

Roofing and Major Repairs to Council Houses – Progress Update



Report to: Scrutiny Committee

Date: 12 March 2024

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

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Recommended that the Committee:

- A** Notes 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** Notes the continued improved performance against the backlog of responsive repairs works and clearance of the backlog of street property roofing projects.

Background

1. For the purposes of this update, we would refer Members to the background position from previous reports to this Committee, in so far as the legislative and statutory requirements of maintaining our property assets to those standards required of us as a social housing landlord.

Issues/Proposals

Targeted Repairs and Maintenance Activities

2. Our assessments for areas where targeted investment could have a demonstrable impact in reducing maintenance liabilities and therefore make the core activities of HTS more sustainable, was the need to reduce the backlog of roof renewals and/or the larger repairs that prevent water ingress.

3. The backlog of works was prioritised due to a number of specific indicators where the impact to the financial burden, efficiency in the completion of jobs and the height of customer concern.
4. Roofing plays a significant role in the maintenance condition of a property where the failure to identify a defect at its earliest stage can ultimately manifest itself as damp, mould and condensation, electrical faults and compliance issues, pipework corrosion and seizure of components, as well as the absence of thermal efficiency and the resultant increase in the demand for heating.
5. Within the overall backlog of works, roofing was the significant underlying factor in:
 - a) Repair requests from Vulnerable residents
 - b) Where a Disrepair case was based on a single issue
 - c) As a ratio of all Stage 2 complaints
 - d) Seen as the potential for an Ombudsman referral
 - e) In any event, the highest proportion of the overall aged backlog of works

WiP Performance

6. For continuity of work, HTS require a manageable level of WiP to ensure their operatives are able to deliver repairs with a reasonable degree of flexibility, productivity, and operational effectiveness – typically 8 weeks (2 months).
7. To that end, September 2023 was agreed as the period to introduce the new category of 60 days (S2) and delete the 9-month (P1) priority. This would enable jobs for July and August 2023 to become that 'True WiP' and hive off the older jobs as a clearly defined package of works.
8. The jobs older than July 2023 would therefore be considered 'backlog' and subject to the targeted investment to accelerate the completion of that package of work over a period of 7 months to March 2024.

Historic WiP (Pre-July 2023)

9. HTS commenced this period of targeted delivery of historic WiP (backlog) with 5,841nr jobs dating back to 2021. There are now no jobs older than 2022, 34nr jobs from 2022 that are booked in with the residents and are due to be completed by the end of February and 136nr from 2023 (January to June) that are already appointed with the residents for our works to be completed prior to end of March 2024.
10. HTS' focus on the coordination and sequencing of their supply-chain has achieved an 97% (5,311nr) overall reduction in the backlog of repair jobs, across all ASC categories, with 170nr jobs remaining.
11. The backlog of roofing jobs has been reduced from its peak of 1,722nr to June 2023, down to the current 57nr. HTS' supply-chain partners will continue with the sustained progress in clearing that remainder, for the duration.

12. HTS' expenditure against the Council's financial commitment of £3.1m is currently £2,669,821 at the end of January 2024, with a projected outturn of £3,095,301 being required to complete the backlog.

Current performance against the WiP (From July 2023)

13. There are currently 3,424nr jobs in WiP where residents expectations for a completion a new backstop of the 60-day (S2) category have – a target which is a significant improvement in the previous expectations of the HTS Repair Service.
14. Customer satisfaction is currently at 99%, highlighting the fact that reducing the WiP, improving completion targets and communicating better with our customers is providing very positive results.
15. Previous reports to this committee have sought to demonstrate the joint working of the Council and HTS to achieve demonstrable improvements in both the methodology and day-to-day activities to support the timely decision making of the Council's Housing Investment Programme to remedy the more urgent roofing and major repairs projects.

Roofing - Current Demand (22 February 2024)

16. The 2023/24 Housing Capital Programme contains >£2.5m for this specific workstream and assumes an allowances for flat blocks which are referred from HTS alongside the more routine demand for street properties. The volume of live projects has stabilised to a typical ~30 at any given time, with the following statuses:

Street Property Programme

On site (Work in Progress)	10
Programmed	12
Works awarded / Awaiting start date	1
Awaiting quotes from contractors	1
Party wall / Building Control / Planning	6
In design / Specification	3
Live Projects	33

17. 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.
18. The properties are further sequenced according to the chronological date of the referral, although 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.

19. 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.

Modernisation / Integrated Systems

20. We have continued the development of the MRI Asset Management System for our purposes, which will play a significant role in assisting us to review SCS data as well as benefitting from HTS' data from MRI's Accuserve module, to seamlessly integrate into the planning for future year's Council's Asset Management Strategy (AMS) and forward workplans, validating and refining the HIP Investment strategies.
21. The Stock condition surveys data gathering exercise commenced in November 2023 and is collating condition information for 1,100 properties in the Potter Street and Harlow Common wards. Old Harlow and the Tower block surveying will commence in March with a roll out of the full stock condition survey programme due to continue in 24/25.
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.

Communities and Environment

None specific.

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

Finance

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Roofing and Major reports costs are included within the Medium Term Financial Plan and monitored at quarterly Financial performance reports.

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

Governance and Corporate Services

There are no direct governance implications arising from this report.
Author: Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Services

Housing

As outlined in the report.
Author: Wendy Makepeace, Assistant Director – Housing and Property

Strategic Growth and Regeneration

None specific.
Author: James Gardner, Assistant Director - Regeneration and Commercial Development

Appendices

None.

Background Papers

None.

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

WiP – Work in Progress
AMS – Asset Management Strategies
HIP – Housing Improvement Plan