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| **Report To:** | Cabinet |
| **Date:** | 10 June 2025 |
| **Subject:** | Housing Landlord Service – 2024/25 year-end performance |
| **Purpose:** | To provide Cabinet with assurance on the performance of the Housing Landlord Service including compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code |
| **Key Decision:** | No |
| **Portfolio Holder:** | Councillor Tracey Carter, Portfolio Holder of Strategic and Operational Housing |
| **Report Of:** | Vikki Cherry, Assistant Director - Housing |
| **Report Author:** | Vikki Cherry, Assistant Director - Housing |
| **Ward(s) Affected:** | All |
| **Exempt Report:** | No |


**Summary**

The Regulator of Social Housing adopts a co-regulatory approach, holding Councillors responsible for ensuring that the Council, in its role as a registered provider of social housing, is delivering the outcomes of consumer standards.

This report provides assurance to Cabinet as the responsible body on how the Housing Landlord Service performed in the following areas during 2024/25:

- Statutory compliance
- Damp, condensation and mould (DCM)
- Responsive repairs and planned maintenance
- Complaints Performance and Service Improvement (including compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code).


**Recommendations**

1. That Cabinet notes the Housing Landlord Service's performance against key areas, accepting this report as assurance of the Service's performance in:
   - delivering the outcomes of the Safety & Quality standard
   - meeting statutory Health & Safety responsibilities.

2. That Cabinet considers feedback from Performance Monitoring Panel regarding the year-end performance reports scrutinised on 20 May 2025 (included as appendices to this report).

3. That Cabinet approves the Council's Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report for 2024/25 (appendix 4).

4. The Cabinet approves the response to the Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report for 2024/25 as the official response from the 'governing body', in accordance with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code.

**Reasons for Recommendations**
To monitor performance and to provide assurance and confidence to Members that the Housing Landlord Service continues to prioritise tenant safety and satisfaction.

It is a statutory requirement that the Council complies with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and the requirement to provide an annual submission, including an Annual Complaint Handling and Service Improvement Report and annual self-assessment.

**Other Options Considered**

1. Do nothing. To not consider information presented regarding the performance of the Service. **This option is not recommended.**

2. To not consider the Council's annual complaints performance and service improvement report. If the Council does not complete its annual submission, a complaint handling failure order may be issued. If the Council fails to comply with this order, a referral may be made to the governing body or Regulator of Social Housing. **This option is not recommended.**

## 1. Background

1.1 On the 20 May 2025, reports were presented to Performance Monitoring Panel for scrutiny on the following items:

- Statutory compliance
- Damp, condensation and mould (DCM)
- Responsive repairs and planned maintenance
- Complaints Performance and Service Improvement (including compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code).

1.2 This report provides a high-level summary of the performance of the Service along with comments and observations from Scrutiny. (Copies of individual reports

presented to Performance Monitoring Panel are included as appendices to this report).

1.3 Oversight and reporting arrangements are detailed in the HRA Governance framework (adopted during 2024/25). The Council monitors the performance of the Service through reporting regularly to Housing Governance Clinic, Housing Compliance Clinic and Performance Monitoring Panel.

## 2. High-level summary of 24/25 performance

2.1. Statutory compliance (Appendix 1)

2.2. 100% of safety checks had been completed for the following:

- Asbestos (communal areas)
- Gas safety (communal areas and dwellings)
- Legionella safety (communal areas)
- Fire safety risk assessments (communal areas)
- Passenger lift safety (communal areas)
- Electrical safety (communal areas)

2.3. 99.54% of electrical safety checks had been completed for dwellings which equates to a total of 18 outstanding properties for which we were unable to complete the periodical electrical check due to being unable to access the properties. (These cases are escalated through our 'no access' procedure, including ascertaining whether any additional support is required to gain access (due to household vulnerabilities) or whether enforcement action is necessary).

2.4. The report sets out in detail remedial actions including those overdue and steps taken to address this. There are no remedial actions due for gas safety, electrical safety checks, passenger lift safety and asbestos safety. 137 remedial actions were identified as part of fire safety checks during 24/25 with 31 actions remaining (see section 9 of the report). 1 remedial action is overdue for legionella (see section 7 of the report). Works are ordered for all actions.

2.5. An Internal audit was carried out in Q3 24/25 across all Housing compliance measures. Governance & Audit received a reasonable assurance grading from Internal Audit in January 2025 stating that robust controls and oversight were evidenced and continue to be developed.

2.6. Damp, condensation and mould (DCM) (Appendix 2)

2.7. DCM remains a key challenge and priority for the Housing Landlord Service and the social housing sector.

2.8. The service has responded to over 700 reports of DCM during the last financial year, identified proactively (by stock condition surveys) and reported by tenants or identified by staff/contractors. The report sets out the position on these cases including those surveyed, works completed and cases overdue. As at 31/3/25, 44 repairs were overdue the timescale for completion (of 56 days) due to major works being required such as roofing works, drainage works or lowering external ground levels or where there has been no access for contractors or operatives and appointments have needed to be rearranged with tenants.

2.9. In May 2025, it was recommended to Scrutiny that additional KPIs on DCM were reported to Performance Monitoring Panel to allow benchmarking to be provided, to support the scrutiny of performance.

2.10. Responsive repairs and planned maintenance (Appendix 3)

2.11. This report covers three areas of our repairs and maintenance operations: responsive repairs (broken down into emergency and routine cases), void repairs, and planned repairs and maintenance.

2.12. 13,329 responsive repairs were completed during 2024/25 of which 91.3% were completed within the target timescale of 28 days. 100% of emergency repairs were attended to within the set timescales (totalling 671 cases).

2.13. 250 void properties were inspected during 2024/25, with necessary repairs and safety checks completed. The average number of void days was 24.94 compared with 46.4 nationally.

2.14. As of 31/3/25, the Council had spent £4.39m of the £5m HRA Capital Programme investing in homes. In addition, £7m was invested improving the energy efficiency of homes, supported by grant funding.

2.15. A key area of focus is delivering a robust Capital Programme. A Capital Programme Clinic will be established during 2025 where Officers will be scrutinised on the performance and delivery of capital programme works.

2.16. Complaints Performance and Service Improvement (Appendix 4)

2.17. It is a statutory requirement that the Council returns a Complaint Handling and Service Improvement Report and self-assessment annually to the Housing Ombudsman Service. The 2024/2025 report (Appendix 4) provides a breakdown of complaints into trends and themes per service area along with service improvements made in response to learnings identified as part of investigations. The approval of this report is important to demonstrate the Council's commitment to transparency and accountability.

2.18. The Housing Landlord Service received the following feedback during 24/25:

- 8 compliments
- 70 thank you's
- 213 Stage one Complaints
- 29 Stage two Complaints
- 1 Housing Ombudsman case.

2.19. Housing Complaint numbers have risen from 38 complaints in 2023/2024 to a total of 242 complaints during 2024/25. This is considered a positive step, reflecting a cultural shift within the service, where Officers are recording expressions of dissatisfaction and actively promoting the complaints process to tenants. Complaints are used as a source of learning to drive service improvements.

2.20. As at 31/3/25, the Council responded to 94.84% of stage 1 complaints and 100% of all stage 2 in the timescales set by the Housing Ombudsman Service. 78.93% of complaints were upheld.

2.21. Improvements have been made during 24/25 including bringing complaint handling into the department to maximise investigation times, establishing complaint learning forms to identify service improvements and an Officer Working Group reviewing themes and trends of complaints.

## 3. Comments and observations from Scrutiny (20 May 2025)

3.1. Statutory compliance

3.2. Queries were raised about the following:

- The Council's approach to gas capping. That this step was taken as a last resort following multiple attempts to contact the tenant.
- When the Tenant Engagement and Influence Strategy would be adopted. The item was due to be presented to Cabinet for adoption on 10 June 2025.

3.3. Panel requested that:

- Cabinet was informed about the Panel's concerns regarding the number of 'no access' cases for damp, condensation, and mould. While Members were familiar with the 'no access' procedure, they expressed concerns about properties deteriorating and the long-term impact on the asset if access was not gained.
- A date was set by Officers for completion of the vulnerability policy. (Members were pleased to see this policy coming through).
- The Crime and Disorder section on the report was revised for future reports. (Panel felt that it implied that the Council was not delivering works to a high standard). It was recommended that this section was revised to include a sentence confirming the unlikelihood of the event occurring or the sentence was omitted.

