

North Yorkshire Council

Executive

18 March 2025

Repairs Standard

Report of the Corporate Director Community Development

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present to the Executive the proposed Housing Repairs Standard, setting out the obligations and commitments of the Council in respect of responsive repairs and maintenance to properties let by the council.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 Registered Social Housing Providers have a legal responsibility to maintain their homes to a decent standard and to conduct repairs to those homes within certain time and quality standards.
- 2.2 North Yorkshire Council (NYC) has repair and maintenance responsibility for circa 8500 council homes across Harrogate, Selby and Richmondshire localities.
- 2.3 Local Government Reorganisation and the bringing together of three stock holding authorities with differing Repairs Standards has necessitated the harmonisation and review of the Repairs Standard NYC will adopt in order to provide an agreed, transparent and consistent service to all tenants and leaseholders.
- 2.4 The proposed standard is based on our legislative requirements and has been reviewed in consultation with involved tenants. It is accompanied by a Tenant Handbook, which outlines in further detail our commitment as a landlord and what is expected of tenants in respect of maintenance of the home, as well as offering advice on how to report a repair, useful health and safety advice and how to make a complaint should our service not meet the standard set out.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council, as a Registered Provider of Social Housing has legal obligations, the primary legislative requirements being:
- **The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985** – section 11 requires landlords to carry out basic repairs within a reasonable timescale.
 - **The Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994** – a statutory compensation scheme which gives secure council tenants a contractual right to have certain qualifying repairs completed within a prescribed period or receive a prescribed amount of compensation where we fail to meet the conditions.
 - **Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)**- a risk-based evaluation tool. This includes mould and all types of dampness. ‘Category 1’ level means that the occupier or visitor to the property may require some form of medical attention over the course of a year.
 - **Decent Homes Standard 2006** – social housing must be free of Category 1 hazards and should be in a reasonable state of repair and provide a reasonable degree of thermal

comfort. Either disrepair or inadequate thermal comfort or both may result in damp and mould.

- **Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018** – requires that properties are free from hazards, including damp and mould, which are so serious that the dwelling is not reasonably suitable for occupation in that condition.
- **The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022** – requires that landlords of properties with shared/communal areas undertake fire safety measures, including annual fire safety risk assessments, annual fire safety advice to existing tenants and new tenants to be provided with fire safety advice at the commencement of their tenancy.
- **Social Housing (Regulation Act) 2023** – powers to set time limits for social landlords to address hazards such as damp and mould ('Awaab's law'), gives power to the RSH to enforce the Consumer Standards and introduces Tenant Satisfaction Measures.
- **Consumer Standards** – is a set of standards that social housing providers must meet to ensure required outcomes are present across the following Standards – Safety and Quality, Transparency, Tenancy and Neighbourhoods and Community.

3.2 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. The new repairs standard sets out that NYC's Housing Standards 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 prioritisation criteria, health and safety commitments and sets out how tenants can hold the Council to account.

3.3 This Standard guides us to deliver on the Social Housing Regulator's expected outcomes under the safety, quality, and accountability standards and ensures that our repairs service is effective, efficient, and provides value for money.

3.4 We are committed to ensuring that our tenants, leaseholders, and their families live in safe, well-maintained homes where they can thrive. The proposed Repairs Standard is a crucial step in transforming landlord services and aligns with our broader Housing Strategy 2024-2029 and the Housing Improvement Plan. This Standard sets clear service standards for NYC's Repairs Service, outlining what tenants can expect from our repairs and maintenance services, including response times and accountability measures.

4.0 REPAIRS STANDARD

4.1 The Repairs Standard (**Appendix A**) 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 Standard sets out how North Yorkshire Council will ensure that works are carried out to the required standard and provide value for money via the following commitments:

- **Listen** to what our residents are telling us – as well as responding to repair requests and complaints, we also proactively request feedback by way of satisfaction surveys and resident forums.
- **Comply** with all our legal and contractual obligations, and regulatory standards including the relevant consumer standards.
- Hold ourselves **accountable** by monitoring and reporting our performance.
- Measure ourselves against other customer centred organisations within the housing sector using Housemark as a performance monitoring tool.
- Provide a **reliable and accessible** service that meets our residents' expectations.
- Consistently deliver **high-quality work** that represents **value for money**.
- **Deliver the majority** of non-specialist general repairs works directly **through our in-house Housing Standards Repairs team**.

