

Housing and Homelessness Public Accountability Committee Meeting on 20 March 2023

Introduction by Richard Shwe, Interim Director of Housing

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for joining me today as we discuss the future of Housing and address the challenges we face. My name is Richard Shwe and I am the Interim Housing Director at H&F and will continue in the role until a permanent appointment is made and starts.

We aim to achieve this objective by addressing several top priorities and associated tasks, with a strong focus on fixing repairs as our number one priority.

Before we delve into the specifics of our approach to housing, let us briefly touch upon the other priorities that we will be addressing alongside our primary focus on repairs:

1. **Overall Management:** To ensure that the Management Team drives improvement, we will establish a stronger portfolio management system for Housing within the Economy by the end of June 2023. We will also concentrate on better defining critical interdependencies for improved services.
2. **Strategic Financial Approach:** To ensure coordination between Housing and Finance, we will focus on areas such as capitalisation, including repairs, costing downstream failure costs from repairs, identifying operational efficiencies, impacts of digitalisation, and decants and allocations policies.
3. **General Repairs: Strategic Interventions:** To tackle strategic challenges, we will conduct stock takes and reviews, annual conversations with contractors, ensure additional contractor capacity, implement a Succession Plan for our primary contractor, and address Damp and Mould Cases through cross-council leadership.
4. **Void Management:** Our focus will be on end-to-end letting management, voids turnaround, and contract management.
5. **Decant and Temporary Accommodation Services:** We will address demand, choice, severely limited supply, policy positions, and delivery.

Now, let us delve deeper into our primary focus: fixing repairs as the number one priority. We recognise that addressing the challenges in general repairs services is crucial to the success of our overall objectives. Therefore, we will concentrate our efforts on three key areas:

- a) **Core Performance:** We will establish a dedicated team to monitor and manage the performance of our patch contractors and their subcontractors, setting clear targets and expectations for quality and timeliness. This will

ensure that repairs are completed efficiently and effectively, reducing the need for additional intervention.

- b) **Disrepairs Cases:** We understand that disrepairs can significantly impact the quality of life for our tenants and leaseholders. We will implement a proactive approach to identify and address disrepairs cases, utilising data-driven decision-making and predictive analytics to prioritise and allocate resources.
- c) **Customer Service, Complaints, and Housing Ombudsman Management:** A key aspect of addressing repairs is ensuring that our tenants and leaseholders feel heard and supported. We will invest in improving our customer service and complaints handling processes, with a focus on early resolution and transparent communication. This will involve integrating Housing Ombudsman Management with Repairs services to ensure that complaints are addressed efficiently and effectively.

To further support our focus on fixing repairs, we will implement several initiatives aimed at improving the overall performance of our repairs services:

1. **Increased Transparency and Accountability:** We will implement a system for tracking the progress and outcomes of repair works, enabling both our department and our tenants and leaseholders to monitor the performance of contractors. This will drive increased accountability and promote a culture of continuous improvement.
2. **Streamlined Processes and Improved Communication:** By streamlining our processes and improving communication channels between all stakeholders involved in repairs, we will reduce delays and increase the efficiency of our repair services. This includes fostering better collaboration between contractors, tenants, leaseholders, and Housing staff.
3. **Proactive Maintenance and Preventative Measures:** We will establish a proactive maintenance schedule and implement preventative measures to reduce the occurrence of repairs, ultimately leading to cost savings and improved service quality for our tenants and leaseholders.
4. **Innovation and Technology:** We will explore and adopt innovative solutions and technologies that can help us optimise our repairs process, such as using AI-driven decision-making tools to utilising modern materials and techniques that can extend the lifespan of our housing stock.

By prioritising repairs as our number one focus, we aim to achieve the following outcomes by the end of 2024/5:

- A trajectory for managing down the cost of repairs failure, with confidence that we will eliminate the dependency on reserves to pay for it.
- Substantial progress toward hitting or moving much closer to performance KPI's.

- A stronger system for business management and co-production around charged-for services, informed by lessons learned from rent and service charge work carried out in 22/3. We will continue to support tenants and leaseholders in hardship and those struggling to pay for essential living.

In conclusion, our commitment to fixing repairs as the number one priority demonstrates our dedication to providing better support, reducing inequalities, and creating ladders of opportunity for our tenants and leaseholders. By achieving our objectives and addressing the challenges we face, we will make a tangible difference in the lives of those who depend on our services and ensure that Housing Services remains a sustainable and effective organisation for years to come.