3.4. Damp, condensation and mould (DCM)

3.5. Queries were raised about the following:

- Whether tenants were aware of how to report DCM considering the volume of cases identified by the stock condition surveys. The annual rent review letter (sent in March 2025) included a leaflet on how to report a repair of which was provided in translations and large print, where applicable. The annual tenants report (planned for summer 2025) would include a section on DCM and how to report it.
- The steps in place to monitor repeat cases. Follow-up phone calls were conducted six months post-repair. Repeat cases were monitored and reported to the Housing Compliance Clinic. RICS-qualified surveyors were appointed. In certain instances, welfare concerns were identified, such as tenants being unable to afford to heat their homes. In these cases, the department's support team would contact the tenant to discuss support options available.

3.6. Panel requested that:

- Cabinet was informed of the Panel's observation that it was imperative that departmental resourcing was sufficient to carry out this critical work.
- Cabinet was informed of the concern around the volume of 'no access' cases, considering the steps Officers were taking to access properties. Panel supported enforcement action being taken to ensure DCM did not have a long-term impact on the condition of property.
- Communications with tenants focussed on the importance of reporting DCM as well as the support available for tenants.

3.7 Responsive repairs and planned maintenance

3.8 Queries were raised about the following:

- Capital Programme Clinic – Panel sought assurance that this would drive change and address a programme that has regularly underperformed. The approach would be similar to the Housing Compliance Clinic with Officers scrutinised by the Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing and the Assistant Director – Housing.
- When online repairs reporting would go live. Go live was anticipated during Q2 2025/26. A contract had been awarded and Officers were working with corporate Transformation Team to establish a timeline which included tenants testing the system prior to it going live.
- The timescale for the implementation of the Asset Management Strategy and HRA Business Plan. Informal Member briefings were being organised for the summer. The documents would be adopted as part of budget setting for 2026/27.

3.9 Panel requested that:

- Cabinet was informed of Panel's support for the department being adequately resourced to ensure properties were maintained fully.

3.10 Complaints Performance and Service Improvement

3.11 Queries were raised about the following:

- Use of colours on bar charts – the variety of colours caused confusion. To consider this in future reports.
- Whether Officers would meet the deadline for submission. The Housing Ombudsman had recently extended the deadline to September (instead of 30 June). The item was on the internal year planner. Subject to Cabinet adopting the report on 10 June, the deadline would be met.
- What analysis of complaints was carried out. To date this has been completed by an internal Officer working group (meeting quarterly to make recommendations for service improvements). This approach will be supported further following the recent recruitment of a data analyst.
- Complaint outcomes and whether those 'not upheld' were justified. Officers stated that complaints marked as "not upheld" were instances where the Council had adhered to their policies and procedures accurately.
- Volume of complaints being upheld (in the favour of the tenant). Officers acknowledged that this volume was high, further steps had been introduced within the department to ensure investigating officers considered how future complaints could be prevented. (All investigating officers were now required to complete a feedback form as part of investigating a complaint, recording learnings and improvements that should be made).

## Conclusion

4.1. The Housing Landlord Service has demonstrated strong performance across its core responsibilities during 2024/25, with clear evidence of progress, accountability, and a commitment to continuous improvement. The Council has maintained high levels of statutory compliance with robust processes in place to address outstanding remedial actions.

4.2. The management of damp, condensation and mould (DCM) remains a challenge and key priority area. The service has responded to over 700 cases, with the majority triaged and resolved within target timescales. Where delays have occurred, these are being actively managed, and additional resources have been deployed to support delivery. Preparations for Awaab's Law are underway, with a dedicated report scheduled for July 2025.

4.3. Responsive repairs and planned maintenance services have continued to perform well, with 91.3% of routine repairs completed within target and 100% of emergency repairs attended to on time. Void turnaround times remain significantly better than national averages, and investment in the housing stock continues, including £7 million in energy efficiency improvements.

4.4. The increase in complaints received during the year reflects a positive cultural shift toward transparency and tenant engagement. The service has responded to 94.84% within Housing Ombudsman timescales and has implemented meaningful service improvements based on complaint learning.

4.5. The report presented provides assurance that the Housing Landlord Service continues to prioritise tenant safety and satisfaction.

## Implications

### South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership

This report provides assurance that South Holland District Council takes its responsibility as a landlord seriously and will mitigate against any potential reputational damage or negative impacts to tenants.

### Corporate Priorities

This report supports the following South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership Sub-Regional Strategy priorities:

- Healthy Lives – Safe housing will lead to the better health of our tenants and everyone that stays or visits the properties.
- Safe and Resilient – Providing community confidence that our homes are well maintained.

Improved use of data and information contributes to the Council's overall aims and objectives around efficiency and effectiveness.

**Staffing**

None.

**Workforce Capacity Implications**

None.

**Constitutional and Legal Implications**

As a social housing landlord, the Council is required to meet the requirements of the Regulatory Standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing in accordance with the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.

It is a statutory requirement that the Council complies with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and provides an annual submission to the Housing Ombudsman Service, including an Annual Complaint Handling and Service Improvement Report and annual self-assessment.

**Data Protection**

None.

**Financial**

The financial position of the HRA is monitored through regular budget meetings, formally reported to Members through quarterly outturn reports. The Portfolio Holder receives updates at the Governance Clinic.

Due to the volume of damp, condensation and mould cases identified by stock condition surveys, additional resources have been temporarily secured to support with assessing cases, surveying properties and ordering works, these resources have been costed and funded from within existing HRA budgets.

**Risk Management**

Managing damp, condensation and mould is a complex challenge for the Service. A risk has been added to the Risk Register regarding the Council's ability to deliver the requirements of Awaab's Law (commencing in October 2025). A paper will be brought forward to Members on the Council's preparedness to deliver Awaab's Law in July 2025.

The risk of managing a Direct Labour Organisation is recorded on the corporate risk register with Senior Leadership Team's oversight and reporting to Members via Governance and Audit committee.

**Stakeholder / Consultation / Timescales**

Performance Monitoring Panel scrutinised the performance on the following items on 20 May 2025:

- Statutory compliance
- Damp, condensation and mould (DCM)
- Responsive repairs and planned maintenance

- Complaints Performance and Service Improvement (including compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code).

Their comments and observations are included in the body of this report.

**Reputation**

Presenting performance reports to Members significantly enhances the Council's reputation by demonstrating a commitment to transparency and accountability. By openly sharing our performance, we build trust with stakeholders, including tenants and Members.

This proactive approach reassures Members that potential risks are being managed effectively, boosting confidence in our operations. Additionally, demonstrating our adherence to regulations and ethical standards reinforces that we are a responsible social landlord.

**Contracts**

None.

**Crime and Disorder**

None.

**Equality and Diversity / Human Rights / Safeguarding**

The Council is committed to making necessary adjustments such as providing additional assistance to meet the diverse needs of our tenants.

**Health and Wellbeing**

Transparently sharing performance data with Tenants and Members demonstrates the Council's commitment to maintaining safe and healthy housing environments.

**Climate Change and Environment Impact Assessment**

Not undertaken – performance report.

**Acronyms**

DCM – Damp Condensation and Mould
RSH – Regulator of Social Housing

**Appendices**

Appendices are listed below and attached to the back of the report:

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| Appendix 1 | Report to PMP on 20 May 2025: Housing Landlord Service – Performance of damp, condensation and mould case management |
| Appendix 2 | Report to PMP on 20 May 2025: Housing Landlord Service – Responsive Repairs and Planned Maintenance Performance |

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| Appendix 3 | Report to PMP on 20 May 2025: Housing Landlord Service - Compliance Assurance |
| Appendix 4 | Report to PMP 20 May 2025: Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2024/2025 |

**Background Papers**

| **Document title** | **Where the document can be viewed** |
|---|---|
| SHDC – HRA Governance Framework | HRA_Governance_Framework.pdf |
| SHDC – Landlord Strategy 2024 -2026 and Transformation Programme for 2024-2026 | SHDC_Housing_Landlord_Strategy_2024-2026.pdf |
| Regulator of Social Housing - Safety and Quality Standard | April_2024_-Safety_and_Quality_Standard_FINAL.pdf |
| Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code April 2024 | https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords-info/complaint-handling-code/the-code-2024/ |

**Chronological History of this Report**

| **Name of Body** | **Date** |
|---|---|
| Performance Monitoring Panel | 20th May 2025 |

**Report Approval**

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|---|---|
| Report author: | Vikki Cherry, Assistant Director – Housing<br>vcherry@sholland.gov.uk |
| Signed off by: | Vikki Cherry, Assistant Director – Housing<br>vcherry@sholland.gov.uk |
| Approved for publication: | Cllr Tracey Carter – Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing |