

STOKE-ON-TRENT CITY COUNCIL

Repairs and Maintenance Policy

Housing Revenue Account Services

2018/20

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1. Introduction and Aims

The Council recognises that the efficient and effective repair and maintenance of the housing properties is both an important service to tenants and leaseholders and an essential part of a much wider asset management function. As such, the Repairs and Maintenance Policy sets out a framework that's designed to strike an appropriate balance between delivering good levels of customer service, delivering for the needs of the housing stock and delivering a range of broader Council objectives.

Our principal aims:

- *To have in place well designed repair and maintenance systems that ensure the housing stock is safe, kept in a **good state of repair** and is brought up to, or continues to meet, agreed standards.*
- *To make sure we provide a **repairs service to tenants that can be relied upon**, responding quickly when the need arises.*
- *To ensure we repair and maintain the housing stock in a way that optimises the use of financial, staffing and other resources so that **value for money** is achieved in its widest sense.*

Whilst the Council's Decent Homes programme has helped improve the housing stock, considerable financial and operational challenges remain in ensuring the Council's homes are well maintained for the long term and that they continue to meet current and future standards at an affordable cost. Therefore, the Repairs and Maintenance Policy is designed to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of the range of day to day repairs, cyclical, planned and improvement works as part of the Council's broader strategic asset management work.

2. Scope

The Repairs and Maintenance Policy sets out how in practice the Council will:

- Meet relevant legislative and regulatory requirements.
- Meet our locally determined repair and property standards.
- Provide a responsive, effective and efficient day to day repairs service, including emergency out of hour's coverage.
- Carry out cyclical and planned maintenance programmes which achieve economies by replacing components just before they would otherwise require responsive repairs, anticipating changes in minimum acceptable standards and thus reduce future requirements for cyclical or planned works.
- Actively use information and data from day to day repairs activities and Housing Solutions to help inform the Council's planned programme of improvement works, as well as decisions around remodelling or replacement of obsolete stock.
- Have in place a range of 'service contracts' which provide for the effective maintenance of grounds and communal areas, as well as for regular servicing/maintenance of mechanical/electrical installations.
- Carry out our gas safety and servicing obligations.
- Carry out Adaptations.
- Effectively manage asbestos and water hygiene.

- Meet our landlord obligations, including those relating to health and safety and under the 'Right to Repair'.
- Manage tenant responsibilities, including Rechargeable Repairs.
- Consult and involve residents in repairs activities to ensure we meet their priorities and expectations.
- Monitor and evaluate the works and expenditure undertaken.

3. Local Context

The Council owns and manages around 18,200 properties across Stoke-on-Trent. Each year approximately 90,000 repairs are undertaken to Council properties funded by an average annual budget of over £8.5 million through the Housing Revenue Account.

Council house repairs are undertaken by Uitas Stoke-on-Trent Ltd, a council owned repairs and maintenance company established in February 2018.

The Council has worked with tenants to develop local property and service standards that are designed to drive forward the provision of a housing repairs service and quality of stock that not only continues to meet statutory and/or regulatory standards but that offers a quality of accommodation and service provision that meets the developing needs and expectations of current and future tenants.

4. Legal and Best Practice Framework

The Repairs and Maintenance Policy and the way in which the Council's repairs and maintenance service is delivered complies with the following, and all other relevant standards and legislation:

- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (Section 11).
- Housing Act 1985 (Section 96).
- Housing Act 2004 (Section 3).
- Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994/133.
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 2018.
- British Standard 7671 (Electrical Installations)
- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012.
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- Equality Act 2010.

In order to respond to best practice the Policy also seeks to have strong reference to the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England by specifically addressing the following expectations:

- To provide a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service to homes and communal areas that responds to the needs of, and offers choices to, tenants and have the objective of completing repairs and improvements 'right first time'.
- To meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of the occupants in their homes.

- To ensure a prudent, planned approach to repairs and maintenance of homes and communal areas, demonstrating an appropriate balance of planned and responsive repairs, and value for money.

The Council has signed up to Housemark's Repairs and Active Asset Management Club and, as such, has made a commitment to look at a range of practical and strategic approaches to ensure delivery of a productive, positive service for the business and customers.

The Policy aligns strongly with the Council's Housing Asset Management Strategy and has close links to the Tenancy Agreement, Void Management Policy, Asset Management Plan and the Leaseholder Policy. It should also be considered in conjunction with the Council's other wider policies and policy framework.

