

Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee



Reading
Borough Council

Working better with you

09 July 2025

Title	RBC Landlord Services Performance Report – Year End Update 2024/25
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Melissa Wise, Executive Director Communities & Adult Social Care
Report author	Natalie Waters - Interim Assistant Director for Housing Landlord Services
Lead Councillor	Cllr Matt Yeo, Lead Councillor for Housing and Communities
Council priority	Secure Reading's economic & cultural success
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee note the Year End position for the Housing Landlord Service Performance for 2024-25.

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 2024-2025 financial year.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. This report outlines how Reading's Housing Landlord Service is delivering against 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:
 - Safety and Quality Standard
 - Neighbourhood and Community Standard
 - Transparency, Influence and Accountability (including Tenant Satisfaction Measures)
 - Tenancy Standard
- 2.2. As part of these new standards, housing providers are required to ensure that performance is reported transparently and subject to robust oversight through their

established governance structures. In line with our commitment to meeting these Regulator Standards, this report is presented to the HNL Committee to provide clear insight into performance, support informed scrutiny, challenge, and strategic discussion.

Service Improvement Plan

- 2.3. Following the outcome of the Council's Regulator of Social Housing Inspection published in April 2025 the service is updating its existing improvement plan entitled 'Building Communities, Empowering Lives Improvement Plan' to fully address the findings of the inspection process and agree priority areas for rapid improvement with the Regulator.
- 2.4. The service is meeting with the Regulator of Social Housing throughout June and July to finalise the priorities, agree milestones and realistic timescales to ensure sustainable improvements are made. Thereafter the service will engage in monthly meetings with the Regulator to monitor progress. The Committee will receive progress highlight reports on an ongoing basis.
- 2.5. In the meantime, the Service continues to deliver against its existing improvement plan with progress made in the follow areas as per deadlines set.

3. The Proposal

Quality & Safety Standard - Housing Repairs

- 3.1. The improvement plan for Repairs and Property services focuses on 10 key workstreams. Four working groups have been established to oversee the workstreams and fortnightly operational meetings monitor and track progress against the plan. Quarterly updates are presented to a dedicated Oversight Board alongside updates to this Committee.
- 3.2. Updates for each workstream up to the end of May are noted below:

1. Transition of service to Directorate of Communities and Adult Social Care

The service has been formally moved into a new Directorate on the back of a staff consultation. The outcome has been communicated to staff and staff moved across on the 12th May 2025. This action is now complete.

2. Embedding culture change

Culture workshops were delivered to all supervisors and managers at the end of April. Follow up sessions scheduled every 6 weeks over the coming months have been arranged to target the key themes of feedback, including staff retention, bullying and harassment and environment in the office.

3. Review of Roles, Responsibilities & Operating Model

This end-to-end review has been planned into phases which is team based, with an initial focus on the back office and senior management roles with the aim to be completed within 12 months, to ensure roles and responsibilities are clear with accurate job descriptions.

4. Recruitment & Retention

A dedicated resource has been assigned to support the delivery of the recently developed recruitment strategy. Key focus areas for the strategy including targeted campaigns, community engagement and events, referral and applicant pipeline. The service recognises the importance of apprenticeships to build and develop our internal resource and currently has 10 apprenticeship posts within the establishment with 8 in post, and 2 within the recruitment process. Alongside this, priorities have been established to work on retention including a review of the induction check list, skills test and addressing barriers.

5. Procurement

There are 12 contracts on the priority one list of contracts and good progress being made. The service will need to be flexible with this pipeline and adjust for any changes. The Fire Compliance contract has been out to tender and clarification questions are now being

responded to. The next 3 contracts, Pest Control, Scaffolding and Gas Boiler Installations, are being checked by Procurement and will then be published for tender.

6. IT System Usage

All trade operatives received NEC Mobile refresher training at the end of March which covered the basics of NEC-Mobile use, recurring user errors and issues, and reset expectations. Reports are being created to highlight if trade operatives are still struggling and ensuring the correct information is being captured.

Back-office support staff refresher training has been split into three distinct groups, covering Voids, Planned and Reactive Repairs, to account for the slight differences in the team's use of the system.

Voids team training is complete, and refresher training for Planned and Reactive Repairs is scheduled.

