

REPORT FOR INFORMATION

REPORT TO:	All Members
REPORT NO:	COH/21/24
DATE:	May 2024
LEAD MEMBER:	Councillor David A Bithell (Housing)
CONTACT OFFICER:	Lee Roberts (Tel: 315357)
SUBJECT:	Housing Repairs - Information Report
WARD:	All Wards

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide all members with an update on the current position regarding housing repairs. This report provides an overview on backlog numbers, the strategies employed to address the backlog, the prioritisation of repairs, as well as the challenges that the team face with delivering the repairs. On a daily basis, Priority 1 emergency repairs remain our primary focus, to respond and resolve within 24 hours.

1.2 Typical examples of this are:

- Complete loss of electricity supply
- Burst pipes
- Flood/fire
- Blocked W.C. (if only one in property)
- Blocked/overflowing drains
- Complete central heating system failure (October to April).
- Locked out of property (re-charge may apply)
- Make safe broken window/door glass

2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 A report was presented to the Homes & Environment Scrutiny Committee on 19 July 2023 (Report No. COH/17/23s), regarding the active and ongoing repairs list, which changes every day. Appendix 2 of that report, highlighted

there was 4,649 active and ongoing repairs. This was broken down into the different trades.

- 2.2 As of 22 April 2024, the current and live number of outstanding repairs is 4,634. This is only a minor reduction of 15 addresses, however, there are contributory factors that have severely impacted on the ability to reduce the active and ongoing repairs list. It must be noted that the industrial action from September until November 2023, significantly affected the repairs service. The industrial action led to 8 full weeks without the ability to carry out normal repairs and only emergency repairs were attended. This two month period impacted on the active and ongoing repairs list and led to 2,056 repairs not being completed during the two month period.

3. NEW APPROACH

- 3.1 The management team have instigated new ways of working to reduce the ongoing and active list of repairs.
- 3.2 The main approach that has been developed and implemented includes utilising trade operatives who work on empty properties. This approach is in its infancy, and commenced after the industrial action ended.
- 3.3 This involves careful planning and monitoring of trade operatives who work in empty properties. The empty property and the target timescale has to be managed, as well as booking in work in an occupied property that is located in close proximity to the empty property. This eliminates downtime and driving across the County Borough.
- 3.4 The team are also continuing to review all current working practices, in a bid to enhance and improve efficiency and to increase the daily operational performance of the repairs service, which ultimately, impacts on Contract Holders.
- 3.5 The table below provides a summary of the repairs numbers, the week number within the financial year and the current number. The table includes the performance data from January 2024.

Financial Year 2023/24 Week	Week Commencing	Week Ending	Active and ongoing repairs list (addresses)
42	08/01/2024	12/01/2024	5,507
43	15/01/2024	19/01/2024	5,476
44	22/01/2024	26/01/2024	5,302
45	29/01/2024	02/02/2024	5,202
46	05/02/2024	09/02/2024	5,035
47	12/02/2024	16/02/2024	5,153
48	19/02/2024	23/02/2024	5,050
49	26/02/2024	01/03/2024	5,000

51	11/03/2024	15/03/2024	4,872
52	18/03/2024	22/03/2024	4,822
Financial Year 2024/25 Week	Week Commencing	Week Ending	Active and ongoing repairs list (addresses)
1	01/04/2024	05/04/2024	4,717
2	08/04/2024	12/04/2024	4,686
3	15/04/2024	19/04/2024	4,634

- 3.6 If the industrial action had not taken place, it is envisaged that the active and ongoing repairs list would have reduced, as the repairs team have routinely demonstrated the capacity to complete an average of 359 repairs per week, over various priorities. The amount to definitively predict an actual projection is difficult, as the number of repairs reported by Contract Holders is beyond the control of the team.
- 3.7 Since the beginning of January until 19 April, the active and ongoing repairs list has reduced by 873 addresses. In some cases, the daily repairs that are reported are seasonal. This tends to be the case with reports of damp and mould.
- 3.8 The cost of living crisis is piling pressure onto households on the lowest incomes, with the lowest income bracket particularly exposed. If a property is not adequately heated during the winter months, it can cause problems for the Contract Holders in terms of comfort, but it can also lead to damage to building fabric and exacerbate issues with damp and mould. These factors are not helping with some of the repair requests, as in some cases, a simple solution to remedy a condensation/mould issue, i.e., constant airflow and stable room temperatures, can result in a cost increase to the Contract Holder.

4. OTHER FACTORS

- 4.1 It is important to also include some other factors that can impact on the repairs service, which members may or may not be aware of.

Named Storms

- 4.2 There has been ten different named storms in 2023, which has led to a significant increase in repair requests from Contract Holders across Wrexham.
- 4.3 The strong winds, heavy rain and adverse weather conditions associated with these storms have caused damage to properties, including roof leaks, fallen trees, broken windows and structural damage.
- 4.4 As a result the repairs service has, at times, experienced a surge in demand for repairs, leading to further demand in repair requests. The last 12 months has seen the highest number of named storms to date in the United Kingdom since 2016, increasing the demand on the repairs team across all four priority

types of repairs, where we received a total of 826 repairs, relating to storm damage.

Resource Implications

- 4.5 The increased repair requests due to named storm damage has put a strain on the resources of the repairs service.
- 4.6 The repairs team has been working tirelessly to address the repairs but the volume of requests has, at times, exceeded the capacity of the existing workforce.
- 4.7 As with all budgets, the pressures on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is no different, which has also led to vacant posts within the repairs service being held throughout 2023/24, and this remains the current position. Efficiency improvements continues to remain a high priority.

Prioritising Repairs

- 4.8 When storm damage occurs, the repairs service has had to prioritise repairs based on the severity and urgency of the damage. These include health and safety issues, such as structural damage or exposed water ingress to a property.
- 4.9 These have been issued as top priority to ensure the safety and wellbeing of Contract Holders. However, this has meant that less urgent repairs may have been delayed, leading to increased frustration among Contract Holders. This was confirmed in our performance based data, on the review of the section's performance for Q4, showing 100% priority 1 repairs, were attended in the correct time frame.
- 4.10. Our Contact Centre deals with an average of 220 reports per day, split between telephone calls and digital enquiries/reports, and prioritise them with our teams.
- 4.11. All repairs must be reported to Housingrepairs@wrexham.gov.uk or telephone on 01978 298993 and be directed to our Contact Centre and emergency out of hours call centre.

5. NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 A further update and monitoring report will be submitted to the Homes & Environment Scrutiny Committee in July 2024.