

Report to: Portfolio Holder

Decision Date: 29 July 2025

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Paul Peacock, Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Performance & Finance
Councillor Lee Brazier, Portfolio Holder for Housing
Sanjiv Kohli, S.151 Officer and Deputy Chief Executive

Director Lead: Suzanne Shead, Director of Housing, Health and Wellbeing

Lead Officer: Craig Tinsley, Housing Maintenance Manager
Craig.tinsley@newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk

Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open non-key decision report (with exempt appendix)
Report Title	Housing Maintenance – Additional Damp, Mould and Disrepair Resources.
Purpose of Report	This report is to present a business case for allocation of budget to facilitate an increase in the establishment of the Housing Maintenance Team to provide adequate resources to respond effectively to the Awaabs Law, new damp, mould and disrepair regulations coming into force from October 2025.
Recommendations	<p>For the Portfolio Holders and S.151 Officer to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Approve the allocation of £135,820 from the HRA Regulatory Compliance/Modernisation Reserve, as detailed in paragraph 7.1.8 of the report, to support an increase in establishment and associated running costs within the current financial year; b) Future ongoing costs will be incorporated into the base budget as part of the annual budget-setting process, to ensure continued delivery of the service in line with forthcoming Regulatory requirements; c) Approve the increase in the HRA Capital budget by up to £112,000 from the Major Repairs Reserve (MRR) to purchase 4x vehicles; and d) Note further regulation is expected in this area to expand on other hazards contained within the Housing Health and

	Safety Rating System (HHSRS) assessment that may impact on resources.
--	---

1.0 **Background**

- 1.1 Following the introduction of the Social Housing (Regulation Act) 2023 (including the confirmation of Awaab's Law) and the increase in complaints following the roll out of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, the volume of repairs and work associated with complying with these legislative and regulatory requirements has dramatically increased.
- 1.2 There are challenges in addressing current damp, mould and disrepair cases and claims due to the available resources and the level of scrutiny and detail required to address these matters. The new Act places increased pressures on the service as it aims to deliver extra control measures within specified timescales.
- 1.3 Furthermore, any repairs as a result of complaints that are due to be completed following the closure of a complaint require separate monitoring to ensure these are completed within satisfactory timescales.
- 1.4 Failure to meet the requirements of the above may result in the Social Housing Regulator and Housing Ombudsman taking action against the Council which could include financial, penalties the issuing of complaint failure orders, and reputational damage.
- 1.5 The Housing Regulator utilises a grading system for Social Housing providers which includes Consumer Grades; C1 – C4 with C1 showing full compliance with the consumer standards. Where a housing provider receives a grading of C4, The Regulator will be actively intervening and/or may consider appropriate to take enforcement action.
- 1.6 There are also other challenges around fuel and food poverty, overcrowding and an ageing Council housing stock that exacerbate the potential for damp and mould in tenants' homes.

2.0 **Awaab's Law**

- 2.1 Awaab's Law is part of the Social Housing (Regulation Act) 2023, is intended to improve the standards of social housing and ensuring better living conditions for tenants. This law will impose new regulatory requirements on landlords to address issues related to damp, mould, and disrepair within their properties promptly and effectively.
- 2.2 The law also emphasizes the necessity for landlords to increase their resources and enhance their maintenance services to manage the influx of demands and maintain higher standards in housing conditions. This includes addressing any complaints and repair requests within the strict guidelines and timeframes set out by the new regulations. **(See Appendix A)**
- 2.3 Awaab's Law is being rolled out in phases, with the initial focus on damp and mould hazards from the 27th October 2025. Following the initial phase there will be a broader roll out of regulations to deal with the reporting and handling of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) hazards in 2026 and 2027. While Awaab's Law utilises HHSRS as a framework, it goes beyond a strict interpretation by considering individual tenant circumstances.
- 2.4 To support the Council in gaining a clearer understanding of its housing stock and maintaining accurate, up-to-date information, a programme of stock condition surveys is currently underway by an external provider. In the coming year, there are plans to consider introducing

a Stock Condition Surveyor role within the Asset Team to implement a continuous 20% stock condition survey programme annually. This process aims to identify existing hazards and issues on a rolling inspection basis, as well as to inform planning for future maintenance and improvement programmes.

