

**CABINET
7 NOVEMBER 2023**

HOUSING SERVICES REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE POLICY

**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Matthew Roche,
Health and Housing Portfolio**

Responsible Director – Elizabeth Davison, Group Director of Operations

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To approve the Housing Services Repairs and Maintenance Policy.

Summary

2. Darlington Borough Council provides over 5,300 high quality homes for local residents. We are committed to providing safe, energy efficient and comfortable homes to our Council tenants and we will achieve this by providing a robust, efficient and effective repairs and maintenance service.
3. The Housing Services Repairs and Maintenance Policy 2023-2028 at **Appendix 1** sets out our responsibilities to our tenants and leaseholders, how we will inspect and survey our properties to ensure they are maintained to a good standard and the arrangements in place for undertaking repairs, when issues arise.
4. The Tenants Panel has been consulted on the draft policy and the outcome of this consultation is given at paragraph 17. However, the proposals have received overwhelming support.
5. This report was considered by Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee on 1 November 2023 and it is anticipated that they will have agreed its onward submission for approval by Cabinet. The Responsible Cabinet Member for Health and Housing will provide confirmation at the meeting.

Recommendation

6. It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - (a) Consider the contents of this report.
 - (b) Approve the Housing Services Repairs and Maintenance Policy 2023-2028 as set out in Appendix 1.

Reasons

7. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:
- (a) The Social Housing Regulator’s Consumer Standards places a duty on social housing landlords to provide their tenants with quality, cost-effective accommodation.
 - (b) The adoption of a formal Repairs and Maintenance Policy is one of the ways to demonstrate how we will achieve this.

Elizabeth Davison
Group Director of Operations

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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S17 Crime and Disorder	There is no impact on the Council’s Crime and Disorder responsibilities as a result of this report
Health and Wellbeing	Well maintained Council homes will have a positive impact on the health and well-being of Council tenants
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	An efficient repairs and maintenance service will have a positive impact on the energy efficiency of our Council homes
Diversity	This policy supports the promotion of diversity
Wards Affected	All wards with Council housing
Groups Affected	Council tenants and leaseholders
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Council Plan	This report supports the Council plan to ensure we are able to provide our tenants with good quality housing
Efficiency	There are no implications
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

8. Darlington Borough Council provides over 5,300 high quality homes for local residents. We are committed to providing safe, energy efficient and comfortable homes to our Council tenants and we will achieve this by providing a robust, efficient and effective repairs and maintenance service.
9. The Housing Services Repairs and Maintenance Policy 2023-2028 at Appendix 1 sets out our responsibilities to our tenants and leaseholders and covers the following areas.

Our Responsibilities

10. This section covers the Council's responsibilities for our tenants, including:
 - (a) Maintaining the structure and outside of the property and keeping it in good repair.
 - (b) Maintaining the installations for heating, water heating, sewerage and for water, gas and electricity.
 - (c) Decorating the outside of properties when necessary, or as part of a planned maintenance programme.
 - (d) Repairing internal decoration, where we have caused damage when completing a repair.
11. For leaseholders, the Council is responsible for the main structure of the building, the shared areas and any shared services to a building or estate.

Inspections and Surveys

12. This section covers how we will carry out inspections and surveys, before and after repairs or maintenance work is completed, including:
 - (a) Any reports of damp or mould.
 - (b) Fence repairs and replacements.
 - (c) Roofing repairs.
 - (d) Major kitchen and bathroom repairs and replacements.
 - (e) Structural damage or issues.
13. This section also covers our legal responsibilities to ensure the health and safety of our tenants, including surveys, checks, assessments and servicing in relation to:
 - (a) Gas appliances, such as boilers and fires.

- (b) Electrical installations and wiring.
- (c) Passenger lifts and stair lifts (where fitted).
- (d) Fire risk assessments and fire doors.

Repairs

14. This sections covers the arrangements for undertaking repairs, when issues are reported or arise, including:
- (a) What is classed as a routine repair, urgent repair or emergency repair and our timescales for responding to these.
 - (b) How our tenants can report repairs and the arrangements for reporting out of hours, emergency repairs.
 - (c) The surveys and repairs undertaken for empty Council properties, before they are re-let.
 - (d) The types of repairs that are rechargeable to tenants.
 - (e) Details of the Right to Repair and Right to Improve arrangements.
 - (f) The arrangements for planned maintenance and improvement works and adaptations for those tenants who need them.

Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Consumer Standards

15. The RSH are currently consulting on new consumer standards that it is proposing to introduce in 2024. Under these new standards is a section specifically relating to repairs and maintenance, as follows:
- (a) Registered providers must provide an effective, efficient and timely repairs, maintenance and planned improvements service for the homes and communal areas for which they are responsible.
 - (b) Registered providers must enable repairs and maintenance issues to be reported easily.
 - (c) Registered providers must set timescales for the completion of repairs, maintenance and planned improvements, clearly communicate them to tenants and take appropriate steps to deliver to them.
 - (d) Registered providers must keep tenants informed about repairs, maintenance and planned improvements to their homes with clear and timely communication.
 - (e) Registered providers must understand and fulfil their maintenance responsibilities in respect of communal areas.

- (f) Registered providers must ensure that the delivery of repairs, maintenance and planned improvements to homes and communal areas is informed by the needs of tenants and provides value for money.

16. Our Housing Services Repairs and Maintenance Policy will help us demonstrate how we will achieve these new proposed standards.

Outcome of Consultation

17. Our Tenants Panel were consulted in June 2023 and overall, the Panel supported the proposed Housing Services Repairs and Maintenance Policy. Examples of the Panel's comments were as follows:

- (a) "I think that the Housing Services Repairs and Maintenance policy makes a lot of sense. It is easily understandable, and I don't think there is any more explanation needed. It all seems absolutely fine to me."
- (b) "Although the policy is lengthy, it is in line with the rest of the policies that I have read from Darlington Borough Council and reads well. I understood all the points that were made. As always, it seems clear, and the main points have been explained very well. I like how you can see similarities in the policies, very uniformed."
- (c) "Although this is a large document, it has been broken down into manageable sections, which are well explained. Tenants should be able to pick and choose what they need to read. It all seems absolutely fine to me."
- (d) "I do believe that the policy is a little long winded, but I understand to cover everything this is hard to get past. Some of the language may be a little difficult for your everyday tenant, but on a whole I think it is self-explanatory and have no major issues with it."