



**Date:** 19 April 2023

**Portfolio:** Housing Services

**The Report of:** Councillor Liza Begum

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**1. Key decisions made in the preceding period since my last Policy & Scrutiny report dated 2 March 2023:**

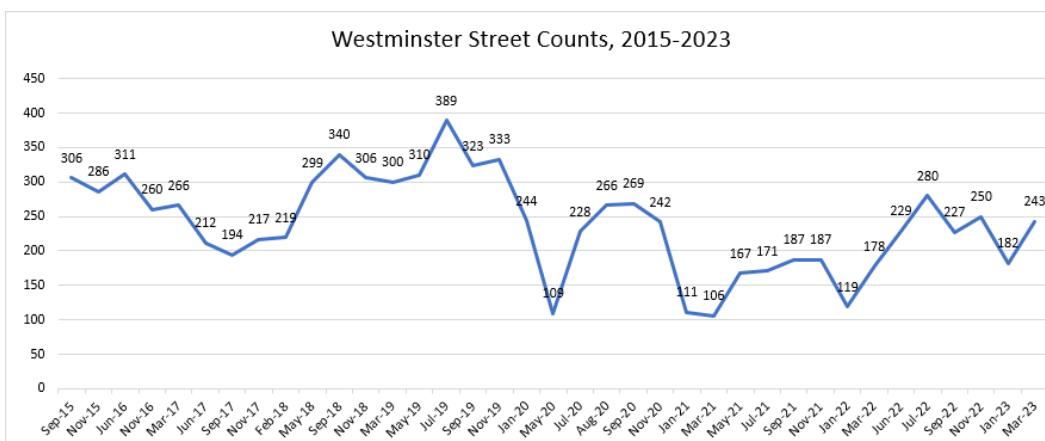
- No decisions have been taken in this period.

**2. The following report includes my priorities and delivery progress to date:**

**2.1 Rough Sleeping Update**

A street count of rough sleepers took place on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2023, with overall numbers increasing from 182 in February to **243** that night. Increases across different groups are as follows:

- UK and ROI - increase from 60 to **67**
- EEA Nationals - increase from 62 to **123**
- Rest of the World - increase from 13 to **17**
- New contact on the night - increase from 2 to **14**



The largest increase was amongst EEA nationals, and this was seen across the borough, with significant increases in Oxford Street and Marble Arch, Strand and Embankment, Paddington and Bayswater and Victoria North and South.

The Council continues to work with those on the street to move into accommodation. This includes supporting individuals to move over the winter months through a combination of

specialist hotel offers and emergency bed spaces in our supported housing units. Additionally, in activating the Councils Cold Weather & SWEP provision this winter when needed, 331 offers of accommodation were taken up.

The count also noted a small increase in the numbers of tents recorded across the borough at **24**, with **3** unoccupied. Public Protection and Licensing will continue to review this position to determine whether the tents are abandoned.

Further analysis on the detail of this street count is on-going with a more detailed report expected later this month. We are under-taking a wider review of the data, delivery and outcomes for our winter response which will give us additional insight, and this will be shared upon completion.

## 2.2 Relief Duty Changes

Due to a recent legal ruling, homeless households owed the Relief Duty will now be able to join the Housing Register and be eligible for social housing. A Relief Duty is owed when the Council has not been able to prevent an individual from becoming homeless. During the Relief Duty we must take reasonable steps to help individuals secure suitable accommodation. The Relief Duty lasts for up to 56 days and is available to all households who are homeless and eligible, regardless of whether they have a priority need.

Previously, our Supply and Allocation Scheme stated that this was only possible if a full housing duty was accepted. The reason for this change is that households owed the Relief Duty are vulnerable because they are homeless so should be added to the Housing Register. Applicants can work with the Housing Solutions Service on a Personalised Housing Plan to help relieve their homelessness and find suitable accommodation that meets their needs. More information can be found on the Council's website.

## 2.3 Anti-Social Behaviour Update

Open ASB Cases	<b>Total – 215 cases</b> West – 40 cases                      North – 56 cases South – 69 cases                      Central – 50 cases
Top 3 Categories (No. of cases)	Noise – 59 cases.  Drug use / dealing – 54 cases.  Verbal abuse / harassment – 43 cases.
Top 3 Wards/Estates	Mozart / Lydford & Avenue Gardens – 28 cases Pimlico – 25 cases Church street – 18 cases
ASB Case Handling Resident Satisfaction	Year to date - 65% (as of February 2023)
Number of Legal Cases	58 (including cases waiting for court hearing dates)

## 2.4 Funding for Retrofitting Council Homes

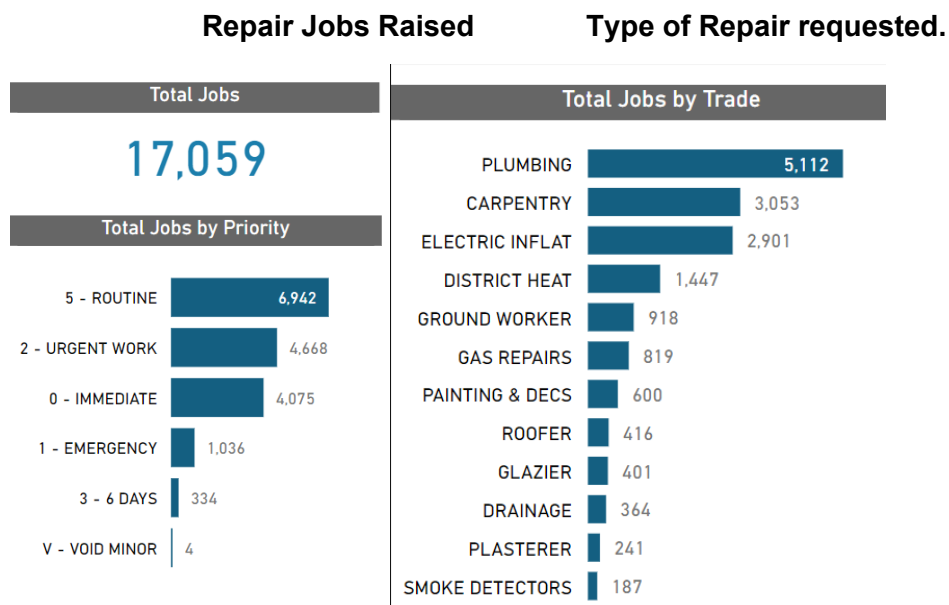
On 22 March 2023, the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (ESNZ) announced the Council was successful in winning the funding award for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 2.1 Competition and was awarded £4.8m in funding. This, along with the matched contribution from Westminster City Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) of another £4.8m sees a total amount of £9.6m to be spent on retrofitting homes across the City.

This investment will see at least 560 council homes in Westminster benefit from energy-efficiency improvements over the next two years. Measures being installed using the funding will include internal wall insulation, secondary glazing/double glazing, floor, loft and cavity insulation, storage heaters, solar PV panels, wastewater heat recovery systems and external doors. These improvement works will reduce resident energy bills, helping to address cost of living pressures for some of the City's most vulnerable residents.

## 2.5 Repairs Service Update

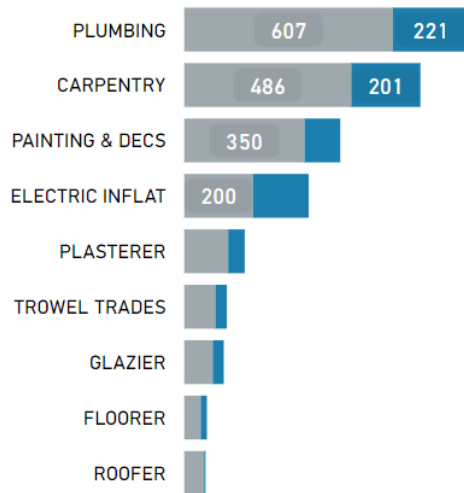
Over the past 3 months on the Repairs, Gas and GEM reactive contracts (January 23 – March 23) the service has received **17,059** repairs.

Of the repairs **40%** have been raised on a 28-day priority, **27%** raised on a 3-day priority and **30%** raised on an attend within 4-to-24-hour priority and make safe.



