

Agenda Item	9.
Report No	HP/16/23

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Housing & Property Committee

Date: 10 August 2023

Report Title: Housing Performance Report: 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Housing & Property

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides information on how the Housing Service has performed in 2022/23 to 31 March based on key performance indicators and national benchmarking information.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:

Note the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource: There are no resource implications arising from this report.
- 3.2 Legal: There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural): There are no equality implications arising from this report.
- 3.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever: There are no climate change/Carbon Clever implications arising from this report.
- 3.5 Risk: Risk is managed through regular review and reporting to allow corrective action to be taken if necessary.
- 3.6 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people): There are no health and safety implications arising from this report.
- 3.7 Gaelic: There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

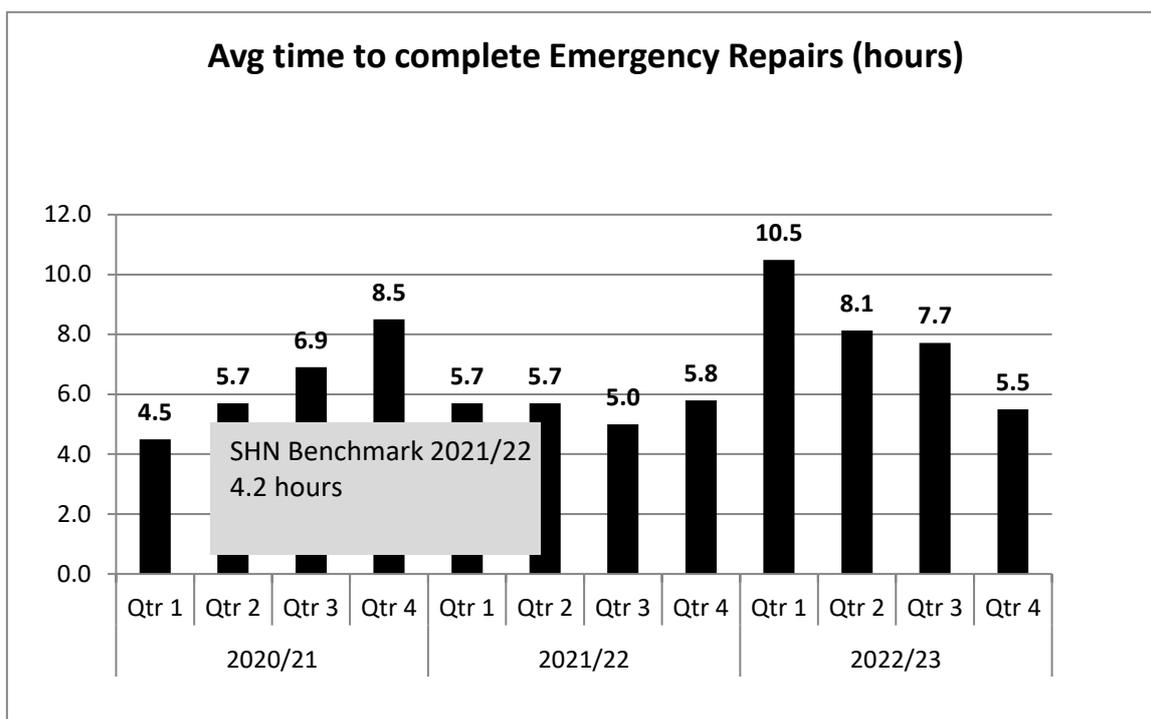
4. Background

- 4.1 The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has set out the performance indicators that it will use in its scrutiny of landlords.
- 4.2 This report provides performance information based on the reporting framework recommended by the SHR. Further performance information by Council Ward can be found on the Highland Council Intranet ward reporting pages.
http://www.highland.gov.uk/staffsite/info/13/members_intranet/37/ward_reporting/2
- 4.3 In accordance with the Scottish Social Housing Charter guidance, the Repairs, Tenancy Management and Rent Arrears figures are cumulative, while the Homeless Presentations figures are given for each separate quarter.
- 4.4 Scottish Housing Network (SHN) benchmark information, derived from the performance of all Scottish Landlords, has also been provided where available. Updated benchmark information will be available for future reporting. Indications are that it will demonstrate national pressures in regard to the Cost of Living Crisis and homelessness demand.

