

Repairs and Maintenance Group meeting

Minutes

Date	Monday, 11 May 2026
Time	11am – 12.30pm
Location	Magna Carta Room Civic Centre, Station Road, Addlestone, KT15 2AH

Attendees:

- Simon Allen – Head of Housing Technical Services (RBC)
- Andrea Norman-Walker – Engagement and Inclusion Officer (RBC)
- tenants

Agenda

I. Welcome and feedback from the previous meeting

Andrea welcomed all residents who attended the meeting and asked the three new members to introduce themselves. She then reported back on issues raised at the previous meeting:

- **Surrey Towers re-paint** – The contractor, TCL, has issued an information letter to residents. Work is planned to begin within the next two weeks.
- **Roof repair at Surrey Towers** – Scheduled for July to September, as confirmed by the Housing Asset Manager.
- **Repairs Policy & Mould and Damp Policy** – Both policies were circulated for feedback. We received a very strong response rate, particularly for the Repairs Policy. Survey summaries were shared with the Group alongside the meeting invitation. Both policies are on today's agenda for discussion.
- **Transactional Survey – Post-Inspection** – Currently in progress.
- **Transactional Survey – Repairs Work Performance** – Work is underway to develop a survey focusing on repairs performance, including contractor communication.
- **Major Works Survey** – A new survey is being developed, which will include questions about residents' experience with scaffolding.

I. Solar panels – bird protection

A member of the Group raised concerns about an increase in pigeons nesting beneath recently installed solar panels:

“Since the installation of solar panels on our roof, we have experienced a significant increase in pigeons nesting beneath them—typically 5 to 8 birds per panel. The associated noise and faeces are now causing a serious nuisance on Victory Park Road and are negatively affecting the quality of life for residents.”

Simon Allen, Head of Technical Services, assured tenants that any issues with pigeons nesting under solar panels installed by the Council will be addressed, and that bird-proofing will be fitted where required.

He explained that the solar panel programme was initiated by the Government to help local authorities improve the EPC ratings of their housing stock. The funding arrangement—51% Council and 49% Government grant—covered only the installation of the panels, not bird-protection measures.

To install bird protection on all homes with solar panels would cost approximately £110–120k. For an individual property, the additional cost is around £1800–1900, of which £600–700 is for the bird-proofing itself and around £1200 for scaffolding.

A tenant asked whether the Council had provided feedback to the Government about this issue. Simon confirmed that there is currently no formal route for such feedback.

The current solar panel scheme is under review, and the Council is considering including bird protection as standard. It was also agreed that when a roof replacement takes place and solar panels are installed, bird protection will be fitted at the same time.

II. Roof repairs, planned works, Sureserve

Although this topic was discussed at the last meeting, a Group member requested that it be added to the agenda again on behalf of her neighbourhood, and the Group supported this.

A recent example was shared where a roof repair took only a couple of days to complete, yet the scaffolding remained in place for over eight weeks. Another tenant reported the same issue following a roof replacement. Tenants feel that leaving scaffolding up long after work is completed has a significant negative impact on their daily lives: windows cannot be fully opened, gardens cannot be properly used, and pavements become obstructed. It was noted that the roof work carried out by Milestone was excellent, but tenants felt the job should not have been signed off while the scaffolding was still in place.

Simon agreed to ask the Asset Manager - who is responsible for planned works - to investigate this issue.

Regarding planned works, it was requested that when a void property is prepared for re-let, decisions about works such as bathroom or kitchen replacements should be based on the actual condition of the property and take into account family life, disabilities, and general wear and tear. Simon explained the voids process:

- a void surveyor inspects the property and lists the required works based on its condition.
- works are ordered, contractors are instructed, and the works are carried out.
- a post-inspection takes place, and the property is then signed off for re-let.

Housing does not complete kitchen or bathroom replacements before new tenants move in for two reasons:

- it is better to consult new tenants about their preferences,
- completing major works beforehand would keep the property void for too long.

However, when a regular stock condition survey is completed, replacements are determined by two factors: condition and age.

A Group member also raised concerns about issues reported with Sureserve's work. Some tenants have complained about being left without heating or radiators for up to six months. It is widely known that Sureserve is based in London, and it was suggested that a local company might be more efficient. Simon explained that Sureserve is a national company with regional branches. However, he acknowledged that public procurement rules can sometimes exclude smaller SMEs. Wherever possible, smaller local companies are used.

III. Communication – Housing-contractors-tenants

Group members raised ongoing concerns about poor communication from contractors. An example was highlighted regarding door replacements: following initial measurements were taken, no updates were provided for an extended period. When contact was finally made, appointments were offered with extremely short notice, creating significant inconvenience for tenants and disrupting their plans. Some tenants felt pressured to accept appointments due to the lack of flexibility and clarity.