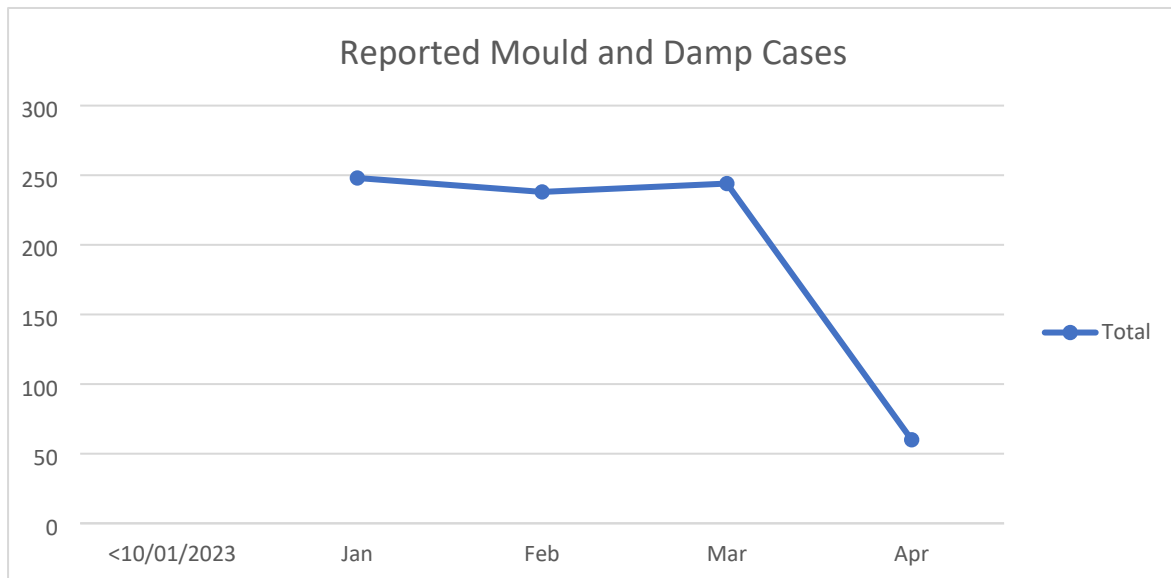
Currently as of the 11 April 2023 Westminster has **2,983** live jobs across the stock on the system. The jobs are split across the trades below with most works being Plumbing and Carpentry requests.

**Repairs - Live jobs on the system split by trade.**

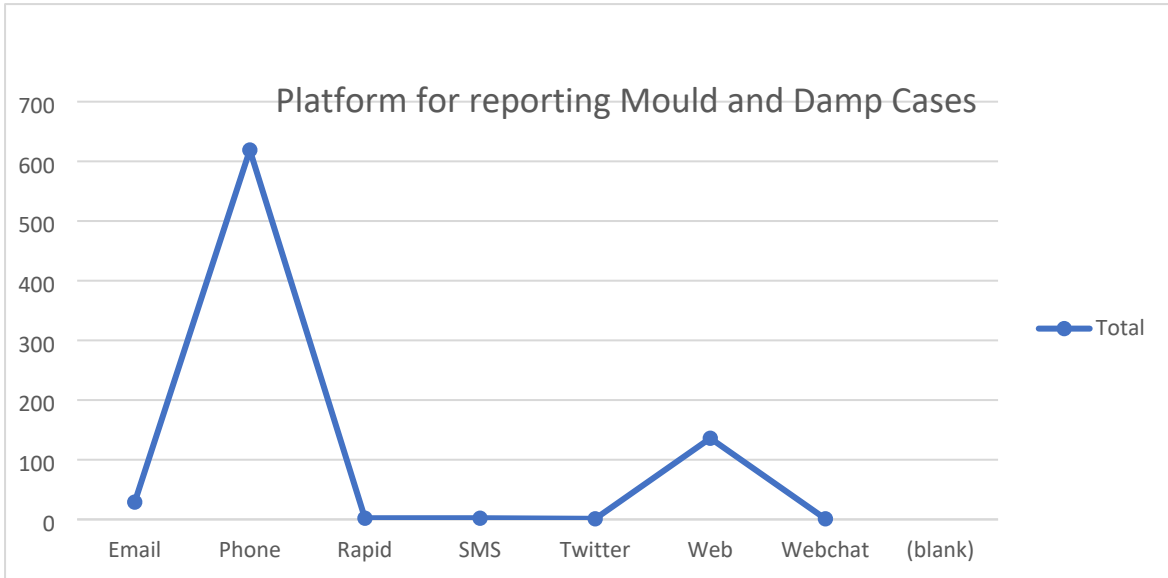


**2.6 Mould and Damp**

Since 3 January 2023 we have received **790** Cases of requests for surveys following Mould and damp reports via our CRM and contact centre agents. This is profiled in **Table A** below.



The profile of the reporting using the Councils services is detailed in **Table B** below and indicates that most of our residents are reporting cases via phone calls to our contact centre as opposed to social media or web formats.

