

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	16
Report No	HP/13/25

Committee: Housing and Property

Date: 29 January 2025

Report Title: Housing Performance Report: 1 April 2024 – 31 December 2024

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides information on how the Housing Service has performed in 2024/25 up to 31 December 2024 based on key performance indicators and national benchmarking information.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- Scrutinise and **NOTE** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2024 – 31 December 2024.

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 **Risk:** Risk is managed through regular review and reporting to allow corrective action to be taken if necessary.

3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people):** There are no implications arising from this report.

3.5 **Gaelic:** There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

4. Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3 This is a monitoring report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5. Background

5.1 The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has set out the performance indicators that it will use in its scrutiny of landlords.

5.2 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

5.3 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.

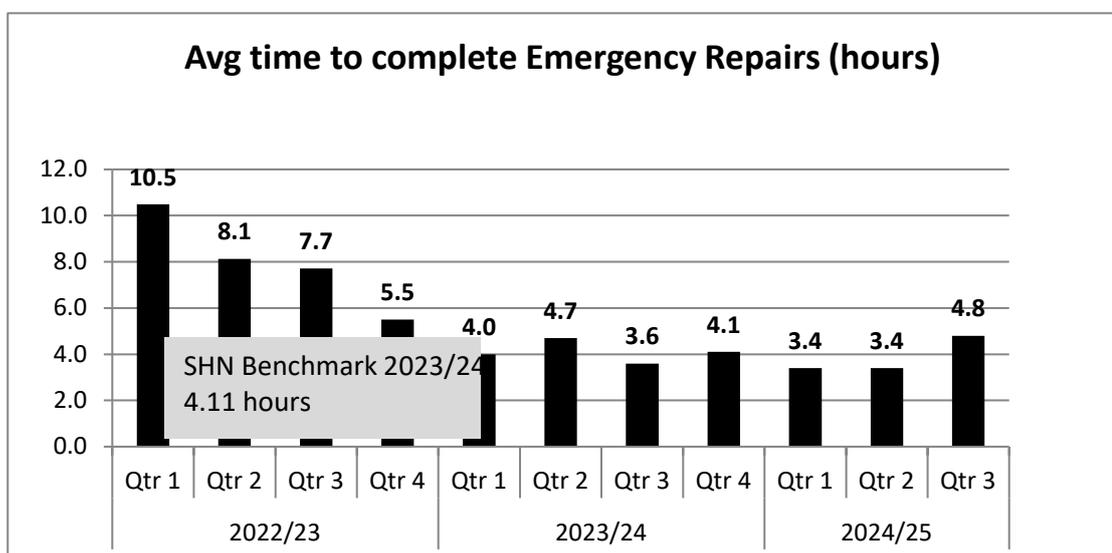
5.4 Scottish Housing Network (SHN) benchmark information, derived from the performance of all Scottish Landlords, has also been provided.

6. Housing Repairs

6.1 The key indicators for measuring repairs performance are the average time taken to complete emergency repairs and non-emergency repairs.

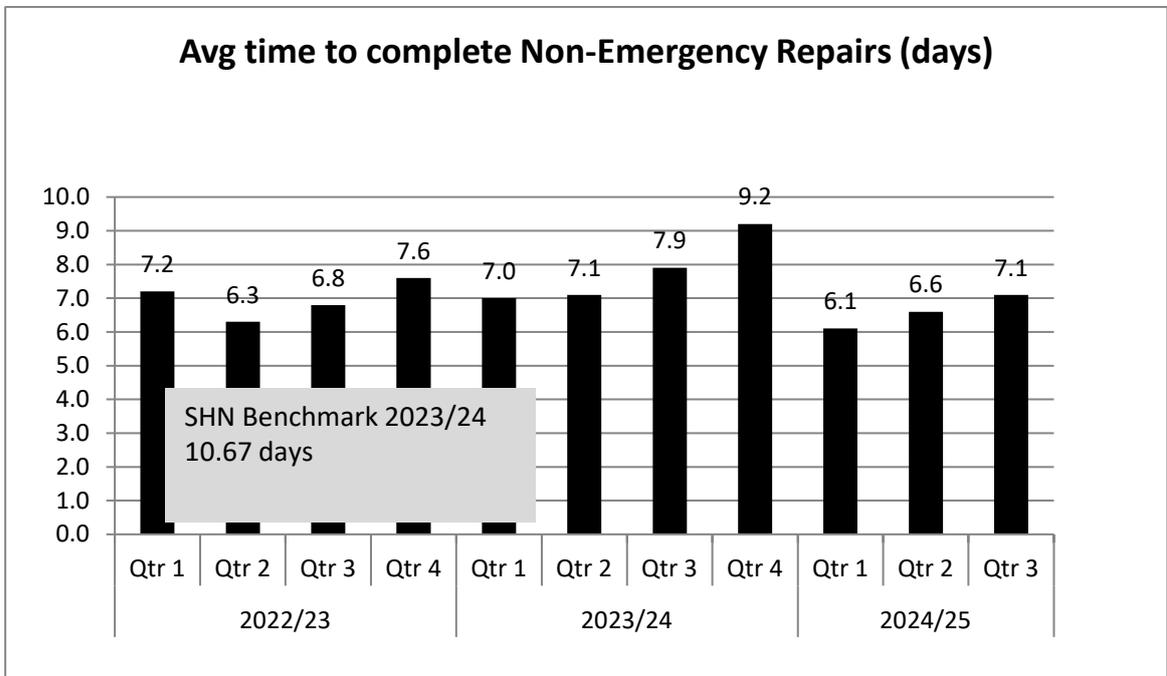
6.2 Table 1 details performance on the average time taken to complete emergency repairs and Table 2 details the average time taken to complete non-emergency repairs. Both graphs contain national benchmark figures for these indicators based on published 2023/24 figures. Highland geography needs to be considered when comparing the Highland figures for the national benchmark on completing repairs.

6.3 **Table 1: Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs (hours)**
Target = 12 hours
2023/24 SHN Benchmark (Group) = 4.11 hours



6.4 The time taken to complete emergency repairs in the last quarter has increased but it continues to be significantly below the Highland target of 12 hours.

6.5 **Table 2: Average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs (days)**
Target 8.9 days
2023/24 SHN Benchmark (Group) – 10.67 days



6.6 Average time to complete non-emergency repairs continues to be significantly below the national benchmarking average.

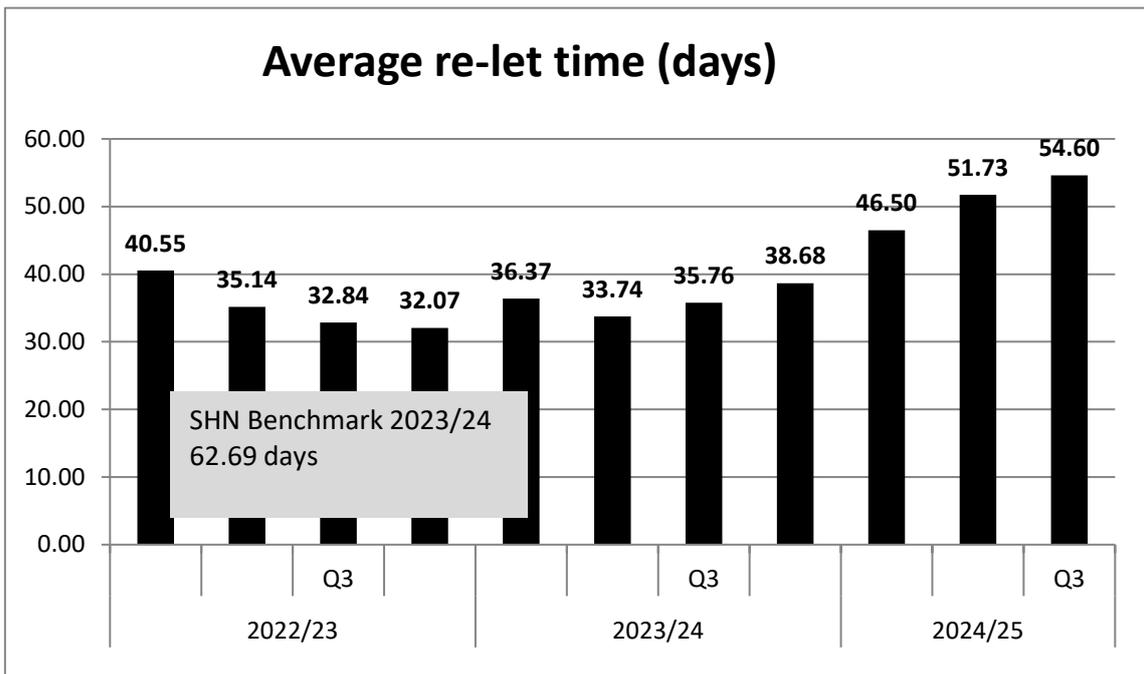
6.7 Progress also continues to be made in terms of tackling the backlog of low priority repairs, such as external pathways, gutters, gates, and fences. Some of these repairs were delayed in 2023/24 as a result of budget pressures. There were 453 of these low priority repairs outstanding as at 31 December 2024. The increased repairs budget in 2024/25 has allowed more of these to be released, however some of these may be included in a future Planned Maintenance Programme to achieve better value for money.

7. Tenancy Management

7.1 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.

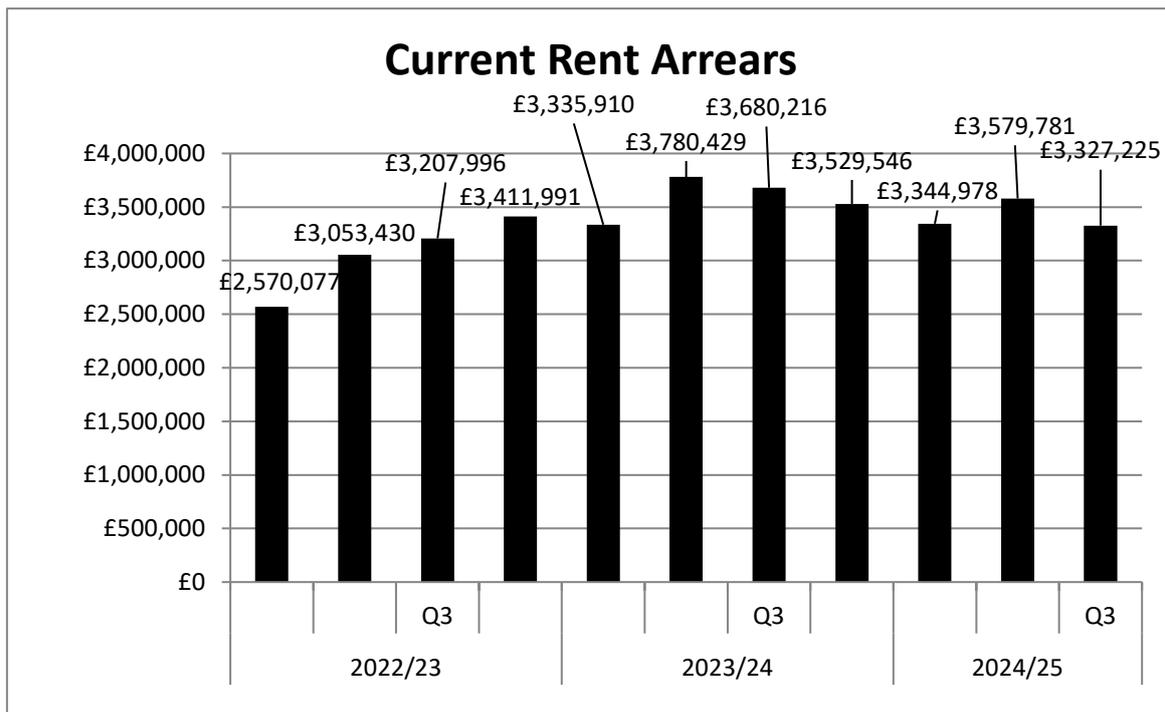
7.2

Table 3: Average re-let time (days)
Target 55.6 days
2023/24 SHN Benchmark (Group) – 62.69 days



- 7.3 Re-letting times have increased for Q3, largely as a result of the time taken for major refurbishment works to be completed for some long-term voids. Despite the increase in re-let times, performance continues to compare favourably with the national benchmarking figures.
- 7.4 The Scottish Housing Network has indicated that the overall local authority average for 2023/24 has increased further to 73 days. As with the situation nationally, Highland is experiencing delays with utility companies in terms of clearing meter debt and installing new gas and electric meters. These issues have been discussed at a national level by the Scottish Government and utility companies. In Highland, there have also been significant challenges in terms of contractor capacity to carry out major refurbishment works at the void stage.
- 7.5 An internal review into how re-let times can be improved has commenced. Any improvement in performance is likely, however, to have an adverse impact on the time taken to complete non-emergency repairs, if tradespersons are redeployed to complete re-let works. Similarly, expenditure on sub-contractors is likely to increase if the priority is to re-let properties quicker. The service will continue to try and balance the competing demands.
- 7.6 The review will ensure that these factors are taken into account, along with issues such as void rental loss and targeting re-let works in areas of greatest housing demand.
- 8. Rent Arrears**
- 8.1 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.

Table 4 – Current Rent Arrears



8.3 Rent arrears for Q3 have decreased from Q2 and are also significantly lower than for the comparative quarter in 2023/24. The management of rent arrears remains a priority with robust case reviewing and monitoring arrangements in place. There is a continued focus on arrears prevention work through close working with the Highland Council Welfare Team and agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau. A preventative approach continues to be taken, with housing teams engaging early with tenants with low rent arrears to provide advice and support and onward referrals where appropriate, in order to avoid arrears escalating.

8.4 Local Housing teams hold regular review meetings focusing on the highest rent arrears cases, and actions are instigated and progressed through these meetings. Officers aim to take a firm but fair approach to arrears management and we are keen to support and advise people where appropriate. Some cases have progressed through the court system where unfortunately tenants have not engaged with the support offered.

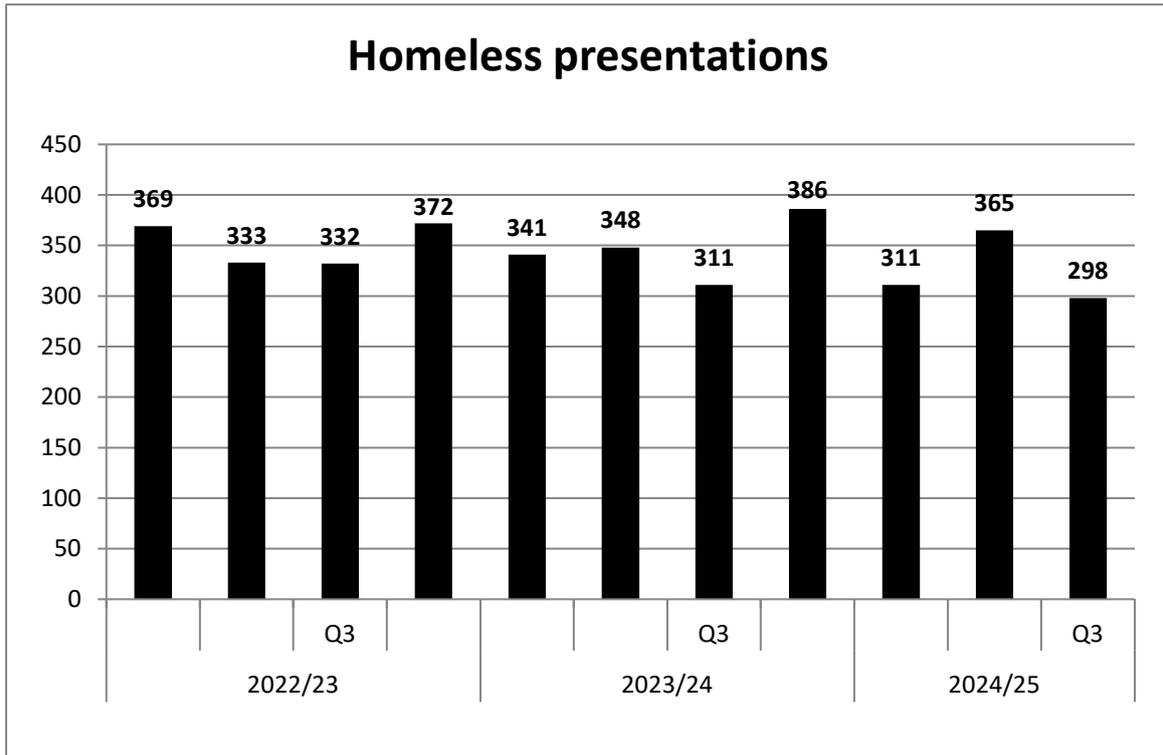
8.5 The Cost of Living (Scotland) Act ended on 31 March 2024. This means that landlords can progress to eviction for cases with arrears below £2,250. Highland is committed to following the Rent Arrears Management Policy approved previously at this Committee. This has set the principle that legal action against tenants in high rent arrears should only be used as a means of last resort.

9. Homelessness

9.1 Performance information on homelessness is noted in tables 5 and 6.

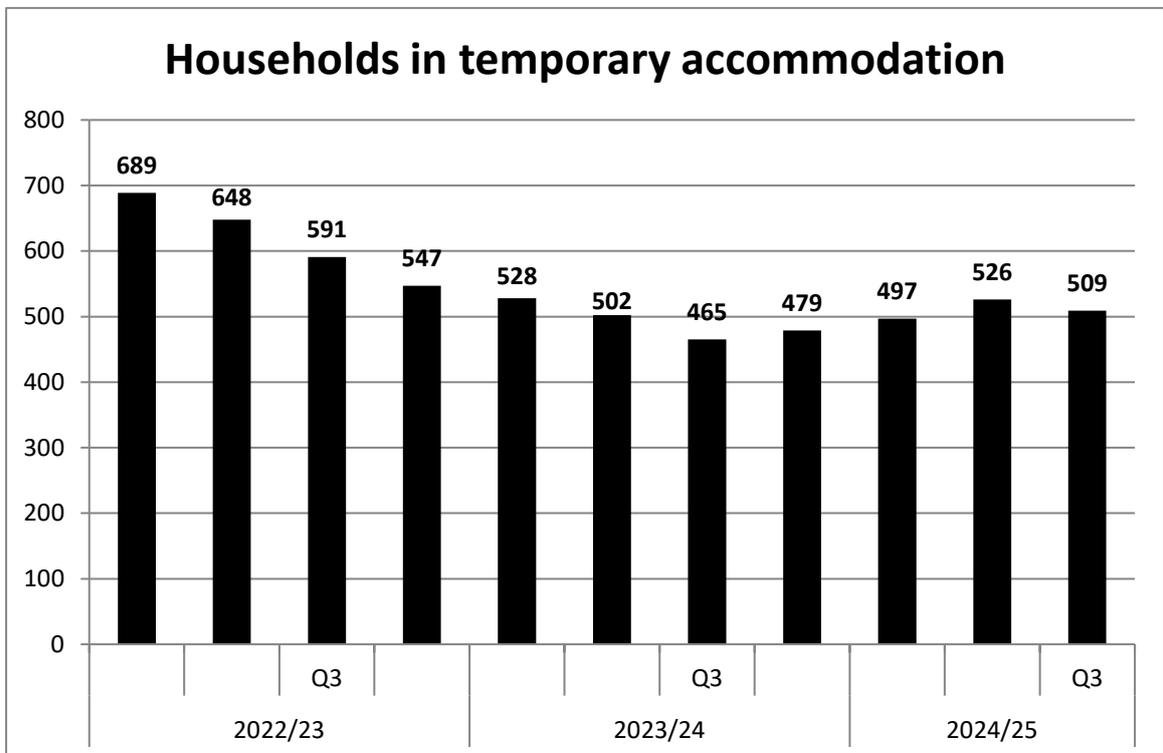
9.2

Table 5 - Homeless presentations per quarter



9.3

Table 6 – Households in Temporary Accommodation



9.4 Table 5 (above) shows that the number of homeless presentations have significantly decreased since the previous quarter and are at a 3-year low.

- 9.5 The decrease in homeless presentations is partly a result of successful homeless prevention work, including supporting households to move into mid-market rentals and providing financial assistance using the Council's Rent Deposit Scheme. There is ongoing discussion at a national level to determine the detail behind forthcoming proposed changes to homeless legislation, which will focus on even earlier prevention work and additional duties on public bodies to prevent homelessness.
- 9.6 The number of homeless households recorded as living in temporary accommodation has also decreased from the previous quarter. Highland continues to focus on achieving permanent outcomes for homeless households and this is reflected in the percentage of lets to homeless households reported previously in the Highland Housing Register Annual Allocations Report to this Committee.
- 9.7 The positive performance of Highland in mitigating homelessness and in achieving permanent housing outcomes was acknowledged by the Scottish Housing Regulator during their 6-monthly engagement visit in January 2025.
- 9.8 The age range of homeless applicants and the reason for homelessness is included in **Appendix 1** of this report. It should be noted that the format of the information is based on Scottish Government reporting criteria.
- 9.9 The demand for social housing in Highland remains high. At 31 December 2024, there were 8,597 applicants on the Highland Housing Register. This compares to 8,338 at 31 March 2024.

Designation:	Assistant Chief Executive - Place
Date:	9 January 2025
Author:	Brian Cameron, Strategic Lead - Housing and Building Maintenance
Background Papers:	Scottish Housing Regulator: The Scottish Social Housing Charter: Indicators and Context Information
Appendices:	Appendix 1 - Main reason given by household for homeless presentation by age range (1 April 2024 – 31 December 2024)

Appendix 1

Main reason given by household for homeless presentation by age range (1 April 2024 to 31 December 2024)

Main Reason for Homelessness	16-17	18-25	26-59	Over 60	Total
Asked to leave the accommodation	11	68	108	15	201
Discharged from prison/hospital/care or other setting		7	37	1	45
Emergency such as fire/flooding/storm or Environmental Health Order			4		4
Fleeing violence from outwith the home (i.e. violence from a neighbour)		1	15	1	17
Forced division and sale of matrimonial home		1	5	4	10
Harassment or other non-violence actions	1	1	8	2	12
Loss of service/ tied accommodation		12	34	8	54
Non-Violent Dispute at home (i.e. relationship breakdown)	3	48	182	11	244
Other action by landlord		4	59	15	78
Other reason	1	8	35	11	55
Other reason for loss of accommodation	1	13	49	10	73
Over-crowding	1	13	10		24
Rent or Mortgage Arrears		3	32	4	39
Terminated their accommodation (i.e. ended their tenancy)		1	5	3	9
Violent dispute or abuse from within the home	2	23	102	6	133
Total:	20	202	685	91	998