages of the process and no backlog of properties within the system.
13. The prioritisation of works is dependent on two main factors beyond economical repair and total component failure. The properties that fall into the financial category are primarily pitched tiled roofs and these are therefore given a medium to low priority. The second category are felted flat roofs, these are treated as a high priority due to the difficulties associated with the undertaking temporary repairs. Flat roof failures can also have associated issues with saturated insulation causing damp and mould. Individual circumstances around the vulnerability of the resident is also considered when prioritising works.

14. The 2023/24 programme is delivering works to both individual properties, terraces where required of street properties, and flat blocks. The list of flat block sites currently identified for inclusion in the programme are being surveyed and will be prioritised accordingly. It is important to note that Leasehold consultation requirements need to be factored into the delivery timetable for flat block works.
15. The review noted that the majority of backlog work within the roofing work category was associated with guttering works and to address this and reduce the Council has committed a further £300,000 within the 23/24 Housing Capital budget. HTS is delivering this work and all work being completed within this financial year.
16. The Council's Housing Management system (Orchard) will this year introduce a new Housing Asset Management system. This new workflow systems will enable the Council to review stock condition data, asset management data and responsive repairs data. This will enable the Council to take an informed and proactive approach to stock management through the use of structured data systems linking directly to the HTS Responsive Repair module.
17. As part of the Council's Priorities for 23/24, the Housing Service will in October 2023 commence surveying all properties. The pilot survey will commence in Potter Street with every property being surveyed internally and externally. The results of these surveys will inform and set the key priorities for the HRA Business Plan, Asset Management Strategy and forward workplans for estates and Housing Investment programmes.
18. The Council and HTS (Property and Environment) Ltd continue to develop a set of shared objectives to provide further enhancements to the service they provide for repairs and maintenance to tenants and leaseholders. Improvements have been targeted to the customer service which will be jointly implemented by both organisations, allowing customers to report repairs online, providing enhanced information about the status of a repair and improvements to the way repairs are scheduled and the time taken to complete them.
19. An external review of the service improvements set out in the HTS (Property and Environment) Ltd.'s Business Plan 2023 is work in progress with clear progress being made against the key objectives within the report and enhanced and improved business processes having been developed and implemented. A key change to the current business process is the removal of the "Planned" works category, which is currently a 9-month programme of work. This will be replaced with a 60-day category which will be implemented in September.

### **How is performance managed?**

20. Performance monitoring is managed through regular meeting with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Housing Standards Board and Tenant/Leaseholder Panel meetings with decisions taken to Cabinet along with JFPR reports. In addition, the Councillor enquiry system respond to individual cases as appropriate. Tenants and Leaseholders are kept

informed by the Housing Officer, leaseholder consultation exercises, responses to emails and telephone calls as well responses to enquiries and complaints.

## **Implications**

### **Equalities and Diversity**

These works will take place on both communal areas of flat blocks where not no one particular characteristic will apply. However, individual roofing projects on street properties, surveys will be undertaken to each individual property.

### **Climate Change**

Roofing works include upgrading of insulation to comply with current standards and will therefore improve the thermal efficiency of the property.

### **Finance**

The HRA business plan and financial plans have made provision for the costs of the works outlined within the report and were approved as part of the 2023/24 budget process in February 2023.

Author: Simon Freeman, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance

### **Housing**

We have been working with Housing and HTS colleagues to review and improve performance to manage our housing properties and services to residents. There are a number of interconnecting strategies within the report, which combined will create the holistic asset management programme going forward. This includes improved data management with the introduction of the Orchard system; combined programmes for roofing and guttering repairs and replacement, a full stock condition survey beginning this year and continuing into future years; closer and co-ordinated working arrangements with HTS and Housing; sharing of HTS performance statistics; improved communications with residents and leaseholders, particularly around capital projects and a review of repairs target completion dates, including the removal of the nine month planned category.

Author: Neil Euesden, Interim Director of Housing

### **Governance and Corporate Services**

There are no direct governance implications arising from this report.

Author: Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Services

## **Appendices**

None.

## **Background Papers**

None.

## **Glossary of terms/abbreviations used**

None.