5. Responsibilities for Repairs

As a landlord the Council is responsible for completing the following:

Landlord Responsibilities

- All repairs to the structure and exterior of the property (including drains, gutters and external pipes) and the fixtures and fittings supplied by the Council.
- Maintenance of communal areas, including lighting to these areas.
- External paintwork.
- To keep in repair and proper working order the installations for the supply of water, gas and electricity; this includes the carrying out of gas, electrical and solid fuel certified checks, in line with current legislation.
- To keep in repair and proper working order the installations for space heating and heating water; in other words the heating equipment within then property.
- To repair and keep in proper working order the installations for the supply of water and sanitation (including basins, sinks, baths and toilets)

The Council, and contractors employed by the Council, will aim to ensure that repairs are completed correctly at the first visit and that disruption to the tenant and their home is minimised.

Responsive repairs will normally replace fixtures and fittings supplied by the Council on a like for like or improved basis or, where this is not possible we will aim to provide the tenant with choices in relation to the replacement.

Where pre-existing council owned heating provision is beyond economic repair the Council will consider replacement with an alternative form.

The Council does not provide a secondary source of heating as standard. Secondary sources of heating will only be provided on a discretionary case by case basis depending on the circumstances involved (for example identifiable medical needs). When any existing secondary sources are beyond economic repair they will be removed.

Wherever possible the Council will repair or make safe any fencing for which it has installed, but if the fencing cannot be repaired or made safe it may be removed or replaced.

Any decision to provide new or replacement fencing will be based on issues around:

- Health and safety.
- Privacy.
- Amenity.

The Council is not responsible for repairing or replacing shared fencing/walls where this has been undertaken as a Tenant Improvement by the current tenant.

The replacement of fencing which is beyond repair will be included in programmes of planned works to council homes and estates going forward.

Tenant Maintenance Obligations and Responsibilities

Under the terms of the tenancy there are some repairs which are the Council's responsibility and other matters which are the tenant's responsibility.

All tenants are required to report any repairs, which are the responsibility of the Council promptly if, in not doing so, it will cause further deterioration to the property or harm to the occupants or others. The tenant must also allow the Council, and its appointed contractors, reasonable access to undertake the required repairs and any necessary surveys or inspections.

Tenants are responsible for the following:

- Work needed as a result of wilful damage or neglect.
- Tenants own fittings, including fridges, cookers, washing machines, showers, blinds and floor coverings.
- Toilet seats.
- Plugs and chains to sinks, wash basins and baths.
- Easing of internal doors after installation of carpets or other floor finishes.
- Damaged or missing internal door handles caused by the Tenant.
- Replacement of door locks as a result of lost keys.
- Internal decoration, including decoration required following repairs.
- Clothes lines, posts or rotary dryers to houses and bungalows.
- Broken glass to windows and doors arising as a result of wilful damage and neglect on the part of the Tenant or a member of their household.¹
- Curtain, picture and dado rails.
- Locks, latches and bolts to gates, garages, lock-ups, sheds and outhouses.
- TV aerials (unless provided by the Council as part of the communal TV system)
- Replacement bulbs to interior and exterior lights (including low level security lights).
- Boundary fencing undertaken by the tenant as a Tenant Improvement.
- The repair or replacement of any fitting, structure or finish that has been undertaken as a Tenant Improvement.
- Hairline cracks and small areas of damaged plaster which could be easily repaired with filler.

All tenants are encouraged to complete the minor maintenance set out above if they feel confident and able to do so. If tenants feel unable to undertake basic maintenance to the property they should contact the Repairs Line on 01782 234100 for advice.

¹ Which arises as a result of the tenant failing to use the property in a tenant like manner.

Within this, the Council may undertake the work listed above in exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of Uritas's Head of Responsive Repairs and Maintenance. This particularly relates to vulnerable tenants – Section 16 of this policy document applies.

The Council may charge for undertaking repairs to the property where damage has been caused by the tenant, members of their household or visitors to the property.

In addition, if the tenant undertakes any of the works listed above and as a result they cause damage which could result in significant risk to the tenant, visitors to the property or local residents, (for example the tenant had been doing DIY and has broken a water pipe, damaged a gas pipe or exposed electrical wiring) then the Council reserves the right to undertake any necessary resulting repairs. However if the damage has arisen as a result of the tenant's action then the Council may re-charge the Tenant for the cost it incurs in putting it right. The Council may undertake any necessary repairs to the property if the damage has occurred as a result of a crime for which the tenant has a crime reference number and is actively supporting the investigation, however the Council will recharge for the repair works if:

- The damage was as a result of criminal activity which involved the tenant or a member of the household, except in exceptional circumstances.
- The repair is required as a result of forced entry by the Police if this action results in a successful conviction of the tenant or member of the household.

