

Report to Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board

6 February 2025

Subject:	Outcome of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board Spotlight Session on Housing Repairs
Director:	Executive Director of Place Alan Lunt
Contact Officer:	John Swann, Democratic Services Officer

1 Recommendations

1.1. To consider and comment upon the findings of the Scrutiny Spotlight Session in relation to Housing Repairs and endorse the below recommendations for submission to the Executive Director of Place as follows:

- a) that the Executive Director of Place enters into a Service Level Agreement with the corporate contact centre which mandates the standard of customer services which is provided to council housing tenants;
- b) that the Executive Director of Place and Head of Communications develop a clear communications strategy, incorporating the utilisation of third sector partners, to cascade housing messaging to residents and tenants;
- c) that the Executive Director of Place submits updates on staff morale (including the impact on productivity) and corporate contact centre

performance as part of the quarterly Housing Improvement and Transformation progress reports provided to the Board.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Sandwell MBC (SMBC) has published service standards in relation to targets for completion of different categories of repair. Carrying out a review of the standards in collaboration with tenants will ensure that achievable expectations are being set and will enhance tenant satisfaction with the service.
- 2.2 Changing legislation around fire and building safety has led to additional financial pressures on the service to ensure the regulations are met to provide safe and decent homes for tenants.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Council Plan?

Living in Sandwell	<p>Engaging with a diverse set of tenants and listening and acting on their feedback will build communities that know the power of their voice. This will hold us to account and allow us to deliver improvements that tenants are passionate about.</p> <p>By providing a high-quality responsive service ensures we are providing a high-quality home for tenants to live in, reducing the impact of disrepair on tenants' lives.</p> <p>The outcomes of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey will demonstrate what our tenants think about the services we provide and indicate which areas require improvement. This will enable us to deliver a service which meets the needs of our tenants and ensures they are receiving value for money.</p>
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4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 On 23 January 2025, Board members attended a spotlight session to discuss Housing Repairs for Sandwell Council housing tenants and made a number of recommendations.

4.2 In the summer of 2023 the restructure of the Asset Management Division resulted in the creation of the Head of Repairs post, overseeing all repairs functions including, gas and electric and voids properties. This has enabled a more cohesive, strategic approach to review the customer journey and best use of resources.

4.3 An improvement plan has been developed at a strategic level and the operational plan is in development to provide task owners and timelines. This does not mean, however, that progress is not being made against the actions, however the restructure and realignment of staff in December 2024 will provide additional capacity to deliver against the actions.

5 Implications

Resources:	The cost of delivering a compliant repairs service is a significant consideration as we are restricted to the income from tenants' rents. The details in the plan are all prioritising efficiency, providing value for money and looking at the asset management service holistically, not just delivering repairs in isolation.
Legal and Governance:	The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 strengthened the role of the Regulator of Social Housing. The Building Safety Act 2022 also has an impact on how we deliver repairs. Contract spend is reviewed monthly and a dashboard showing the performance of the DLO is being developed to monitor to success of the changes.
Risk:	By not being able to deliver the standards expected and consistently not achieve targets, there is a reputational risk to SMBC. There is also the impact of the information being published by the RSH through the Tenant Satisfaction Measures. Therefore, the opportunity to review a Repairs Policy will reset the expectations of repairs for the customers of SMBC.
Equality:	The Repairs Policy will need to provided consistency across all customers, however, will be implemented along the Housings Reasonable Adjustment Policy to ensure we treat all customers equally and fairly.

Health and Wellbeing:	If we do not have an achievable repairs policy, the disrepair can have an impact of customers health and wellbeing.
Social Value:	There are no specific social value implications arising from this report.
Climate Change:	There are no specific climate change implications arising from this report.
Corporate Parenting:	There are no specific Corporate Parenting implications arising from this report.

6 Appendices

6.1 None

7 Background Papers

7.1 None