



| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Title | RBC Landlord Services Update 2024/2025 |
| Purpose of the report | To note the report for information |
| Report status | Public report |
| Report author | Natalie Waters - Interim Assistant Director for Housing Landlord Services |
| Lead Councillor | Cllr Matt Yeo |
| Corporate priority | Not applicable, but still requires a decision |
| Recommendations | 1. That Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee note the Housing Landlord Service Performance and key achievements delivered within 23/24 financial year, coupled with acknowledging the proposed outcomes of the service improvement plan against the consumer standards. |

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The Council's 5-year Housing Strategy was adopted by Policy Committee in September 2020. The vision for the strategy is "For all our residents to have the opportunity to live in a good quality sustainable home they can afford within a thriving neighbourhood." Key to this is the supply of accommodation, the quality of accommodation and neighbourhoods and the support available to residents within their communities.
- 1.2. This report provides an update on Housing Landlord Service performance and key achievements delivered within the 2023-2024 financial year.
- 1.3. This report aims to provide assurance to Members and Senior Officers that Reading's Housing Landlord Services is delivering the strategic objective of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 to deliver improved outcomes for current and future tenants of social housing against the following five consumer standards:
 - Neighbourhood and Community Standard
 - Safety and Quality Standard
 - Tenancy Standard
 - Transparency, Influence and Accountability (including Tenant Satisfaction Measures)
 - Consumer standards code of practice

2. Key Achievements 2023/24

- 2.1. The service has achieved a great deal this year against a backdrop of recruitment difficulties in key areas including Housing Repairs, Housing Property Services and Tenant Services coupled with the cost-of-living crisis affecting our tenants. A few of the key achievements are listed below:

- Delivered low carbon improvements in a further 14 properties in Kentwood Ward to reduce carbon emissions and improve energy efficiency. The properties benefitted from the installation of new external wall insulation and render, triple glazed windows, air source heat pumps and mechanical ventilation. This brings the total number of properties with low carbon improvements on the estate to 57.
- A further 40 Air Source heat pumps were installed in Granville Road 8 storey flats to reduce carbon outputs and improve energy efficiency. This means that three blocks have been completed with the final block being completed during the current year.
- We are nearing the completion of Phase 1 of the Crosswall refurbishment for 18 Crosswall flats at Bamburgh Close. Phase 2 has commenced for a further 36 flats at Newcastle Road and Hadrians Walk East, which will continue into the following programme year. The works include a new highly insulated external wall incorporating Triple Glazed Windows and Air Source Heating. This project is part of our Carbon Reduction Programme.
- The Council's Local Authority New Build programme continues to deliver new homes with 15 key worker flats at the old Arthur Hill swimming pool site and 37 homes in North Street handed over. Works are due to commence across the next phase of the schemes from late 2024 into early 2025 with completion planned for 2026. The next phase will deliver a further 104 properties including general needs flats, sheltered accommodation, supported living, a respite scheme and adult day care centres. Developments are being designed to Passivhaus principals to ensure energy efficiency, low carbon operations and to allow residents to reduce their energy bills. We also successfully purchased 21 family sized properties this year for the HRA.
- We have continued to provide support and assistance to our tenants which has ensured that we maintained top quartile rent collection levels of just under 99% % despite the increasing financial pressure on our tenants due to the cost-of-living crisis.
- We have continued to deliver an in-house Debt Advice Service who manages the assessment and administration of the Discretionary Housing Budget together with providing confidential and impartial money advice to our tenants to help sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness. This team is also responsible for the continued review and updates to the 'Money Matters'¹ webpages which provides advice, information and assistance to residents facing the financial difficulties.

3. Housing Performance - Complaints

- 3.1. In March 2022, as part of the enactment of the Social Housing white paper, the Housing Ombudsman published an updated Complaints Handling Code (CHC) for all Social Landlords, which came into effect on 1st October 2022. A replacement Housing Ombudsman Scheme was also implemented on the same day, and compliance with the CHC is a mandatory requirement for membership to the scheme. This Scheme became mandatory for all Registered Providers of Housing from 1st April 2024. It is important to note these results are in line with the previous timescales within the Council's corporate complaints policy.
- 3.2. The scheme requires the landlord to report its performance in relation to complaints to a 'Governing Body' on an annual basis. Complaints performance is already reported quarterly to the Lead Member for Housing and will now also be included in the Annual Housing Landlord Services update report, to Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee by the Assistant Director for Housing Landlord Services.
- 3.3. In 2023/24 the Housing Service (including the repairs and maintenance) responded to 110 complaints at stage 0, and 262 complaints at Stage 1, which is 372 in total

¹ <https://www.reading.gov.uk/housing/money-matters/>

(representing 6.6% of tenants). There were also 37 Stage 1 complaints that were escalated to Stage 2 which were responded to in year.

3.4. These complaints can be broken down into the following areas:

| Area | Number | Percentage |
|------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Community Partnerships | 9 | 2% |
| Housing Needs | 62 | 17% |
| Property Development | 5 | 1% |
| Property Services | 51 | 14% |
| Sheltered Housing | 4 | 1% |
| Strategic Housing | 0 | 0% |
| Tenant Services | 83 | 22% |
| Repairs | 158 | 42% |
| Total | 372 | 100% |

3.5. Of the 372 complaints the outcomes are listed in the table below:

| Outcome | Number | Percentage |
|-------------------------|--------|------------|
| Upheld | 162 | 44% |
| Partially Upheld | 45 | 12% |
| Not upheld | 126 | 34% |
| Multiple Outcomes | 23 | 6% |
| No Outcome ² | 16 | 4% |
| Total | 372 | 100% |

3.6. 65% of complaints were responded to within the required timescale.

3.7. The most common themes for the complaints are listed below:

- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Communication
- Failure to Resolve Issue
- Financial Issue
- General Estate / Maintenance Issue
- Health & Safety Issue
- Lack of Action Taken
- Lack of Support
- Missed Appointment
- Policy Issue

² Not enough evidence to decide

- Quality of Service Provided or Received
- Staff Conduct
- Time Taken to Resolve Issue







3.8. Improving performance in this area is a key focus for the service, it has put in place new systems to track, manage and embed learning from complaints within the service, in line with the Housing Ombudsmen’s requirements, as well as providing assurance to Housing & Communities Management Team that all actions outlined in any responses are carried out. The Customer Relations Team will be bringing an updated Housing Complaints Policy through Policy Committee this year, to align the corporate process with these mandated requirements.











3.9. The above statistics do not include the figures for Affinity, under the PFI arrangement for the 1251 units managed. During the year 2023-2024, affinity received 3 Stage 1 complaints, and 2 of which were escalated to Stage 2. 66% of Affinity’s Stage 1 complaints and 100% of the Stage 2 complaints were responded to within the required respective time scales.

4. Housing Performance -Tenant Satisfaction Survey & Tenant Satisfaction Measures

4.1. In Autumn 2023 Reading Borough Council Housing Service commissioned NWA Social and Market Research to undertake a satisfaction survey with a random sample of tenants of both RBC and Affinity by e-mail and telephone. The survey consisted largely of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM’s) which are required by the Housing Regulator from April 2023. A total of 641 tenants completed the questionnaire, 101 online and 540 over the telephone. The overall data therefore has a confidence interval of +/-4%.

4.2. The results from the survey were predominately positive with the Council’s Housing Service with performance either improving or aligning from the results from the 2022 survey. However, there were three areas of small decline within the survey. As outlined above complaints performance is an area requiring improvement. The results of the survey are outlined in the table below:

| | Top-Line Findings – Reading Borough Council Housing Services 2023, 641 responses overall (2022, 561 responses overall; 2020, 625 responses overall) | 2023 | 2022 | 2020 | Change ('23 - '22) |
|-----|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|---|
| Q1 | Overall satisfaction with RBC Housing Services | 78% | 82% | 81% |  |
| Q2b | Satisfaction with overall repairs service over the last 12 months | 80% | 76% | 74% |  |
| Q3 | Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair | 75% | 73% | NA |  |
| Q4 | Satisfaction that RBC Housing Services provide a home that is well maintained | 83% | 84% | NA |  |
| Q5 | Satisfaction that RBC Housing Services provide a home that is safe | 86% | 88% | 86% |  |
| Q6 | Satisfaction that RBC Housing Services listen to your views and act upon them | 73% | 79% | 69% |  |

