

# Diversity impact assessment

<b>TITLE</b> Retender of Gas Services (HRA Housing Services)
<b>DATE:</b> 22 <sup>nd</sup> November 2023
<b>LEAD OFFICER.</b> Adam Spokes – Head of HRA Property and Development
<p><b>1 Summary description of the proposed change</b>            What is the change to policy / service / new project that is being proposed?            How does it compare with the current situation?</p>
<p>The project is a competitive tender exercise led by HRA Housing Services to source a future supplier of the repairs and maintenance contract.</p> <p>Potential suppliers will be required to express interest, pass a prequalification questionnaire, demonstrate that they can meet particular standards and then competitively bid for business worth around £850k per annum. The contract will be in place for 144 months inclusive of extensions. The contract will provide a fully encompassing gas repairs, servicing and maintenance service to the councils housing stock. The contracts are proposed to commence on 1 September 2024 and depending on the extension agreements, could conclude on 31 August 2036.</p> <p>The current gas contract which forms part of the repairs contract was awarded to Mears Ltd for a period of five years from 01 September 2014, concluded in August 2019. As a result of good performance, this contract was extended until August 2024. The current contract includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repairs to all Council owned dwellings and communal areas.</li> <li>• Out of Hours service.</li> <li>• Annual gas servicing of appliances owned within the council's stock.</li> <li>• Void works to empty dwellings.</li> <li>• Capital works such as renewal of kitchens and bathrooms.</li> <li>• A small proportion of compliance work streams.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2.Summary of evidence used to support this assessment</b>            E.g.: Feedback from consultation, performance information, service user.            E.g.: Comparison of service user profile with Medway Community Profile</p>

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## Customer profile

The HRA has a responsibility as a local authority landlord to ensure that the properties that the council own are maintained, safe and compliant. As of the 31/03/23 the council owned a total of 3031 properties and managed 222 leasehold properties.

The HRA team engages with and collects information about our residents to ensure that we know households and communities so that services can be delivered in the most appropriate ways.

A breakdown of the lead tenant's age shows we serve an ageing population, with 31.3% of residents being aged 65 and over. In comparison to the whole of Medway where 16.6% of residents are aged 65 and over (ONS population estimates 2021).

Age	%
24 or younger	2.70%
25-34	13%
35-44	15.40%
45-54	17.10%
55-64	19.30%
65-74	17.10%
75 or older	14.20%
Refused/Unknown	1.10%

According to the latest Census data it is reported that 5.1% of the population in Medway are in bad or very bad health and 17.4% are considered disabled under the Equality Act (Census data 2021).

## Performance Monitoring

The new contract will require the supplier to keep track of and report on a series of performance metrics (e.g., customer satisfaction with the gas repairs service, response times, rate of gas repairs carried out within defined timescales).

These will be used by Housing Services to review the usage of the contract, identify issues (including those that impact populations with protected characteristics) and work with the supplier and Council services to resolve them.

The gas repairs service has made significant improvements in performance in recent years and we continue to benchmark our performance against similar providers. Under the current arrangements, contract monitoring reports are produced monthly and discussed at contract monitoring meetings. The service has also improved its data capturing, procurement processes as well as putting measures in place to ensure statutory compliance is maintained.

As at year end 2022/23, a summary of results is as follows:

- % of homes for which all required gas safety checks have been carried out: 99.96% - 2<sup>nd</sup> quartile

(Source: Housemark -All providers with a stock size 2,500 to 5,000).

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From 1 April 2023, social housing providers are required to collect data for tenant satisfaction measures (TSMs) on areas such as repairs, safety checks and complaints. The measures are intended to enable residents to scrutinise their landlord and hold them to account and provide a source of intelligence to the Regulator on whether landlords are meeting the regulatory standards. TSMs will be used alongside other tools to gain assurance from social housing providers. Landlords with a stock of over 1,000 properties will be required to submit this data on an annual basis.

In March 2023, the HRA carried out a baseline TSM survey and below is a summary of results:

- Overall satisfaction 64%
- Repairs satisfaction 68%
- Repair timing satisfaction 66%
- Satisfaction with home maintenance 62%
- Satisfaction that you feel safe at home 65%
- Satisfaction that your landlord listens and acts 46%
- Satisfaction that your landlord keeps you well informed 55%
- Your landlord is fair and respectful 64%
- Satisfaction with complaint handling 28%
- Satisfaction with communal areas 56%
- Satisfaction with your neighbourhood 45%
- Satisfaction with landlords handling of ASB 39%

## Consultation and customer service

Monthly repairs (inc gas) complaints analysis is conducted to monitor service level provision and proactively identify areas for improvement. Service provision is also monitored at Quality Management Service meetings.

HRA Services will involve tenants in the tender process. Tenants will be involved in the decision-making process and were given 10% of the quality weighting where they selected their own questions and scored the tendering contractors answers under moderation.

Several consultation events will be held in a variety of formats to ensure accessibility and inclusivity. Consultation materials will be offered in a variety of formats, translation services will be offered at consultation events.

Medway Council Housing Repairs Complaints (Stage 1 and 2, inc Mears)  
2022-23

	Q1	Q2
<b>Received S1+S2+ Mears</b>	17	28
<b>Upheld</b>	12.5	23

## Consultation

Tenants and leaseholders have been consulted about the next contract and have strongly expressed a wish to have a separate contract for the HRA service that provides value for money but also a high-quality service.

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### 3 What is the likely impact of the proposed change?

Is it likely to:

Adversely impact on one or more of the protected characteristic groups

Advance equality of opportunity for one or more of the protected characteristic groups

Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't

**(Insert Yes when there is an impact or No when there isn't)**

Protected characteristic groups (Equality Act 2010)	Adverse impact	Advance equality	Foster good relations
Age	No	Yes	Yes
Disability	No	Yes	Yes
Gender reassignment	No	No	No
Marriage/civil partnership	No	No	No
Pregnancy/maternity	No	No	No
Race	No	No	Yes
Religion/belief	No	No	No
Sex	No	No	No
Sexual orientation	No	No	No
Other (e.g. low income groups)	No	Yes	Yes

### 4 Summary of the likely impacts

Who will be affected?

How will they be affected?

The proposed retender of the gas servicing contract will apply equally to all residents and will only serve to advance equality, by improving and adapting homes, estates and the services provided by the HRA service.

#### Race

If English is not a first language to some parts of the community, then the communications relating to the repairs retender may not be understood. Additional work will be carried out to improve monitoring and feedback from under presented groups by council staff and the successful gas repairs service provider.

#### Vulnerability

Tenant profile data will be used to model services around individual customer needs. It is anticipated that the model will better match customer needs with the 'best-fit' service provider. It is anticipated that there is stronger likelihood that customers' needs are met.

#### Religion

We do not have any data on the religion or beliefs of residents accessing the repairs service and so we cannot draw any conclusions as to whether any faith groups are disproportionately affected. We will ask providers to collate data and update documentation accordingly.

#### Equalities

Equalities matters will be prioritised as part of the regular monthly contract and performance review meetings and, as a minimum, will cover diversity/equality, social value, safeguarding alerts and complaints.

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## **General impact**

The procurement and effective mobilisation/delivery of the gas servicing contract is crucial to maintaining standards in HRA provided accommodation.

Having a safe and decent home to live in is important for maintaining the health and general wellbeing of all residents, but particularly those that are vulnerable.

Ensuring resident engagement and support for a new contract will be essential to ensuring that tenants buy in to any potential new arrangement.

## **5 What actions can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impacts, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations?**

What alternative ways can the Council provide the service?

Are there alternative providers? Can demand for services be managed differently?

# Diversity impact assessment

## **Contract delivery**

If the contract does not commence on 1<sup>st</sup> Sept 2024, this could have a detrimental impact on service provision.

Failure to comply with legal requirements and statutory responsibilities in terms of either contract procurement or contract delivery of the service could lead to poor PR for the Council or even death of a tenant.

Tenants with disabilities or language barriers may face additional difficulty should contract delivery fail.

An ineffective or poorly managed contract may lead to poor levels of customer satisfaction.

Effective project management is in place to manage transition of service if required from current contractor.

A clear timetable for procurement is in place at outset of the tender process so Legal advice can be sought with ample time.

Timescales reflect statutory obligations and will be discussed and reviewed at tenant consultation meetings.

## **Reporting of Gas Repairs**

In the event of a new contractor being appointed their ICT software may not be compatible immediately to allow the contractor interface to be in place from the start of the contract. This could lead to the inability for customers to report and monitor repairs online.

## **Impact on service delivery**

A poorly operating contractor can have detrimental effects on customer satisfaction. This contract is key to maintaining good satisfaction with the HRA service overall and much work has been undertaken in recent years to improve the image of the service.