3.0 Damp and Mould Cases

- 3.1 Reports of damp and mould continue to increase, potentially as a consequence of the increased publicity around the general condition of social housing, but regardless of why, this has resulted in a significant increase in the workload for our current resources
- 3.2 The following tables document the increase in the resulting number of repairs raised/completed and properties affected by damp/mould.

Repairs: 01/04/2023 to 04/12/2023	
Number of properties	51
Repairs raised	96
Repairs completed	70
Repairs outstanding	26
Overall average time (days) to complete a repair	48.86

Repairs: 01/04/2024 to 04/12/2024	
Number of properties	264
Repairs raised	646
Repairs completed	261
Repairs outstanding	385
Overall average time (days) to complete a repair	57.29
12 month total repairs raised	811

The table below, shows the number of inspections raised regarding damp and mould for both the same reporting period as the repairs data and the full year for 2024/25 (no data available for 2023)

Inspections: 01/04/2024 to 04/12/2024	
Inspections raised	476
Inspections completed	376
12 month total inspections raised	795

- 3.3 There has been a 500% increase in the number of properties reported as being affected by damp/mould and a 670% increase in the number of repairs raised between the same periods in 2023/24 and 2024/25.

4.0 Disrepair Cases

- 4.1 Tenants also have legal remedies to address issues of property condition – whether that is through a company targeting a street or an area and whether or not the tenant has reported the repair to us or indeed given us access to fix it.

- 4.2 When disrepair claims are received, it is necessary to adhere to strict protocols and timelines. Failure to do so may result in the Council being found liable and required to pay compensation to the tenant. All such enquiries need to be investigated, and any highlighted defects must be resolved promptly, regardless of whether the case proceeds to court.
- 4.3 In terms of disrepair, there has been an increase in numbers since 2020/21.
- 4.4 See **Exempt Appendix** showing the number of claims received each year since 2020 and the current cost.
- 4.5 The most common disrepair claims continue to be in relation to Damp and Mould.
- 4.6 The introduction of the proposed resources will provide the flexibility needed to respond promptly to potential claims against the Council.

5.0 Proposal/Options Considered and Reasons for Recommendation

5.1 Option 1 - Retain the current structure (Appendix A)

Option 1 maintains the current structure with sub-contractors and agency support, but this approach may not keep up with the volume of damp, mould, and disrepair cases. Relying on this model risks non-compliance with legislation, legal deadlines, and scrutiny from regulatory bodies, potentially resulting in financial penalties and reputational harm to the Council.

Persisting with this strategy will also mean rising costs for external contractors, continued failure to meet timelines set by Awaab's Law, and reduced control over inspections and repairs due to greater reliance on outside support and failing to build permanent knowledge, skills and resilience.

5.2 Option 2 – Introduce New Posts into the Establishment (Appendix B)

Supervisor – Planned Works, Damp & Disrepair

This Supervisor will be responsible for coordinating the Planned Maintenance and Damp & Disrepair team, overseeing both staff and contractors, as well as managing day-to-day operational matters.

This position requires close collaboration with the Surveyors (Damp & Disrepair) to gather necessary evidence and prepare witness statements, supporting the Council's defence in cases of alleged non-compliance with statutory obligations. The Supervisor will also work closely with the Works Planner and Customer Advice Service Team to ensure all projects are scheduled efficiently and effectively, maintaining consistent communication with tenants throughout the process and following up upon completion, in accordance with regulatory requirements.

Surveyor – Damp & Disrepair

Due to the increased number of damp, mould and disrepair issues being received, the current number of Surveyors within the Housing Maintenance team is inadequate to meet the increased demand for these works. There is currently one Surveyor for Damp and Disrepair and a Housing Inspector for routine repairs inspections and transfers and mutual exchanges. At present the current Surveyor for Damp and Disrepair does not have the capacity to undertake the current and future increased workload around these specialist works, this will become even harder when the stricter timelines for providing a written summary of investigation and conclusion within 3 days comes into place as part of Awaab's Law.

