

Thurrock - An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The meeting will be held at **7.00 pm** on **22 June 2021**

Council Chamber, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, Essex, RM17 6SL

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Membership:

Councillors Lynn Worrall (Chair), Augustine Ononaji (Vice-Chair), Mike Fletcher, Maureen Pearce, Joycelyn Redsell and David Van Day

Lynn Mansfield, Housing Tenant Representative

Substitutes:

Councillors Adam Carter, Steve Liddiard, Georgette Polley and Elizabeth Rigby

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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1 Apologies for Absence	
2 Minutes	5 - 16
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 16 March 2021.	
3 Urgent Items	

To receive additional items that the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.

4	Declaration of Interests	
5	Damp and Mould in Council Housing Properties	17 - 28
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Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

Please contact Wendy Le, Senior Democratic Services Officer by sending an email to Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

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DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Breaching those parts identified as a pecuniary interest is potentially a criminal offence

Helpful Reminders for Members

- *Is your register of interests up to date?*
- *In particular have you declared to the Monitoring Officer all disclosable pecuniary interests?*
- *Have you checked the register to ensure that they have been recorded correctly?*

When should you declare an interest at a meeting?

- **What matters are being discussed at the meeting?** (including Council, Cabinet, Committees, Subs, Joint Committees and Joint Subs); or
- If you are a Cabinet Member making decisions other than in Cabinet **what matter is before you for single member decision?**



Does the business to be transacted at the meeting

- relate to; or
- likely to affect

any of your registered interests and in particular any of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests?

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

- your spouse or civil partner's
- a person you are living with as husband/ wife
- a person you are living with as if you were civil partners

where you are aware that this other person has the interest.

A detailed description of a disclosable pecuniary interest is included in the Members Code of Conduct at Chapter 7 of the Constitution. **Please seek advice from the Monitoring Officer about disclosable pecuniary interests.**

What is a Non-Pecuniary interest? – this is an interest which is not pecuniary (as defined) but is nonetheless so significant that a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard to be so significant that it would materially impact upon your judgement of the public interest.

Pecuniary

If the interest is not already in the register you must (unless the interest has been agreed by the Monitoring Officer to be sensitive) disclose the existence and nature of the interest to the meeting

If the Interest is not entered in the register and is not the subject of a pending notification you must within 28 days notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest for inclusion in the register

Unless you have received dispensation upon previous application from the Monitoring Officer, you must:

- **Not participate or participate further in any discussion of the matter at a meeting;**
- **Not participate in any vote or further vote taken at the meeting; and**
- **leave the room while the item is being considered/voted upon**

If you are a Cabinet Member you may make arrangements for the matter to be dealt with by a third person but take no further steps

Non- pecuniary

Declare the nature and extent of your interest including enough detail to allow a member of the public to understand its nature



You may participate and vote in the usual way but you should seek advice on Predetermination and Bias from the Monitoring Officer.

Our Vision and Priorities for Thurrock

An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future.

1. **People** – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay
 - High quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time
 - Build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing
 - Communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together

2. **Place** – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future
 - Roads, houses and public spaces that connect people and places
 - Clean environments that everyone has reason to take pride in
 - Fewer public buildings with better services

3. **Prosperity** – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations
 - Attractive opportunities for businesses and investors to enhance the local economy
 - Vocational and academic education, skills and job opportunities for all
 - Commercial, entrepreneurial and connected public services

Minutes of the Meeting of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 16 March 2021 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Luke Spillman (Chair), Chris Baker (Vice-Chair), Qaisar Abbas, Colin Churchman, Joycelyn Redsell and Lynn Worrall

Lynn Mansfield, Housing Tenant Representative

In attendance:

Ian Wake, Director of Public Health
Tracy John, Interim Assistant Director of Housing
Michele Lucas, Assistant Director of Education and Skills
Keith Andrews, Housing Development Manager
Tiffany Bright, Skills Manager
Ryan Farmer, Housing Strategy and Quality Manager
Chris Seman, Intelligence and Performance Manager

Before the start of the meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being live streamed and recorded, with the video recording to be made available on the Council's website.

41. Minutes

Referring to page 13, Councillor Worrall said that she had not received the information on the number of people that had completed the resident survey for the rents Ryan Farmer said that he would send this across.

Referring to page 5, Councillor Redsell highlighted the suggestion for corporate sponsorship for the gates and asked that this be considered by the service.

42. Urgent Items

There were no items of urgent business.

43. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

44. Inspire - Head Start Housing : Supporting Care Leavers

The report on pages 17 – 24 of the Agenda was presented by Tiffany Bright. A link to the videos of the project would be emailed to Members.

The Chair felt the project was a wonderful programme and commented that a similar project could be done for offenders as well as care leavers. Councillor

Redsell asked how long care leavers could stay in the property and if the service liaised with them. She also questioned if the videos could be presented at Committee that night; and if care leavers paid rent. Tiffany Bright answered that the average length of stay was eight months but could be longer if the care leaver did not have recourse to public funds. Pre-Covid-19, Officers were checking in every month but were currently calling care leavers every four days to check their understanding of the changing Covid-19 guidelines; if they were able to access education/training and if they had sufficient funds for food/mobile. If care leavers reported Covid-19 symptoms, these phone calls would increase to everyday until the symptoms ceased. In regards to rent, she said that an equitable rental system scheme had been developed as these were shared accommodations to ensure a fair way of contribution where a young person would contribute 10% of their weekly income after completing their probationary period in employment.

In regards to the video, Michele Lucas said that it was 25 minutes long which detailed individual young people living in the Head Start properties and one of the main issues raised was a lack of Wi-Fi which led to the installation of Wi-Fi in the new property that was shown in the shorter video. The videos would give Members an idea of the work that the service undertook with care leavers to ensure that they had a place to live with the wrap around service provided by the Council and linking them to the right opportunities.

Councillor Worrall was pleased to see that the service had taken a proactive approach in ensuring that care leavers had a settled accommodation. She questioned if there was enough accommodation for those who needed it. She noted that universities were currently closed and asked if any care leavers in university were in the Head Start accommodations or whether they could access these. Tiffany Bright answered that the current average occupancy rate was around 84 so had little capacity left and needed to be carefully managed by working with aftercare services in relocating young people when needed. The service set rooms aside for care leavers at university which turned out that none of those rooms were used so another piece of work was being done on this. The service was working closely with the Finance Team to ensure that there was sufficient provision in the next budget to be able to grow the service.

Councillor Worrall asked what the number of rooms were needed to adequately house care leavers to which Tiffany Bright replied that another 15 beds would be more than adequate. Councillor Worrall commented that this was a target that the service needed to work towards and that care leavers and young people needed homes as well so should be considered as part of building homes in Thurrock.

Councillor Abbas said that the report was positive. He sought clarification on bringing care leavers back due to the differing paragraphs on pages 17 and 20. He also asked how care leavers with no recourse to public funds were supported and what support was offered upon leaving care. Tiffany Bright explained that the service's aspiration was to bring the care leavers back to Thurrock by December 2023 as the service was unable to continually support

Thurrock's care leavers outside of the Borough. She said that where care leavers had been involved in serious crimes or in prison, there were court orders that required them to stay away from the Borough that they committed the crime in. The aspiration was for them to return but to ensure that they would not be placed in danger by doing so. In regards to care leavers with no recourse to public funds, she said that the Council covered rent costs and tenants received a personal allowance that was the equivalent of Universal Credit. Care leavers were supported until the day before their 26th birthday and they were supported in home office applications for asylum thereafter.

Lynn Mansfield asked if there was other support available for care leavers after they turned 26. Tiffany Bright answered that the Aftercare Team would provide support if care leavers asked for this and it was a tailored support where care leavers could be supported into private rental accommodation or into an adult social care setting.

The Chair felt the service had taken a proactive approach in supporting care leavers and thanked the service. Michele Lucas added that the scheme had been achievable as there had been a joined up work approach across the Council that had enabled care leavers to be supported through this scheme.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 To scrutinise the cross directorate working to improve the quality of services to care leavers regarding housing options.**
- 1.2 To support and promote innovative ways to engage CLs to prepare for independent living including entry into employment.**
- 1.3 Housing Overview and Scrutiny was asked to note and comment upon the work undertaken by HSH.**

45. Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey Results and Initial Action Plan

The report was presented by Chris Seman.

The Chair noted that the results showed that leaseholders did not feel that they were getting value for money on their service charges and asked how this could be resolved. He commented that some of the blocks of flats were not in good conditions compared to private blocks of flats and he felt that more could be done to ensure a nicer place to live. He suggested using focus groups to identify what leaseholders wanted. The Vice-Chair commented that leaseholders complained about damp and mould and paint issues. Councillor Abbas said that it was hard to justify service charge increases when there was a high level of dissatisfaction. He also asked why the survey had not collected more detailed data to identify why leaseholders were dissatisfied.

Chris Seman explained that the service was looking to deliver focus groups as soon as it was possible to do so which would help to identify why leaseholders were dissatisfied as the survey did not show these reasons. Once these

reasons were identified, it would help the service to identify what needed to be focused on.

Adding to this, Ian Wake noted the Chair's earlier comparison to private blocks of flats and pointed out that service charges in private flats were likely to be higher than what these leaseholders were paying. He said that these leaseholders' blocks of flats had low level Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) which Officers could look into on a 'postcode level' to identify where the ASB was occurring to address these issues but that officers would need to identify the reasons behind leaseholders' dissatisfaction to work out a coaching plan. In regards to the survey, he said that the first stage was in collecting quantitative data to understand the issues in terms of the categories and then to conduct further focused and targeted engagements to understand the reasons behind the quantitative data.

Tracy John added that with the Capital Programme and a decorations programme, this could increase the service charges for leaseholders. She went on to say that there was a difference between leaseholders and tenants in these areas that the service would look to identify the reasons for this through the focus groups.

Councillor Redsell asked how many people had the survey been sent to. She said that people had to take pride in the area that they lived in but if it was not well maintained, people would not take pride in it. She said that people were expected to keep diaries of ASB on council owned properties and that the Council should take responsibility there. She felt that the Council should be aware of where ASB was occurring where flats were not looked after or in good condition and suggested that Officers should physically check properties as had been undertaken in the past. She stated that the Council was the landlord and should aim to keep properties up to standards and felt that where it was not, it did not look good for the area. Chris Seman answered that there were just under 900 leaseholders and every leaseholder was posted the survey except for those that lived abroad. The survey was emailed to leaseholders to those who had not received the postal copy and a second postal survey was sent as well.

Councillor Worrall stated that the survey showed that the service was not good enough and mirrored how people felt in council properties. She said that the service needed to identify why leaseholders felt that they were not getting good value for money as they were charged a lot of money. She highlighted concerns on the survey's low satisfaction level of staff dealing with enquiries and questioned if there was enough staff there and if they were properly trained to be able to answer general queries. In regards to ASB on car parking, she noted that parking permits would be considered and she felt that this was not the right approach to resolve this issue and that the service needed to identify the reasons behind the ASB. In regards to focus groups, she questioned how the Committee would be able to measure the improvements from this survey as they would need to wait a year for the outcome. She agreed with Councillor Redsell's earlier comments on Officers going out to check council properties and said that Officers should be

assigned an area to look after. Chris Seman answered that leaseholder survey outcomes would be measured through a tracker survey on a yearly basis which would focus on the issues raised by leaseholders and measure the improvements that would be implemented. The service also had an ongoing programme of telephone satisfaction surveys that gave results on a monthly basis and the service was also looking to implement a six month leaseholder satisfaction survey next year. Ian Wake added that the service would have a better understanding of what the solutions would be once conversations with leaseholders were held. The service would then need to implement these solutions and then re-measure before bringing an update back to Committee to collectively decide how and when to measure these solutions.

Councillor Churchman commented that a basic service such as acquiring a caretaker took a year which was not satisfactory. Tracy John answered that caretaking charges were not always included in service charges and was aware that there was an issue in areas that did not have a caretaking service currently. A review was in place to identify ways to bring a caretaking service in without increasing costs for leaseholders and tenants and hoped to make progress over the next 12 months.

Members commented that the issues highlighted had been going on for a long time and that the report had provided the information needed about leaseholder properties which highlighted how leaseholders felt. Members looked forward to future reports on this.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee noted and commented on the report.

46. Housing Development Programme Update

The report was presented by Keith Andrews.

The Chair questioned why there had been no 'take ups' from SMEs. Keith Andrews answered that the first round of engagement had a mix of responses where some had misunderstood the tender and some had missed the bidding deadline. SMEs showed an interest in coming back and the service aimed to improve the messaging for next time to promote the opportunities and to work better with the SME sector as it was recognised that SMEs generally found it difficult to engage with Local Authorities. He went on to say that this was a national pilot to promote these opportunities and hoped for a more positive response next time.

Councillor Redsell questioned whether there were other garage sites considered for the Site Options List. She also commented on the quality and design of the Claudian Way development in Chadwell St Mary and suggested that the same developers be used for other sites in Thurrock. Keith Andrews answered that the service worked closely with the Housing Team and that garage sites had been reviewed but some were not practical as they had

access and overlooking issues. The service would bring forward any suitable sites once these were identified. He went on to agree that the Claudian Way scheme was good and the service was pleased with the outcome as it was important to invest time and energy into the design to deliver a good quality product.

In regards to the garages on Lyndhurst Road, Councillor Worrall asked whether the service had informed the people that owned those garages that the site was being considered for housing development. She also commented that she was not happy with the process of the Site Options List as it was unclear how sites were added on and then it was taken off or paused. She felt that the list did not have the right pieces of land. Keith Andrews answered that they had not been contacted yet as the requirement was that the sites be brought to Committee at an early stage and that the land contained only garages, not homes. The service would be engaging with those garage owners to discuss the options and the site. He explained that the process for identifying sites had begun 18 months ago and part of the process was to bring the Site Options List to committee to ensure transparency. He said that the March Cabinet report had set out that a process that still needed to be discussed and for a report to come back on the options on how housing delivery could be achieved using the Council's assets. Once this was identified, it would be brought back to Committee which would help to give more certainty to the delivery programme.

Referring to the Claudian Way development and other developments, Councillor Worrall said that the process at that time had been to take those sites to Property Boards with Councillors and then to forums so the sites had been looked at in detail before it had been published. She felt that the same process had not been undertaken this time and that the service should consider property boards with Councillors. She said that she had enquired about the Richmond Road site where users were concerned that they would lose this site and she felt that a consultation should have been undertaken. She went on to say that another process needed to be considered as people were finding out about their sites through Committee which caused them worry. The Chair highlighted that stakeholder engagement was essential in a project and that people should have been consulted to identify any concerns and issues. This would have helped to bring a more realistic list to Committee. He said that he appreciated the service's intention was to be transparent but agreed with Councillor Worrall's point of view. Keith Andrews explained that he was aware that there had been a need for transparency at the start of the project but would take Members' comments into consideration and review the process of introducing new sites onto the list. He said that how information was presented to Committee remained fit for purpose.

Councillor Worrall sought detail on the Prince of Wales pub and said that it was a perfect site for development. Keith Andrews answered that there had been some late objections raised in relation to the method statement for demolition. This had resulted in a withdrawal of the application and to resubmit with more information.

Councillor Abbas asked how many properties were SMEs expected to build and how many of these would the Council buy from them. He also asked if a budget had been allocated for these purchases. In regards to Richmond Road, he asked if the service had considered options for other places that the users could use for their meetings. Keith Andrews answered that there had been a tendering opportunity with a capped value on the number of units between 10 – 15 depending on the location and type of properties. He said that the service had the ability to fund development through the HRA using Right to Buy receipts and potentially through Homes England grant where it was appropriate. The process for these types of projects for a decision to go ahead would be to go through Cabinet to seek budget approval as was usually the case. In regards to Richmond Road, he stated that no decisions were being made and if the site was to progress with development, options for users could be considered to include re-provision of facilities on site or through working with other Council departments to find alternative places. The service recognised that there were existing and valued users on the site and was aware of the need to engage with them.

RESOLVED:

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee were asked to:

- 1.1 Note progress on the list of housing development sites to be taken forward for further detailed work, involving engagement with stakeholders and communities.**
- 1.2 Note the addition of a site at Lyndhurst Road, Stanford-le-Hope to the Site Options List.**
- 1.3 Note the deletion of a site at Crammavill Street, Stifford Clays from the Site Option List.**

47. Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy - Action Plan

The report was presented by Ryan Farmer.

The Chair was pleased to see that the Council had delivered on its promise in regards to tackling homelessness and the funding that had been provided by national Government. He commented that the homelessness service had improved over the last few years but was concerned that too many people were still being placed outside the Borough and was concerned whether there was enough provision in the Borough.

Councillor Worrall questioned whether there were vacancies within the Homelessness Team. She said that she had been informed that people were struggling to make contact with Homelessness Officers and that she had tried calling the department herself where there had been no answer. She questioned who or what Jigsaw was. Ryan Farmer said that he did not manage the team but he was aware that there had been a number of posts over the past 12 months which had been created due to the funding from

national Government. He was aware that the team was expanding and could not confirm if there were vacancies that the team needed to recover but there was good coverage within the team. He said that Jigsaw was the name of the case management system that tracked and progressed cases. He asked Councillor Worrall to pass the case details on to him so that he could pass this onto the Homelessness Team to look into.

Councillor Worrall said that she would pass these details on and went on to say that the Homelessness Team needed to follow through with their case work which had been discussed in reports at Committee last year. She said that since the pandemic, there had been support from charities such as Friends of Essex and London Homeless and that the service should consider speaking with charities such as It's Nice to be Nice when engaging with stakeholders instead of consulting bigger organisations. She highlighted that this charity were made up of volunteers in the community to help people during the pandemic. Ryan Farmer said that it was important that the issue of homelessness was tackled in partnership with other organisations. He appreciated that the Council was made aware of other organisations and encouraged Members to continue to do so.

Councillor Redsell questioned whether there were any rough sleepers currently and if any of these were ex-servicemen. Ryan Farmer answered that he was not aware of any currently and said that 77 people had been helped in the past 12 months through the homelessness initiative. He was not aware of any that were ex-servicemen and would provide an update to Councillor Redsell.

Referring to paragraph 4.4, the Vice-Chair questioned whether individuals had been permanently or temporarily housed. Ryan Farmer answered that the figure was now 77 people in which 74 had been placed in emergency accommodation and that 37 of these had moved into permanent accommodation. Three people had been assisted by other organisations with some supported back to friends or family and people were generally supported to find somewhere more permanent to move into.

RESOLVED:

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee were asked to note and comment on the content of this report.

48. Interim Housing Strategy Timetable

The report was presented by Ryan Farmer.

The Chair commented that there was a lot of uncertainty currently and understood that the strategy would be considered in more detail before going forward. Noting paragraph 4.4, Councillor Abbas said that there were housing developments underway in West Thurrock and asked how these would fit in with the strategy. Ryan Farmer explained that the strategy was not in regards to the provision of sites or how development would be undertaken in Thurrock

which was a part of the Local Plan process. Members discussed that it was important for infrastructure to be in place to enable the Local Plan to progress.

Councillor Worrall commented that a report on the Housing Strategy had been brought to Committee in 2015 and asked if that had laid the foundations for this report. She also asked if the current objectives in the current report had been measured against those from 2015. Ryan Farmer answered that the 2015 report was used as the foundation to ensure that the strategy captured an up to date picture of those figures and was at an early stage so there were further points to consider particularly as the housing landscape had changed significantly since the 2015 – 2020 report. The Chair commented that housing had changed a lot since 2015 particularly in the private housing market which had seen an inflation of house prices. He said that this made it difficult for the housing strategy and Councillor Worrall commented that the housing strategy should be revisited every three years instead of five years if the 2015 strategy was out of date.

RESOLVED:

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the contents of this report and comment on the proposal to develop a new housing strategy. The Committee is also asked to comment on the consultation proposals as set out in section 6.

49. Housing Service COVID-19 Response Update

The report was presented by Ryan Farmer.

The Chair asked whether the service had considered what issues they would face after the pandemic if the Covid-19 vaccination programme was successful. Ryan Farmer answered that in the past 12 months, there had been significant intervention from the service to help people in their stability and security. There had been a ban on residential evictions that had now been extended along with Universal Credit and when these came to an end, people would have to support themselves again but it was unclear to know the full impact this. He commented that the service could potentially see an increase in the homelessness service with people facing financial difficulties but was hard to quantify whilst interventions were in place.

Ian Wake said that the Council had seen a fundamental change in how health services had been provided and care had been altered in order to provide sufficient capacity. He commented that there was a worry in that there could be a bigger health crisis that was not Covid-19 related as things that normally happened had not occurred. This could lead to a demand for more specialist and supported housing in adult social care provision and there was already recognition of a mental health crisis. He went on to say that after the interventions ended, there could be a potential increase in unemployment which would see associated problems that included an increase in homelessness and an impact to the economy that could lead to housing demand. Tracy John added that the Housing Service would look at how they

could continue to deliver its housing programmes and repairs services as well as looking out for issues where people were financially restricted. She said that the service would ensure that teams had the capacity and flexibility to respond to issues and also support staff who may have had issues through the pandemic as well.

The Committee agreed to suspend standing orders until 10pm to enable the Agenda to be completed.

Councillor Redsell commented that car crimes had increased and questioned if this was due to everyone working from home. She also mentioned that tenants who lived in Chadwell St Mary had been prioritised for the Claudian Way development and was concerned that other people on the housing waiting list had not been prioritised and may have been on the list for a longer time. Ryan Farmer said that he was unable to answer in regards to car crime. In regards to Claudian Way, he said that a local lettings plan had been used as with the Council's previous four new developments. For Claudian Way, 75% of the lettings had been provided to people within the boundary of Chadwell St Mary as people who lived in the area of a new development should be offered the opportunity to move there and this had freed up other properties for people to bid on through the housing register. There had been a proportion of the Claudian Way properties that were still available through the housing register. The bungalows had been offered to people with specific needs for a bungalow across the Borough. With the houses and flats, 25 were made available through the housing register for people to bid on as usual. The Chair commented that Local Lettings policies were good as there was a better buy-in from the local community and satisfied their needs.

Councillor Abbas highlighted concerns on the increase in ASB particularly in the Garrison Estate and asked how this issue would be addressed. He also asked for an update on previously reported cases of people who had no recourse to public funds. He also asked how people on Universal Credit would be helped with the rent increases. Ryan Farmer answered that work was being undertaken to tackle this issue between the Housing Team and the ASB Safeguarding Team. In regards to an update on people who had no recourse to public funds, he said that people were continued to be supported as best as possible and would provide further details after Committee. In regards to Universal Credit and rent increases, he said that the service had been taking a data-led approach over the last 12 months which looked at indicators and signals in advance where people may be starting to face some financial difficulties. This approach had been able identify the people who needed support the most and financial inclusion officers had been able to support people to maximise their income to ensure that they received the benefits that they were entitled to as well as providing advice and support.

In regards to sheltered accommodation and the communal halls, Councillor Worrall highlighted concerns that residents were not able to use the communal halls as it was difficult to make these 'Covid secure'. She asked if there were plans in place to enable residents to book time to use the communal halls. Ryan Farmer said that he understood that there were

feelings of isolation within a vulnerable group that had to shield in the past 12 months. He explained that the service was led by national Government guidance during the pandemic and would open the communal halls as soon as it was safe to do so.

Councillor Redsell commented that feelings of loneliness had been an issue before the pandemic had occurred and she asked what other plans were being implemented here. She also said that the issue of loneliness had brought back a community spirit. Ian Wake answered that he was aware of this and shared the concerns and hoped that everyone would receive their full Covid-19 vaccinations soon. He said that this linked to the Housing Strategy as housing services needed to be integrated with all the other relevant services to enable older people and those who felt lonely to be able to make use of the community resources that Thurrock had. He went on to say that the Thurrock Coronavirus Community Action Group had a great partnership of volunteers that had come forward to help people during the pandemic as well.

Lynn Mansfield sought clarification on what would happen to people once the eviction ban was lifted and questioned if this would put a strain on the Homelessness Service and what the options would be for children. Ryan Farmer answered that if there were evictions within the private housing sector, it would potentially lead to an increase in the Council's homelessness service. When a person or family approached the homelessness service, an assessment of their situation was undertaken and the service would try to help in preventing their homelessness. The service had a duty to provide temporary accommodation to certain people such as those who had children. Within the Council's housing sector, an eviction would be the very last resort as the service aimed to ensure that people had a safe, secure and stable home for as long as possible and would support people where there were difficulties.

RESOLVED:

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee were asked to note and comment on the contents of this report which sets out the continued response of the Housing service in relation to the challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

50. Work Programme

The following reports were added to the work programme for the next municipal year:

- Stock Survey – Damp and Mould.

The meeting finished at 9.37 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**

22 June 2021	ITEM: 5
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Damp and Mould in Council Housing Properties	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key
Report of: Susan Cardozo, Strategic Lead Assets, Repairs and Compliance	
Accountable Assistant Director: Tracy John, Interim Assistant Director for Housing	
Accountable Director: Ian Wake, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

This report is being presented to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny committee to provide an update on the occurrence and management of reported mould and damp cases within the Council's housing portfolio.

This document provides an overview of the causes of damp and mould, the number of properties that have been affected over the last two years and how we respond to damp and mould problems through our repairs contract and future capital investment programme.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 The Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee are invited to comment on the Council's approach and performance in relation to the management of damp and mould within the housing portfolio.

2. The Causes of Damp and Mould

2.1 Dampness within a building can be caused by building defects and housing conditions. Subject to the causes there are a range of repairs to tackle and remedy problems of mould and damp. Set out below are the key causes of damp that in turn can cause damage and mould to form within a property.

2.2 Rising Damp

2.2.1 Rising damp is caused by moisture rising up through the building structure causing the walls, and in some instances sections of the floor, to become wet. This will cause deterioration of the structure. One sign of rising damp can be a 'tide mark' where it is visibly wet up to approximately 1m high.

2.2.2 This form of dampness can be a result of a failed damp course membrane or the level of soil outside being above the damp course. Dampness to walls and floors will cause the finishes to decay causing wallpaper or paint to blister and ultimately lead to plaster spalling and crumbling away.

2.3 Penetrating Damp

2.3.1 Penetrating damp can be caused by an external defect such as leaking guttering, water getting in through cracks in an outside wall or through windows/door frames. It becomes more noticeable when it rains. This will cause damage to internal finishes if excessive amounts of water are allowed to get in to the structure over a prolonged period of time.

2.4 Interstitial Condensation

2.4.1 Interstitial Condensation is the presence of moisture build up within the structure causing building elements to become damp. Interstitial condensation occurs when warm air vapour passes through the part of a building structure and cools down in a void of the building structure.

2.5 Escape of water

2.5.1 This is caused by a failed service pipe within a building, it can be either a water feed such as a hot or cold water plumbing pipe / tank or this can be a waste pipe for either foul waste or rain water.

2.5.2 Escape of water is the most common cause of dampness associated to building defect. Most services are concealed behind building structural elements for aesthetic purposes and therefore small leaks can remain undetected for a period of time until a point when dampness becomes apparent.

2.6 Condensation

2.6.1 This is when mould forms in the home as a result of condensation.

2.6.2 Condensation mainly occurs on cold walls inside and other cold surfaces such as tiles and cold-water supply pipes under sinks and hand basins. It is usually worse during the winter. It is caused by humid air coming into contact with cold surfaces. The moisture contained within the air turns to water droplets that form on the hard surface. This is the point where the surface becomes wet and this is then associated with being damp.

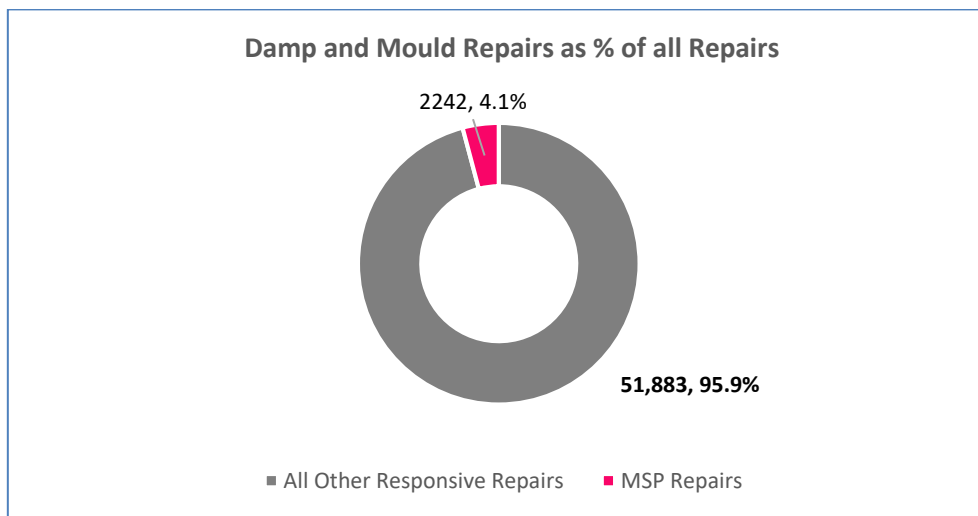
2.6.3 Damp caused by condensation is more likely to be a problem in buildings with poor levels of thermal-efficiency, typically older or poorly constructed buildings.

2.6.4 Over time if steps are not taken to reduce or prevent condensation occurring, black mould can form on surfaces such as walls, ceilings and furniture. Condensation will also allow mould and mildew to form on upholstery and

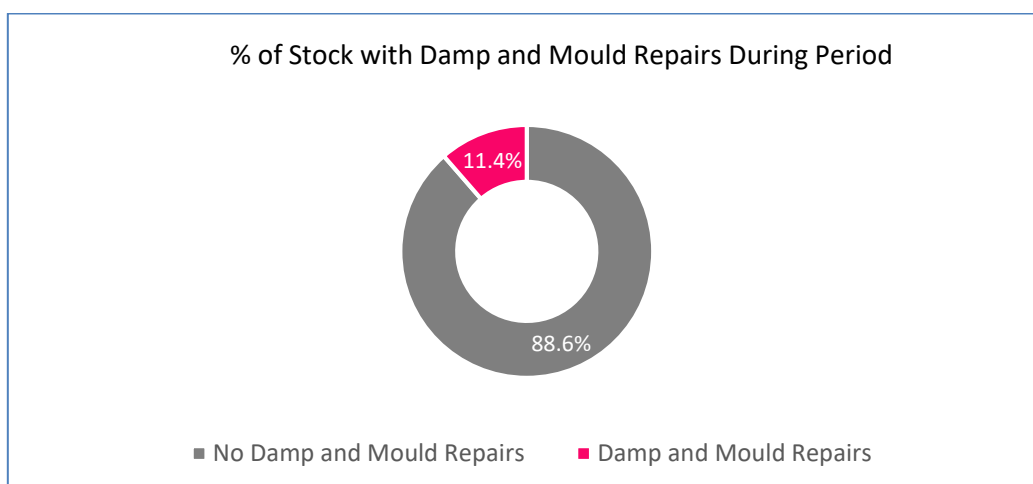
personal possessions stored in cupboards or other areas without sufficient means of ventilation.

3. Incidents of Damp and Mould

3.1 We have analysed the repairs data for the last two years (1 April 2019 to 31 March 2021). The repairs data shows that damp and mould repairs are relatively uncommon as a proportion of all repairs. 2,242 responsive damp and mould repairs have been completed representing only 4.1% of the total repair demand. 45 of these repairs were completed at properties that are no longer owned by the Council.

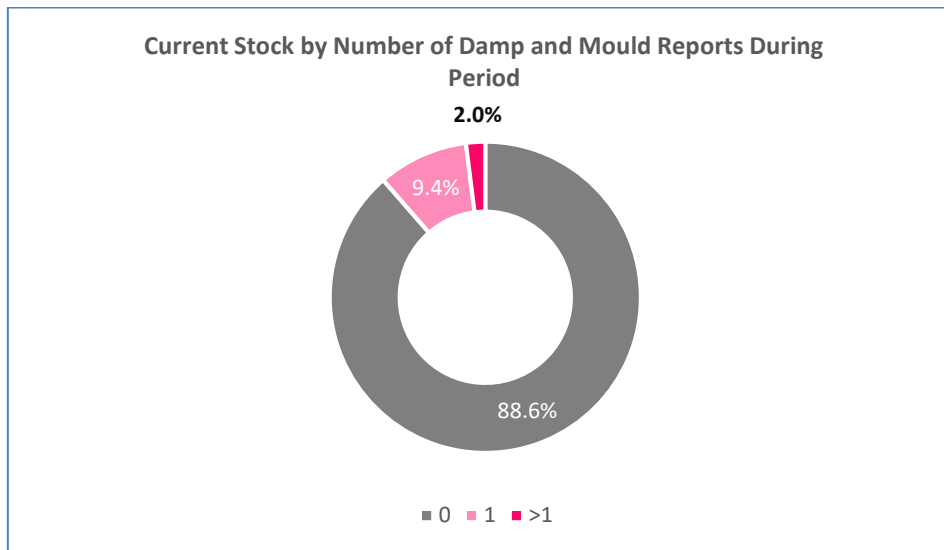


3.2 During the reporting period, 2,197 damp and mould related works orders were completed at 1,123 properties which are currently Council owned. As we can see from the graph below, this is 11.4% of the Council's housing stock.

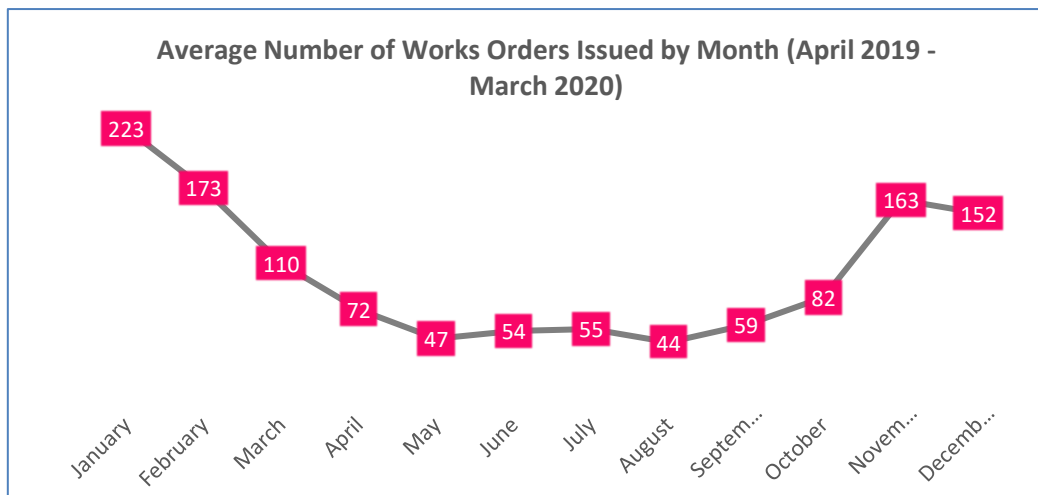


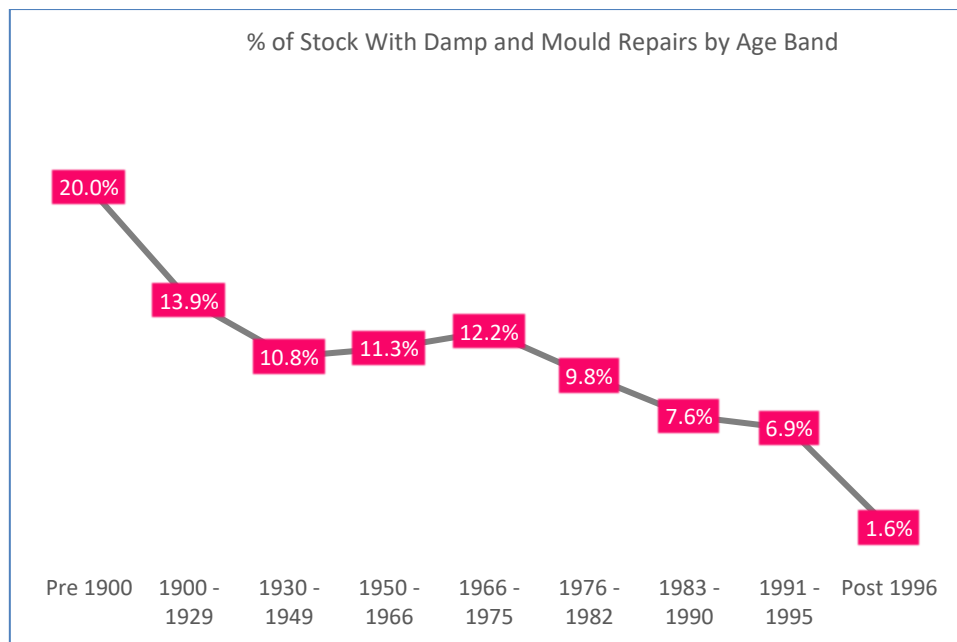
3.3 Further analysis of repairs data demonstrates that the majority of the properties have only reported damp and mould once during the two year

period. 2% of the Council's Housing stock have reported damp and mould more than once during this same period.



3.4 The following two graphs demonstrate the seasonality of damp and mould and its association with older properties. There are over five times as many damp and mould works orders completed in January compared to August and damp and mould issues are clearly positively associated with older stock which is less likely to be thermally well insulated. Both of these findings suggest that the primary cause of damp is condensation, where warm humid air inside the property condenses on cold walls (more common in older properties) during the winter months.





4. Dealing with Damp and Mould

4.1 Repairs and Maintenance

4.1.1 The Council work closely with its responsive repairs contractor Mears to ensure that reported occurrences of damp and or mould are remediated as quickly as possible.

4.1.2 In cases where it is the first report of damp and mould at the property, this is dealt with directly by the contractor Mears who will arrange for a survey to determine the cause and arrange the appropriate repair.

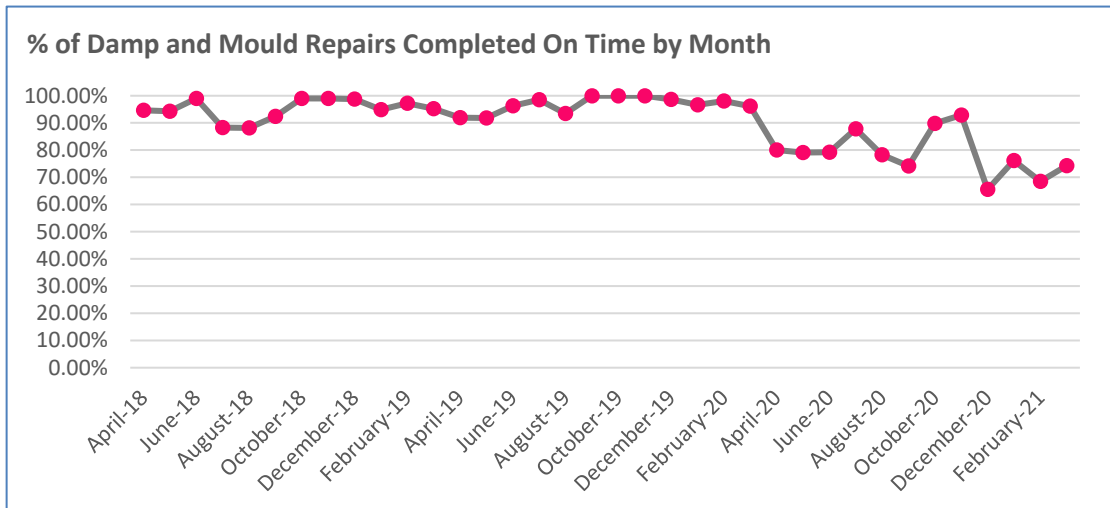
4.1.3 Cases that have had repairs of this nature undertaken within the last three years are automatically referred back to Thurrock Council. This prompts a detailed survey by a Thurrock Council building surveyor with appropriate remediation work then arranged.

4.1.4 Remediation work can include any of the following:

- Fungicide treatment and redecoration using appropriate products
- Improvement of ventilation by installing air bricks and upgrading extractor fans
- Upgrading building fabric to address thermal bridging in certain structures
- Repairing and renewing building facades and damp-proof courses to maintain a weatherproof structure.

4.1.5 The aim is to ensure remediation works are carried out in line with the housing repairs policy timeframe of 20 days. The graph below shows how the Council and its repair partner Mears have performed in this respect over the last three

years. It demonstrates that performance has been strong, but has dipped in the recent period where progress has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The repairs contractor Mears suffered an outbreak of Covid within their workforce during this period and progress was further impacted by the reluctance of some residents to allow access to their homes during the restrictions. We continue to work with our contractor to improve and further drive down the expected timeframes for this type of work.



4.1.6 Damp and mould and its impact has recently been widely reported by the media. There has been an indication that the number of cases are high and the Council are slow to respond. However as we can see from the graph above and those shown in section 3 of this report, housing repairs data demonstrates that the reality is in fact quite different. The position reported by the media has been challenged and statements have been retracted on this basis.

4.1.7 Every case that has been reported in the media has been thoroughly investigated. Of the 19 cases reported, four were not council housing tenants. All the cases that did relate to council owned properties had remediation works planned or already completed. The investigation showed that in seven of these cases the remediation works were delayed because the tenants did not allow access. Five of the cases were further delayed due to the tenants involvement with 'no win no fee' solicitors.

4.2 Ongoing Management and Resident Support

4.2.1 Condensation of warm, humid air onto cool walls is the single biggest cause of damp and mould issues within our housing stock. Condensation prevention can be achieved by managing the environment within the home ensuring there is adequate heating and ventilation. The aim is to ensure that the hot humid air that is produced through normal every day activities such as cooking, bathing, drying clothes, using appliances such as a kettle and tumble dryers and washing machines, is released from the property and fresh air enters the home. The number of people living in a property will generally

mean more activity and therefore will impact on the level of moisture produced in the home.

- 4.2.2 Residents who have suffered from damp and mould in their homes are given advice on the ongoing management of the home environment. This is delivered through resident liaison visits and the provision of printed information. The Council offer this advice in a supportive manner to help residents to live in their homes without the reoccurrence of mould and is alongside remedies to any structural defects, if found. In some cases residents have raised concerns because they feel that the responsibility wholly lies with the Council as a landlord, but to successfully eradicate damp in any home, some household management is required.
- 4.2.3 Our resident liaison officers (RLO) have been trained by the NEA (National Fuel Poverty Charity) so as well as advising on how to best manage the home environment, they are able to help residents to understand how to manage their resources and their heating systems.

Where necessary the RLO help can help residents claim fuel poverty grants and liaise with our financial inclusion officers to ensure they are accessing all the financial support they are entitled to.

5. Longer Term Solutions - Modern Fuel Efficient Homes Fit for the Future

- 5.1 Year on year, the council invests in the housing portfolio through the revenue and capital work streams.

5.2 Revenue Investment in Servicing and Repairs

Over the last two financial years £408,961 has been invested in servicing of mechanical ventilation and heat recovery units, repairing and replacing rain water goods and completing the repair works under the specific mould remediation and prevention programme. The number of properties that have benefited from these works over the last two years is 4820.

5.3 Capital Investment to Improve Energy Efficiency

- 5.3.1 The Housing capital investment programme continues to invest in measures to improve the performance and overall energy efficiency of the buildings. This includes specific remediation works to the buildings where structural defects have caused damp problems.
- 5.3.2 The following table details the relevant areas of investment over the last two financial years from April 2019 to March 2021.

Improvements	Property / Unit Numbers	Expenditure
Replacing Central Heating Boilers	1807	£1,240,301
Replacement Mechanical Ventilation and Heat Recovery units	236	£429,366
Window and Door replacements	331	£842,413
Roof Replacements including improved insulation	98	£1,730,114
Replacement of rain water goods	168	£43,918
Specialist remediation works relating to damp and mould	105	£933,195
Total Capital Investment improving the efficiency of the buildings		£5,219,307

5.3.4 We recognises that some property build types and particularly older properties, present more of a challenge in relation to the ongoing management of the home environment. Some construction details are more prone to cold bridging meaning that sections of the structure become very cold causing condensation to form, especially in winter.

5.3.5 In the past the Council have improved the thermal efficiency in many solid wall properties through the application of external wall insulation (EWI) with the help of grant funding. In recent years funding has been more difficult to source however the Council continues to review all available options to enable future programmes of this nature.

5.4 Future Improvements and Learning

- 5.4.1 A project is currently being developed to replace the electric storage radiators to 273 properties in three high rise blocks to provide a more efficient heating system linked to a ground source heat pump.
- 5.4.2 The Committee will also be aware of the current improvement works being implemented across nine of the high rise tower blocks in Grays. Whilst these works are not being delivered to directly address matters of damp and mould, the replacement of the windows and upgrade of the external wall insulation will have a positive impact on the overall thermal efficiency of the individual flats supporting the residents to maintain a warmer home.
- 5.4.3 The Housing Ombudsman have launched a ‘thematic review’ into the topic of damp and mould. They have asked for evidence submissions from both landlords and their residents to ensure they are able to make far-reaching recommendations that promote greater understanding of the complexity of tackling damp and mould and to share best practice across the sector, helping landlords to develop their policies and procedures with a view to improving the experience for all residents.
- 5.4.4 The Council have participated in this call for evidence to ensure we are in a position to learn from the review and benefit from any emerging approaches to further improve the service we provide to our residents.
- 5.4.5 As mentioned in 5.3.4 above the Council recognises that certain property archetypes within the housing stock will continue to present challenges due to their age or build type. Full stock appraisals of these archetypes would inform recommendations for either future investment or redevelopment of those assets in the future. Any major decisions arising from appraisals of this nature would be subject to Cabinet approval.
- 5.4.6 The Council are aware that damp and mould has featured as an ongoing problem for a number of properties in the three tower blocks in Grays Blackshots. Plans are in place to consult with the residents of these blocks about their preferences for either future investment or the possible regeneration of this estate.

6. Reasons for Recommendation

- 6.1 This report is being presented to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide an update on the management of reported damp and mould cases within the Council’s housing portfolio.
- 6.2 The Committee are invited to comment on the Council’s approach and performance.

7. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 7.1 Housing carry out customer satisfaction surveys on individual repairs; and hold a bi-annual STAR survey. The performance data for these are reported to Housing Overview and Scrutiny.

7.2 The Resident Excellence Panel have regularly review the detailed performance on our repairs and maintenance contractor through participation in monthly contract governance.

8. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

The ongoing maintenance and improvement of the Council's housing assets supports the Council's key priorities through the provision of quality housing and estates people are proud to live on.

9. Implications

9.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Mike Jones**
Strategic Lead – Corporate Finance

The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan makes provision for the ongoing investment in the existing housing stock over the next 5 to 10 years to facilitate ongoing maintenance and improvements

9.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**
Deputy Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer

Given this is an update report and the nature of the recommendation to the Committee, there are no legal implications directly arising.

9.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer

A full community equality impact assessment has been undertaken of the implementation of the Housing delivery of the investment programmes.

Many residents are experiencing high levels of fuel poverty. Fuel poverty has many negative impacts on physical and mental health. Fuel poverty creates a harsh choice for our residents to choose between a warm home or food. The provision of tailored advice and the introduction of further energy efficiency measures and heating systems are designed to address this financial exclusion.

10 Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- N/A

11 Appendices to the report

- N/A

Report Author:

Susan Cardozo

Strategic Lead Assets Repairs and Compliance

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22 June 2021	ITEM: 6
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Housing Delivery Approach	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A
Report of: Keith Andrews, Housing Development Manager	
Accountable Assistant Director: Dr Colin Black, Interim Assistant Director – Regeneration and Place Delivery	
Accountable Director: Sean Clark, Director of Resources & Place Delivery	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

The emerging local plan identifies a need for around 32,000 new homes in Thurrock by 2038 and the Council has previously agreed ambitious targets to contribute to this – to build 500 affordable HRA homes between 2019 and 2029 and 1000 homes for sale and rent by 2023. 29 units were completed by 2020, a further 56 in early 2021 with an additional 35 units now on site completing later in 2021

To date, the latest Government Housing Delivery Test for 2020 shows that housebuilding in Thurrock has only met 59% of the overall Government target for the area. 3,088 houses needed to be constructed between 2017 and 2020, but only 1,823 were actually built.

A report was presented to Cabinet on 9th December 2020, which explored various approaches to increase the Council’s capacity to deliver housing development schemes and to assist in the wider regeneration of the borough. Cabinet agreed to adopt a mixed approach to Housing Development Delivery which would ensure that even if a project were delayed, the policy as a whole would not also be delayed, ensuring more affordable homes would be built.

A further report on Assets Disposals was taken to Cabinet on 10th March 2021, where an Assets Disposals Policy was approved with a clear process identified to Reuse, Retain or Release an asset and a proposed approach to towards identifying the route for additional housing as set in Appendix 3 of that report.

This report further explores the options for disposal when the assets would be suitable for housing and proposes a process to help determine delivery routes. The report also highlights the role that Thurrock Regeneration Ltd (TRL) can play in helping to increase good quality housing across the borough.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 Approach to Housing Delivery as set out in the report is agreed.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The emerging Local Plan identifies a need for around 32,000 new homes in Thurrock by 2038.

2.2 The Council has previously agreed its targets for housebuilding as a contribution to this, both through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and through Thurrock Regeneration Limited (TRL). The previously agreed targets are to build:

- 500 affordable HRA homes to be built between 2019 and 2029 of which 85 units have been completed to date.
- 1000 homes for sale and rent by TRL by 2023. There have been no starts or completions by TRL since the introduction of this target.

2.3 To date, the latest Government Housing Delivery Test for 2020 shows that housebuilding in Thurrock has only met 59% of the overall Government target for the area. 3,088 houses were required between 2017 and 2020, but only 1,823 were actually built.

2.4 Housing delivery is primarily through the private sector and developers have a range of reasons for not bringing forward developments – local land values often being one aspect, along with planning permissions and other factors.

2.5 Delivery of new housing through the Council programme has been impacted on the need to limit and revise how resident engagement could take place during the Covid pandemic, but new ways of working have now been established. The operation of TRL has also been subject to pause and review and further reports on that operating model are being prepared.

2.6 On 29 October 2019 and 15 January 2020 respectively, Housing Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet established the process and criteria by which Council owned sites are to be identified as potential housing development sites.

2.7 Further reports to Housing Overview and Scrutiny and to Cabinet in February 2020 agreed a long list of 20 sites, with an estimated delivery target of around 900 homes to address the Council's Housing Development targets.

2.8 This list has been reviewed and amended and regularly reported to Housing Overview and Scrutiny, the most recent being in March 2021 which identified 14 sites now on the Site Options list which could potentially be taken forward for delivery.

- 2.9 On 9th December 2020, Cabinet agreed to adopt a mixed approach to Housing Development Delivery which would help increase capacity to deliver more much needed housing.
- 2.10 The paper identified that the mixed delivery approach would likely include:
- Continued direct delivery on Council owned sites
 - Street purchase of existing private sector stock
 - Purchasing new homes through S106 opportunities
 - Purchase of existing private sector land or completed units
 - Continued TRL development on appropriate sites
 - Joint Ventures or collaboration with the private sector
- 2.11 The Cabinet report of 9th December 2020, also recommended that a further review of the Council's own assets take place to highlight other sites for disposal or for housing development and a subsequent report on Assets Disposals was taken to Cabinet on 10th March 2021, where the Assets Disposals Policy was approved with a clear process identified to Reuse, Retain or Release an asset and a proposed approach was set out to identifying the route for additional housing delivery.
- 2.12 The proposed approach in Appendix 3 of the report (10th March 2021) set out four options for disposal when the assets would be suitable for housing delivery:
- Straight disposal to the private sector as land not fit for housing.
 - Joint venture with a private or public sector partner.
 - Sale to the Housing Revenue Account; or
 - Where no partner is found the asset reverts to a reformed TRL or is sent there with cabinet consent.

3. Housing need across the borough

- 3.1 Providing good quality, sustainable and affordable housing is absolutely key to the wider growth agenda as it enables our residents to live healthy and happy lives and means that there are local people available to take up the new employment opportunities created by this growth.
- 3.2 The South Essex Strategic Housing Market Assessment (May 2017) objectively assessed the need for housing in Thurrock between 2014 and 2037 as being between 1,074-1,381 new dwellings per annum, within which the affordable housing element is estimated at 472 dwellings per annum. Accordingly, the emerging Local Plan acknowledges the need for up to 32,000 new homes in Thurrock during the next Local Plan period to 2038.
- 3.3 To achieve this, different types of housing are needed - more social housing, more in the private rented sector and more affordable ways of purchasing to help those who aspire to own their home, to be able to buy a house. In addition, we need different types and sizes of houses. This could meet the needs of single people, enable young people and people with a need for supported housing (including care leavers) to move on to sustainable housing,

provide larger houses for those who have growing families, and, provide accommodation for those who are getting older and need more help with day to day living or specialist care.

- 3.4 Therefore, an increase in good quality housing across all tenures is needed and given the demand in the area, this cannot be delivered via just one route, as recognised in the December 2020 Cabinet Report.
- 3.5 The growing population (estimated to be 178,300 following the latest census – an increase in 35,000 in a decade) will place additional pressure on the housing supply with 20,600 new homes required by 2031, equating to 1,030 per year. This is the highest of any local authority in the sub region and this requires collaborative working to deliver these much-needed homes.
- 3.6 The Strategic Housing Market Assessment report (SHMA) shows circa 60% of housing requires 3 bedrooms or more across all tenures – and across both private and affordable housing.
- 3.7 Local housing waiting lists for Council housing, indicate that whilst there is still a demand for 3-4 bedroom properties (circa 22%), 78% of current demand is for one and two bedroom homes. This need can be satisfied by constructing new smaller dwellings for rent and also in part by building larger homes for expanding families needing to move thereby releasing the smaller homes vacated.
- 3.8 As at May 2021, Council Housing Waiting list was 5,301 and the Council Housing transfer list 1,566, meaning that on total 6,867 people are seeking new Council homes in Thurrock. 83% of that demand is for 1 and 2 bedroom homes.
- 3.9 This indicates a requirement for significantly increased affordable accommodation across the spectrum of need including for younger people who are looking to buy/rent their own home; single households; small families and also for older people.
- 3.10 There is an ageing population in the borough and more housing suitable for those aged 60+ will be needed in the future. Ensuring that older people can live longer in their own homes is hugely important as public sector finances reduce. Looking at ways we can incorporate assistive technology and wider aspects of health and wellbeing into such developments will be paramount to ensure independent living.
- 3.11 This will be important for both social housing and private schemes. We need far more accommodation that meets the needs of older people. This will encourage them to move into housing that is more suited to their longer term needs and release larger houses for those needing more space.

4. A Mixed Approach to Housing Delivery

4.1 The Cabinet report of 9th December 2020 and the proposed approach in Appendix 3 of the Cabinet report on Assets (10th March 2021) set out four options for disposal when the assets would be suitable for housing delivery:

- Straight disposal to the private sector as land not fit for housing.
- Joint venture with a private or public sector partner.
- Sale to the Housing Revenue Account; or;
- Where no partner is found the asset reverts to a reformed TRL or is sent there with cabinet consent

4.2 Straight disposal to the private sector

4.2.1 This may be when the land is deemed to be unsuitable for housing or where there may be complications with the site that may be best served via private sector delivery.

4.2.2 The Council is already working with the private sector to bring forward sites and larger housing programmes across the Borough, in a variety of ways.

4.2.3 In some areas, this has included developers proposing sites for the Council to purchase for development as part of wider private sector led proposals.

4.2.4 Following the Council's approach to engaging with land owners and developers through the Design Charrette process that is supporting development of the new Local Plan, approaches have also been received from the private sector on collaborative approaches to bring forward new larger scale developments alongside the Council.

4.2.5 The Council also has targets for capital receipts to enable it to invest in other council priorities. Therefore some sites will need to be sold directly to the private sector.

4.2.6 Timing of disposals, due diligence and ensuring best consideration for any council assets being sold, is set out comprehensively in the Assets Policy approved by Cabinet on 10th March 2021.

4.2.7 Sales to the private sector for residential use, will likely mean housing is developed that is in demand locally – therefore a range of dwellings will be expected including 3 and 4 bedroom properties with some apartments. Affordable housing/s106 agreements will be agreed on viable schemes.

4.3 Joint venture with a private or public sector partner

4.3.1 Joint ventures (JVs) can be with a private sector partner or a public sector partner.

4.3.2 Public Sector JVs may involve working with Housing Associations (HAs) to open up more affordable housing developments in the area. These may involve agreeing the sale of local authority land to develop accommodation

with social housing nomination rights, developing housing together across the borough or simply supporting HA applications for Government grant.

- 4.3.3 The past 10 years or so have seen big changes in HAs' plans to increase housing and both HAs and Local Authorities are committed to providing affordable housing. Enabling greater HA delivery in Thurrock may be one way of increasing affordable housing provision for Thurrock residents in the borough without increasing risk on the local authority.
- 4.3.4 There are a wide range of private sector JV structures available to local authorities which can be adapted to reflect the Council's appetite for risk and reward. The structure of any particular joint venture ultimately depends on the objectives of the partners involved, often with access to land, equity funding and/or development related skills or expertise.
- 4.3.5 There are a number of local authorities which have agreed JV models known as "income strip" deals whereby they agree long-term leases, and at the end of the period, they take possession of the property for a peppercorn fee. There are a range of models available via this route but they mostly rely on the covenant strength of the local authority for further investment.
- 4.3.6 Some JVs involve setting up a new structure such a Limited Liability Partnership (LLP), with specific governance arrangements. Others may involve a development agreement being put into place.
- 4.3.7 JVs may be appropriate where the private sector partner/investor owns land holdings adjacent to council land, enabling both parties to create a more ambitious scheme.
- 4.3.8 They may also be appropriate to lever in investment to the area, rather than the council taking on all of the risk.
- 4.3.9 A joint venture can be helpful in bringing new ideas and expertise to the area, where successful schemes have been delivered elsewhere, especially where particular types of housing/demographic groups may be the speciality of the private sector partner. Similarly urban regeneration projects can often be delivered effectively through joint venture arrangements where each party is best able to manage the risk appropriate to its expertise. A private sector partner often takes on the role of sales or management of market facing products including outright sale and private rent. Council's will commonly retain and manage newly constructed replacement affordable housing.
- 4.3.10 However, the process of finding and procuring a suitable JV partner, agreeing any proposed deal or "income strip" needs to be carried out with care and attention to ensure the council does not enter into a prohibitive, long term arrangement which would be costly to exit.
- 4.3.11 Finalising the legal negotiations, what the JV governance model will be and carrying out full due diligence on the arrangement and JV partner, can be

lengthy, time consuming and incur significant set up fees. It would clearly necessitate profit share based on the level of investment/risk by the partners.

4.3.12 Joint ventures can focus on whatever type of housing is needed in the borough depending on the agreement in place. Housing Associations will be basing developments on known need for social housing and tenure/size of units on private sector developments will be agreed as part of the initial agreement.

4.4 Land Sale to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

4.4.1 Thurrock Council is the local housing authority with circa 10,000 homes and this is managed through the Housing Revenue Account. Consequently the Council can borrow money via the HRA to support housing delivery.

4.4.2 On 29 October 2018, the government confirmed that the HRA borrowing cap was abolished with immediate effect. As a result, local authorities with an HRA are no longer constrained by government controls over borrowing for housebuilding and are able to borrow against their expected rental income, in line with the Prudential Code.

4.4.3 On 19 March 2021 MHCLG also introduced additional flexibilities in the use of capital receipts from sales of Council homes under the right to buy. These included raising the proportion of a project's costs that can be funded from RTB receipts from 30% to 40%; permitting their use in developing shared ownership homes and extending the period by which they must be used by from three to five years after receipt. These changes together with the introduction over time of a cap on how much of an authority's receipts can be used on acquiring properties rather than new development means that there will be wider scope to fund HRA development.

4.4.4 Land for affordable housing can be from a range of sources. It can be land currently held within the existing HRA estate, land held by the General Fund or plots of land purchased on the open market from private owners. Where new affordable housing is to be built on land currently held within the General Fund it will need to be appropriated to the HRA under powers contained within the Housing Act 1985. Through this process the HRA 'pays' for the land through an increase in the HRA Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) whilst the General Fund benefits from a corresponding decrease in its CFR thereby freeing up General Fund resources for other uses.

4.4.5 Land that is suitable for HRA developments will include:

- Plots of available land in areas where there is existing social housing to enable ease of housing management;
- Smaller developments (up to 50 dwellings) in mixed development areas on existing council land;

- Part of larger developments where there would be a mixed approach to housing tenures – some HRA, some Private Sales (PS) and some Private Rented (PR).
- Re-provision of existing housing stock where due to its age or condition will need to be redeveloped. This can include both small scale re-provision and large scale housing regeneration projects.

4.4.6 Given the demand for smaller sized residences, much of the HRA focus will be on 1 and 2 bedroom homes and residences for older people. However there will be a mix of homes including 3 and 4 bedroom developments for growing families which can in turn make smaller homes available for re-let where the new occupiers are moving from an existing Council home.

4.5. Thurrock Regeneration Ltd (TRL)

4.5.1 A “reformed TRL” has the potential to play a greater role in housing delivery as the company has previously delivered high quality, award winning affordable housing and private rented homes at St Chads. In the first instance this requires a new operating model and revised governance arrangements to be put in place and this is currently in progress.

4.5.2 The TRL model enables the regeneration of Council sites, the delivery of housing and provides an associated income source to the council via the financing of the scheme. Housing delivered can be managed through the subsidiary company Thurrock Regeneration Homes Ltd (TRHL).

4.5.3 The quality of the St Chads development was achieved despite some indications from the private sector initially that the scheme may not be viable due to factors such as low land values, high construction costs, the required levels of affordable housing and higher quality design required.

4.5.4 Therefore the TRL model of delivery enables the local authority to challenge such views. The company will assess projects to ensure schemes deliver a required return over the project life. TRL can also agree a level of affordable homes and ensure build is to a quality and standard consistent with the Council design standards.

4.5.6 TRL can support brownfield redevelopment and ensure sites (where there may be feasibility issues identified by the private sector) to be developed by accessing funding via partners such as the LEP, ASELA and Homes England.

4.5.7 However, to enable TRL to operate successfully, achieve design standards and policy compliant affordable housing levels, there may be a need to also develop sites where higher returns are also possible. This may then enable the cross subsidy of more challenging sites.

5. **Decision Making Process for Release of Land**

- 5.1 The Proposed Approach to Housing Delivery and Asset Rationalisation (Cabinet Report on Asset Disposals - March 2021), helpfully sets out the process for release options.
- 5.2 Each site should be assessed as to whether it is suitable for housing and then reviewed as to how it could then progress to development (using the Flow Chart identified in Appendix 3 of the Cabinet Report on Asset Disposals – March 2021).
- 5.3 The assessment would include an overview of:
- Suitability of land for housing
 - How the development supports the Strategic Plan and wider vision
 - Deliverability of site – land condition
 - Is the land part of a possible wider development with different ownerships?
 - How the site will support targets for affordable housing
 - Financial/viability appraisal
 - Local issues
 - Regenerative effect.
 - Impact on economic growth, job creation and social value
 - Key risks and benefits
- 5.4 Appendix 1 gives an example of the process to be taken by officers when assessing the land for housing delivery and the route being proposed for said delivery.
- 5.5 Engagement with cabinet members and ward members is also crucial at this stage to ensure local concerns are fully understood as part of the assessment process.
- 5.6 Once appraisals have been carried out on each site, recommendations will be made to Cabinet and, where appropriate, to the new TRL Board when re-formed.

6. Reasons for Recommendation

- 6.1 To ensure that we can deliver a wide range of housing tenures and developments across the borough.

7. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 7.1 This report builds on the Cabinet Report on Housing Delivery approved December 2020 and the Cabinet Report on Assets approved March 2020.
- 7.2 Housing Overview and Scrutiny regularly monitor and approve the housing delivery programme and will consider this report, making recommendations to Cabinet as appropriate.

8. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

8.1 The proposed approach to the development of new housing aligns closely with the Council's Vision and Priorities adopted in 2018. In particular it resonates with the "Place" theme which focuses on houses, places and environments in which residents can take pride.

9. Implications

9.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**
Assistant Director, Finance

The financial implications of specific housing delivery schemes will be considered on a site by site basis. This will initially include consideration of the proposed delivery route and the wider financial implications to the Council.

9.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Ian Hunt**
**Assistant Director of Law and Governance and
Monitoring Officer**

The Council is generally empowered to dispose of assets which are underperforming or surplus to requirements. Each asset will need to be checked to ensure its formal ownerships and appropriation enable general disposal with terms to be confirmed. A final analysis of the legal title and terms of disposal will be included in the disposal decision report.

In considering direct sales and potential joint venture arrangements the Council will have to comply with relevant procurement regulations and guidance. Particularly in respect of Joint Venture arrangements this may necessitate formal public advertisement for partners. Future decisions on specific sites will need to balance the Council's duties in respect of securing best value with the benefits obtained from schemes, this is particularly relevant in any situations where sites could be developed for mixed tenure arrangements and higher levels of affordable housing are balanced against immediate capital receipts.

9.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
**Community Engagement and Project
Monitoring Officer, Community Development
and Equalities**

The aim of the Housing Delivery approach is to provide good quality housing across a range of tenures for a wide variety of residents with differing needs across the whole borough including those with protected characteristics.

In line with Equality Act 2010 requirements a Community Equality Impact Assessment (CEIA) will be required for individual proposals to determine potential impacts and mitigation where identified for individuals or groups with protected characteristics. This will ensure detailed consideration of the impacts of particular developments take place.

9.4 **Other implications** (where significant – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

Not applicable

10. Background papers used in preparing the report

- Cabinet Report 9th December 2020 - Housing Development Delivery Approach (Decision 110540)
- Cabinet Report 10th March 2021 – Asset Disposals (Decision 110565)

11. Appendices to the Report

- Appendix 1- Land Assessment Grid – Suitability for Housing and Delivery Method Proposed

Report Author:

Keith Andrews

Housing Development Manager

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Appendix 1

Land Assessment Grid – Suitability for Housing and Delivery Method Proposed

Site Address	
Ward	
Existing Use	
Local Plan Designation	
Site Boundary	
Site Ariel View	
Site Photographs	
Site Identified by	Eg. Housing Dept/ Property dept /Education etc

Criteria	Detail
Site size	Measured from Geographic Information System
Site Capacity	Dwellings per ha reflecting planning policy or from capacity study
Suitability for affordable housing	Proximity to existing Housing Revenue Account stock for ease of management. Proximity to local services and public transport accessibility Capable of meeting expressed (affordable) housing need
Land Condition/Deliverability	Existing use and obvious constraints on delivery, topography, flooding, contamination
Any infrastructure/access issues	Requirement to relocate/extent of underground utility services, highways access constraints/ substations
Wider regeneration – is the site part of a Strategic programme?	Scope to contribute towards area based place making Is the site part of a 'strategic programme' e.g. Towns Fund, ASELA, potential bid for grant funding from Homes England.
Planning Constraints	Extent of planning constraints and likelihood of them being overcome – e.g. overlooking, loss of amenity, access
Legal & Land constraints	Existence of constraints to development, such as : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type(quality) of Title held • Rights necessary for development • Other relevant leases, easements, rights of way or light • Environmental and flood search records • Chancel repair liability • Other landownership e.g. garages
Value of land	Existing use valuation and/or with outline planning for residential.

Criteria	Detail
Any local issues?	Local community issues or constraints, loss of community assets, community groups
Existing local housing character	Suburban/urban/rural Apartments or houses High or low rise
Does it impact on economic growth/jobs?	Any loss of employment land Potential for job creation or social value
Is the land part of a wider possible scheme? If so – ownerships?	Are there adjoining land ownership where land assembly could increase value or scope of opportunity
Financial viability	High level financial viability appraisal. Including consideration of affordable housing rental levels/supported borrowing , income target, return on investment Availability of Homes England/RTB/Other grant funding
Proposed Development Programme	Milestones of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation • Planning Submission • Start on Site • Practical completion
Alternative Options considered	E.g. Community provision, play area, supported housing provision
Does this fit with the Strategic Vision for Thurrock?	How proposal meets strategic vision
Key benefits	Key benefits e.g. influencing housing delivery test, affordable housing, and social value/infrastructure.
Key Risks	What are the key risks to successful delivery

Project Managers Justification for use as residential

This enables the project manager to put forward a rounded justification why the site should be considered for residential development taking into account all the criteria above.

By having a justification overall it enables challenge focussed on the merits of the proposal and not on a scoring system.

If recommended for Residential select route: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Joint Venture (JV)• Private Sale (PS)• Housing Revenue Account (HRA)• Thurrock Regeneration Ltd (TRL)	Rationale for route selected.
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Consultation with Property Team - comments

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22 June 2021	ITEM: 7
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Housing Development Programme Update	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A
Report of: Keith Andrews, Housing Development Manager	
Accountable Assistant Director: Dr Colin Black, Interim Assistant Director – Regeneration and Place Delivery	
Accountable Director: Sean Clark, Corporate Director of Resources & Place Delivery	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

Since February 2020, Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee have received update reports on a list of Council owned site options which had been selected as being potentially suitable for redevelopment for residential purposes. This report updates Committee further on progress.

1. Recommendation(s)

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to:

- 1.1 **Note progress on the housing development sites to be taken forward for further detailed work, involving engagement with stakeholders and communities.**
- 1.2 **Note that a review of the current process and reporting of the Site Options List is to be agreed with the Portfolio Holder for Housing in consultation with the Chair of Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that any revised proposals be brought back to a future meeting of this committee**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Reports are presented regularly to Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee which have established and updated a list of Council-owned housing development option sites to be taken forward for further detailed work, involving engagement with stakeholders and communities. It has been previously resolved that additional sites or amendments to the existing

programme would be reported back to Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a regular basis.

- 2.2 The aim of the Sites Options List is to provide greater transparency on the sites being considered for potential housing development, to address the Council's growth aspirations and housing development targets. This process was agreed at Cabinet on 15 January 2020.
- 2.3 At 16 March 2021 Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members expressed a preference to review the operation of the sites option list. Concern was expressed that local residents were not fully consulted in advance of sites being placed on the options list. Members will also be aware from the Housing Delivery Approach paper on this agenda that a wider range of routes to housing delivery is being proposed which may mean update reports to Committee may need to broaden out to include those alternative delivery methods.
- 2.4 It is proposed, therefore, that a review of the current process and reporting is agreed with the Portfolio Holder for Housing in consultation with the Chair of Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that any revised proposals be brought back to a future meeting of this committee.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

The Sites Options List

- 3.1 At present there are no new sites to be added or deleted to the site options list, meaning that there remains 14 sites on the list unchanged from that reported at the March 2021 Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Collectively those sites could potentially deliver up to 609 new homes. It should however be emphasised that these figures remain largely indicative until schemes have progressed to detailed assessment and community engagement.

Project Updates

- 3.2 The 35 unit **Calcutta Road** project in Tilbury for older people has been designed to the HAPPI standard which provides generous internal space, plenty of natural light in the home and circulation spaces, avoids single aspect design apartments and promotes the use of balconies and provision of outdoor space for the residents. Work is progressing well with an anticipated completion date in September 2021.
- 3.3 A revised planning application for a 5 unit development of four three bedroomed houses and one two bedroom house at **Loewen Road** is due to be submitted before the date of this Committee and work is being progressed to enable a construction tender to be issued immediately following a recommendation to approve the application at Planning Committee. Members

approved the commencement of a procurement exercise at Cabinet on 13th January 2021 to appoint a building contractor for the project. These new homes with associated parking are to be let in line with the Council's Housing Allocation policy. The scheme has been designed to a high quality and seeks to make use of renewable and low carbon technologies by being a zero gas development. Formal consultation will be carried out during the planning process in line with planning legislation.

- 3.4 The **Culver Centre and Field** planning application for 173 homes is awaiting determination. The proposal has been the subject of detailed resident consultation with the resultant application being for a mix of houses and apartments. 35% of the dwellings will be affordable housing.
- 3.5 An first stage consultation event for the **Broxburn Drive** proposal was held in March 2021. A consultation leaflet was issued to 237 local residents, and invited responses to a Freephone and email address. Due to the Covid pandemic an online resident consultation workshop was held rather than in person. Key issues from responses were concerns around parking provision for existing and new residents, the importance of retaining green space, a preference for any new homes to be no taller than existing buildings and to have a traditional design and materials and for any new development to enhance shared areas and not simply add to the number dwellings. This input is being considered by the Councils design team and further resident engagement sessions are planned to be held as face to face events wherever possible.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The recommendation is informed by previous reports and the agreed Housing Delivery process.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 This paper provides opportunity for Members of this Committee to review progress on the delivery of the Housing Development Programme.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 The list of housing development sites aligns closely with the Council's Vision and Priorities adopted in 2018. In particular it resonates with the "Place" theme which focuses on houses, places and environments in which residents can take pride.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Mike Jones**

Strategic Lead – Corporate Finance

There are no financial implications directly arising from this update report.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**
Deputy Head of Law and Deputy Monitoring Officer

There are no legal implications directly arising from this update report.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer

There are no equalities implications to this update report.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

None

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Cabinet, 15 January 2020, Housing Development Process
- Cabinet, 12th February 2020, Housing Development Options List.
- Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee 16th March 2021, Housing Development Programme Update

9. Appendices to the report

None

Report Author:

Keith Andrews

Housing Development Manager

**Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Work Programme 2021/22**

Dates of Meetings: 22 June 2021, 21 September 2021, 9 November 2021, 11 January 2022 and 2 March 2022

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member
22 June 2021		
Damp and Mould in Council Housing Properties	Tracy John	Members
Housing Delivery Approach	Keith Andrews/Colin Black	Officers
Housing Development Programme Update	Keith Andrews/Colin Black	Members
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
21 September 2021		
Private Sector Stock Condition Survey	Tracy John	Officers
Housing Development Programme Update	Keith Andrews	Members
Health and Wellbeing Strategy Refresh 2021-2026	Jo Broadbent	Officers
Agreement of Briefing Notes	Ian Wake	Standing Item
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
9 November 2021		

Housing Development Programme Update	Keith Andrews	Members
Fees and Charges – TBC	Kelly McMillan	Officers
Agreement of Briefing Notes	Ian Wake	Standing Item
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
11 January 2022		
Housing Development Programme Update	Keith Andrews	Members
Agreement of Briefing Notes	Ian Wake	Standing Item
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
2 March 2022		
Housing Development Update	Keith Andrews	Officers
Agreement of Briefing Notes	Ian Wake	Standing Item
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
TBC for next municipal year		