

REPORT TITLE: HOUSING REPAIRS, MAINTENANCE AND DISABLED
ADAPTATIONS POLICIES

23 JULY 2025

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: Mark Reach, Cabinet Member Good Homes

Contact Officer: Gilly Knight Tel No: 01962 848 577 Email
gknight@winchester.gov.uk

WARD(S): ALL

PURPOSE

The housing repair and maintenance policies and procedures for approval and adoption in this paper have been introduced and updated as a business need in support of the housing procurement of the HRA Council Housing Repair, Maintenance and Compliance Activities Contract as approved at Cabinet Committee on 21 May 2025 (CAB3506).

The proposed policies and procedures will support the upcoming preliminary market engagement with potential bidders, scheduled for July. Once approved the policies and procedures will be shared with potential contract bidders to set out the council's delivery principles of the Council Home Repairs, Maintenance and Compliance Contract and the service tenants can expect to receive. It is expected that good tenant communication and satisfaction levels are adopted as a joint and collective responsibility.

Policies supported by service procedures provide a foundation to ensure repairs and maintenance work is compliant with laws and regulations, provide consistency and fairness of processes, mitigate risk and liability and improve customer communication and satisfaction levels. They support and promote a positive culture and a climate of diversity and inclusion to create positive service outcomes for staff and tenants.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That Cabinet Committee: Housing is asked to approve and adopt the 4 Housing Repairs and Maintenance policies:
 - a) Disabled Adaptations Policy
 - b) Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy
 - c) Housing Repairs Recharge Policy
 - d) Managing Damp and Mould Policy
2. That Cabinet Committee Housing:
 - a) Delegate to Corporate Head of Housing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Good Homes, to make any minor amendments to the damp and mould policy so it is compliant with legislation from October 2025.

IMPLICATIONS:1 COUNCIL PLAN OUTCOME

1.1 Greener Faster

Greener Homes' is one of the key strategic objectives within the Housing Strategy (2023 - 2028) and will help develop and support a greener district to address the climate emergency. The procurement of the repairs, maintenance and compliance contract include a requirement for contract bidders to outline how they would contribute to the council's carbon reduction targets. Providing clear policies and procedures that outline service expectations is a critical component of the tender process, as they inform an integral part of the contractual framework, including service management and performance indicators.

1.2 Thriving Places

Delivering a quality repairs service is essential for our tenants who often view how well the repairs service is run as representative of the performance of the council housing landlord service. The views of residents is a key driver in designing and setting the new service standards to include having robust service policies and procedures in place.

The tender process will encourage and assess how suppliers can incorporate the use of local market in delivering council home repairs and maintenance services with the aim of contributing to prosperity and resilience of the local economy.

1.3 Healthy Communities

Good housing is crucial for healthy communities as it directly impacts on physical and mental well-being it can enhance overall safety, quality of life, promote healthy behaviours and reduce health inequalities. Part of the repairs, maintenance and compliance contract tender evaluation will assess the social value that contractors will deliver to enhance and support local communities. The provision of policies and procedures setting out the service principles and procedures will support this work.

1.4 Good Homes for All

Repairs and maintenance have a direct influence on the quality of the council's housing stock and on the wellbeing of our tenants' lives. The repairs, maintenance and compliance redesign contract will improve, repair and increase the lifespan of a property's fabric while ensuring that residents' homes meet decency standards and comply with the Housing Health and Safety Rating system (HHSRS).

The provision of repairs and maintenance policies and procedures setting out the service principles and procedures help tenants and stakeholders to hold the council landlord to account and drive improvements in customer satisfaction and efficiency of delivery.

1.5 Efficient and Effective

Sector specialist advice has been sought to ensure that we procure efficient and effective repair and maintenance customer solutions to provide our tenants with the most efficient options to raise repair requests. This will support the aim of a first-time fix for tenants, reduce repeat visits and support improved tenant satisfaction levels. The provision of policies and procedures setting out these service principles will enhance efficiency methods.

1.6 Listening and Learning

The emphasis of the appointed contractor and the supporting policies and procedures is to establish a resident centric ethos to deliver the service 'With and for them' and not 'To them'. The policies have been consulted on with tenants and stakeholders, we have listened to feedback and incorporated changes within the policies as referenced at 6.3.

2 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 The policies and procedures have been developed and updated to support procurement of the repairs, maintenance and compliance contracts which will be delivered and monitored within existing staffing resources. The business plan agreed in February 2025 included agreed estimates of reactive repair, void costs and compliance works within the scope of the repairs, maintenance and compliance policy principles and aims, the HRA revenue budget, and within the capital programme for planned and reactive maintenance works.
- 2.2 The overall revenue budget in the agreed business plan supports the delivery aims of the proposed repairs and maintenance policies for the revenue works that are within the scope of the repairs, maintenance and compliance contract procurement is £56.7m, and capital budget for works in scope is £43.7m over the repairs and maintenance 4+3 contract period.