Multiskilled Trade Operatives x 3

These employees will join the current workforce but will focus primarily on damp, mould and disrepair issues working for the Supervisor (Planned Works, Damp & Disrepair). These trade operatives will work alongside the current painter and provide us with full control over the scheduling and quality of work undertaken.

Should the situation arise whereby there is some scope for work to be completed elsewhere within the wider Housing Maintenance team these employees can be utilised for day-to-day repairs and empty homes works activities further reducing the need to rely on external contractors.

Customer Service Adviser

Due to the increase in calls received relating to damp, mould and disrepair and the requirement to keep tenants updated on every stage of the work within their home the addition of another member of our Repairs Customer Service Team will enable us to meet the requirements of the regulations. There is also a requirement to keep records of where works have been completed relating to damp and mould and a follow call arranged at a date 6 months after completion, again this is additional work which we have not had to do previously. The additional Customer Service Advisor will join the current Customer Service Team.

The proposed changes in Option 2 allow for an increase in the establishment of the Housing Maintenance service which would then provide adequate resources to address the current influx of demand which has been placed on limited resources and provide more flexibility to deal with the new regulations as they come into force, therefore this is the recommendation of the report.

6.0 Cost / Benefit

- 6.1 The following information provides an overview of the additional ongoing costs that would be incurred by the Housing Revenue Account as a result of the proposal. The costs detailed in the table below are based on the salary costs for 2025/26 with a 3% inflation in anticipation of a pay award.

Position	No. of Posts	Grade	Salary	Salary including 'on costs'
Supervisor – Planned Works, Damp & Disrepair	1	NS10	36,290	47,740
Surveyor (Damp & Disrepair)	1	NS10 (including £3,000 market supplement until Feb 26)	39,290	50,740
Joiner	1	Craft C023	29,370	38,490
Plasterer	1	Craft C020	29,170	38,220
Bricklayer	1	Craft C020	29,170	38,220
Customer Service Advisor	1	NS06	26,770	35,020
Total			190,090	248,410

6.2 Fleet Vehicles

There will also be a requirement to purchase 4 x additional fleet vehicles for the additional trade operatives (one of these is for the Painter position which was recently added to the establishment). At present the Council's fleet vehicles are procured via a Nottinghamshire/Derbyshire purchasing consortium led by Nottingham City Council. The new

framework agreement was only awarded 2 weeks ago so at present the accurate cost of purchasing 4 x new fleet vehicles is unknown but estimated at £112,000.

The vehicle costs are for a one-off purchase but there will also be ongoing maintenance costs which have been projected for the next 7 years (this will depend upon future replacement date).

Looking at similar size and type of vehicles provided to other authorities and based on their average yearly maintenance costs the below are estimated potential costs. Please note that the Business Manager for Environmental Services will provide accurate fleet cost information once it is available, and a further update can be provided.

Estimated costs:

Fleet Vehicles	No.	Cost per Vehicle	Total Cost
Ford Transit Connect (Diesel/Petrol) purchase	4	£28,000	£112,000
Projected ongoing annual maintenance costs	4	£3,800	£15,200

- 6.3 The proposal is considered to be a spend to save, due to the consequences and costs of losing disrepair cases in Court, which could be severely detrimental to the projected costs over a prolonged period. **See Exempt Appendix.**

In addition, and a little more difficult to calculate, are the costs and time that Officers are spending on these issues, these tasks are taking Officers away from other duties which is impacting on performance throughout the service and ultimately the service we provide to tenants.

7.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications:

Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding and Sustainability, and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment below where appropriate.

7.1 Financial Implications (FIN25-26/8549)

Option 1

- 7.1.1 This option has no impact on the establishment or the salary budgets, however, to keep up with damp and disrepair cases without adding to the establishment, it is expected that the costs would surpass the other option through agency or subcontractor work.