Simon referred to the survey being set up to gain a better understanding of tenants' experiences. ***He also agreed to send a letter to contractors reminding them of their responsibilities regarding offering appointments and maintaining clear communication with tenants.***

IV. Terms of Reference (ToR) – the structure of the Group

Andrea reminded members that she had circulated the Group's Terms of Reference (ToR) along with a request for volunteers to put themselves forward for the roles of Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary. She emphasised that resident meetings should be tenant-led to ensure they reflect tenants' priorities, lived experiences and views, rather than being directed by the Council, as set out in the Group's ToR. To support this approach, it is considered good practice for tenants to take on the roles of Chair and Secretary.

Andrea confirmed that training, officer guidance and administrative support will be provided as needed to enable tenants to carry out these roles effectively. She invited attendees to express their interest in taking on either of these positions.

It was noted that a previous candidate for the Chair role had to withdraw on health grounds. ***As an agreed process, Andrea will contact members directly and, if suitable candidates are identified, she will circulate their names to the Group for approval.***

V. Preparations for the next phase of Awaab's Law

Simon explained that under Phase 2, the law broadens its scope far beyond damp and mould, placing legal duties on landlords to address a much wider set of health and safety risks. Homes that expose tenants to excess cold or heat, unsafe stairs or structural elements, fire hazards, electrical faults, or poor hygiene conditions caused by inadequate ventilation will all be treated as **significant hazards**. These are defined as risks that could seriously harm an occupier's health or safety and that any reasonable landlord would be expected to fix urgently.

In practice, this means issues like persistent condensation, outdated wiring, inadequate smoke alarms, or energy-inefficient heating systems are no longer viewed as comfort problems but as compliance failures. Cold, poorly ventilated, or unsafe homes will trigger enforcement action, placing stronger obligations on landlords to maintain properties to a safe, healthy standard.

Tenants noted that mould issues can sometimes be caused by blocked or unsuitable gutters, downpipes, or other structural problems. Simon agreed but highlighted that most cases are actually the result of condensation. We support tenants in managing condensation by providing guidance and checking that vents are working properly.

Tenants suggested that they should have the option to turn vents down if needed. They also proposed that reminders on how to tackle condensation be shared with tenants, either through leaflets or newsletters.

Landlords have until **October 2026** to prepare for Phase 2, which requires stronger oversight of housing conditions. Providers will need to update repair and reporting processes to meet new legal deadlines, identify and prioritise high-risk homes affected by cold, condensation or poor ventilation, and plan budgets for long-term improvements that support both energy efficiency and tenant wellbeing. Regulators are signalling a firm expectation: homes must be demonstrably **safe and healthy**.

VI. Feedback on the Repairs Policy

The Repairs Policy was circulated for feedback following the last meeting, and the feedback summary was sent to the Group along with the invitation.

Simon reported that we took into consideration the strong feedback on the policy and changed it accordingly:

1. Repairs reporting and appointments:

Tenants noted that the online reporting system is difficult to use, particularly because some issues that are not listed, cannot be described (not facilitated by the online form). ***Simon agreed that we will investigate this and put measures in place to resolve it.***

Regarding the revised repair timeframes, Simon explained that four categories have now been created—rather than the original two—in order to align with the requirements of Awaab's Law.

- **Emergency** – emergency repair work will be attended and if possible, completed within 4 hours.
- **Significant** - If there are significant repairs, it will be completed within 5 days.
- **Routine** – all repair work will be completed within 20 days
- **Planned repairs** – 90 days (larger fencing and more complex works).

Simon mentioned that we tried to extend the standard working hours (08:00–17:00) for repairs, but we weren't successful.

2. Specific Repairs

Simon explained our current practices for fence repairs and replacements. The assumption that any garden backing onto a public highway will automatically have all fencing replaced with 6ft timber panels and posts was challenged by a tenant, who stated that his rear fence - despite bordering a public highway - was not replaced with a 6ft timber panel. ***Simon confirmed he would investigate the matter.***

3. Alterations

Simon assured the Group that we remain flexible in authorising alterations, provided the chosen contractor is reliable and the work is completed to a good standard. We will inspect the finished result. Tenants who make alterations to their homes are responsible for maintaining them. We take a more cautious approach with conservatories because of their specific characteristics and potential issues

VII. AOB

Other issues raised were referred to the Neighbourhood and Communities Group meeting next week (18 May).

The Group's next meeting is scheduled for 13 July at 10.30am for 11am.

Actions agreed:

- Report back on the outcome of the review of the solar panels and the associated bird-protection measures.
- Asset Manager to provide an update on the steps we plan to remove scaffolding as soon as possible following roof repair/replacement. (Sign off granted following scaffolding removal?)
- Send a letter to contractors reminding them of their responsibilities regarding offering appointments and maintaining clear communication with tenants.
- Report back on the progress of the Group's restructuring.
- Investigate the feasibility of installing vents with variable-speed settings.
- Provide feedback on how we deliver information to tenants about condensation and how to prevent it.
- Investigate the online form used to report repairs.