3 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The procurement strategy for the repairs, maintenance and compliance contracts places a clear emphasis on quality over the lowest price, with the objective of securing reliable and consistently delivered services at a fair and sustainable price. The supporting proposed policy aims and priorities define the required outcomes for repairs and maintenance, setting firm expectations for contractor bidders. These include a shared and proactive commitment to effective tenant communication and tenant satisfaction, which are regarded as core contractual obligations and collective responsibilities.

- 3.2 The proposed principles and aims of the repairs, maintenance and compliance policies and procedures align with the new Procurement Act, where the basis of award is now referred to as the 'most advantageous tender' rather than, as in the previous legislation, the 'most economically advantageous tender' (MEAT). This enables the assessment of tenders against a range of 'quality and 'social value' factors to determine the best solution.

4 WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The policy work will be undertaken within existing staffing resources with the enhanced recharging mechanism in the Housing Repairs and Recharge Policy carried out by the existing housing income team.
- 4.2 The Housing Revenue Account budget is in place to deliver on associated revenue and capital works within the current scope of the proposed repair and maintenance policies.

5 PROPERTY AND ASSET IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The proposed provision of the repairs and maintenance policies and procedures will support the work of the repairs and maintenance redesign contract. They will support and drive changes that will improve the decency standards of council homes, comply with the Housing Health and Safety Rating (HHSRS) requirements and Awaab Laws.

6 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 6.1 A survey tenant consultation process took place last summer with 823 survey responses received. While the survey predominantly supported the early work of the procurement of the repair and maintenance redesign service, the feedback and outcomes captured from surveys informed the formulation of several of the policies and procedures in this paper.
- 6.2 The four proposed policies and procedures were presented to the Economy and Housing Committee (EHP56) on 11 February 2025. Committee noted that the new policies and procedures together provided clarity on the responsibilities of both tenants and the council and raised the importance of a robust appeals process, particularly for the recharge policy, anticipating potential challenges from tenants due to its new implementation.

The committee welcomed a regular review of the policies and suggested adding the implementation date and review date on each policy. The Committee requested a review of the policies in one year, following implementation, to assess the impact of the policies.

- 6.3 An on-line digital tenant feedback survey was sent to 6,273 individual tenant email addresses on 20 May 2025, in respect of the four proposed policies and

procedures. A total of 92 responses were gathered. Respondents could select which policies they wished to review and had the option to skip policies. Questions focused on whether the policies were clear to the reader and whether the content was good, a rating score from 1-5 (5 being excellent) was used for these questions. The survey also enabled more qualitative responses from questions asking for feedback or anything that should be removed or added to each policy.

Rating scores from respondents:

HRA Aids and Adaptations	Housing Repairs and Maintenance	Housing Repairs Recharge Policy	Damp and Mould
90% rated 3 or above for content.	93% rated 3 or above for content	87% rated 3 or above for content	87% rated 3 or above for content
90% related 3 or above for clarity	97% related 3 or above for clarity	85% related 3 or above for clarity	87% related 3 or above for clarity

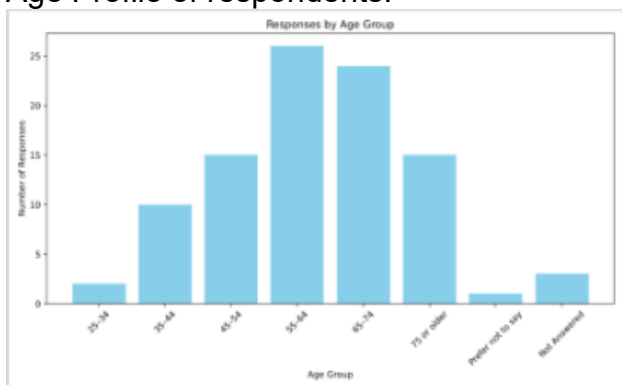
The two emerging themes on the four policies focused on accessibility, and clarity of content responses are reflected below under the themes.

- 6.4 Accessibility: Policies are too long, and waffly, suggestion to provide a simpler version which is easy read, use plain English and clear language removing technical and legal language. Avoid using language that could be seen as punitive, blaming or dismissive. Other format suggestions included replacing bullet points for expandable sections, searchable or interactive versions to help tenants quickly locate relevant sections.
- 6.5 Clarity of content: Key concern raised with the 12-month timescale for the aids and adaptation process, suggestion to reduce to 6 months especially where health is deteriorating. Clarity on tenant's rights and responsibilities for maintenance and replacement of aids and adaptations. Clearer, priority-based repairs system to help the understanding of repairs priorities. Clarity of escalation processes when repairs are delayed beyond timeframes, who to contact and how to maintain communication throughout the process. Suggestion to add in tiered or escalating contribution model for damage, clarify responsibility in grey areas for recharges such as shower cubicles, mould or accidental damage.
- 6.6 The key recurring themes across the four policies is tone of language such as blaming residents for damp and mould rather than focusing on structural issues and there was various feedback that policy aims did not reflect the tenants experience in practice this was specifically in respect of the repairs and maintenance and damp and mould policies. Examples provided were concerns about delays in repairs, contractor accountability, and a perceived lack of oversight by housing officers. That policies did not consider carers with

informal responsibilities and suggested allowing residents to nominate a trusted individual to grant access on their behalf.

- 6.7 The policies have been amended to reflect tenant feedback and shared experiences captured through the online tenant survey. We have new tenant engagement platforms in place where tenants have opportunities to monitor policy work to influence change, help fine tune policies and identify gaps in service that may need policy intervention.

- 6.8 Age Profile of respondents.



7 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 The Term Contractor(s) for the repairs, maintenance and compliance contracts with the provision of the repairs and maintenance policies and procedures will require the successful bidders to support the council's Carbon Neutrality objectives and Nature Emergency.

8 PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed on all four Repair and Maintenance policies and explores the potential impacts on tenants, particularly those with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. The assessment process anticipated variations in tenant circumstances and the ways in which the policies can be applied to mitigate against any adverse effects on tenants.
- 8.2 The Repair and Maintenance tender process and the successful bidder will be required to comply with the council's Equality Policy. The council will also include questions within the PA 2023 compliant questionnaire to determine whether any of the bidders has had any complaints made against them in the last three years, which were upheld following an investigation by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (or equivalent).
- 8.3 While the proposed policies carry potential impacts, the Equality Impact Assessments demonstrate that through adaptive design and processes, inclusive communication, access and ongoing monitoring, adverse effects can

be mitigated, ensuring fairness and compliance with equality obligations to ensure there is little or no differential impact on tenants.

9 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 The proposed repair, maintenance and compliance policies and procedures are operational service policies for guidance and information and do not collect personal data. Personal data is collected, used or processed as part of current housing data systems in accordance with the data protection principles and legislation.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 10.1 There are more opportunities than risk associated with the proposed adoption of the repair, maintenance and compliance policies and procedures. The potential risk is the current lack of policies. To mitigate this risk and support regulatory work the service has commissioned external support to deliver a wider suite of repair, maintenance and compliance policies for the six areas of compliance related to property health and safety. The policies and procedures are due to be completed by end of July 2025 with staff workshops in place to help develop policy.
- 10.2 The proposed policies and procedures are required to support the upcoming preliminary market engagement with potential bidders, scheduled for July.

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
Financial Exposure:	HRA Business Plan and revenue and capital budgets in place to support delivery of the associated work within the repairs and maintenance policies.	Improved tenant repairs and maintenance satisfaction levels. Improved Regulator TSM results. Reduced complaint handling.
Exposure to challenge:	Policies will be regularly reviewed and where applicable include a dispute/appeals process.	
Innovation		The introduction of new and improved policies and procedures to enhance the safety, quality and efficiency of service delivery.
Reputation		Enhanced repairs and maintenance reputation with clear and transparent repairs and maintenance policies in place.

Achievement of outcome	Clear and transparent policies to provide guidance and information in respect of tenants and landlord repair and maintenance responsibilities,	Improved tenant Repairs and Maintenance satisfaction levels. Improved Regulator TSM results. Reduced complaint handling
Property		
Community Support	Consultation with tenants and stakeholders to provide collaboration of views and ensure the tenants voice is heard within the policy making process.	
Timescales		
Project capacity	Within current staffing, budget resources and the agreed HRA Business Plan.	
Other		

11 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

Background

- 11.1 The repair, maintenance and compliance policies and procedures are introduced and improved to support the current procurement of the council housing repair and maintenance redesign contract due to be implemented in August 2026. The proposed policies and procedures will support the upcoming preliminary market engagement with potential bidders, scheduled for July.
- 11.2 Once approved and adopted the proposed repair, maintenance and compliance policies and procedures will be shared with potential contract bidders to clearly set out the expected service delivery principles and outcomes for our tenants receiving the service. They will support improvement in customer communication, satisfaction levels and efficiency of delivery.

Proposed Policies

- 11.3 The four policies and procedures seeking approval are important in providing a framework for consistent and compliant repair and maintenance operational work, to ensure safety, adhere to regulatory requirements, streamline decision making and protect against risk.