Following refresher training, guides will be circulated to ensure everyone is following the agreed and expected processes within the system from job creation, job management and closure. We expect this to help reduce jobs ending up in the planning queue, contributing to the Work In Progress numbers, as well as preventing duplicate jobs being created, and closed incorrectly.

In this last reporting period, we have had an NEC Mobile and Scheduler health check with an NEC consultant, looking at best practices and highlighting any issues. We are waiting for the report which will highlight the next steps.

7. Closure of Wokingham Borough Council Contract

Notice has been given, and the contract will end on 16th June. Operational meetings are held fortnightly. The Council are sharing information with the new service provider and planned staff consultation has commenced.

8. Contract Management

A dedicated contract manager has been appointed, and started at the beginning of April, to manage the two largest contracts; Planned & Voids and Reactive Repairs contract.

In the last reporting period, the contractor for Planned and Voids works has given the required 13-week contractual notice, which runs to mid-July. Plans are moving forward, with support from procurement to secure a new contractor.

9. Policies, Procedures and Processes

All required policies and procedures have been produced to a standardised template, and are under review by sub-working groups, with subject matter experts. Once finalised, these will be processed for sign off via the appropriate channels for adoption.

Alongside the policies, process mapping across Property Services and Repairs is underway, covering 32 processes in total. Mapping workshops have been carried out or are scheduled for 14 of the required processes before the end of May, with all expected to be completed by the end of August 2025.

10. Damp & Mould

Fortnightly case reviews have been embedded into operational practice, supported by ongoing collaboration with the Repairs service. This structured approach has resulted in a notable improvement, with the oldest open case now dating from May 2023—an advancement from the previously reported position of December 2022. These reviews also ensure that any remedial works related to Damp and Mould are promptly identified and prioritised.

To ensure readiness for the forthcoming legislative changes under Awaab's Law, anticipated to take effect in October 2025, strategic monthly meetings have been established. These sessions are focused on aligning service delivery with the new statutory requirements, ensuring full compliance and proactive implementation.

3.3. Performance against the Key Performance Indicators for the Repairs & Property Services Improvement Plan is presented below:

Ref	Description	Target	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25
Procurement					
CIP01	Number of priority 1 contracts awarded (12 identified as priority 1)	12	4	5	5
CIP02	Number of priority 1 contracts not awarded but in progress		7	5	5
CIP03	Number of priority 2 contracts in progress (12 identified as priority 2)	12	2	2	2
Policies & Procedures					
CIP04	Number of required policies drafted and in review	13	8	8	13
CIP04A	Number of required policies signed off and available centrally		0	0	0
CIP05	Number of required business processes documented	32	2	7	9
Staffing (Recruitment)					
CIP06	Percentage of vacancies against the establishment - Repairs only		22.61	20.4	20.4
CIP06A	Number of vacancies against the establishment - Repairs only (total 113 posts)		26	23	23
CIP07	Percentage of vacancies against the establishment - Property Services Back Office		30.77	34.2	34.2
CIP07A	Number of vacancies within the establishment - Property Services Back Office (out of 38 posts)		12	13	13
CIP08	Percentage of vacancies against the whole establishment		24.68	23.8	23.8

CIP08A	Number of vacancies within the establishment - Total (out of 151 posts)		38	36	36
Repairs Performance KPIs					
CIP09A	Outstanding Repairs (WIP)	1000	2617	3370	4050 ¹
CIP09B	Overdue Repairs (out of timescale) ²	350	1600	1890	2300
CIP10	Customer satisfaction (%)	90	78.94	81.88	83.76
CIP11	Repairs completed within timescale (all priorities)	90	78.94%	74.23%	85.70%
CIP12	Emergency repairs completed within timescale (3 hours)	95	76.74%	80.18%	91.29%
CIP13	Urgent repairs completed within timescale (2 working days)	95	59.89%	41.86%	48.67% ³
CIP14	Routine repairs completed within timescale (15 working days)	90	79.84%	77.85%	91.39%
CFC Call Volume Data					
CIP15	Number of repairs calls received by CFC		2682	2380	2167
CIP16	Percentage of repairs calls answered		56.0%	58.9%	70.1%
CIP17	Average wait time (HH:MM:SS)		00:41:51	00:40:41	00:24:44
HR KPIs					
CIP18	Number of long term sickness absences (over 20 consecutive days)		3	2	3
CIP19	Percentage of RTW interviews completed	100	77	100	91

3.4. The performance KPIs for April saw an improvement on the last period for almost all measures, with the performance indicator for repairs completed on time increasing from 74.2% to 85.7% and a significant improvement seen for emergency repairs completed on time, jumping from 80.18% to 91.29%

¹ see point 3.5 of the report for further narrative on this.

² Figures shown are less approx. 1000 duplicate jobs or works completed not yet shut down.

³ See point 3.5 of the report for further narrative on this

- 3.5. Attention has been focused on improving the urgent repairs completed on time, which had dropped in the last period to 41.8%. For April, this has improved to 48.67% and we expect this to continue to increase through the data cleansing exercise the teams are carrying out to work through the repairs backlog to clear down works that have already been completed together with work orders that have been raised to process contractor work which has caused duplication. Through process mapping it has been determined that this duplication was due to incorrect processes being followed, and this has since been rectified. The next piece of work is to close those duplicated orders in the system, which the temporary TSO staff will be doing over the coming months
- 3.6. Four new temporary (6 months) Technical Support Officers have joined the back office, and this has had a positive impact on the performance of KPIs including managing throughput of jobs with the aim of reducing the WIP. Further interviews are planned for the coming weeks for an additional TSO resource.

Quality & Safety - Decent Homes

- 3.7. As part of our strategic objective to gain a comprehensive understanding of the condition of our housing stock and to ensure we meet our commitment of getting behind every door over the next 12 months, we initiated a large-scale stock condition survey in February 2025
- 3.8. The survey has been commissioned from Ridge & Partners LLP. The first phase covers 2,300 properties. The primary aim is to provide robust, up-to-date data on the condition of our homes, which will inform future investment planning and compliance with Decent Homes standards.
- 3.9. To ensure Tenants were informed and prepared for the surveys, introductory letters were sent to all households included in the first phase. These letters outlined the purpose of the surveys, introduced Ridge & Partners LLP as our appointed contractor, and provided details on what Tenants could expect during the visit
- 3.10. To date, Ridge & Partners have successfully completed approximately 900 surveys. An additional 600 properties have been allocated to surveyors and are scheduled for completion in the coming weeks. There have been challenges in accessing properties and we have been working hard with tenants to help them understand the importance of these surveys.
- 3.11. While the initial rollout experienced some teething issues related to the quality and consistency of the data received, these have been addressed promptly. We implemented additional training sessions for surveyors and established a regular communication protocol with Ridge & Partners LLP to ensure ongoing quality assurance.
- 3.12. Regular progress meetings are being held with Ridge & Partners LLP to monitor delivery against milestones, address any emerging issues, and ensure alignment with our strategic objectives. An update on the progress made and outcomes of the surveys being completed will be brought back to the next HNL committee.
- 3.13. A number of key themes that require works have been identified from the new surveys carried out together with those that have already been completed, which includes the replacement of windows, front doors, pitch and flat roof's together with remedial works that are required to external wall finishes and chimneys. We are currently in the process of drafting several programmes of works with the aim of completing these works in this financial year.

Transparency Influence & Accountability – Complaints & Housing Ombudsman

- 3.14. The Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code (CHC) for all Social Landlords requires the Landlord to report its performance in relation to complaints to a 'Governing Body' on an annual basis. In Reading the Complaints performance is reported to the

Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee 3 times per year in order to adhere to this requirement.

3.15. In 2024/25 the Housing & Communities Service (including repairs and maintenance) has received 526 complaints at Stage 1. There were also 47 requests for complaints to be escalated to Stage 2. The breakdown of the complaints and the comparison to the previous year is outlined in Table 1.

3.16. Table 1: Total number of complaints split by Area and compared to the previous year:

Area	2024-25		2023-24	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Community Partnerships	9	1.7%	9	2%
Housing Needs	105	20.0%	62	17%
Property Development	2	0.4%	5	1%
Sheltered Housing	1	0.2%	4	1%
Strategic Housing	1	0.2%	0	0%
Tenant Services	65	12.4%	83	22%
Repairs & Property Services	342	65.0%	209	56%
Private Sector Housing (Adaptations)	1	0.2%	0	0%
Total	526	100%	372	100%

3.17. There has been a significant increase in the number of complaints received in 2024-25 compared to 2023-24, the most significant of which are in Housing Needs and the Repairs Service (43 and 133 respectively). The increase within Housing Needs is attributable to initial problems associated with implementation of the new Housing Online System which have since been resolved. The increase relating to repairs stems from the lack of capacity, difficulties in staff recruitment and challenges in procuring and mobilising appropriate contractors has impacted on our ability to complete jobs in a timely way.

3.18. Of the 526 complaints received during this period, 414 have been responded to and the outcomes are listed in the table below. These figures will not add up to the total received during this period as there are complaints that are in the process of being investigated and remain open as the target times fall within the next reporting period.

Table 2 Outcome of complaint in year and compared to 2023/24:

Outcome	2024-25		2023-24	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Upheld	250	60%	162	44%
Partially Upheld	37	9%	45	12%
Not upheld	66	16%	126	34%
No Outcome	23	6%	23	6%
Multiple Outcomes	38	9%	16	4%
Total	526	100%	372	100%

3.19. In line with the number of complaints, the number of upheld decisions has also increased, rising from 162 in the previous year to 250 in 2024-25. A substantial proportion of these upheld complaints relate to the Repairs Service. The primary factors contributing to this increase include missed appointments and prolonged delays in

scheduling, both of which have resulted in justified tenant dissatisfaction, and subsequent upheld decisions.

3.20. The most common themes for the complaints are listed below, in decreasing order of quantities received:

2024-25	2023-24
Quality of service	Time taken to resolve issue
Failure to resolve issue	Quality of Service
Time taken to resolve issue	Failure to resolve issue
Communication	Communication

3.21. The top themes for complaints mirror those from 2023-24, the only difference being the numbers of complaint for each theme. As part of the Service Improvement Plan, and focus on learning from complaints, a full review of all upheld / partially upheld complaints is being completed to identify the specific themes where there has been service failures and dissatisfaction expressed and options to address those that are not already part of the Building Communities, Empowering Lives improvement plan.

3.22. During this period 54% of complaints were responded to within the required timescale as defined by the Housing Ombudsman, a decreased on the previous year of 2023-24 which was 65%.

The decline in response performance has been attributed to two key factors. Firstly, the implementation of the new Arcus system introduced a range of initial challenges, including system-related delays and a period of adjustment as teams adapted to new workflows. These early-stage issues significantly impacted the timely allocation and response to enquiries. Secondly, the volume of complaints, approximately 41% more than the previous year. Although both the Housing & Communities Team and the Customer Relations Team responded by deploying additional resources, the scale of incoming contacts has made it extremely challenging to consistently meet the revised response times.

3.23. The complaint statistics for Affinity (Reading) Ltd who manage 1248 units as part of the PFI arrangement are captured separately. The table below shows the performance for 2024-25, in comparison to 2023-24.

Complaints	2024-25		2023-24	
	Received	Responded in timescale	Received	Responded in timescale
Stage 1	10	80%	3	66%
Stage 2	2	50%	1	100%
Total	12	65%	4	83%

3.24. In response to the Regulator for Social Housing's (RSH) recommendations work is progressing with Affinity to align the services tenants receive. This will include ensuring that complaints are formally recorded and responded to in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code, rather than an informal estate-based approach. This work will be captured as part of the Service's Strategic Improvement Plan.

3.25. The report brought to Committee in March 2025 outlined the results of all findings made by the Housing Ombudsman for the year 2023-24. At the time of writing this report the Council is waiting for the report of the findings made within 2024-2025. Once this is received the information will be shared with Committee as part of a future update.