Effective project management is in place to manage transition of service if required from current contractor. If tender is awarded to new contractor robust weekly meetings will take place to manage new contractor through daily monitoring reports.

Tenant profile data will be used to model services around individual customer needs. Contracts will consider how technology could be utilised to improve the customer experience as well as achieving operational efficiencies and financial savings.

## **Consultation**

HRA residents will be consulted and engaged with throughout the process in line with the social housing white paper requirements. Tenants will be represented on the panel and will be involved in the decision-making process. Tenants will be involved in the co-production and scrutiny of the tender process.

Several consultation events will be held in a variety of formats to ensure accessibility and inclusivity. Consultation materials will be offered in a variety of formats, translation services will be offered at consultation events.

A full section 20 Leaseholder consultation will take place as part of this procurement activity.

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## **Health and Safety compliancy**

As a housing provider, the council has a range of responsibilities which helps to keep tenants' and leaseholders' homes safe – this includes completing regular safety checks. Failure to communicate compliancy and health and safety information to tenants in an appropriate format could result in tenant or contractor death or injury.

A dedicated Compliance Performance Monitoring Officer post is in place to reduce risk and monitor statutory obligations. Compliancy data information will be provided to tenants in a range of styles, languages and in formats (visual, face to face, text, braille, audio) appropriate to the tenant profile.

## **Performance monitoring post procurement**

To ensure the needs of the requirement are met and continuously fulfilled post award, the following KPIs will be included in the tender and will form part of any subsequent contract. These KPI's will be more specific come tender award stage.

There will be a minimum of monthly contractor monitoring meetings in place at which residents will be present.

## **Social Value**

The proposed Contractors may seek to develop social value initiatives by making apprenticeships, training, and work placement opportunities more accessible to Medway residents. This will be in addition to the HRA's 'One Medway' Social Value initiative.

## **Budget Implications**

The latest HRA Business Plan review identified that the financial costs for maintaining the housing stock are sustainable for the next 30 years, ensuring the Council meets its statutory repairs and maintenance responsibilities.

## **Training**

The legislative requirements of the White Paper for Social Housing (chapter 5) requires that housing staff have professional training and development to ensure residents receive a high standard of customer service and are treated with courtesy and respect. As a representative of the Council, the contractor will be required to demonstrate training in areas such as customer service, social stigma, safeguarding and complaints. This will advance equality for tenants with protected characteristics and those who do not.

## **Communication**

Details of the tender process will be clearly communicated to tenants and HRA staff.

Information that is published online regarding the repairs service may require review and updating. This information will be provided in a variety of formats.

Key contact information for the repairs service, such as the repairs phone number will remain unchanged.

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## 6.Action plan

Actions to mitigate adverse impact, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations and/or obtain new evidence

Action	Lead	Deadline or review date
The council is to ensure that consultation information is provided in a variety of formats, including Easy Read, Braille or Audio if required.	Tenant Engagement Team/RLO	August 24
The Council will provide additional support to vulnerable tenants when delivering repairs retender information.	Tenant Engagement Team/RLO	August 24
Tenants are involved in the scrutiny and co-production of the tender process.	Tenant Engagement Team/RLO	August 24
Equalities matters will be prioritised as part of the regular monthly contract and performance review meetings and, as a minimum, will cover diversity/equality, social value, safeguarding alerts and complaints.	Tenant Engagement Team, RLO & Contracts Manager	Ongoing and continuation of new contract – monthly
That the specification requires the new contractor to adhere to the legislative requirements of the White Paper for Social Housing.	Head of HRA Property and Development	April 23
Contractors demonstrate a commitment to the professional training of staff to ensure that tenants are treated with courtesy and respect.	Head of HRA Property and Development	ongoing annually
Monthly repairs complaints analysis is conducted to monitor service level provision and proactively identify areas for improvement.	HRA Property Services Operations Manager	Ongoing and continuation of new contract – monthly



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## **7.Recommendation**

The recommendation by the lead officer should be stated below. This may be: to proceed with the change, implementing the Action Plan if appropriate, consider alternatives, gather further evidence  
If the recommendation is to proceed with the change and there are no actions that can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impact, it is important to state why.

The recommendation is to proceed with the Gas Servicing Retender and the mitigating actions in this DIA.

## **8.Authorisation**

The authorising officer is consenting that the recommendation can be implemented, sufficient evidence has been obtained and appropriate mitigation is planned, the Action Plan will be incorporated into the relevant Service Plan and monitored

### **Assistant Director**

Mark Breathwick

### **Date of authorisation**