- 11.4 They will contribute to efficiency of delivery of service and promote fairness and transparency. They provide assurance, guidance and awareness of policy for tenants living in council homes and a framework for decision making and procedure guides for staff.
- 11.5 The policies and procedures will be monitored and reviewed every two years, any new national and regulatory priorities that emerge may change the current policy focus.

11.6 HRA Aids and Adaptions Policy

The updated Aids and Adaptation policy sets out how the council will respond to tenant's request for aids and adaption to ensure the needs of those living with disabilities in council homes are supported to live better, stay safe and live independently at home for longer. The policy also operates in conjunction with the council's allocations policy to support tenants who may need to move to a more suitable home when it is not cost effective to carry out property adaptations.

The policy sets a benchmark of £6,000 for major adaptations within the Housing Revenue Account budget. The 2026/27 budget for aids and adaptions provides £120,000 for fast track works and £695,000 in the capital programme. Due to the increase in demand for social housing alternative options are considered on a case-to-case basis by the housing adaptations panel. This is to ensure that the aids and adaptation budget is spent effectively and to make best use of the council housing stock and may result in a tenant needing to move to a more suitable property.

Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy

- 11.7 The policy sets out the council's approach for the delivery of the housing repairs and maintenance contract. The policy reflects responsive repairs, planned and cyclical maintenance programs to ensure the council's stock is well maintained and safe to meet the needs of our tenants.

The policy applies to all tenants, and we will work with tenants to continue to improve and shape the service and to meet regulatory requirements. To include regular customer feedback opportunities to find ways to improve customer service and satisfaction levels.

This policy aim is to ensure that all tenants have good quality safe homes that meet decency standards.

11.8 Housing Repairs Recharge Policy

The policy aims to meet the council's statutory and regulatory repair and maintenance requirements within a value for money context. Recovery of repair cost debts that are not the responsibility of the council ensures fairness and sustainability of the HRA budget for all tenants.

The council has a duty to all its tenants to ensure that the use of HRA funds is applied fairly and appropriately. The policy aim is to reduce the cost of repair works that are not considered to be a landlord responsibility by the introduction of a framework for recharging tenants and sets out examples of the type of repairs to be recharged.

Much of the policy principles are already set out in tenancy agreements and in the tenant and landlord responsibilities of the Tenants Handbook. Recharges will be applied in the cases of wilful damage and general neglect that would otherwise fall to the council to fix at a cost to other tenants. A recharge mechanism will be established within the current housing income recovery processes. The policy includes an appeal process to manage disputes. This policy will be effective in reducing the current cost of carrying out repair work which is not the council's responsibility.

11.9 Damp and Mould Policy.

The purpose of this policy is to support the council and its tenants to work together to prevent and solve the causes that lead to damp and mould in homes. The key aim is to provide assurance that effective processes are in place to deal with reported damp and mould and in within set timeframes. The policy provides a framework for staff to effectively deal with reported damp and mould problems. It is aimed at ensuring tenants get appropriate information regarding the causes and control of damp and mould and that as a landlord we carry out our duties and are compliant with the Housing Health and Safety Rating (HHSRS) requirements and Awaab's Laws due to be implemented in October 2025. The law requires social landlords to address damp and mould hazards within strict timescales.

The policy will require further amendments to ensure full compliance with Awaab's Law from 27th October. These changes will be updated, communicated and implemented in readiness for the legislative changes. The policy adopts a clear framework with processes for housing staff and contractors to report, monitor and manage damp and mould concerns and to raise awareness for tenants to report issues.

11.10 Conclusion

The four policies and procedures for approval and adoption will ensure consistent and efficient service delivery, reduce legal risk, set clear expectations between landlord and tenants and promote a positive repairs and maintenance collective culture of responsibilities.

They provide a framework for decision making and procedure guides for staff to help clarify and communicate service principals to promote a positive culture and a climate of diversity and inclusion to create positive outcomes for staff and customers.

12 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

No other options have been considered and rejected as it is a business need to have appropriate service policies and procedures in place as together policies and procedures provide a roadmap for day-to-day operations. They ensure compliance with laws and regulations, give guidance for decision-making, and streamline internal processes.

The policies also provide clear and transparent guidance and information in respect of tenants and landlord repair and maintenance responsibilities holding both the tenant and landlord to account.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Previous Committee Reports:-

CAB3506 Housing Repair, Maintenance and Compliance Activities Contract 21.5.25

Other Background Documents:-

APPENDICES:

- Appendix 1 – HRA Disabled adaptation policy
- Appendix 2 – Repairs & Maintenance policy
- Appendix 3 – Housing repairs recharge policy
- Appendix 4 – Managing damp & mould policy
- Appendix 5 – EQIA HRA aids and adaptations
- Appendix 6 – EQIA Housing repairs & maintenance policy
- Appendix 7 – EQIA Housing repairs recharge policy
- Appendix 8 – EQIA damp & mould policy