Transparency Influence & Accountability - Tenant Satisfaction Survey & Tenant Satisfaction Measures

- 3.26. The service has no further updates to provide on the Tenant Satisfaction Measures or Tenant Satisfaction Measures at this time. This data set will be submitted to the Regulator for Social Housing as part of our annual return, and this is due by the end of June 2025. The details of this submission will be shared with Committee as part of the next update.
- 3.27. The service is currently preparing for the completion of the 2025-26 Tenant Satisfaction Survey, and in doing so we are reviewing best practices across the sector to understand if any changes need to be made from the current arrangement of this being completed in the Autumn / Early winter. Options are being considered to understand the best way to delivery this survey moving forward. The questions will remain the same as previous years, as well as the sampling approach, but options around timing and including additional surveys have been discussed and will be considered. These changes and approach will be brought as an update at the next Committee following the completion of the 2025-26 Tenant Satisfaction Survey

Transparency Influence & Accountability - Tenant Engagement Strategy 2025-30

- 3.28. The Tenant Engagement Strategy (TES) was formally approved by Committee at its meeting on March 11th 2025. The service is currently in the process of agreeing the Terms of Reference with the Tenant Voices Panel, which comprises the core group of engaged tenants. This will be in place by June 2025.
- 3.29. Training has been identified and prioritised in agreement with the Service, engaged tenants and partners, and the training offer is ready to be finalised ahead of the recruitment campaign, and will be in place by July.
- 3.30. The recruitment campaign to attract engaged tenants is currently being scoped, with the following phased approach:
 - **June 2025:** Soft launch using existing engagement opportunities at community centres.
 - **July 2025:** Targeted outreach campaigns begin, focusing on underrepresented groups and areas with lower engagement. To include a Your Housing Special, and targeted messaging via social media channels and emails.
 - **Early September 2025:** A Housing Information Day is being planned for the end of the summer holidays to boost visibility of the Housing Services and encourage sign-up to either the Sounding Board or the Tenant Voices Panel either in person or digital membership. This is currently being scoped but will be held centrally and will be advertised in all housing publications, in the community centres and on social media channels.
 - **September / October 2025:** Review of the impact of the recruitment initiatives and onboarding of new participants into the new menu of options and training opportunities. This will be delivered throughout September & October to ensure a flexible offer to the new engaged tenants.
 - This timeline is designed to ensure a steady build-up of interest and participation, culminating in a strong start to the autumn engagement programme.

Transparency Influence & Accountability - Tenant Accessibility Policy 2025

- 3.31. The Tenant Accessibility Policy appears elsewhere on the agenda for this Committee

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

4.1. The work of the Housing & Communities service contributes to the Council's Plan themes around:

- **Promote more equal communities in Reading** - by introducing new meaningful ways for our tenants to engage with and scrutinise the services they receive from Reading the Council's Housing & Communities Service, ensuring their voice is heard and represented
- **Secure Reading's economic and cultural success** - 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
- **Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce Reading's carbon footprint 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

4.2. 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.

4.3. The Housing & Communities service aspires to deliver a common purpose of 'supporting the life that matters to you'. This aims to ensure we tailor our services to meet the individual needs of our tenants. Ensuring our Council stock is safe, efficient and well maintained and we deliver fit for purpose and efficient Council services aligns with this ambition.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

5.1. There are no environmental or climate implications as a result of this information report.

6. Community Engagement

6.1. The Housing Service has an engagement approach that enables consultation with tenants on a range of issues and through different means including, surveys, focus groups, a tenant scrutiny panel and formal consultation, the results of which drive service improvement.

6.2. Details of engagement with tenants via complaints and surveys is included in the body of the report alongside references to the planned improvements around tenant engagement.

7. Equality Implications

7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2. There are no proposed changes to services that will negatively impact on the way people access and experience services therefore there is no requirement for an Equality Impact Assessment for the purposes of this report.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

8.1. N/A

9. Legal Implications

9.1. 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).

9.2. In addition, work outlined in this report is covered by the following legislation, which gives councillors a flavour of the highly regulated nature of the Service:

- Landlord & Tenant Act 1985
- Social Housing (Regulations) Act 2023
- 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

10. Financial Implications

10.1. There are no direct financial implications as a result of the information outlined in this report. The additional posts supporting the improvements in the service were previously agreed by Council in February 2025 as part of the Housing Revenue Account budget setting.

10.2. The Programme of Works for 2025-26 report was approved by this committee on the 11th March 2025, which included budgeted provision of circa £3.7 million to address the remedial works identified through the Decent Homes Surveys.

11. Timetable for Implementation

11.1. Not applicable.

12. Background Papers

12.1. There are none.