

<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet	<b>Date:</b> 11 June 2025
<b>Subject:</b>	Housing Services Property Restructure	
<b>Report of</b>	Cabinet Member for Housing Services	

## Summary

1. Bury Council returned the direct management of the Council's housing stock to the Council following concerns and deficiencies in the delivery of key services including issues relating to building safety compliance and asset management.
2. Since bringing the management of the stock back in house gaps have been identified in the capacity and the skills of the teams in place to deliver the repairs, the building safety compliance and asset management services. This proposal sets out changes to these functions including the permanent addition of several key roles within these services. These changes will ensure we are able to deliver improved services to tenants, ensure tenants' homes are safe and well maintained and that we meet the requirements of the Regulator for Social Housing's (RSH) Safety and Quality Standard.
3. The additional costs of the proposed structures to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) are;

Service area	Additional cost
Repairs and maintenance	£71,835
Building safety	£394,292
Asset management	£513,400
<b>Total</b>	<b>£979,527</b>

## Recommendation(s)

Cabinet is asked to;

4. Approve the additional full-year costs of £979,527 from the HRA for the proposed structures as set out in the body of this report.
5. Approve the proposed structures outlined in the report for the repairs, building safety and asset management structures as a basis for a 30 day consultation with Trade Unions and affected staff.

## Reasons for recommendation(s)

6. To support the delivery of efficient and effective property services to Bury Council tenants, ensure we our council homes remain safe and well maintained and to ensure we meet the requirements of the RSH's Safety and Quality Standard.

## **Alternative options considered and rejected**

7. To maintain the current structures. This is not a viable option, the current structures are interim structures which are staffed with either permanent staff TUPE transferred from Six Town Housing in interim roles or are interim agency staff. This is leading to a high level of uncertainty within the affected teams. In the case of the both the asset management structure and the building safety structure the structures are not fully staffed and this is impacting the ability to deliver core housing services to tenants.
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## **Background**

8. This report outlines significant proposed changes to the Property Services function within Bury Council's Housing Services.
9. Since the TUPE transfer of former Six Town Housing staff into Bury Council, the Executive Director of Strategy and Transformation has led on the establishment of new key leadership positions within the Directorate (Director of Housing Operations, Head of Housing Property, Head of Building Safety, and Head of Repairs and Maintenance). These posts are all now recruited to with the exception of the Head of Repairs and Maintenance.
10. To further support the improvement of key services within the property management functions, this proposal sets out changes to our asset management, building safety compliance and repairs functions including the permanent addition of several key roles within these services.
11. The restructure of the property service function within housing is in response to historic under resourcing of the all the property functions and the Council's drive to improve the service we provide, we are striving to improve performance and regulatory compliance of these services and to improve tenant satisfaction with these services which are a key driver of satisfaction with the housing service for our tenants.
12. The key drivers behind the proposed restructure of each service area and the proposed structure for each area are set out below.

## **Responsive repairs and planned works**

13. The restructuring of this service re-builds the team to enable it to efficiently and effectively deliver the responsive and planned repairs service. This includes responsive repairs, empty homes, disrepair and disabled adaptations together with structural works and some limited repair and refurbishment works for other departments of Bury Council. It also creates the foundation to grow the teams and the service to increase the level of work it can take on in the future for other departments in Bury Council or other providers in the Greater Manchester area.

14. In autumn 2023 it was deemed that the structure of the team had been depleted. Over the following months, the team has begun to be re-constructed and the current re-structure is the culmination of this work.
15. The current staff in the team are now confident, motivated and innovative and are keen to see the restructure progress to implementation and the repairs service be able to provide excellent services to tenants.
16. The key drivers of the proposed repairs and planned works structure are;
  - Improving compliance with the regulatory standards – the Safety and Quality Standard sets out clear expectations for the repairs service. The standard states that landlords must ‘provide an effective, efficient and timely repairs, maintenance and planned improvements service for the homes and communal areas for which they are responsible.’ The proposed structure for the repairs service ensures we have the resources to do this.
  - Improving tenant satisfaction with the repairs service – the repairs service is one of the key drivers of tenant satisfaction as it is the main reason most tenants interact with the housing service. Feedback from tenants through the tenant satisfaction survey and through complaints and other insight shows that this is an area of service where we are failing to fully deliver tenants expectations. This is partly due to a lack of capacity to effectively manage and deliver the service. The proposed structure puts in place the surveying, supervisory and customer care capacity to improve service delivery and meet tenant expectations.
  - Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the service – without sufficient capacity in management, supervision and planning the repairs service will remain inefficient. By increasing the capacity in these areas we can more effectively plan repairs and operative schedules getting the most out of the operative resources we have in place. This will increase the number of jobs completed each day and enable us to put in place more effective processes around no access, recharges and follow on work. The increased surveyor resources will reduce the wait time for repairs that need surveys; increase the accuracy of the repair raised; and ensure repairs are carried out to the right standard, leading to more ‘right first time’ repairs visits.
  - Supporting our response to disrepair claims and minimising future claims – along with other Housing providers we are seeing an increasing number of disrepair claims and at the time of writing had 140 disrepair cases. All of these require management and response within statutory timescales. In order to reduce the number of claims we need to be able to defend claims and reduce the number of claims that lead to payment of compensation. By employing our own Disrepair Surveyors we will not only reduce the cost of commissioning surveyors but will reduce the time it takes us to respond to claims and increase the quality of the surveys we undertake, making it much easier to deny and defend disrepair claims. It will also ensure we can accurately specify and oversee the work, ensure it is carried out in a timely and effective manner, and signed off as satisfactorily completed.

17. The current repairs and maintenance structure is an interim structure put in place to move towards a repairs service that has the resources it needs in order to deliver the service to tenants and is supported by a number of seconded staff and agency staff. The proposed structure formalises the interim structure and will bring certainty to staff involved in the delivery of the service.
18. The proposed structure is attached at appendix one and is explained in more detail below;

### **Responsive repairs and voids**

- a. This team is responsible for the delivery of day-to-day responsive repairs and repairs to our empty homes. The proposed structure reflects the format of the current interim structure with two teams, one responsible for the south of Bury and the other responsible for the North. Each of these teams has a manager, 2 repairs surveyors, 2 repairs supervisors and 1 void supervisor. The supervisors are each responsible for the day-to-day management of a team of operatives. The structure retains a separate team of electricians, sitting under an electrical manager and an electrical supervisor. This team is responsible for the delivery of electrical repairs to our homes.

### **Disrepair**

- b. The disrepair function has been strengthened to ensure we are able to robustly responding to and defending the increasing number of disrepair claims we receive. Robust denial and defence of disrepair claims relies on timely and accurate surveys of the works; an efficient response to any outstanding repairs identified as part of the survey; and good administrative systems. The proposed structure ensures we have the resources in place to deliver this.

### **Planning and Customer care**

- c. The Planning and Customer Care team are key to the efficient scheduling of operatives time, ensuring we are keeping tenants informed of the progress of their repairs particularly in relation to more complex repairs that require more than one trade and/ or visit. The team also includes tenant liaison officers to support tenants on complex jobs, disrepair and complaints. The proposed structure builds on the interim structure with a Planning and Customer Care Manager, 6 repairs schedulers, 2 tenant liaison officers and 3 business support officers.

### **Major works team**

- d. The major works team are responsible for delivering disabled adaptations together with structural works and some limited repair and refurbishment works for other departments of Bury Council. The proposed structure reflects the current interim structure with a manager, a quantity surveyor and 3 supervisors.

## **Cost of the repairs and planned works structure before and after the proposals take effect**

19. All the posts in both the interim repairs and planned works structure are funded from the HRA. The current costs of the interim repairs and planned works structure is £1,930,700. The cost of the proposed structure is £2,002,535 – an increase of £71,835. This is a result of changes to grades and role definitions rather than an increase in the number of posts within the structure.

### **Building Safety (Compliance)**

20. In 2023 a report commissioned by Bury Council of Six Town Housing found deficiencies in core compliance areas such as fire safety and electrical safety. It was found that although Six Town Housing had been reporting 100% compliance in those areas, this was not correct. In response to the report an interim structure was introduced and an Interim Head of Compliance instated to lead the change. The role of Head of Building Safety has since been created that directly replaces the Interim Head of Compliance role and formalises the role within the current structure.
21. The proposed structure for this area formalises the creation of a specific Building Safety function that did not exist prior to bringing the housing service back in house. The current interim structure is staffed with existing staff moving from Repairs and S&I teams as well as appointment of interim staff to enable the delivery of statutory and regulatory requirements.
22. The key drivers in designing the new structure and team are;
- Accountability and Golden Thread – the introduction of specialist roles will ensure that for each area of building safety and compliance there is a suitably qualified subject matter expert within the Building Safety Team. Historically the 'Big 6' and damp and mould management were divided between numerous teams with inadequate collaboration on areas of interdependencies. Formally bringing the core compliance skills together will allow for a 'Golden Thread' to run through all aspects of health & safety, compliance and building safety. The team will not only be responsible for the delivery of periodic risk assessments, inspections, servicing and maintenance of their key areas, but also supporting the wider housing function such as the repairs and property teams.
  - Governance – the introduction of a Health and Safety Team within Housing Services will allow for the implementation of 3rd party audit regimes. Gas servicing currently has a 10% check by a 3rd party auditor of all works carried out; the medium-term plan is to roll this out to all areas of compliance and for this QA/QC function to sit independently from the compliance specialist roles to drive forward a culture of continual improvement, technical oversight and scrutiny.
  - Legislative and Regulatory Changes – the Building Safety Act, proposed changes to the Housing Act 2004 (and in particular the Housing Health & Safety Rating System), 'Awaab's Law', Heat Network Regulations and Electrical Safety Testing requirements require specialist roles that understand the complexities of each compliance area and management oversight to ensure the Council continues to meet its statutory obligations.
  - Audit Recommendations – whilst recent audits for fire safety, gas safety and lift management have provided either full or substantial assurance. Electrical safety and damp & mould found some deficiencies and only provided a moderate level

of assurance. The themes from the audits were around data management or a failure to deliver to timescales; the recommendations were on the whole not indicative of inefficient or generally poor management. An increase in capacity and oversight will allow for the recommendations to be fully implemented.

- Top Quartile Performance – central to the tenet of the Council's visions to be “a landlord of choice” and in line with the LET'S DO IT Strategy for tackling some of the core causes of inequality means not just doing the ‘bare minimum’ in terms of building safety, but also being ‘ambitious’ and striving to be ‘Best in Class’ when it comes to the health and safety of our tenants who live in some of the borough's most economically deprived areas. This will require a deliverable plan to eradicate damp & mould, ensuring that tenants not only have access to heating and hot water but are able to afford to use it (i.e. ensuring the most efficient heating systems are used) and ensuring customers are aware of any risks in their properties (such as asbestos, radon, CO) and working with them to mitigate those risks.
- Value for Money – the Council has a planned large capital works programme in 25/26 and beyond. Currently all CDM functions are contracted out to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party; the plan is for this function to be in-sourced to the Building Safety Team reducing the reliance on external consultants. Equally, the Council has invested a significant amount of money in fire safety works over the last 18 months; it is important that there is now a control of works in our communal areas with the introduction of a ‘Permit to Work’ system, ensuring that the integrity of the works carried out is protected and that works being carried out are signed off by the Building Safety Team to ensure that buildings are kept safe and the money invested is not wasted and need doing again in the future.

23. The proposed structure for building safety is set out at appendix 2. This builds on the interim structure that was put in place following the transfer of Six Town Housing staff back into Bury Council.
24. The proposed structure will not only bring certainty to the staff involved in delivering the service, it will also ensure we have enough resources to ensure we are effectively and consistently meeting our compliance and building safety legal and regulatory requirements as outlined above.

### **Cost of the Building Safety structure before and after the proposals take effect**

25. All the posts in both the interim Building Safety and the proposed structure are funded from the HRA. The current cost of the interim Building Safety structure is £336,900. The cost of the proposed structure is £731,192 – an increase of £394,292.
26. The increase in cost is due to an increase in the number of posts within the structure in order to meet the statutory and regulatory requirements outlined above. The number of FTEs in the structure will increase from 6 to 13.

### **Asset management**

27. The restructuring of this area of service delivery builds on the interim structure that has been put in place since the transfer of Six Town Housing back into the council

and builds the capacity and skills in the team to be able to deliver a strategic housing asset management function and to deliver a large stock investment programme.

28. In 2023 it was identified that there were number of deficiencies in how Six Town Housing managed its stock and its approach to asset management including incomplete and inaccurate stock condition data. An interim structure and external resources were put in place to help improve this area. The role of Head of Property was created and has been successfully recruited to and the post holder started in post in February 2025.
29. A number of key drivers were considered when designing the new structure, along with a clear focus on stock investment planning, energy efficiency, stock investment delivery and Quantity Surveying functions to enable an effective asset management service.
  - Improving compliance with RSH regulatory requirements – the Safety and Quality Standard sets out clear expectations for asset management and understanding the condition of the housing stock. It is the expectation of the RSH that landlords 'undertake regular physical assessments of the outside and inside of the homes they have a legal responsibility. These assessment of the condition of homes should be 'frequently enough and in sufficient depth to maintain their assurance on their quality and safety'. Previously assessment of stock condition was based on 20% external stock condition surveys which were then cloned to give an assessment of the condition of homes. A large part of the proposed new structure for asset management is to ensure there is enough surveyor resource to undertake stock condition surveys on a rolling five-year basis to maintain an accurate and ongoing assessment of the condition of the housing stock. The surveying resource is imperative to support requirements for meeting the Decent Homes Standard (DHS) and Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) effectively. Ensuring that remedial measures and improvements are planned and delivered in a timely manner for homes that are or may be at risk of failing the DHS.
  - Achieving net zero – there is a requirement on all landlords to be working towards achieving net zero (or net zero ready) in all of its housing stock by 2050. There is also a requirement for all our homes to be at least EPC C by 2035 – though we are working to the more challenging target of 2030 in line with GMCA targets. In order to achieve this we need to complete EPC and retro fit surveys of all our housing stock to understand the investment needed. We need to ensure that energy data is up to date and continues to accurately reflect the energy efficiency performance of our housing stock. Improving the quality of data will provide increased confidence in the planning and prioritisation of investment programmes in the short to longer term. Importantly these activities support our bid applications for external funding for e.g. Warm Homes Social Housing via GM. The addition of extra surveying resource and additional roles with the Home Energy team will support this.
  - Improving asset data governance and the golden thread– ensuring a golden thread of information through all our property services is a key role of the asset management team. We need to ensure that we keep all our property records up to date including any changes that are made to the fabric of the building or the components within the building. This in turn ensures that when coupled with our stock condition surveys we are able to make informed decisions about the investment and repair requirements of our homes in a timely manner. The

proposed structure ensures that there are sufficient resources in the planning to enable this.

- Increasing tenant satisfaction with tenants' home and neighbourhood – the delivery of improvements to our homes and neighbourhoods through the investment programme will, if well managed, increase tenant satisfaction with their homes and neighbourhoods. In order to achieve this the team needs to be resourced to deliver and manage multi million pound investment contracts and to support our tenants through improvements to their homes. The proposed structure ensures there is enough resource to do this effectively.
- Increasing value for money – a large amount of money is invested in our homes through the investment programme and through other capital works. It is important we are able to procure and cost this work accurately to ensure we deliver best value for money. To support this the proposed structure includes a strengthened quantity surveying team.

30. The proposed structure for asset management is set out at appendix 3. This builds on the interim structure that was put in place following the transfer of Six Town Housing back into Bury Council. The proposed structure formalises the interim structure and will bring certainty to staff involved in the delivery of the service.

### **Cost of the asset management structure before and after the proposals take effect**

31. All the posts in both the interim asset management structure and the proposed structure are funded from the HRA. The current costs of the interim asset management structure is £851,200. The cost of the proposed structure is £1,364,600– an increase of £513,400. This is as a result of an increase in FTEs from 16 to 25 including an increase in the number of building surveyors and tenant liaison officers, the introduction of the Home Energy Officers and a Leasehold Officer and bringing the Quantity Surveyor roles into housing services team from Facilities Management. It is also proposed there will be two trainee surveyor roles which provide apprenticeship opportunities.

### **Summary of impact on staff**

32. There are 40 individuals in scope of the proposed changes with 56 roles in the proposed new structure. All of the staff in scope of the restructure were TUPE transferred from Six Town Housing at the point the housing service was brought back in house and the majority of affected staff are currently on Six Town Housing terms and conditions.
33. Of the affected staff, 35 assimilate into the new roles as at least 60% of their current job role matches the proposed new job roles. 10 of these staff are assimilated to roles where the pay is lower than their current pay. These staff will receive pay protection for one year after the new structure is implemented.
34. Where the requirements of new roles differ significantly to the current job descriptions this will constitute an Organisational reason for the proposed change, as per requirements of TUPE legislation. The organisation cannot deliver services required if roles remain as they were designed under the former Six Town Housing structures. As a result, it is proposed that staff matched to new roles within the structure will be moved to Bury Council terms and conditions.



35. There are 3 people who are at risk of redundancy as a result of the proposed changes but there are potentially suitable alternative roles available across the service. The estimated redundancy costs for these staff are £19,210.
36. 23 roles within the new structure will be vacant.
37. All affected staff will be fully consulted on the proposed changes. The table below shows the proposed timetable for the consultation on the proposed changes;

Activity	Date
S188 consultation	Thursday 26 <sup>th</sup> June 2025
Individual meetings with staff at risk of redundancy ahead of wider announcement	Friday 27 <sup>th</sup> June 2025
Consultation announcement to impacted staff	Monday 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2025
Information packs outlining changes and new job roles available to staff	Monday 30 <sup>th</sup> June
Individual team meetings with Heads of Service to discuss proposals in more detail	Wednesday 2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2025
One to ones and ongoing consultation with impacted staff	30 <sup>th</sup> June 2025 – 30 <sup>th</sup> July 2025
Close consultation	30 <sup>th</sup> July 2025
Consider feedback and make any changes to proposals	31 <sup>st</sup> July – 5 <sup>th</sup> September
Feedback changes (if any) to staff	September 2025
Implement new structures	1 <sup>st</sup> October 2025

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#### **Links with the Corporate Priorities:**

38. These proposals seek to support the Council in ensuring it has the right structure and capacity in place to deliver against the Corporate Plan and LET'S Do It Strategy going forwards.

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#### **Equality Impact and Considerations:**

39. The proposals do not affect Council policy and are delivered within the scope of the agreed organisational policy framework which has been subject to a full Equality Impact Assessment.

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#### **Environmental Impact and Considerations:**

40. No negative impacts identified
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## Assessment and Mitigation of Risk:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Insufficient staffing resources and capacity to deliver requirements of the RSH Quality and Safety Standards leading to a poor regulatory judgement	Structures developed that ensure we have the capacity to deliver the RSH requirements.
Lack of relevant skills and knowledge to deliver good quality property services that meet expectations of tenants and the regulator	Proposed structures ensure the right roles with up to date job descriptions and person specifications to ensure we have the right skills
Insufficient capacity to deliver large investment programme	Asset management structure developed to provide management, surveyor and tenant liaison capacity to procure and deliver the investment programme

## Legal Implications:

41. Employees transferred into the Council from STH Ltd are protected under Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006. After a TUPE an employer can only make changes to contracts because of the transfer if one of the following applies:
  - they improve employees' terms and conditions
  - there is an 'economic, technical or organisational' (ETO) reason involving a change in the workforce – for example the organisation needs restructuring
  - there's a clause in the contract that allows the employer to make the change
42. ETO reasons include:
  - economic reasons – such as essential cost-saving requirements
  - technical reasons – such as using new processes or equipment
  - organisational reasons – such as making changes to the structure of an organisation
43. A change in the workforce could include making redundancies, restructuring an organisation, job role changes, and a change in work location.
44. The reports identifies the ETO reasons in detail and include the new Consumer Regulatory requirements, increasing demand pursuant to Awaab's Law and transferred in structure being unfit for purpose.
45. Staff who are assimilated into new roles will transfer to Bury Councils employment terms and conditions and will continue to be protected under Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006.
46. Legal advice will be provided throughout.

## Financial Implications:

47. The financial impact of this restructure will result in a full-year reduction of £979k in the transfer to the HRA reserve with a part-year impact in 2025/26 depending on how quickly the structure is fully recruited to. The restructure will not result in an in-year

deficit as the service will be working closely with finance over the next couple of months linked to the zero based budget review work to thoroughly scrutinise the HRA budget, with the expectation that this will lead to efficiencies and reductions being identified elsewhere in the HRA budget that will mitigate these additional costs.

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**Appendices:**

*Appendix one – Proposed Repairs and Maintenance Structure*

*Appendix two – Proposed Building Safety Structure*

*Appendix three – Proposed Asset Management Structure*

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**Background papers:**

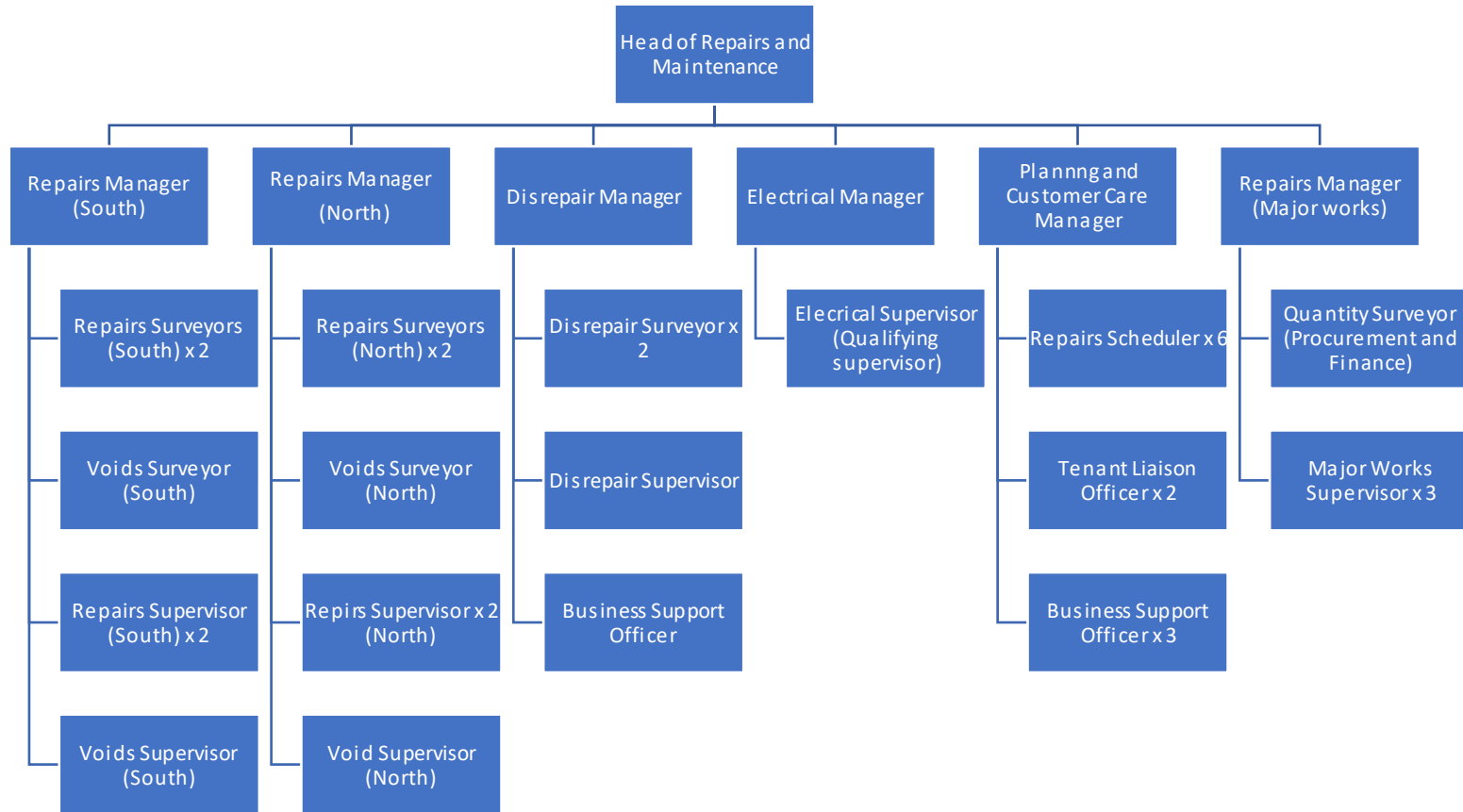
*Please list any background documents to this report and include a hyperlink where possible.*

**Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.**

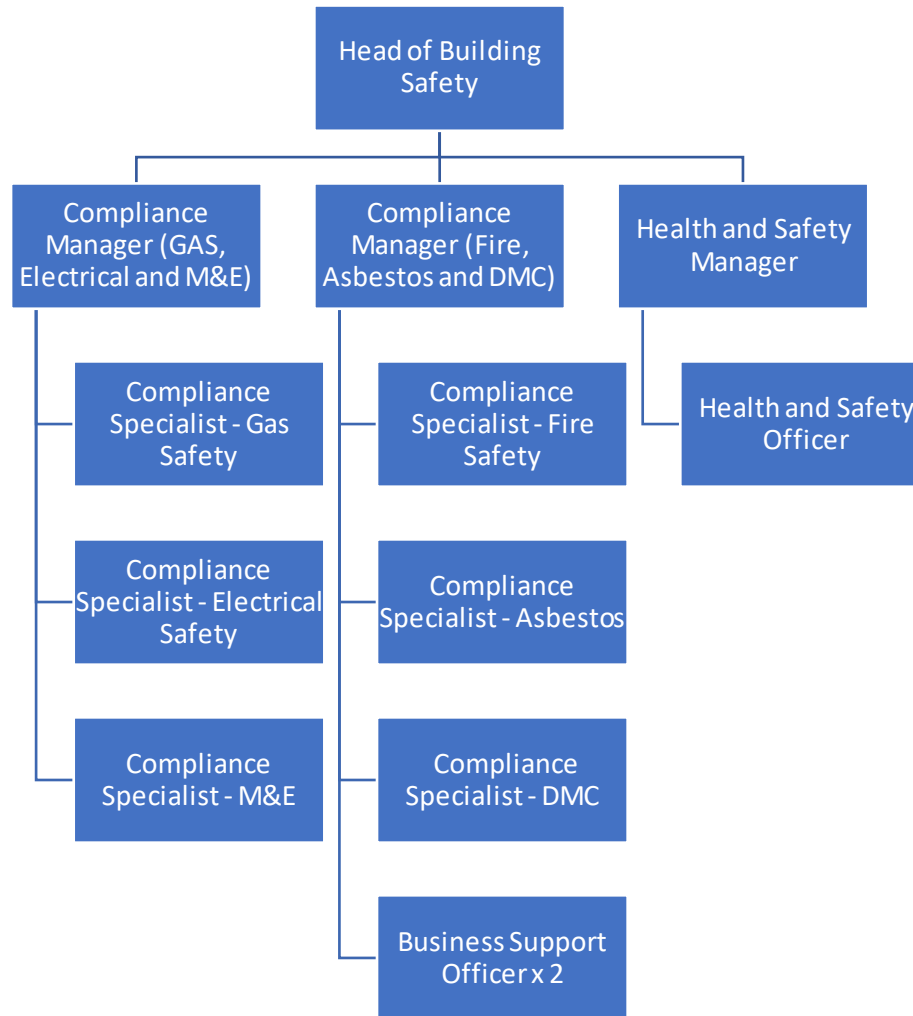
Term	Meaning
TUPE	Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006



## Appendix 1 – Proposed repairs and maintenance structure



## Appendix 2 – Proposed building safety structure



### Appendix 3 – Asset management structure

