

# Roofing and Major Repairs



**Report to:** Scrutiny Committee

**Date:** 5 December 2023

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor David Carter, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing

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**Recommended that** the Committee notes:

- A** Improvements to the business process, following the review of both the major works and the roofing referral processes. (Major Works - Cabinet report 30 November 2023)
- B** The continued improved performance against the backlog of responsive repairs works and clearance of the backlog of street property roofing projects.

## **Background**

1. The council is required to maintain its property assets to the Government's standards for social housing by investing in programmes of capital improvements, planned and preventative maintenance (PPM) and a responsive repair/emergency service.
2. The approved Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan contains a defined Housing Investment Programme (HIP) which proactively seeks to address the maintenance condition of the property assets and any pre-determined failures of a particular archetype, yet simply allows for funding to complete undefined projects to individual properties as they arise or are escalated by HTS' responsive repairs service.

## **Issues/Proposals**

3. Each year, the council's HIP illustrates the financial resources necessary and enables Officers to determine the allocation to individual budgets for the diverse capital and planned maintenance workstreams required over that period of the Business Plan; the revisions to the HRA Business Plan (2022-2052), was approved at Cabinet and Full Council in February 2023.
4. The Work in Progress (WIP) in roofing had been steadily increasing since 2018, aligned to a significant increase in material supply and labour costs (reduction in skilled operatives), extent of the repairs from minor detailing to larger uneconomical revenue-based tasks, the escalating volume of roofs which are well beyond their original design-life as a consequence of the relatively short construction period of the Town and peak demands for elemental renewal.
5. Historically It was common practise to complete the renewal of both flat and street property major roofing works through more generic external's programmes of work. However due to the increasing demand for roofing works, the Council developed and financed a dedicated roofing programme. Previous reports to this committee have sought to demonstrate the joint working of the Council and HTS to identify, scope, review, mitigate and deliver measurable improvements in the methodology used to ensure that adequate funding exists within the Council's Housing Investment Programme to remedy the more urgent roofing and major repairs projects, short of the more proactive basis for inclusion in the HRA Business Plan.

## **HTS Repairs and Maintenance Day-to-Day Activities**

6. When assessing the area for targeted investment to reduce maintenance liabilities and therefore allow the core activities of HTS to remain sustainable, the immediate consideration for the implications of the rising WIP, was the need to reduce the backlog of roofing issues.
7. The WIP was prioritised due to a number of specific indicators where the maximum demonstrable impact to the financial burden, efficiency of delivery and significance regarding customer concern, where roofing equated to:
  - a) Roofing as a disproportionate impact on Vulnerable residents
  - b) Roofing as the sole basis for Disrepair cases at that time
  - c) Roofing as a ratio of all Stage 2 complaints
  - d) Roofing as the basis for potential Ombudsman referrals
  - e) Roofing as a proportion of the overall aged WIP

8. Since the targeted investment from the council, HTS has coordinated its existing supply-chain to mitigate new jobs and procured additional roofing subcontractors to ensure timely progress is made on residual WIP once elemental renewals were placed in the Housing Capital programme.
9. The focus of HTS and their supply-chain has resulted in a 73% reduction in the overall backlog of works which includes all repair categories within the ASC. Roofing repairs have continued to see a significant downward trend with just 321 jobs being reported on for October 2023, against the April 2023 figure of 1722, again demonstrating significant performance improvements within this specific repair category. The target for December is 150 for roofing related repairs.

