



6th January 2022

Dear Tenants,

Notice on UK-wide Challenges in the Construction Sector

We hope that you are keeping well and enjoyed the recent holidays.

It is important that we update on response maintenance repairs and future scheme plans for our housing stock. As a social housing landlord, we are committed to ensuring homes are first and foremost safe, warm and of a decent liveable standard. Thank you to all tenants who provided prompt access to enable vital health and safety checks to be carried out last year, which is our biggest priority. For example, we achieved 100% safety across all homes for annual boiler servicing and checks of fire and carbon monoxide alarms. We also replaced a number of boilers in the year and made other major improvement works to our properties.

There is no doubt that the Covid-19 global pandemic has brought unprecedented challenges that permeate many areas of our daily lives and will remain so for some time as we approach the third year of living with the virus. Our vital health and education sectors remain under enormous pressures and the construction sector also has not escaped from serious impacts. You may be aware the main contractor JMC that we worked with for a number of years was unfortunately a casualty of that recently. Following their closure we have had a very busy period right up to end December putting in place repair cover arrangements and are pleased to announce we have procured and engaged a new contractor CTS.

The entire construction sector has been dealing with staff shortages across all trades for a considerable time and with the fast spreading cases of Omicron variant it has resulted in a need to prioritise need and further prevent the continued rise in numbers. Many of the workforce are ill with the virus or isolating. It also has been reported widely in the media about the impact of the pandemic on supply chains and building materials are badly impacted [Public sector contracts affected by rising building material costs - BBC News](#).

That reverberates into our day-to-day repairs and presents significant difficulties for both our small team of staff and our contractors and like other sectors, it has called for difficult decisions to be made.

JOBS ATTENDED - As of today's date only emergency and urgent repair jobs will be attended until more labour is available. If you have a current routine repair or new routine repair it will only be carried out in the next four weeks if the contractor finds new capacity. We will continue to monitor the situation weekly for improvements to construction staff shortages. We are working with our contractor to ensure they attend all emergency and urgent jobs.

Do please continue to report your repairs to the office **Tel. 02890 773330** and the Maintenance staff will assess the priority. Emergency and Urgent repairs our contractors have committed to deliver and they are beginning to catch up with some outstanding works in the past few days, sincere apologies who have been waiting. For those with routine repairs these will be reviewed again towards the end of January. This necessary action will help ease current pressure and enable the type of repairs that impact most on health and safety for vulnerable tenants to be dealt with first and foremost.

It is only fair and proper to inform you that these issues will not resolve in the short term and are expected to continue well into 2022 and are very much outside of our controls. Therefore, I would respectfully ask all of our tenants to take a reasonable view about the urgency level of a repair and please bear with us. Is it something that would be considered by most a **serious** impact on health and safety (i.e. no heat, electric or serious leak) or an "inconvenience" and a more minor matter that is not causing serious damage to your home (i.e. external to your property, loose fixture etc.) Our staff and contractors are trying their utmost in carrying out their daily job, working long hours, and exposed to visiting homes when Covid-19 remains a real threat. They should never be subjected to abusive and aggressive behaviour. Where issues do arise, we will do our very best to try and put them right, with the resources we have available, and ask you bear with us. Missed appointments and non-co-operation for access, or not giving adequate time given to do a job when there, are a huge drain on already stretched resources and it is strongly advised if an appointment is offered take it, (if you or no-one in your home is isolating due to the virus) and this will enable repairs for all to be done more quickly for all. Calls made to tenants to get access are being reported as not being returned so please return missed calls.

Staying Safe - To keep everyone safe when a contractor is visiting ensure all windows in the area they are working are opened before during and after the visit to allow good ventilation and that you stay in a separate area allowing the contractor to safely conduct their work. All contractors should also be wearing a mask. We encourage everyone to follow the urgent pleas from health care professionals to protect yourself and others by having all of your vaccines and support older people to get to appointments. If you require support to arrange an appointment for your booster vaccine please contact us and we will help where we can.

Adaptations – If you need an adaptation to your home for health reasons, please contact your local OT service to request a professional assessment of your needs. We will consider all recommendations received from Occupational Therapy. We cannot approve any major works of this nature without a professional OT recommendation. If you need something minor like a handrail please contact the office and speak with Gerry or Terry.

Planned Maintenance - On a more positive note, a stock condition survey has now been completed and we have analysed the results. This will inform our plans and decisions for improvement schemes that will take place over the next 12-24 months. We have committed to complete three schemes of improvement works by the end of March 2022. Our new contractors are working hard to deliver these improvements that our previous contractor was unable to do prior to their closure and we apologise for any delays. We will be issuing orders next week and those tenants will be contacted over the next two weeks to update on the schedule for these works. The improvements



represent a further significant investment that will improve the thermal comfort and energy efficiency of those homes.

As we work through our new draft budget for new financial year April 22 to March 23 we will notify tenants throughout the year of further major investment plans in our homes. We are committed to this before we commence our new build of 24 new homes (which is progressing well as scheduled for the numerous survey and design stages).

We hope it can be seen that significant improvements have been made to many homes over the past two years and our engagement with tenants. We will continue to strive for quality and value for money contracts so that we can deliver more.

In the meantime, please do take the opportunity to play your part in getting involved in the Grove community and some of the great initiatives taking place. We can choose to focus on what positive things we can do, displaying kindness and understanding as we emerge from the struggles of the pandemic together. Hopefully the negative impacts can only get better in good time as we all strive to remain safe.

Thank you for your understanding on behalf of all the staff team. Like all, a busy and bumpy start to 2022 but we look forward to a great year ahead and working with you to have a safe and comfortable home.

Yours sincerely

Agnes Crawford
Chief Executive