Tenants are responsible for damage to the contents of the property and are encouraged to ensure they have appropriate insurance in place to cover their personal possessions.

Tenants are required to treat Council staff and contractors with respect whilst they are working on their property. Tenants are expected to refrain from smoking whilst technicians are working in the property. Tenants are also expected to remove animals from the areas where technicians are working. Local Centres will be informed of any person acting unreasonably towards Council staff or contractors and action for breach of tenancy may be progressed.

6. Carrying out Day to Day Repairs

The Council aims to utilise its resources effectively and efficiently to provide a high quality, responsive repairs service in line with its repairing obligations, whilst at the same time ensuring that its repairs service meets the needs and expectations of tenants. The delivery of this objective will be balanced with the need to make sure that the day to day repair activities support a range of broader asset management objectives and securing of good value for money for the Council. The Council's policy for carrying out day to day repairs is built around a number of key principles:

- To provide an open, accountable and consistent level of service.
- To optimise the balance between cost and service quality so as to achieve value for money.
- To continually involve tenants to ensure the service responds to the needs of customers and remains 'fit for purpose'.

Day to day repairs are those carried out when components fail, and which cannot wait to be undertaken under a cyclical, planned or improvement programme. These works, which are

revenue funded, comprise of responsive repairs to items such as plumbing/sanitary equipment, door/window fittings, heating appliances and electrical installations.

Reporting Repairs

The Council will maintain a range of ways for repairs to be reported in order to ensure that the service is accessible to all tenants. Repairs can be reported via:

- Telephone on: 01782 234100.
- In person at a Customer Service Centre
- On-line at: www.Unitas.co.uk

Repairs can be reported by council officers, support workers or carers using any of the methods above.

It is the tenant’s responsibility to report repairs promptly as and when they become needed, particularly if leaving the repair unattended could cause further damage or deterioration to the property or risk of injury to residents or others. Failure to report repairs may be considered neglect of the property and is a breach of the tenancy agreement.

If a tenant fails to notify the Council that they are unable to keep an appointment for works to be carried out then the repair will be cancelled. In addition, if persistent requests are made for repairs and technicians are unable to access the property a call out charge may be applied to the tenant as a recharge. Similarly, if repeated call outs are made by technicians and it is determined no repair is required, the cost of the call out charge may be applied to the tenant as a recharge.

Repair Categories

In order to help deliver a more efficient and cost effective service, repairs will be prioritised according to the nature of the work involved. Repairs that are required as a result of component failure or breakdowns that put tenants’ health and safety, or the property, at risk will be dealt with faster than those that can safely wait.

Thus, the Day to Day Repairs service is organised into two main categories of repair; ‘emergency’ and ‘routine’.

<p>Emergency (initial attendance at property within 2 hours to repair or make safe)</p>	<p>There is an immediate and serious risk to people or property. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gas escapes. • Exposed live electrical cables. • Severe water leaks. • Major drainage problems.
<p>Routine (by mutually agreed appointment)</p>	<p>All other repairs that need to be carried out to remedy building or component failure and that cannot reasonably wait for a programme of cyclical, planned or investment works.</p>

Tenants will be advised of the priority assigned to their repair at the time of it being booked and for routine repairs a mutually convenient time slot will be agreed for attending and carrying out the works. The Council will give priority to those repairs that require a more urgent response e.g. no heating during the winter period² and those repairs causing most inconvenience for tenants. Prioritisation will also reflect the vulnerabilities of the tenant and current weather conditions.

Appointments to Undertake Repairs

When a customer notifies the Council of a repair they will be advised of how quickly it will be attended to. The Council and the customer will agree an appointment slot based on the availability of the customer and the technician.

Peak times can vary dependent upon the season and local weather conditions and therefore tenants will be advised of any longer than usual times when they report the repair.

Each repair will be assessed by the attending technician. If required, specialist technicians may be called to undertake the repair.

The Council always aims to complete repairs within the mutually agreed timescales. However, this may sometimes not be possible, such as if special parts have to be ordered or if repairs are dependent on other organisations or suppliers. If there is a delay in being able to complete a repair then tenants will be notified, advising of the reason and when the repair is likely to be completed.

Technicians' Identification

Council officers and all approved contractors will carry formal identification which will be shown when they arrive at a property. Tenants are advised that any caller failing to show appropriate identification should not be allowed access to their property.

At Risk Groups

If a tenant or a member of their household is less mobile (perhaps because of advanced age or a disability) or the household contains a young child/baby then some types of repairs may place greater risks. These situations will be identified and repairs attended to more quickly if at all possible.

Out of Hours Emergencies

The Council operates an out of hours service to complete emergency repairs in order to make the property safe until a full repair can be undertaken. This service is available through 01782 234100. An emergency repair is restricted to circumstances where there is a danger to life, a safety hazard, the potential for more extensive damage or is needed to ensure a home is secure. These may include:

- Gas escapes.
- Exposed live electrical cables.
- Severe water leaks.
- Major drainage problems.

² In the event of a heating system break-down which leaves a home with no heating, temporary heaters will be provided if required by the tenant.

The Council will aim to attend all emergency repairs reported out of hours within 2 hours of it being reported. The tenant is responsible for ensuring access to the property in instances where emergency repairs are required.

The priority in instances of emergency repairs will be to make the property safe; as such follow-up visits may be required to undertake a full repair, this will be undertaken at a convenient date and time agreed with the tenant in line with the approach to routine repairs.

During the winter period the out of hour's service for emergency repairs will include heating and hot water repairs. During the summer period these repairs will be undertaken as a routine repair.

Pre-inspections

Some jobs will require a pre-inspection and a visit by one of our surveyors before the repair is arranged. These will include damp-related problems, re-plastering where the scope of the job is not known or if the diagnosis given by the tenant is not detailed enough. An appointment will be made for carrying out the pre-inspections

No access

Where access cannot be gained to undertake a repair the Council will take appropriate measures to make further arrangements for works to be carried out.

These measures will include:

- Leaving a card to ask the tenant to rearrange a visit
- Telephoning the tenant to rearrange the visit
- Writing to the tenant requesting that they contact the Council to rearrange a visit
- Sending a surveyor out to inspect in instances where the tenant's original repair report suggests a potentially hazardous situation exists

Ultimately, if a tenant is unreasonably preventing access to undertake the repairs this may be considered a breach of their tenancy and may result in action and, potentially, the loss of tenancy.

7. Void Works

This is the collective name for the range of repairs and checks that are undertaken prior to a property being re-let. The Council is committed to only letting good quality homes where the property meets its specified standard. Details about the standard are contained within the Empty Property Standards for Council Tenants.

8. Carrying out Cyclical and Planned Maintenance

These are maintenance works that are carried out as routine preventative maintenance, in many instances at defined time intervals. The works are undertaken on regular planned cycles for servicing, inspection and testing of equipment, often as required by statute or regulations or to maintain the generation condition of the stock, and particularly the electrical and mechanical installations within the stock.

The principal items of cyclical and planned maintenance are:

- Annual servicing of gas heating systems/installations (to include the statutory requirement for an annual gas safety check).
- Communal boiler servicing.
- Periodic inspection of electrical installations.
- Internal communal area redecoration.
- Other planned works, to include the replacement or renewal of building elements or components due to them reaching the end of their life for example roof coverings and windows.

Cyclical and planned maintenance will fall into a number of programmes requiring a visit to each property on different cycles and a table of cyclical maintenance frequencies is provided below:

Work Programme	Frequency
Gas servicing and safety check	Annually
Solid Fuel sweeping	Half yearly
Smoke detector testing	Annually
Fire Detection, intruder alarm, door entry, warden call and equipment in flat-block schemes	Weekly/quarterly/half yearly/annually (as applicable for installed equipment)
Emergency lighting in flat-block schemes	Monthly/half yearly/annually (as applicable for installed equipment)
Periodic electrical inspection	5 yearly for those under older regulations 10 yearly programme for those under current regulations
Periodic electrical inspection on communal areas	5 year cycle
Internal communal decoration programme	7 year cycle
Water hygiene/Legionella testing monthly on sheltered schemes and relevant flat-block schemes	Monthly/quarterly/half yearly/annually (based upon the setting)

Communal areas to flats, sheltered accommodation common rooms, etc. may require painting at different intervals. Common areas that are subject to reduced traffic or wear and tear will not require decorating at the same frequency as other parts subject to heavier traffic. Therefore whilst the painting and decorating programme may identify the decoration to internal stairs and common rooms, these will be inspected and assessed before any work is undertaken. Where work is not required in the area it shall be re-scheduled for a future inspection within a suitable timescale.