- 4.2 It sets out the timescales for responding to repairs based on the urgency of the case based upon the level of risk posed to the tenant or to the property. The responsive repair priority levels are set as detailed below:
- **Priority 1 – Emergency** response within **2 to 4 hours and made safe within 24-hour time frame**. Problems that put someone’s safety, security, or health at immediate risk, for example, no heating or hot water, burst pipes or dangerous electrical fittings.
 - **Priority 2 – Urgent** response within **72 hours**, not an emergency but a repair that needs to be done quickly to prevent more damage to the home or risk to tenants, for example, loose handrail, blocked sink/basin, partial loss of electricity or water.
 - **Priority 3 – Response within 7 calendar days**, priority repairs which pose a moderate risk to tenant safety, for example, missing roof tiles or faulty extractor fan, and work which has been identified, following a survey, as a hazard which poses a significant risk to the health or safety of the resident to be commenced within 7 calendar days.
 - **Priority 4 – Response within 28 calendar days** e.g., plaster work, joinery work to windows/doors, rainwater goods, general surveyor inspection.
- 4.3 In preparation for Awaab’s Law; a piece of legislation to be enacted in October 2025, the Repairs Standard identifies the steps and timeframes for actions to be taken on receipt of a report of a potential hazard within a tenant's home. The actions and time frames are set out below:
- Health and Safety responsibility met by responding to any reports of HHSRS hazard within 24 Hours in accordance with our Priority 1 i.e., all Emergency repairs to make the home safe actioned within 24 hours if a hazard is found and deemed significant and 'imminent' to health or safety
 - An initial investigation completed within 14 days of a relevant request with a written summary of findings to the tenant within 48 hours.
 - If a potential hazard is judged to pose a significant risk, repairs to commence within 7 days, in accordance with the Repairs Priority 3 response times, with completion within a 'reasonable' period, with the tenant kept informed of the work to be undertaken and progress.
- 4.4 In addition to responsive repair priority times and actions to address the requirements of Awaab’s Law, the Standard also identifies certain work which is outside the scope of general repairs and maintenance as Planned Repairs and Programmed Replacement, providing information and timeframes for those properties.
- 4.5 It clarifies the council and tenant repair responsibilities, confirming that the Council adheres to the 'right to repair legislation, together with informing that repairing obligations for leaseholders are contained within their own leaseholder agreements.
- 4.6 It includes a section on the policy approach to delivering repairs for vulnerable tenants, as we recognise the impact of the loss of key facilities on those who have pre-existing medical conditions or vulnerabilities will be greater and will, through listening to tenants in every case, seek to understand these situations and grant higher priority to repairs should vulnerabilities be present within a household.
- 4.7 Other sections to note include the approach to our Health and Safety, these are critical service standards, with new obligations on the Council to fulfil which will have implications for tenants, for example 5 yearly electrical testing which will require contractor access to every home.

- 4.8 The policy also confirms which repairs are the responsibility of the council and which would be the responsibility of the tenant.
- 4.9 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.

5.0 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The proposed Standard has been drafted in consultation with Service Managers within the Housing Standards Team, taking into account firsthand experience of repairs work, service demands and complaints received.
- 5.2 The Standard was also subject of an Involved Tenant Focus Group, the notes of which are attached at **Appendix B**. Overall tenants felt that the Standard was clear and that the content and priorities felt right. Feedback from the focus group led to several revisions to the Standard and to the Tenant Handbook for example, revisiting some of the priority repair examples where they may be open to interpretation to improve clarity and providing clarity on our approach to tenants with vulnerabilities.

6.0 CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES

- 6.1 The Repairs Standard contributes to the following council priorities:
- People: People are free from harm and feel safe and protected.

7.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 7.1 We could continue to not have an agreed and harmonised Standard 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 standard will assist the Council to meet the Social Housing Regulator's Safety and Quality Standard and our commitment to introduce updated policies in the Housing Strategy 2024 – 2029 and the Housing Improvement Plan.