5. Housing Repairs

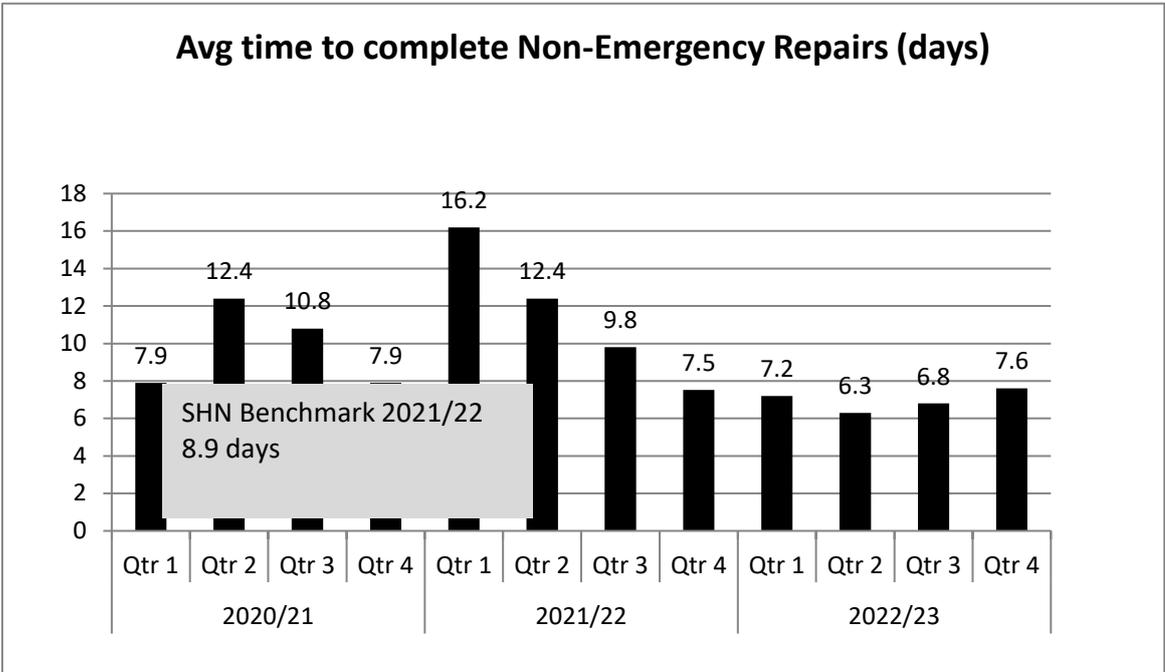
- 5.1 The key indicators for measuring repairs performance are the average time taken to complete Emergency repairs and Non-emergency repairs.
- 5.2 Table 1 details performance on the average time taken to complete emergency repairs and Table 2 details the average time taken to complete non-emergency repairs. Both graphs contain national benchmark figures for these indicators based on published 2021/22 figures.

5.3 **Table 1: Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs (hours)**
Target 12 hours
2021/22 SHN Benchmark (Group) – 4.2 hours



5.4 The time taken to complete emergency repairs in the last quarter has decreased significantly which reflects ongoing efforts to prioritise emergency repairs. Highland geography needs to be considered when comparing the Highland figure with the national benchmark for completing emergency repairs.

5.5 **Table 2: Average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs (days)**
Target 8 days
2021/22 SHN Benchmark (Group) – 8.9 days



5.6 Average time to complete non-emergency repairs remains well below the national benchmark average.

5.7 The Housing Account Revenue Monitoring Report to this Committee refers to the overspend on the repairs budget in 2022/2023. It also refers to both existing and future management actions to minimise repairs spend to ensure this is within budget in 2023/2024.