Gas servicing and Gas Safety Check works are carried out annually and completed in tandem with the smoke detector testing programme. The combination of these programmes reduces tenant disturbance, improves access rates for smoke detector checking, and increases value for money by using one contractor. It is a requirement under the tenancy agreement for all tenants to provide access for an annual Gas Safety Check and the Council has a statutory duty to inspect every gas appliance within every one of its housing properties every year. Occasionally the Council has to take legal action to enter tenants' homes where access has previously been refused.

The Council aims to develop cyclical and planned works programmes that minimise annual expenditure on responsive repairs and maintenance.

9. Carrying out Planned Improvement Works

The Council has developed and will continually update a 30 year programme of expenditure that meets the long term investment needs of its sustainable housing stock. The range of improvement works will be developed taking into account the investment requirements identified in stock condition surveys, the ongoing suitability and 'performance' of the stock in financial and other aspects, the priorities of current and future tenants and the need to ensure that incremental and sustained improvements are made to the homes we provide.

When replacing building components or facilities the Council will aim to use superior quality items that are more sustainable, offer better value for money over time and improve the environment of estates and communal areas.

Improvement programmes will be developed in partnership with tenants and continually shaped by them to ensure that it meets their needs, demands and expectations.

Planned improvement works will fall into a number of different programmes, the principal ones being shown in the following table:

Work Programme	Frequency
Kitchen replacements	20 years
Bathroom replacements	30 years
Boiler replacements	20 years
Windows/doors	25 years

Electrical re-wires	30 years
External rainwater goods	30 years
Soffit and fascia replacements	30 years

The Council aims to develop planned improvement works programmes that, as a result of works undertaken, minimise expenditure on responsive repairs and maintenance.

10. Remodelling and Replacing Obsolete or Uneconomic Stock

The Council's Housing Asset Management Strategy provides for remodelling or replacing obsolete or uneconomic stock with new properties which are better designed to meet future needs and create a better balanced portfolio.

Such properties are identified through review, analysis and assessment techniques and will be informed by stock condition and wider property sustainability data and information. The intention is that, rather than spend large amounts of money trying to repair, maintain and improve stock which falls into this category, the opportunity is taken to remodel or replace it with redesigned or new, high quality properties which are better suited to the future needs of tenants and which are of a type which aids the development of a balanced housing stock portfolio.

As and when obsolete properties are identified and programmed for replacement, the Council will move to limit the amount of resources it spends on the subject properties in carrying out day to day, cyclical and planned maintenance works. This is to avoid scarce financial resources being wasted on repairing and maintaining properties that are not going to be kept. However, it should be stressed that the Council will continue to meet all its legal and regulatory obligations in carrying out essential day to day repairs, cyclical and planned maintenance, notably including annual gas servicing and safety check works, periodic electrical testing works etc.

11. Service Contracts

Service contracts include the range of estate management and health and safety arrangements that need to be in place to ensure the Council meets its obligations. Specifically, the Council will make sure service contracts are in place for:

- Regular grounds maintenance of communal areas.
- Cleaning of communal areas.
- Regular inspection and servicing of plant, including fire alarm installations, emergency lighting, water storage systems, kitchen extraction systems and lift installations.

The service contracts will provide for regular visits to properties to ensure service standards and health and safety requirements to be met.

12. Meeting the Gas Safety and Servicing Obligations

The Council is committed to meeting its legislative requirements for ensuring all of its homes with a gas supply have a valid Landlord Gas Safety Record. To this end we will service and carry out a Gas Safety Check for all gas appliances and boilers within all of our homes within 12 months of the anniversary of the previous date. Servicing dates are planned for at least four weeks before expiry of the current certificate to ensure adequate time is allowed for missed appointments, no access and, if necessary, legal action.

The Council aims to ensure that all gas appliances within its housing stock, irrespective of the tenure type, have an annual gas service. However, in respect of leaseholders, we can only advise of their responsibilities in respect of their leasehold commitments, legal and regulatory requirements.

Any tenants who fail to allow access to carry out the service and annual Gas Safety Check will be subject to all necessary steps in order to gain access, which may result in legal proceedings and potentially the loss of their home.

The Council operates a 24 hour emergency repairs service which includes arrangements for the prompt repair and/or making safe of all gas appliances within tenant's homes.

The Council has an absolute commitment to the provision of a high quality gas servicing and repairs service that:

- Properly discharges its legal and regulatory requirements.
- Preserves the safety of its tenants and their household and visitors.
- Is delivered efficiently and effectively to high standards of customer care.

The Council will move promptly to upgrade boilers and isolate any gas fires that fail their annual inspection. Any faulty gas appliance owned by the tenant that is discovered to be connected to the system will have a 'defective appliance' label attached and will be disconnected.

The detailed arrangements for fulfilling the Council's legal responsibilities for accessing tenanted properties to carry out the annual servicing, safety check and repair works are contained in the Council's Gas Safety and Servicing Policy.

13. Carrying out Major Adaptations

The Council is committed to facilitating and supporting independent living, by carrying out alterations to meet the special needs of individuals to enhance their lifestyle and where appropriate enable them to remain in their current home. In this respect the Council's housing team will work with colleagues in social care and other appropriate agencies to ensure funding is available to enable this to happen.

The Council will assist tenants to secure aids and adaptations to their homes by:

- Helping identify what type of aids and adaptations might be most suitable, working with specialist Occupational Therapists to determine individual need.
- Directly undertaking the work using Council funds.

The Council will maintain all aids and adaptations and will replace these at the end of their economic life provided they are still required. Major Adaptations may include:

- Level Access Showers
- Large Ramps
- Stairlifts
- Door Widening
- Through Floor Lifts
- Structural Alterations

In meeting the above objectives, the Council will provide a responsive service to tenants who are or become vulnerable or who have special needs arising through disability or infirmity.

Further information on Major Adaptations is available in the 'Major Adaptations Policy for Council Tenants.

14. Effectively Managing Asbestos and Water Hygiene

Asbestos

The Council acknowledges the serious health hazards associated with exposure to materials containing asbestos. We accept our responsibility under legislation to protect our employees, contractors, tenants and any other persons who may be at risk from asbestos in the buildings that we own, lease and manage. We will fulfil our duties by eliminating or reducing to an absolute minimum, so far as is reasonably practicable, the risk of exposure to asbestos by managing risk effectively.

The Council staff and any contractor working on our behalf will adhere to Government legislation and regulations for asbestos management.

In effectively managing asbestos the Council will:

- Put in place an Asbestos Management Plan that meets and that goes beyond the minimum best practice requirements, presently the 2010 HSE (Health and Safety Executive) publication; HSG264 – Asbestos: The Survey Guide (Health and Safety Guidance).
- Carry out surveys in accordance with current legislation, guidance and good practice namely, HSE's Advisory Note on the refurbishment of housing stock likely to contain asbestos.
- Assess and manage the risk from Asbestos Containing Materials (ACM) identified within our building stock.
- Provide information about the presence, location and condition of asbestos containing materials to employees and any other persons who are liable to disturb these materials, including tenants and contractors.
- Ensure that appropriate control measures are taken by any persons who are likely to disturb these materials.

The HRA Asbestos Management Plan contains further details of how asbestos will be effectively managed.

Water Hygiene

The Council will manage the water hygiene of its properties in accordance with the relevant legislation. We will take any necessary measures to prevent exposure to staff, tenants and others to any hazard, which could arise due to poor water hygiene management.

In effectively managing water hygiene, the Council will:

- Appoint a competent person(s) to undertake suitable and sufficient risk assessments of any hot and cold water systems incorporating cold water storage
- In cases where the risk assessment reveals a reasonable foreseeable risk take responsibility and provide supervision for the implementation of precautions. These shall be monitored by the Council.

15. Repairs to Garages / Lock Ups

Demand for garages and lock ups has reduced significantly over the last 5 years. As a result the garage and lock up sites have undergone a wider asset review and in some cases longer term alternative uses for sites have been identified. Over the coming years repairs to garages will only be undertaken if there is a significant risk of harm or there is demonstrable demand for the garages in the area. In some cases tenants may be offered an alternative garage which is in good condition if repairs to their current garage are deemed uneconomical.

16. Supporting Vulnerable Tenants

In order to protect more vulnerable tenants the Council will provide a safety password service. This service provides an agreed password between the tenant and the technician attending the repair when the repair is logged.

The Council may also undertake repairs listed in section 5 (Tenant Obligations, Responsibilities and Chargeable Repairs) if the tenant meets one or more of the following criteria:

- Tenant is aged over 70 years old with no other member of the household under 70.
- In receipt of a registered care package.
- In receipt of the medium or high rate of the care component or the higher rate of the mobility component of the Disability Living allowance.
- In receipt of Attendance Allowance.
- In receipt of War Disablement Pension.
- Other cases considered as vulnerable at the discretion of Unitas's Head of Responsive Repairs and Maintenance.

The Council may carry out the maintenance which would normally fall under the responsibility of the tenant either at a nominal fee or free of charge dependent upon the circumstances.

Some tenants have specialist adaptations, fixtures or fittings to their property as a result of specific needs, including physical disabilities or risks from Domestic Abuse. In the vast majority of cases these will have been fitted by dedicated support services and will be

maintained by them for a minimum of twelve months after they have been fitted. After this time maintenance and repairs can be logged in the normal way as a routine repair. Out of hours repairs may be undertaken if there is a significant risk to the tenant if the works are not completed quickly.

17. Right to Repair and Compensation

Under 'The Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994' Secure and Introductory tenants are entitled to have certain repairs carried out within a prescribed period of time. Tenants may be entitled to compensation of up to £50, if their repair is not completed within the prescribed time limits. This only applies to repairs below the value of £250 relating to the following:

- Total or partial loss of essential services (electric, water, gas supply, primary heating);
- Unsafe power, or lighting sockets, or electrical fittings;
- Blocked flues to fires or boilers;
- Leaking roofs;
- Toilets that won't flush;
- Blocked or leaking foul drain or soil stack;
- Blocked sinks, baths or basins;
- Taps which cannot be turned;
- Insecure external window, door or lock;
- Rotten floor timbers or stair treads;
- Leaking or flooding from pipes, tanks or cisterns;
- Loose or broken banisters or handrails;
- Door entry system which not working;
- Internal extractor fans not working.

Damage to internal decorations as a result of a general responsive repair will not generally be compensated unless such damage is as a result of a programme of major repair.

Tenants may be able to claim compensation for damage to their possessions or injury to themselves or a member of their household which has resulted from the Council, or its agents, being negligent or breaching its statutory duty.

A request for compensation can be made by contacting the Council within 28 days of the damage occurring.

18. Tenant Improvements

If tenant improvements have been left in the property by a previous tenant the Council will only assume responsibility for repairs if it is practical and economical to do so; in other instances the tenant improvements will be removed and the property returned to the original state.

Major tenant improvements, including loft conversions, driveways, porches and new internal walls can only be left in-situ when a tenancy ends with the written permission of the Council. Permission will be granted if maintenance works can be economically maintained. In all other instances the works should be removed and the property returned to the original state.

More information on tenant improvements, including acceptable works and authorisations, can be found in the Tenancy and Estate Management Policy 2017.

19. Measuring Quality and Performance

The Council is committed to ensuring that its repairs and maintenance services are delivered to a high standard and provide high levels of customer satisfaction. In order to help it do this, it will monitor and manage performance through a range of methods.

Monitoring and measuring performance levels of all repairs across the housing stock are monitored on a regular basis. The performance and delivery of the service is monitored and reported to the Council and Unitas's Board.

The Council will measure and evaluate performance against a range of appropriate and relevant performance indicators and will benchmark itself against other social housing providers.

The Council may audit the quality of repair works and investigate complaints in relation to the standard of works.

The Council also collects and analyses tenants' views on the repairs service provided. This is collected by staff acting independently of the delivery of the repairs service.

The Council will use performance information to help shape service improvements.

20. Delivering Value for Money

The Council is committed to ensuring its repair and maintenance services offer excellent value for money and will therefore ensure that a range of mechanisms are in place to demonstrate value.

The mechanisms used will include:

- Benchmarking against peers
- Market testing against other providers
- Reviewing internal cost and performance data
- Internal business reviews

Demand information for the repairs service will be kept under review in order to identify trends in repairs within localities, failure of particular elements or issues with particular property types. This information will be used to inform the planned maintenance programme to deliver a more cost effective programme of works.

Analysis of demand will also aim to identify properties for which no repairs have been reported within a 2 year period. These properties may be targeted for inspection to ensure that that tenant has not failed to report required repairs through vulnerability or negligence.

21. Funding Repairs and Maintenance

The costs of undertaking and managing the repairs and maintenance activities of the Council are accounted for within the Housing Revenue Account. As part of the financial regulations in relation to Housing Revenue Account the Council is obliged to ensure that there are sufficient funds available to cover the costs of repairs and maintenance to all properties. The costs of repairs will be considered as part of the annual rent review. The annual budget for

day to day repairs is in the region of £8.5 million which has been accounted for within the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

The Council will need to review and amend its HRA Business Plan from time to time to take into account any significant changes to the policy and/or operating environment. These amendments may impact on the funding available for the Council's repairs and maintenance activities.