8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The delivery of the Repairs Standards does not have direct budgetary impact and has been developed to align repair priorities across NYC Housing Standards repair service, meet the requirements of the regulator and harmonise the repairs service. It is recognised that as the Council is progressing its programme of condition surveys, further repairs will be identified. The Housing Standards Service has anticipated this increase and made appropriate allowances within the HRA Business Plan.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 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 in the Legislation and Regulation section of the Repairs Standard and the contractual obligations are set out the relevant leases and tenancy agreements.
- 9.2 The Repairs Standard 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.

9.3 The Standard also sets out response times reports of Condensation, Damp and Mould and in line with the expectations of the incoming Awaabs Law.

10.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The Standard considered here will apply to Council tenants and leaseholders. Whilst we are still unable to fully understand our tenant demographic by all protected characteristics, we do know that when compared to the North Yorkshire population our tenant profile has:

- Significantly more over 60s.
- More who consider themselves to have a disability or long-term health condition.
- More females.

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

10.3 The Repairs Standard 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 Standard 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. The Tenant Handbook provides clear help and advice, tips on what to do and not do regarding health and safety in the home.
- Language and cognition should never be a barrier to accessing services, by making the Standard available in other formats we will make sure that no tenant is disadvantaged in accessing our service, this should also have a positive impact.

10.4 The Standard will have a positive impact on the protected characteristics of age and disability. It will have a neutral impact on those with other protected characteristics.

11.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The recommendation to adopt this new standard may contribute to the delivery of the Council's Climate Change Strategy 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. Climate Change impact assessment to be included at **Appendix D**.

12.0 PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

12.1 Performance on the Repairs Standard will be monitored primarily by the Tenant Satisfaction Measures, the statutory return required by the Regulator for Social Housing on an annual basis. The following TSMs apply:

- TP02 – Satisfaction with Repairs
- TP04 – Satisfaction that the home is well maintained
- TP05 - Satisfaction that the home is safe

- o TP10 – Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained

12.2 From October 2024 North Yorkshire Council began to track tenant satisfaction on a quarterly basis, giving us more real time information about satisfaction with our services.

13.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 Harmonising the Repairs Standard in line with the principles of the new Consumer Standards guides North Yorkshire Council staff, tenants and leaseholders in the delivery of a compliant, transparent and accessible repairs service.

13.2 It should be noted that the topics of tenant safety, tenant satisfaction and decency are high profile, and further legislative review is expected by central government within the next parliament. The Repairs Standard should be kept under review and amended as soon as possible where legislation requires.

14.0 ICT IMPLICATIONS

14.1 The Housing Service, supported by colleagues in Transformation and Technology are in the process of implementing a new asset management system (Planon). The system will be used to log, assign and manage requests for repairs from tenants and leaseholders.

14.2 The Planon system will be configured according to the service standards, timescales set out in the Repairs Standard.

14.3 There will however be a lag between the Standard being launched and the Planon system being fully implemented which will require updates to be made to current legacy repairs systems managing external contractor repair jobs in Harrogate, Selby and Richmondshire.

15.0 CONCLUSIONS

15.1 The Standard delivers a robust operating arrangement for the delivery of a Repairs Service for NYC council which provides staff and Council tenants with clear information, meets the needs of the Regulator for Social Housing, and takes account of forthcoming legislation with regards to Awaab's Law.

15.2 The Standard will provide harmonisation across the former district and borough councils in the provision of a singular Repairs Standard for tenants.

16.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

16.1 The new Repairs Standard 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.

16.2 The new standard will help the Council to deliver the Social Housing Regulator's consumer standards, specifically the Safety and Quality Standard and the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard.

16.3 Delegating amendments to the standard required by changes to legislation and regulation to the Assistant Director (Housing) 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.

17.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 17.1 Executive is recommended to approve the Repairs Standard at **Appendix A**, having had regard to the Equality Impact Assessment at **Appendix C**. Launch of the Standard to be no later than 1 May 2025, in line with the roll out of the new asset management system.
- 17.2 Executive is recommended to delegate to the Executive Member for Culture, Arts and Housing) any future changes to this Standard required by changes to legal or regulatory requirements arising in the three year period before the policy is due for review.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Repairs Standard
Appendix B – Tenant Focus Group Notes
Appendix C – Equalities Impact Assessment
Appendix D – Climate Impact Assessment

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Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.