### **Identifying roof renewals and major repairs**

10. The council analyses the demand for responsive repairs and aims to identify the trends and concentration of any defined tasks for the various trades. The review and critique of that data occurs through monthly Annual Service Charge (ASC) meetings using HTS' financial statements of budget vs forecast vs actual jobs in a jointly attended forum.
11. The monthly report tracks accuracy of forecasts of demand, progress against that profiling, the volume of work in progress (against the profiled expectation) which is defined from collating productivity from previous years. A process for the referral of roof renewals was agreed between the Council and HTS, and a recent review of that early experience led to some clarifications and widening of HTS' remit in resolving the more immediate reports of rainwater ingress.
12. The council continues to review each property/block referred to us to ensure properties are prioritised according to need and against a strict criteria of:
  - a) Uneconomical to repair;
  - b) Discontinued materials;
  - c) +50% of defective roof area to replace; or
  - d) Dangerous / at risk of collapse. Other reasons for a referral are entertained by exception, such as rare or unique roofing systems that require specialist contractors.
13. The council and HTS maintain a shared file location where referrals can be submitted, reports reviewed, and further information requested and subsequently added. A master spreadsheet records each address, date, and reason for the referral, etc, where the status is updated as the council manages the roofing project to completion. HTS have sight of that progress to relay updated to tenants and assess what other measure could be used to maintain the weatherproofing with knowledge of the start date for the individual projects.

14. 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.

### Current Demand

15. The 2023/24 Housing Capital Programme contains £2m for this specific workstream and assumes an allocation for flat blocks alongside the more routine demand for street properties. The volume of live projects has stabilised to 32 at any given time. Currently there are 29 Live projects at various stages of the process:

#### Street Property Programme

On site (Work in Progress)	5
Programmed	9
Works awarded / Awaiting start date	2
Awaiting quotes from contractors	0
Party wall / Building Control / Planning	6
In design / Specification	7
<b>Live Projects</b>	<b>29</b>

#### Flat Block Programme

##### 2023/24

106-129 Northbooks

18-23 Northbrooks

155-186 Shawbridge

11-43 Willowfield

89-91/106-108 Shawbridge

1-44 Edmunds Tower

80-85 Longfield

16. The priorities of the roofing projects are categorised as High, Medium, and Low and is primarily dependent on the overall maintenance condition when the property is referred, although the risk of collapse would obviously result in an additional status of Urgent were it to arise.
17. The properties are further sequenced according to the chronological date of the referral. Representations could also be made by the tenant to Housing Management and a request to escalate is possible based on an assessment of individual circumstances. HOPs assess the technical nature and risk of the roof's performance for preventing rainwater ingress and its thermal insulation properties, but acknowledge some tenants require a more responsive approach to completing the works, and the procedures allow for those scenarios.

18. During the primary review of the diversity of roofing and major repairs backlog, it was recognised that within the roofing workstream there were a significant volume of guttering works. To address this, the council committed a smaller budget of £300,000 in 2023/24 to ensure targeted 'quick wins' were achieved and where the diagnosis was not specifically a matter of renewing the roof covering, but remedying issues before they manifested as a larger repair over time.

### **Modernisation / Integrated Systems**

19. The 'Orchard' brand, the council's Housing Management system, has been acquired by MRI and their stable of asset and task management systems will play a significant role in assisting us to enhance workflows and review SCS data. Teams have been working closely to design and implement a structured asset management module and to take a proactive approach.
20. HTS have concluded their assessment of suitable task management systems, and recommended MRI's Accuserve module which will fully integrate into Orchard and seamlessly benefit from the data provided by HTS' responsive repair activities.
21. The task of gathering up to date and reliable SCS data has commenced in November 2023 with the Potter Street and Harlow Common areas of the Town. The survey will include both the external and internal building fabric, with results supporting decision making for the Council's Asset Management Strategy (AMS) and forward workplans, validating and refining the HIP.
22. The council and HTS' continued alignment in shared aims and objectives, provide further enhancements to the services they provide, improve the outcomes of a best value approach, maximise the benefit of capital investment in reducing revenue liabilities. Recommended improvements target customer expectations – online reporting of repairs, enhanced information about the status of a repair, scheduling appointments and estimating durations of the work, and shortening the process to refer major repairs into a capital programme when pragmatic to do so.

### **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.