22. Consultation & Communication

The Council has established and developing tenant involvement mechanisms in place as part of its commitment to ensuring that tenants and leaseholders actively shape and influence the services it delivers. In relation to repairs and maintenance, the Tenants' Board:

- Has a voice and input to the repairs and maintenance service
- Questions and discusses issues in relation to the service
- Receives and scrutinises performance indicator reports
- Actively promotes repairs and maintenance
- Monitors and scrutinises the Council's local standards and Service Improvement Plan
- Ensures value money for tenants and the Council is achieved
- Responds to any changes in national or local policy and governance, in relation to repairs and maintenance
- Is involved in the development of specifications for programmes of work
- Monitors and scrutinise all contracts and programmes of work
- Be involved in contract selection and monitoring

The Tenants' Board works closely with the Council to ensure that these objectives are met. The tenants' groups are also actively involved in target setting, the annual programme for reviewing and agreeing targets and areas for improvement.

The Council is also keen to ensure that tenants and leaseholders are well placed to understand the key contents and components of the Repairs and Maintenance Policy and has therefore produced a summary 'easy to read' guide which is available on the Council's website.

23. Equalities Statement

The Council recognises that it delivers Housing Revenue Account services to communities within which there is a wide social diversity, and is committed to providing equal opportunities and valuing diversity.

Through the management of responsive repairs, the Council and its contractors aim to treat all customers fairly, and with respect and professionalism regardless of their gender, race, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation and marital status.

To enable customers to have clear information and equal access to responsive repairs services information will be made available in a range of appropriate languages and formats when requested. A range of options for reporting repairs will also be maintained to enable all tenants to access the service.

This policy has been designed to be fully inclusive regardless of the ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religious beliefs or disability. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed in order to inform the policy throughout the development phase and to ensure any negative impacts on minority groups are appropriately mitigated.

24. Links to Other Policies

The Repairs and Maintenance Policy is a key document of the Council and sits under the Council's Housing Asset Management Strategy.

The key documents with which the Policy has links are:

- Housing Asset Management Strategy
- Tenancy and Estate Management Policy 2017
- Tenancy Agreement
- Major Adaptations Policy
- Compensation Policy
- Gas Safety and Servicing Policy
- Asbestos Management Plan
- Tenant Improvements
- Tenant's Right to Repair

Key Contacts

For comments in relation to this policy and its development please contact the Enabling and Projects Team:

- Telephone: 01782 233330 (office hours only)
- Email: housing.strategy@stoke.gov.uk
- Post: Enabling and Projects Team, Floor 1, Civic Centre, Glebe Street, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 1HH

For further information on how to influence policy development, please contact the Tenant Involvement and Leaseholder Team:

- Telephone: 01782 235916 (office hours only)
- Email: tenantinvolvementteam@stoke.gov.uk
- Post: Tenant Involvement and Leaseholder Team, Floor 2, Civic Centre, Glebe Street, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 1HH

To report a repair, please contact:

- Telephone: 01782 234100
- Online: www.Unitas.co.uk
- In person: at your nearest Customer Service Centre

To make a complaint or compliment regarding a responsive repair, please contact:

- Telephone: 01782 234100
- Email: customer.feedback@unitas.co.uk
- Post: Unitas Stoke-on-Trent Ltd, Alton House, Cromer Road, Northwood, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 6AY
- Alternatively ask a member of staff to log your feedback for you

For information on the provision of adaptations please contact the Housing Assistance and Adaptations Team:

- Telephone: 01782 232008 (office hours only)
- Email: council.adapts@stoke.gov.uk
- Post: or in person: Housing Assistance and Adaptations Team, Floor 2, Civic Centre, Glebe Street, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 1HH.

Glossary / Definitions

Throughout this policy document, it is inevitable that words or phrases are used that are readily understood by some reader, but which are new to other readers and their meaning is not immediately apparent. The meanings of some words/phrases used in this document are given below:

Unitas Stoke-on-Trent Ltd – the name of the council owned company established to deliver repairs and maintenance services to council owned properties.

Recharges – is the cost of repairing or putting right damage or neglect to properties. The costs are charged to the tenant and reclaimed.

Routine Repairs – are those repairs normally requested on a day to day basis by the tenant following a failure of an element within the property and do not include planned works and maintenance, repairs to void properties and cyclical works (for example annual gas safety checks).

Tenant Improvements – the term used for works carried out on the property by the tenant with the permission of the Council.