| | | | | | |
|------|---|-----|-----|-----|---|
| Q7 | Satisfaction that RBC Housing Services keep you informed about things that matter to you | 81% | 87% | 82% |  |
| Q8 | Agree that 'My landlord treats me fairly and with respect' | 89% | 91% | 81% |  |
| Q9b | Satisfaction with RBC Housing Services' approach to complaints handling | 36% | 29% | 18% |  |
| Q10b | Satisfaction that RBC Housing Services keep communal areas clean and well maintained | 77% | 70% | NA |  |
| Q11 | Satisfaction that RBC Housing Services make a positive contribution to your neighbourhood | 79% | 85% | NA |  |
| Q12 | Satisfaction with RBC Housing Services' approach to handling ASB | 68% | 67% | NA |  |
| Q13a | Satisfaction that RBC Housing Services give you the opportunity to make your views known | 80% | 84% | 64% |  |
| Q14 | Staff at RBC Housing Services pleasant and polite? (Yes) | 95% | 94% | 95% |  |
| Q15 | Likelihood of recommending to family and friends – promoters or passive | 78% | 82% | 80% |  |
| Q16 | RBC Housing Services has stayed the same or got better in the past year | 85% | 83% | 87% |  |

4.3. Following the return of the TSS results the Housing & Communities Management Team commissioned NWA to complete 3 further pieces of work, which are as below:

1. NWA to set up focus groups with tenants and staff to have better understanding of the tenant voice, and communication needs from the tenants. The focus groups are currently on going, and the results are expected back late November for consideration.
2. NWA to complete an additional data dredge and analyse the results from tenants within the Coley and Central Ward's due to consistently low levels of satisfaction across most of the TSS questions. This was completed by breaking down the 2 patch areas and comparing those individual results to that of the rest of the Borough. This has highlighted that tenants in Coley are less satisfied across the most of the TSS questions, this may be linked to the ongoing regeneration within this ward. This will be monitored in the 2024 TSS survey to understand if this is an emerging pattern.
3. NWA to complete an exercise to map the customer journey through the repairs process. Although the satisfaction results received against this question were largely positive, due to the number of complaints received within this area the area it was determined that this piece of work would help us to better understand the customer journey and look at service improvements. A draft report is due to be submitted imminently for the consideration of HCMT, and actions will be built into the Service Improvement Plan as appropriate.

4.4. From 1st April 2023, the Regulator for Social Housing has required registered providers of Social Housing to complete an admissible return of management information that supplements the Tenant Satisfaction Survey, which is known as the Tenant Satisfaction Measures . With effect from 1st April 2024, this return is now part of the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Consumer Standard enforced by the Regulator. This return ensures our tenants can hold us to account for the quality of service they receive and guarantees greater transparency by providing clear accessible information about our performance.

- 4.5. This return consists of key information around compliance of housing stock, repairs, complaints and Anti-Social Behaviour performance metrics, which can be seen below (this includes the combined PFI and RBC returns):

| | |
|--|--------|
| TSM - CH01 - Complaints relative to size of landlord (per 1000 properties) | |
| No of Stage 1 per 1000 properties ³ | 46.81 |
| No of Stage 1 complaints received | 323 |
| No of stage 2 per 1000 properties | 4.64 |
| No of Stage 2 complaints received | 32 |
| TSM - CH02 - Complaints responded to within Handling Code guidelines (percentage) | |
| Stage 1 - percentage responded to on time | 63% |
| No of Stage 1 complaints responded to on time (by complaint start date) | 204 |
| Stage 2 - percentage responded to on time | 59% |
| No of Stage 2 complaints responded to on time (by complaint start date) | 19 |
| TSM - NM01 - Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord (per 1000 properties) | |
| total cases opened per 1000 properties | 19.57 |
| total number of ASB cases opened | 135 |
| total hate crime cases per 1000 properties | 0.58 |
| * of total ASB opened - how many are hate crimes | 4 |
| TSM - RP01 - Homes that do not meet Decent Homes Standard (percentage) | |
| Percentage not meeting decent homes | 1.98% |
| No of homes that did not meet decent homes in period | 136 |
| TSM - RP02 - Repairs completed within target timescale | |
| Percentage - Non-Emergency in timescale | 85.47% |
| Number of Non-Emergency repairs completed in timescale | 19612 |
| Number of Non-Emergency repairs completed in period | 22946 |
| Percentage - Emergency in timescale | 99.29% |
| No of emergency repairs completed in timescale | 3091 |
| Number of emergency repairs completed in period | 3113 |
| TSM - BS01 - Gas safety checks | |
| Percentage of gas safety checks completed | 99.97% |
| No of dwellings owned that have received gas safety checks that required them | 5990 |
| TSM - BS02 - Fire Safety checks | |
| Percentage of fire safety checks completed | 100% |
| No of dwellings owned that have received fire safety checks that needed them | 490 |
| TSM - BS03 - Asbestos Safety checks | |
| Percentage of Asbestos checks completed | 100% |