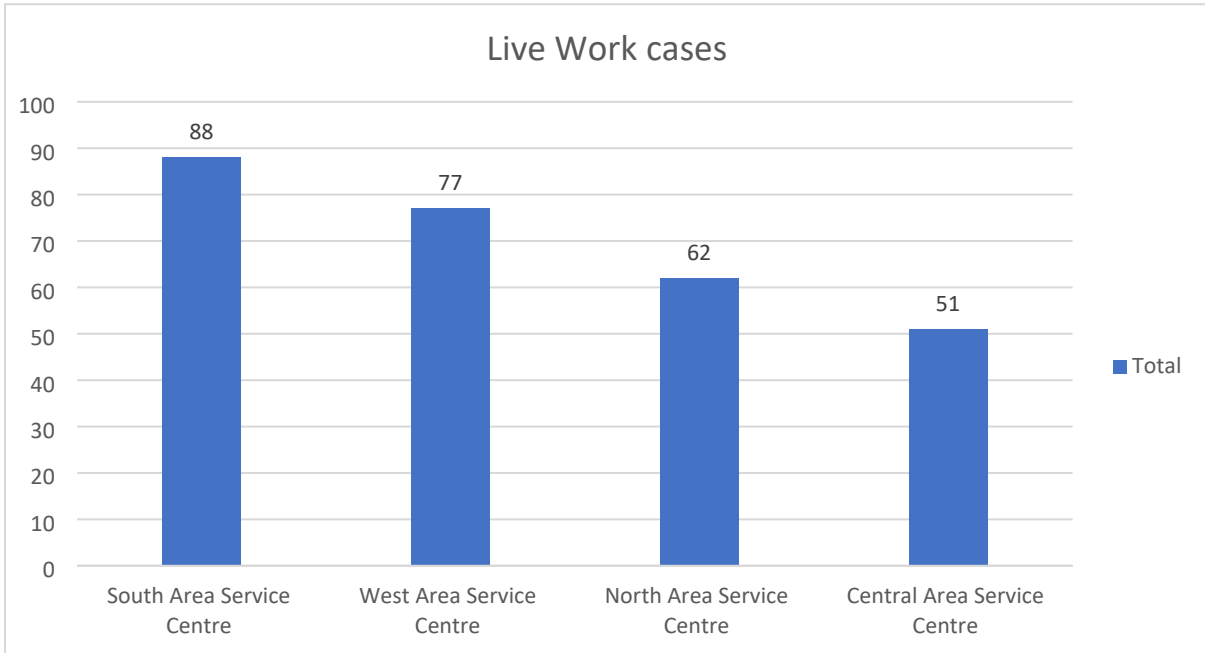


Currently the team have **338** live cases to visit, and additional surveying resource has been allocated to work on the back log from the 17 April 2023. This includes 3 additional surveyors being moved from the area patches to have a dedicated North, South, West, Central resource.

In addition to the above 5 dedicated Decorators and Mould and Damp operatives will commence work on the cases from the 19 April 2023.

**Live work cases from reported Mould and Damp**

Of the **452** cases of report mould in the homes we have visited **278** jobs have been raised with the majority of cases being minor mould washes and the remaining cases decoration requests from residents asking for water staining or whole rooms to be painted from a previous leak with no traces of mould or damp in the home.



The remaining cases (**338** live cases) are being booked in now with **100** appointment slots available from week commencing the 17 April 2023.

From the 24 April 2023 – the service will aim to deliver **142** mould and damp washes each week with the additional resource dropping back into decoration works as a secondary trade moving forward.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sub Total
5	5	5	5	5	25
5	5	5	5	5	25
4	4	5	5	5	23
4	4	5	5	5	23
4	4	5	5	5	23
4	4	5	5	5	23

**142**

### GP referrals

- Over the past 3 months we have had 3 GP referrals to the team and those visits and works have been prioritised and closed off.

### 2.6 Rent Support Fund

In March the Council launched the Rent Support Fund to help social housing tenants struggling with rent payments during the cost-of-living crisis. We have set aside the sum of £1m to support our tenants. Created specifically to help those in financial difficulty, the money will be used to cover some or all the rent increases for households who are not entitled to Universal Credit or Housing Benefit. Tenants who are eligible for full or partial benefits will receive the full rebate in their Housing Benefit or Universal Credit payments.

Over the upcoming weeks we will be releasing information via video on our Rent Support page on the Council’s main website on how to apply to the fund in five languages, Arabic, Bengali, Kurdish, Portuguese, and Spanish. In addition to this, we will be contacting our residents who need support by text, phone, letters, and house calls. We will also be reaching out to faith networks, libraries, and schools.

### 2.7 Additional Estate Offices

Work continues to progress at pace on adding additional estate offices across the borough. With Bruckner Street (Queen’s Park Ward) now confirmed, our next suitable site North Paddington Hall Place (Little Venice Ward) will be undergoing survey work, and having a new reception space put in. As this work is ongoing along side the Cross-Cabinet Community Hubs Programme, the Committee will receive updates when appropriate and available.