Option 2

- 7.1.2 The proposed 6 additions to the establishment would result in an additional cost of £124,220 for 2025/26 that could be funded from the HRA Regulatory Compliance/Modernisation Reserve. The additional costs for future years would be implemented to the base budget at budget setting. This is assuming appointment from 1st October and includes inflation of 3% each year.

Position	Grade	2025/26 1/8/25 – 31/3/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Supervisor - Planned Works, Damp & Disrepair	NS10	23,870	50,450	53,320	54,940

Surveyor Damp & Disrepair (including £3,000 market supplement)	NS10	25,370	53,450	56,320	57,940
Joiner	C023	19,250	40,990	43,250	44,570
Plasterer	C020	19,110	40,690	42,940	44,250
Bricklayer	C020	19,110	40,690	42,940	44,250
Customer Service Advisor	NS06	17,510	36,680	38,430	40,250
Total annual cost		124,220	262,950	277,200	286,200

7.1.3 The Damp and Disrepair surveyor currently in post has a market supplement of £3,000 that is in place until February 2026.

7.1.4 Laptops, associated equipment and licences will be required for the Supervisor and the surveyor at an estimated total cost of £4,000. This can be funded by the HRA Regulatory Compliant/Modernisation Reserve.

7.1.5 As shown in paragraph 6.2 the estimated costs for the additional fleet vehicles would be as follows:

Fleet Vehicles	No.	Cost per Vehicle	Total Cost
Ford Transit Connect (Diesel/Petrol) purchase	4	£28,000	£112,000
Projected ongoing annual maintenance costs	4	£3,800	£15,200

7.1.6 Up to £112,000 may be required in the HRA Capital budget to purchase four additional vehicles, with the final cost to be confirmed by the Business Manager for Environmental Services once specifications are agreed. This will be funded from the Major Repairs Reserve. Depreciation will be charged over seven years and transferred back to the Reserve to support future replacements. All vehicles are procured and managed by Environmental Services, with appropriate running cost recharges made to the HRA.

7.1.7 Assuming the vehicle additions are made on 1st August maintenance costs in 2025/26 could cost up to £7,600 in 2025/26, this could be funded from the HRA Regulatory Compliance/Modernisation Reserve. The HRA Regulatory Compliance/Modernisation Reserve currently has £250,000 and so after the staffing costs, ICT equipment and vehicle maintenance this would leave a balance of £114,180. Budget for future years for recharges will be added into the base budget at budget setting.

Summary

7.1.8 HRA Revenue Transfer from the HRA Regulatory Compliance/Modernisation Reserve

Item	2025/26 £
Additional Staffing costs	124,220
New ICT Equipment and Licencing	4,000
Projected ongoing annual maintenance costs	7,600
Total	135,820

7.1.9 The General Fund revenue budget will also need to increase by £7,600, and this will be covered by the increased recharge to the HRA.

7.2 Human Resources Implications

7.2.1 If the decision is taken to build these six roles into the permanent establishment will increase the overall Council establishment in this financial year, however, the increased expectation and legal requirements would add additional pressure to an already busy team. This has implications for employee health and well-being, together with attendance and retention.

7.2.2 There will be training requirements for new recruits so inductions will need to include training around the legislation and the implications of the decisions that the team make. In addition to this, clear expectations around KPI's and response times will be required to ensure the best use of this new resource. It may be a useful exercise to measure how much workload would be removed from the existing repairs team to the Damp & Disrepair team and what tangible improvements in service delivery we should expect as a result.

7.2.3 Staffing implications:

Supervisor – Planned Works, Damp & Disrepair		
1FTE New role	Once JDPS finalised and reviewed advertise as appropriate – decision to be taken as to whether to advertise internally only initially.	
Surveyor – Damp & Disrepair		
1FTE New role	Once JDPS finalised and reviewed advertise as appropriate – decision to be taken as to whether to advertise internally only initially.	
Multi-Skilled Trade Operatives		
3FTE New Roles	1 x Joiner 1 x Plasterer 1 x Bricklayer Consideration should be given to how pay is set up for the multi-skilling operatives and clear definition of what skills are required of them. The current multi-skilling arrangements are de-motivating those currently on the scheme so more clarity is required on how this will be applied to these positions.	
Customer Service Advisor		
1FTE New role	No JDPS review required if bolting on to existing team	

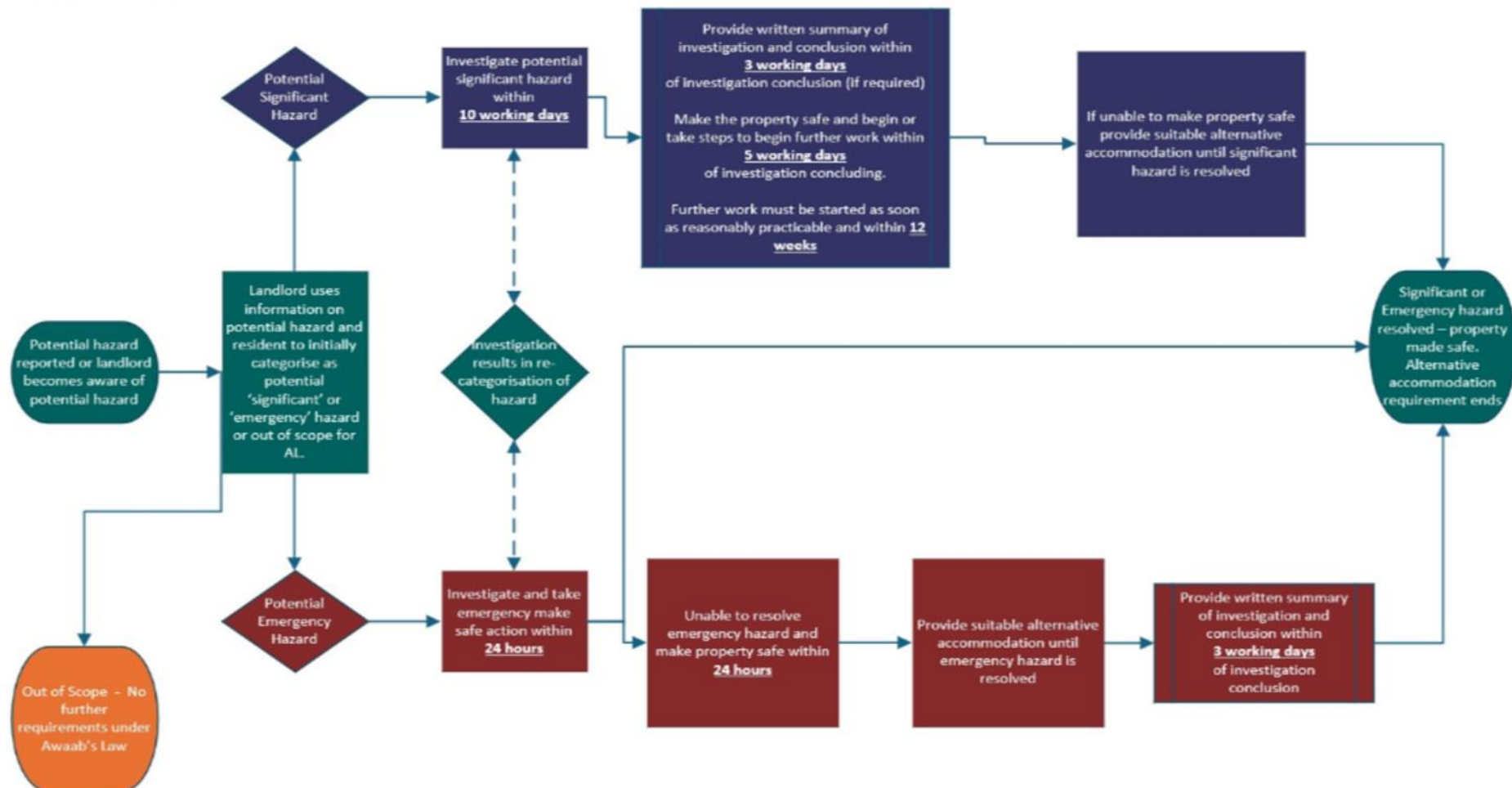
7.3 Legal Implications LEG2526/4282

7.3.1 The Portfolio Holder for Finance is the appropriate decision-maker. A capital budget change of between £10,000 and £150,000 can be approved by Portfolio Holder or Cabinet in accordance with paragraph 6.3.8 of the Council's Financial Regulations. A transfer of budget from reserves in excess of £100,000 can be authorised by the Portfolio Holder for Finance in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder and the Section 151 Officer, providing the transfer is for the specific purpose and function for which the reserve was established (paragraph 6.3.3 of the Financial Regulations).

Appendix A:

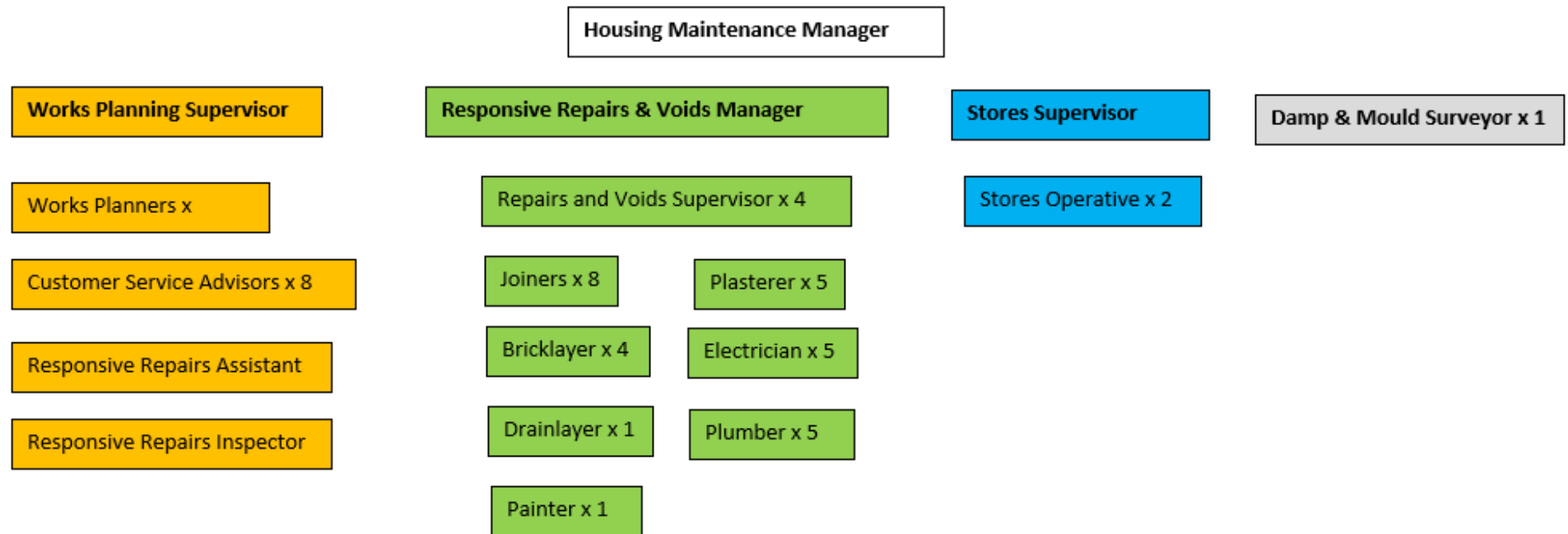
Diagram 1 - Awaab's Law Process Flow

Note : Does not include, renewed and further Investigation timeframes



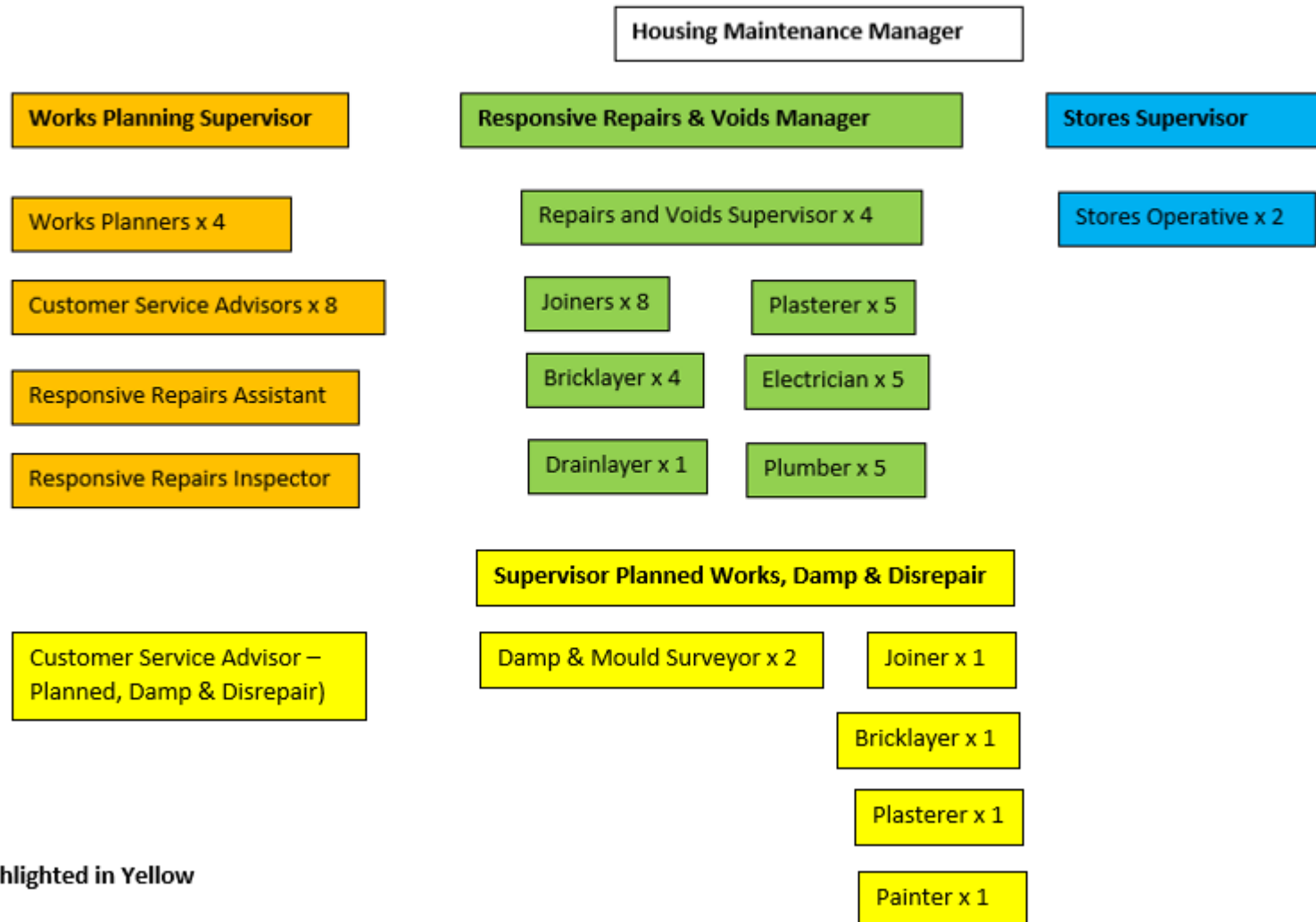
Appendix B:

Current Structure



Appendix C:

Proposed Structure



*New posts highlighted in Yellow