³ Prescribed formula for calculation: Complaints received in year / number of HRA properties x 1000 – as per [TSM Technical Guidance](#).

| | |
|---|--------|
| No of dwellings owned that have received an asbestos survey that need one | 342 |
| TSM - BS04 - Water Safety Checks | |
| Percentage of Legionella Risk Assessments completed | 96.23% |
| No of dwellings owned that have received a legionella risk assessment that need one | 102 |
| TSM - BS05 - Lift Safety Checks | |
| Percentage of Communal Passenger Lift Safety checks completed | 100% |
| No of dwellings owned that have received a lift safety check that need one | 123 |

5. Service Improvement Plan

- 5.1. Following the introduction of the new Consumer Regulations by the Regulator for Social Housing, the Housing & Communities Service has conducted a gap analysis of the whole service against the standards and the specific requirements within each, to understand the current position of service delivery.
- 5.2. This gap analysis has highlighted areas of both strengths and weakness within the service and this has provided a basis for the improvement work that will need to be undertaken to ensure that all the standards are fully met, and as importantly deliver high quality services for our tenants.
- 5.3. Key focus themes of Know your Tenants, Know your Homes, Data Assurance and Governance/ Performance Information have been identified as requiring improvement which span multiple services and teams. Once outcomes have been delivered against the plan it will assist in meeting all aspects of the standards and will ameliorate the service being delivered to tenants.
- 5.4. The Service Improvement Team have approval to recruit 3 Housing Project Officers to help deliver the work required within these project themes due to the current workload demands and pressure carried within the existing structure.

6. Contribution to Strategic Aims

6.1. The programme of works to Council Homes contributes to:

- **A Healthy Environment** by retrofitting existing homes with low carbon initiatives to improve thermal efficiency and ultimately contribute to Reading becoming a carbon neutral town by 2030
- **Thriving Communities** by introducing thermal efficiency measures to reduce fuel poverty and enable those living in Council homes to have an equal chance to thrive
- **Inclusive Economy** by seeking to let contracts for major projects to contractors who provide a level of social value to the town including opportunities for education, skills and training

6.2. In line with TEAM Reading values the programme of works to Council homes makes a difference to our residents by:

- Safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable; and
- Providing homes for those in most need.

7. Environmental and Climate Implications

7.1. Not applicable.

8. Community Engagement

8.1. Details of engagement with tenants via complaints and surveys is included in the body of the report.

9. Equality Implications

9.1. There are no requirements for an Equality Impact Assessment for the purposes of this report.

10. Other Relevant Considerations

10.1. N/A

11. Legal Implications

11.1. The 2006 Decent Homes Standard is a government-set standard for council housing. The standard describes a Decent Home as one that is fit to live in, in a reasonable state of repair, having reasonably modern facilities and services, and being insulated to a reasonable standard and weatherproof. The standard was updated in 2006 to include the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

11.2. In addition, work outlined in this report is covered by the following legislation:

- Landlord & Tenant Act 1985
- Housing Act 2004
- Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994
- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Commonhold & Leasehold Reform Act 2002
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Building Regulations Act 1984
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Sections 2, 3 and 4
- Equality Act 2010
- HCA – The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England from April 2012
- Building Safety Act 2022
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023

12. Financial Implications

12.1. Not applicable.

13. Timetable for Implementation

13.1. Not applicable.

14. Background Papers

14.1. Not applicable.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable.

3. Value for Money (VFM)

Not applicable.

4. Risk Assessment.

Not applicable.