5.8 Future performance on emergency repairs will not be impacted by these management actions, as the Council is committed to ensuring that emergency/health and safety repairs are carried out as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

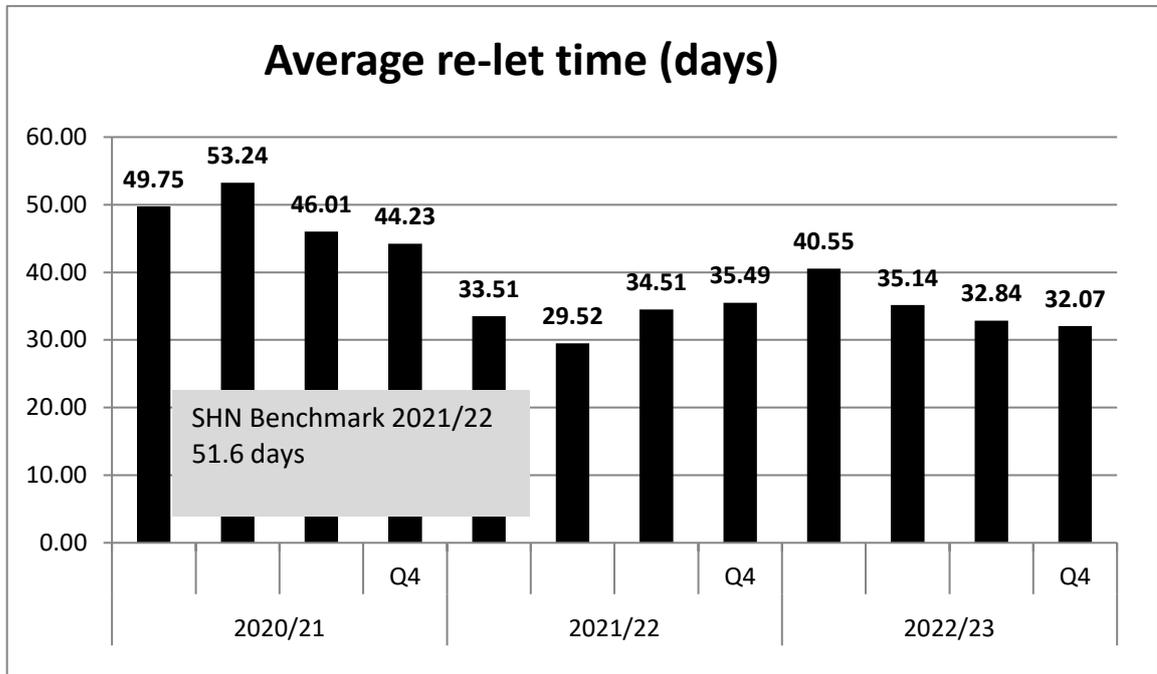
5.9 However, there is likely to be an impact on performance for non-emergency repairs as inevitably some of these works will be delayed to ensure best value for money is achieved. In the vast majority of cases, this will involve works being held over for several days until a less expensive in-house tradesperson is available to carry out the repair.

5.10 Communicating any potential delay to our tenants is essential and there are processes in place with Customer Services to ensure our tenants have information as to when they can expect work to take place. Officers will continue to carry out a weekly review of any works which have been “held” and will ensure that works will be prioritised if there is any concern that a delay will impact on the condition of the property.

6. Tenancy Management

6.1 Table 3 below provides information on the average re-let time showing the trend back 3 years and highlighting the same quarter in previous years for comparison.

6.2 **Table 3: Average re-let time (days) Target 35 days
2021/22 SHN Benchmark (Group) – 51.6 days**



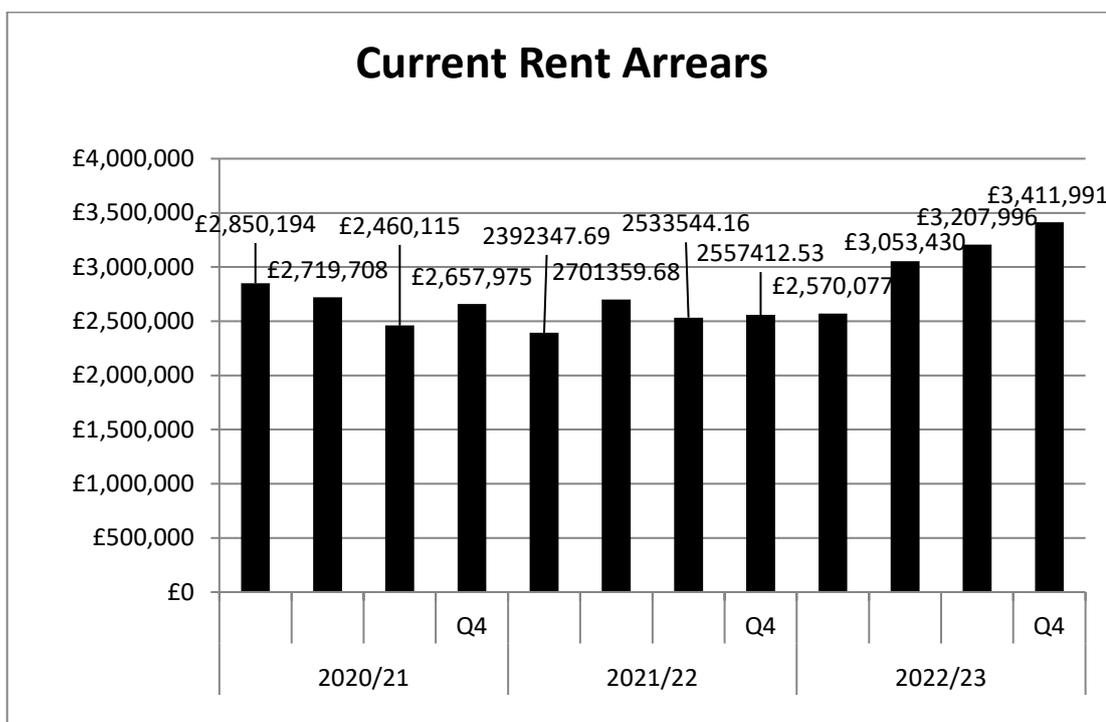
6.3 Performance on reletting times has improved in the last quarter and performance compares very favourably with the national benchmarking figures. Early indications are that the national benchmark figure is likely to be significantly higher for 2022/23.

6.4 As indicated at section 5 of this report, our relet performance will be impacted by the financial monitoring controls in place for 2023/2024. Local teams will ensure that re-letting continues to take place as quickly as possible, but that this is within the context of achieving best value. As with other works, this will mostly involve works being held over until a less expensive in-house tradesperson is available to carry out the repair.

7. Rent Arrears

7.1 The key performance indicator for rent arrears is the value of current arrears. Table 4 below provides information on current rent arrears and shows the comparative figure for the same quarter in the previous year.

7.2 **Table 4: Current Rent Arrears**



7.3 Rent arrears have increased during 2022/23 and this is primarily related to the Cost of Living Crisis. The financial pressures experienced by households is reflected in the increased number of tenants in arrears. A detailed breakdown of rent arrears by amount is provided at Table 5 below.

7.4 **Table 5 – Rent arrears by amount**

Rent Arrears Levels	Number of tenants in arrears 2021/22	Total arrears 2021/22 (£)	Number of tenants in arrears 2022/23	Total arrears 2022/23 (£)
Under £75	1,025	37,689	1,092	39,851
£75-250	1,337	194,528	1,646	238,433
£25-£1,000	1,500	782,174	1,801	928,093
£1,000 - £2,250	509	750,156	639	959,010
Over £2,250	229	792,866	342	1,246,604
Total	4,600	2,557,413	5,520	3,411,991

7.5 The Cost of Living (Scotland) Act was passed by the Scottish Government on 6 October 2022. This has temporarily suspended evictions in most circumstances, although social landlords are still able to evict where tenants have been found responsible for ongoing anti-social behaviour and where tenants are in arrears of over £2,250. The legislation has now been extended to 31 March 2024.

7.6 All high-level arrears cases are under regular review in line with our Rent Arrears Management Policy.

7.7 While arrears have increased in 2022/23, Highland performance remains significantly better than national benchmarking averages. As at 31 March 2023, gross rent arrears as

a percentage of rent due was 7.05% in Highland. This compares with the local authority average of 8.21% for 2021/22, with early indications that many local authorities will exceed this level for 2022/23.

- 7.8 Most of our tenants remain willing to responsibly manage their rent accounts. Officers continue to be supportive and sympathetic to all tenants facing financial hardship at this time and officers continue to signpost tenants to partner services who can provide specialist advice relating to income maximisation and benefits uptake.
- 7.9 The Review of our Rent Arrears Management Policy was reported to November 2022 Committee and Members noted the advice and assistance that is in place to help tenants manage their rent accounts. Table 6 below details some of the actions provided by Housing Officers to assist tenants to manage their rent accounts.

7.10 **Table 6: Referrals to specialist advice services 2022/23**

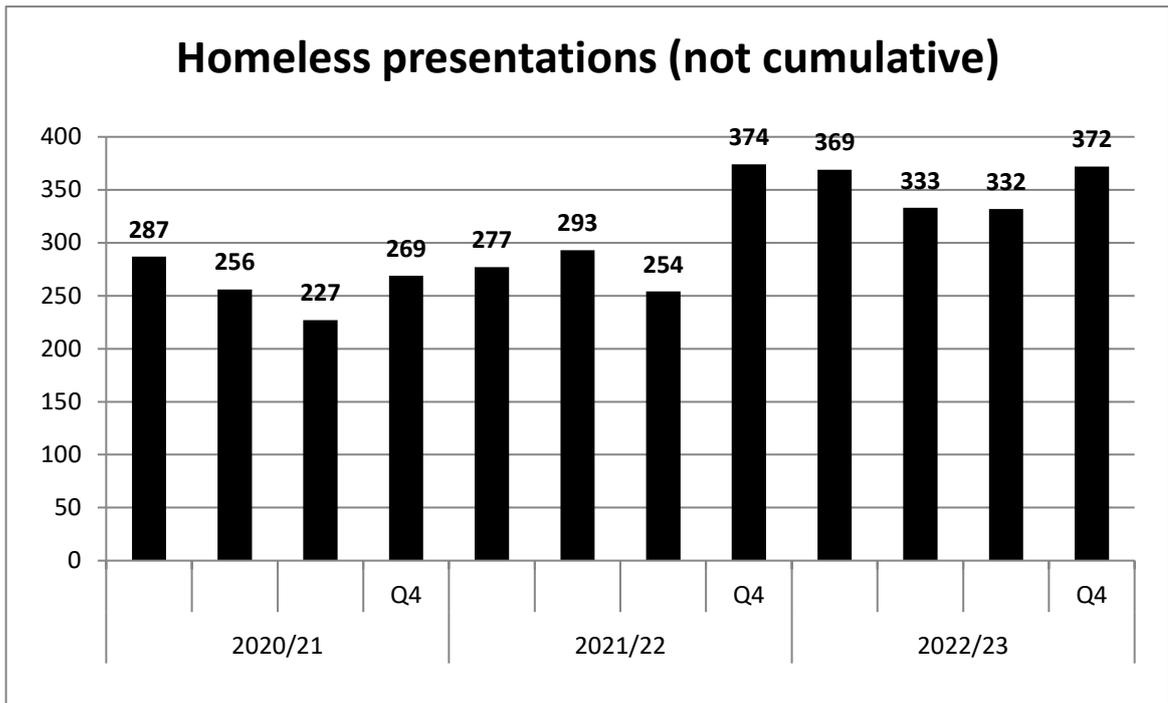
Description	No of Actions in 2022/23
REFERRED TO CAB	26
REFERRED TO WELFARE SUPPORT TEAM	184
REFERRED TO INTENSIVE SUPPORT OFFICER (FINANCE SERVICES)	41
REFERRED TO LOCAL ADVICE AGENCY	15
REFERRED TO COUNCIL'S MOVE ON PROJECT	40
REFERRED TO PERSONAL BUDGETING SERVICE	2
REFERRED FOR ENERGY ADVICE	278
REFERRED TO SOCIAL WORK SERVICES	37
REFERRED TO HOUSING SUPPORT PROVIDER	148

8. Homelessness

- 8.1 Performance information on homelessness is noted in tables 7 and 8.

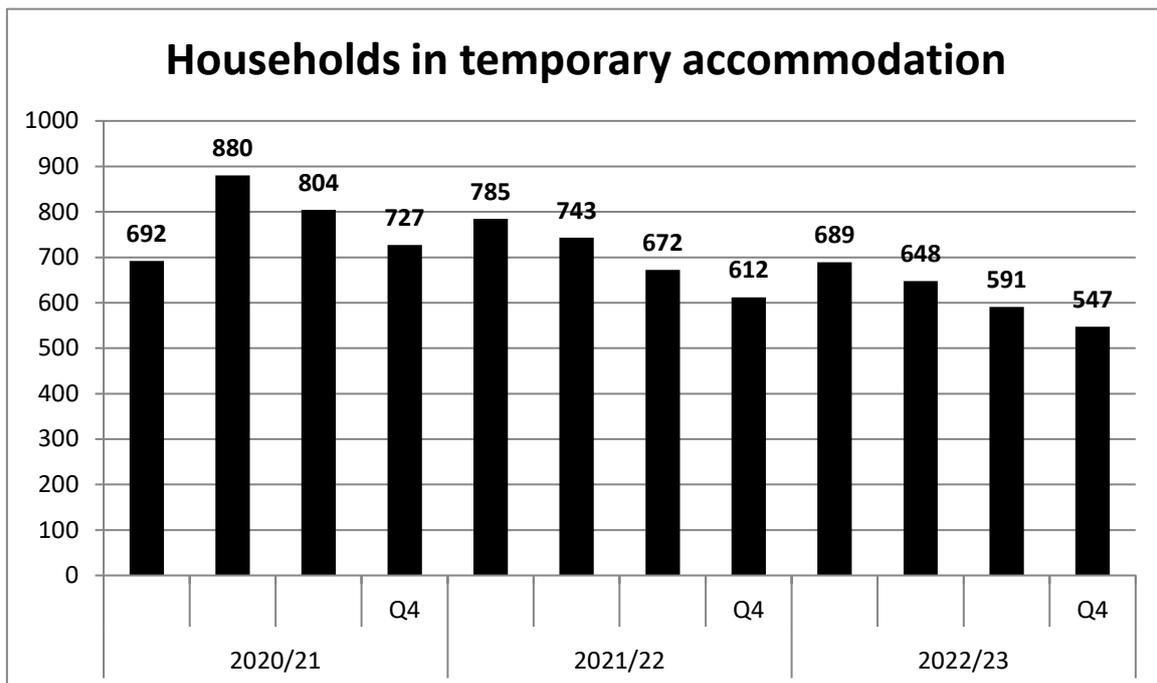
8.2

Table 7: Homeless presentations per quarter (not cumulative)



8.3

Table 8: Households in Temporary Accommodation (not cumulative)



8.4 Table 7 above shows that numbers of homeless presentations have returned to the high levels experienced at the end of 2021/2022.

8.5 The increase in homeless presentations is partly a result of households struggling with mortgage and private rental payments as a result of the Cost of Living Crisis. While the extension to the Cost of Living Act has protected private tenants from eviction, many households have reported continuing difficulties with accessing the private rented sector both in terms of affordability and supply.

- 8.6 Highland remains committed to homelessness prevention and our approach will be reviewed as part of the Scottish Government's new prevention duties which they intend to implement in 2023/24.
- 8.7 The number of homeless households recorded as living in temporary accommodation has continued to reduce as a result of an increase in households receiving a permanent tenancy. Providing the long-term security of a permanent tenancy is a key feature of Highland's approach to delivering sustainable outcomes for homeless households.
- 8.8 The Highland approach to tackling homelessness is reported annually to the Scottish Government through the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan and this update was approved at November 2022 Committee.
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Designation: Executive Chief Officer Housing & Property

Date: 13 July 2023

Author: Brian Cameron, Interim Head of Housing and Building Maintenance;

Background Papers: Scottish Housing Regulator: The Scottish Social Housing Charter: Indicators and Context Information

Appendices: