

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 **28 September 2023**

Committee Room 2, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, Essex RM17 6SL

Membership:

Councillors James Halden (Chair), Sue Shinnick (Vice-Chair), Steve Liddiard, Maureen Pearce, Joycelyn Redsell and Neil Speight

Sue Hodgson, Housing Tenant Representative

Substitutes:

Councillors Qaisar Abbas, Alex Anderson, John Cecil, Aaron Green and Lynn Worrall

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

	Page
1 Apologies for Absence	
2 Minutes	5 - 10
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 20 June 2023.	
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. To agree any relevant briefing notes submitted to the Committee.	

4	Declaration of Interests	
5	Housing Ombudsman Report: Spotlight on Damp and Mould - Thurrock Council's Response	11 - 48
6	Housing Development Programme Update	49 - 58
7	New Recommendation Log	59 - 60
8	Work Programme	61 - 64

Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

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

Agenda published on: **20 September 2023**

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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 20 June 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors James Halden (Chair), Sue Shinnick (Vice-Chair), Steve Liddiard, Joycelyn Redsell and Neil Speight

Sue Hodgson, Housing Tenant Representative

Apologies: Councillor Luke Spillman

In attendance: Ewelina Sorbjan, Assistant Director Housing
Dulal Ahmed, Housing Enforcement Manager
Ryan Farmer, Housing Strategy and Quality Manager
Abim Mabadeje, Homelessness Assessment and Prevention Manager
Mohammed Ullah, Repairs & Planned Maintenance Manager, Adults, Housing & Health
Chris Wade, Rehousing Manager
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

The Chair welcomed officers, members, and co-opted member to the committee. Stated that three items had been added to the work programme on Value for Money, Right to Buy Receipts Refreshed and links between Mental Health and housing.

Members agreed to "walk about" visits over the summer period to look at those estates with higher complaint levels and those with higher compliment levels.

Members agreed to a visit to Mears office.

The Chair stated he had spoken with the chair of the Planning Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee to work alongside the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee in regard to a task and finish group to look at the delivery of private and housing stock in the borough.

Members agreed that a standing invite to all Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committees should be sent to the HealthWatch Chief Operating Officer.

ACTION 1 – Democratic Services to work with Officers on suitable dates/times and locations for walk about and Mears visits - **Democratic Services, Ryan Farmer, Mohammed Ullah**

ACTION 2 – Democratic Services to liaise with Officers on the terms of reference, activity plan and the assignment of officers for the task and finish group. **Democratic Services**

ACTION 3 – Democratic Services to share the terms of reference with the clerk of the Planning Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Democratic Services

ACTION 4 – Democratic Services will invite the HealthWatch Chief Operating Officer to the remaining of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committees. **Democratic Services**

1. Minutes

The minutes of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 7 March 2023 were approved as a correct record.

2. Urgent Items

There were no urgent items of business.

3. Declaration of Interests

Sue Hodgson declared an interest in that she served on the Mears Panel and received expenses.

4. Terms of Reference

Members noted the terms of reference.

5. Houses of Multiple Occupation - Update report

The report provided an update on the council's performance on ensuring that Houses of Multiple Occupation were licensed in accordance with Mandatory Licensing scheme as stipulated under Part 2 of the Housing Act 2004.

A PowerPoint was presented to Members and can be found from the following link:

[\(Public Pack\)Houses In Multiple Occupation Agenda Supplement for Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 20/06/2023 19:00 \(thurrock.gov.uk\)](#)

Following the presentation the members discussed the following:

- The committee noted there was an imbalance and evidence that more should be done to deliver properties for smaller households or one person households. To look at the growth of E / G properties to offset the financial burden of having smaller properties that were not paying the same amount as larger properties. Officers agreed to take away and work alongside planning and regeneration colleagues, to apply influence for the need for one-bedroom properties and how possible it would be to make the planning process for HMOs more difficult.

- Members raised concerns on how the number of HMOs had increased over the last five years.
- Members requested the inclusion of eastern wards of the borough when the renewing of the additional HMO licensing scheme took place and to expedite where possible.
- Members were informed that recognised IT systems were used.
- Members were informed a review of the current system that would form part of the evidence file for the new scheme was scheduled to come into play next year.
- Members raised concerns on staff resource within the team and were updated that vacancies would be filled by August.

ACTION 5 - Officers to work alongside planning and regeneration colleagues to deliver smaller households or one person households. **Dulal Ahmed, Keith Andrews**

RESOLVED

1. **That the Committee noted and commented on the report.**
2. **That the Committee noted the local household need for 1-bedroom properties in the borough has increased in line with Thurrock's population. Officers agreed to take away and work alongside planning and regeneration colleagues, to apply influence for the need for one-bedroom properties and how possible it would be to make the planning process for HMOs more difficult.**
3. **That the Committee noted the Private Housing would produce a new business case to extend its Additional Licensing Scheme for another 5 years covering the whole of the borough.**

6. Procurement of Repairs and Planned Maintenance Housing Contracts

This report presented the procurement of the repairs and planned maintenance work with finances for the delivery of these works being allocated within the HRA 30 business plan. Members were informed the recommendations fit within the objectives of the Thurrock Improvement and Recovery Plan 2022 for the Council to be a more streamlined and financially sustainable council.

During the discussion the following was acknowledged:

- The chair had concerns on how the report did not have the analysis or evidence base required to demonstrated what was undertaken on the last contract, such as performance, value for money and satisfaction to be able to compare with as to why the report recommended the new direction.
- Concerns were raised on the current level of service, poor management, poor due diligence and engagement of providers named in the report.

- The chair questioned the level of on-going compliance control to which he was informed there was a central compliance team in the housing directorate.
- Comments were made that contracts should stipulate the extend of spend within the borough for materials and use local suppliers.
- Comments were made on how the inspection of work undertaken and contractors' performance would take place and how this should be built into contracts.
- Members were informed of survey results for contractors as satisfactory with an overall target of 85%, a comment was made that every target should be 100% satisfactory and there needed to be more accountability of the work undertaken.
- There was concern from members that too much sub-contracting was taking place and control of those works were not being controlled.
- Members agreed to establish a working group for members to consult, inform, influence, and oversee the procurement process of the procurement process.
- Members agreed to add a further recommendation that there would be an expectation for the working group to complete its task by the end of September 2023.
- Officers to share detailed plans, with key milestones, for the procurement process with the members of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

ACTION 6 – Democratic Services to liaise with Officers on the timeframes, terms of reference, activity plan and the assignment of officers to this proposed working group. **Democratic Services, Mohammed Ullah**

ACTION 7 – Detailed procurement process plan to be shared with members. **Mohammed Ullah**

RESOLVED

1. **The Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommended the formation of a working group to consult with officers and experts with a view to producing a detailed report in advance of the procurement of a domestic and commercial gas servicing, breakdown, repair and installation contractor and to determine the most beneficial length of contract.**
2. **The Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommended the formation of a working group to consult with officers and experts with a view to producing a detailed report in advance of the procurement of a domestic and commercial gas servicing, breakdown, repair and installation contract repairs and maintenance (including communal and external decorations) contractor and to determine the most beneficial length of contract.**

3. The Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommended that both recommendations 1.1 and 1.2 include the expectation that the working group completes its task by the end of September 2023.

7. Hostel Management Executive Summary

The report examined the benefits and operational risks of bring the hostel management service in house as the current contract was due to end in September 2023.

During the discussion the following was highlighted:

- Assessment of capacity to bring in house would need to be considered.
- Saw this as an opportunity to integrate more services, share experiences and skills.
- Officers stated the services would be brought in house in its entirety with a complement of staff, not setting up a new team but to inherit the team that had successfully been provided by the current provider. The current provider had a proven concept with no overspends.
- Members were given the reassurance that during any transition period the services would not be scaled down.

Members agreed that a visit to Brooke House be organised.

ACTION 8 – Democratic Services to liaise with officers on a member visit to Brooke House. **Democratic Services**

At 8.37pm, the meeting went into exempt session.

At 8.56pm, the committee resumed in public session.

8. Work Programme

Members discussed the work programme.

The Chair requested an item be added on the Complaints Systems.

ACTION 9 - Democratic Services to update the work programme with the above item. **Democratic Services**

ACTION 10 - Democratic Services to re-circulate the Garages Update briefing note. **Democratic Services**

ACTION 11 - Officers to prepare Lowen Road, Local Lettings Policy Briefing Note. **Ryan Farmer**

ACTION 12 - Officers to prepare Headstart Housing Briefing Note. **Ryan Farmer**

ACTION 13 - Blackshots - Officers to ensure the steering group/working group, at ward councillor level, is set up. **Keith Andrews**

ACTION 14 - Blackshots – Officers to share a detailed plan with key milestones at Housing Overview and Scrutiny committee level and share with members. **Keith Andrews**

The recording of the meeting can be found from the following link:

[Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 20 June 2023, 7:00pm - Thurrock Council committee meeting webcasts \(public-i.tv\)](#)

The meeting finished at 9.03 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

28 September 2023	ITEM: 5
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Housing Ombudsman Report: Spotlight on Damp and Mould – Thurrock Council’s Response	
Wards and communities affected: ALL	Key Decision: Non-Key
Report of: Mohammed Saheed Ullah, Housing Repairs and Planned Maintenance Manager	
Accountable Assistant Director: Ewelina Sorbjan, Assistant Director Housing	
Accountable Director: Ian Wake, Strategic Director of Adults, Housing & Health	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

This report is being presented to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide an update on how the council is addressing the management of damp and mould within its housing stock, and in the context of the Housing Ombudsman’s Spotlight on Damp & Mould Report published in October 2021.

The Committee has received reports in November 2021 and November 2022 which set out the council’s approach to managing damp and mould within its housing stock in light of the Ombudsman’s recommendations.

Since the publication of the Ombudsman’s report, there has been the tragic death of a child, Awaab Ishak, in Rochdale that has brought the management of damp and mould further under the spotlight. This report sets out Thurrock’s approach and work in progress and underlines Thurrock’s commitment to addressing this crucial issue for its residents.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 The Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to comment on the Council’s progress on the management of damp and mould within the housing portfolio in relation to the Ombudsman’s Spotlight report on Damp and Mould.**
- 1.2 The Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to comment on the Council’s measures that are still in development on the management of damp and mould.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 It is a fundamental role of the council as a social housing landlord to provide its tenants with homes that are safe and well managed. The council recognises that damp and mould within our tenants' homes can have a profound impact on the quality of life and well-being.
- 2.2 As part of the council's commitment to transparency this report will set out the following aspects in addressing and managing damp and mould within our housing portfolio. This will include an overview of:
- Damp and mould in the context of relevant housing regulatory frameworks and the Ombudsman's recommendations
 - cases referred to the Ombudsman for Housing from council tenants in reference to damp and mould and what were the findings from these cases.
 - provide information regarding legal disrepair cases for damp and mould
 - provide information from residents' complaints on damp and mould and corrective actions taken by the council.
 - provide data from the council's business intelligence performance database on damp and mould.
- 2.3 The report will provide an update on actions adopted by the council in the context of the 26 recommendations from the Housing Ombudsman's Spotlight on Damp & Mould Report published in October 2021.
- 2.4 The council has adopted the recommendations highlighted by the Ombudsman. The council has established clear and comprehensive processes and policies for the management of damp and mould. The focus is to respond promptly when damp and mould is reported to the council and to be proactive in identifying potential issues that is informed by asset intelligence data and resident experiences. The full range of measures and approaches adopted by the council as a response to all 26 Ombudsman's recommendations is attached as an appendix to this report.
- 2.5 On 17th November 2020, the Charter for Social Housing Residents: social housing white paper was published and updated in 22nd January 2021, which "sets out the actions the Government will take to ensure that residents in social housing are safe, are listened to, live in good quality homes, and have access to redress when things go wrong...[and] what every social housing resident should be able to expect".

The key themes of the paper are:

- To be safe in your home. We will work with industry and landlords to ensure every home is safe and secure.
- To know how your landlord is performing, including on repairs, complaints, and safety, and how it spends its money, so you can hold it to account.
- To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly, with access to a strong ombudsman who will give you swift and fair redress when needed.

- To be treated with respect, backed by a strong consumer regulator, and improved consumer standards for tenants.
- To have your voice heard by your landlord, for example through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being on its board. The Government will provide access to help, if you want it, for you to learn new skills to ensure your landlord listens.
- To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in, with your landlord keeping your home in good repair.
- To be supported to take your first step to ownership, so it is a ladder to other opportunities, should your circumstances allow.

2.6 The Government will “work with the Regulator of Social Housing (“the regulator”) to create a strong, proactive consumer regulatory regime” and “requires that social rented homes are maintained by landlords to at least the quality set out by the Government’s Decent Homes Standard.” The Decent Homes Standard is currently under review reflect the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

2.7 In the coming months, it is anticipated the Social Housing Regulation Bill will lead to changes in the expectation of landlords and damp and mould:

- Awaab’s Law to provide tenants with more rights and protection
- the HHSRS being reviewed and updated
- introduction of a Private Rented Landlord Ombudsman
- national Damp and Mould Standard

2.8 **Thurrock Task & Finish Group for Damp and Mould**

In January 2023, the council convened a multi-agency partnership task group to address damp and mould in all social housing provision across the borough. The Housing Damp and Mould Task and Finish Group will coordinate the response of Thurrock housing providers to focus on damp and mould in the social and private rented sector. It will act as a sounding board for essential transformation work, offering assurance that housing providers are progressing as necessary, whilst remaining connected and linked to system partners such as:

- adult social care
- delivery partners and contractors
- community, voluntary and faith sector
- health partners

The task and finish group continues to meet at regular intervals to provide the opportunity for reflection to support a fundamental change of culture and approach within housing services. This includes sense checking that services are prioritising the transformation that is required in everyday operations. Initial steer will be taken from Government and Ombudsman recommendations but continue with a strong focus on assessment from internal and external stakeholders, evaluation of individual services and an overall focus on meaningful improvement. Transformation work will also

encompass emerging changes in regulation, supporting a robust but considered approach to resolving damp and mould.

2.9 Thurrock Council Policy on Damp & Mould

The council has developed Housing Damp & Mould Policy to outline the approach that Thurrock Council and partners will take to resolve issues of damp and mould within the borough. The policy covers a range of tenure types, including council-owned homes, leasehold properties in council-owned blocks, and homes in the private sector. Although it is recognised the process may be different between tenures, the overriding response and approach will remain the same.

The policy aims to ensure a considered and effective response to reports of damp and mould, such as:

- the language used when addressing issues of damp and mould
- working with internal and external partners for a holistic solution
- proactively resolving underlying causes of damp and mould
- following recommendations made by both the Ombudsman and Central Government

Although this policy directly relates to damp and mould, there are several wider documents that both support and drive this policy:

- Housing Strategy
- Asset Management Strategy
- Repairs Policy
- Thurrock Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Better Care Together Thurrock: The Case for Further Change

2.10 Cases Referred to the Ombudsman

Between April 2021 to end of May 2023, there were five cases referred to the Ombudsman by residents relating to damp/mould. Of the five cases, three cases were deemed to be 'No Maladministration', one case was determined to be 'Outside of the Jurisdiction of the Ombudsman', and once case remains live.

2.11 Below is a summary of the findings of two cases referred to the Ombudsman.

Housing Ombudsman - Decision
Complaint definition The complaint is about the landlord's response to the resident's report of mould in the property, and his request to replace kitchen units.
In accordance with paragraph 54 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was no maladministration by the landlord in its response to the resident's

report of mould in the property, and his request to replace kitchen units.

Recommendations

The landlord to re-offer to carry out the works it proposed, and to monitor the mould at the property if and after the resident agrees for it to carry out the works – to ensure an effective solution to the current reported mould is reached.

Final decision – Damp and Mould

I agree with the adjudicator that the landlord's overall handling of the damp and mould was reasonable and in line with policy obligations. The Ombudsman understands that the resident disagrees with the landlord's conclusions. However, it acted reasonably when having the property inspected and relying on the comments of appropriately qualified staff when reaching its conclusions.

In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was no maladministration by the landlord in respect of its handling of the resident's reports of ongoing damp and mould in their property.

Housing Ombudsman- Decision

Complaint definition

The complaint considered was about the landlord's handling of the resident's:

- Reports of damp and mould.
- Reports of leaks into the property caused by cracks in the ceiling and walls.
- Reports of contractors being unprofessional during an asbestos removal.
- Request to be moved to another property.

Recommendations

I agree with the adjudicator that the landlord's overall handling of the damp and mould was reasonable and in line with policy obligations. The Ombudsman understands that the resident disagrees with the landlord's conclusions. However, it acted reasonably when having the property inspected and relying on the comments of appropriately qualified staff when reaching its conclusions.

Final decision – Damp and Mould

In accordance with paragraph 54 (now paragraph 52) of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was no maladministration by the landlord in respect of its handling of the resident's reports of damp and mould.

Legal Disrepair Cases for Damp and Mould.

- 2.12 Historically, the council has had a very strong record in defending legal disrepair claims for damp and mould. Between April 2022 and March 2023, nine legal disrepairs claims for damp and mould was upheld against the council. These cases were initiated during 2020-2022 but due to lockdown

restrictions did reach a decision until 2022-2023. Works were eventually completed in these nine properties.

- 2.13 Currently, there are seventy-six live cases for disrepair which are being addressed and investigated by the council. It is worth noting that in most of these live cases the council has attempted to carry out the identified treatment works for damp and mould but tenants have refused access to the property under advice from their legal representatives. The council is exploring more robust approaches to securing access to properties so that the council can complete the identified works and fulfil its landlord obligations.

2.14 Complaints Received on Damp and Mould

The Quality Assurance Team completes monthly learning actions for all upheld complaints relating to repairs issues, allowing the service team to identify common themes and trends and implement learning actions, including review of processes.

These learning action plans are used to identify common themes, trends, area of practice or operations that require improvement. These are then used for discussions as part of contractual meetings and performance monitoring allowing the monitoring of themes month on month and year on year.

- 2.15 From this process, a dedicated Mears supervisor leading on damp and mould was identified as an improvement and thus allowing for a consistent approach in regard to inspections, particularly where this is a report of reoccurrence.
- 2.16 There has been further review of the process relating to the way in which repeat reports of mould are assessed and managed. This includes a Thurrock surveyor attending the Mears office on a weekly basis to undertake a desktop inspection of works previously completed. This allows the council to identify any themes or trends relating to areas reported to be repeatedly affected and also allows for remedial action to be progressed in a timelier manner.

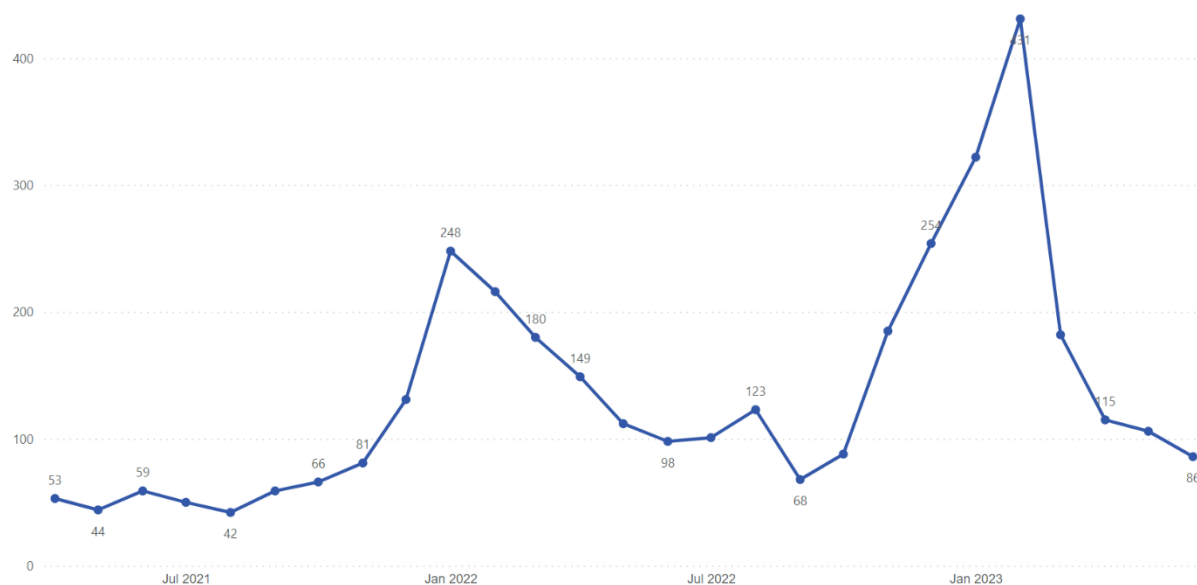
2.17 Business Intelligence on Damp and Mould

In the report to Overview and Scrutiny in November 2022, it was highlighted that the council is utilising business intelligence performance dashboards that are being used to analyse and visualise damp and mould repairs data. These dashboards are used to performance manage the contractor as well as identify properties with a high prevalence of damp and mould based on historical data. These proactive interventions and treatments are currently being evaluated to assess effectiveness and lessons learned from this approach.

- 2.18 In 2021/22, 1,229 damp and mould works orders were issued overall. In 2022/23, 2,113 damp and mould works orders were issued overall and represents a year-on-year increase of 71.9% in comparison with 2021/22. So far in 2023/24 as of the end of Q1, 307 damp and mould works orders have

been issued which represents a 16.9% decrease on demand compared with the same period in 2022/23 when 359 damp and mould works orders were issued.

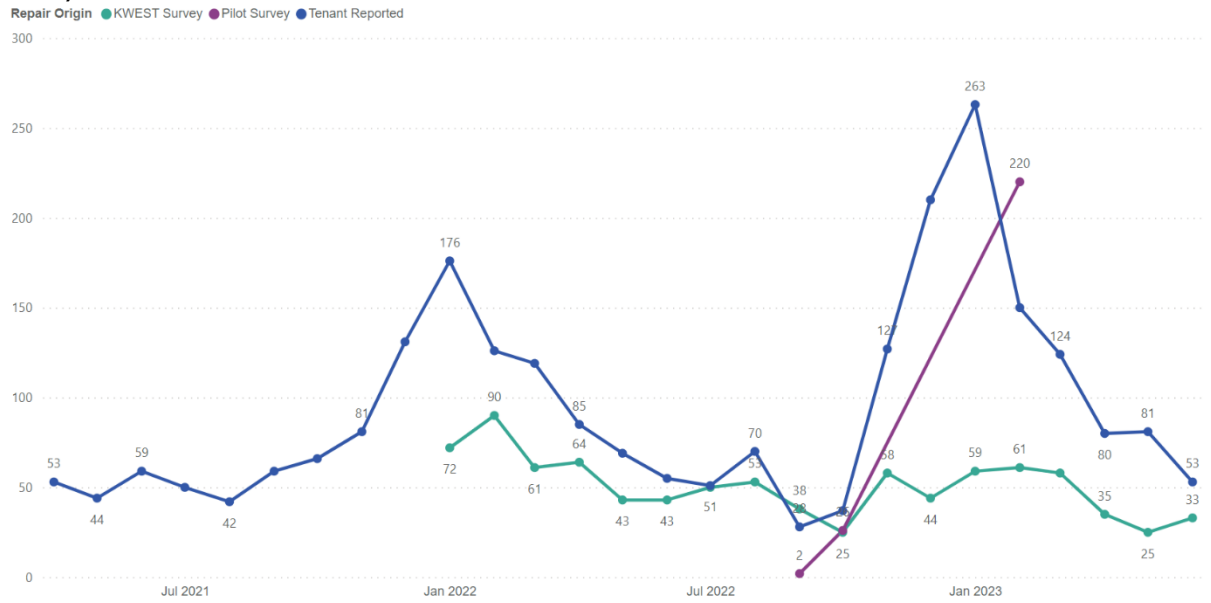
Damp and Mould Repairs Issued by Month (April 2021 – June 2023)



2.19 For the majority of 2021-22 (April 2021 – December 2021), repairs were being issued on a reactive basis only when a tenant reported a repair directly to Mears. However, in response to the Ombudsman’s recommendations the Housing service decided to include additional survey questions on unreported damp and mould across a number of satisfaction surveys as a measure to pro-actively detect unreported repairs. When a tenant indicates that damp and mould is present in their home and has not reported a repair during a satisfaction survey, an immediate e-mail alert is generated to alert the council and its repairs contractor to engage with the tenant to address any unreported damp and mould. Data collection for the additional questions on unreported damp and mould began in January 2022 and resulted in a new workstream of pro-actively detected repairs.

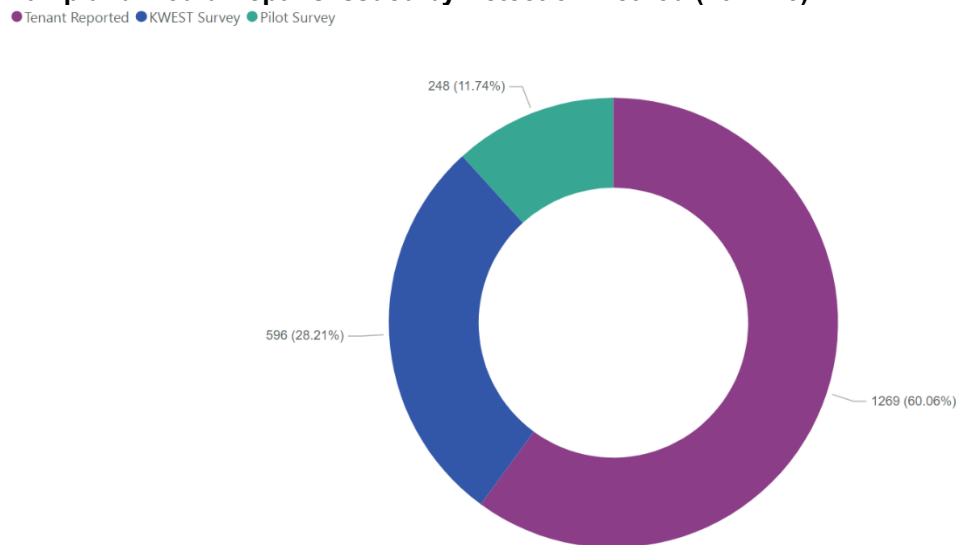
2.20 The Housing service has also developed business intelligence dashboards that can be used to analyse and visualise damp and mould repairs data. These dashboards have been used to identify and select properties with either a high prevalence of damp and mould or a high likelihood of damp and mould based on historical data. The council’s repairs and maintenance contractor (Mears) has been commissioned to visit and survey the selected properties as part of a pro-active pilot programme of preventative maintenance. The aim of these pro-active surveys was to identify any early indications of damp and mould. Where required, the appropriate corrective works were issued and undertaken resulting in another new workstream of pro-actively detected repairs from September 2022.

Damp and Mould Repairs Issued by Detection Method and Month (April 2021 – June 2023)



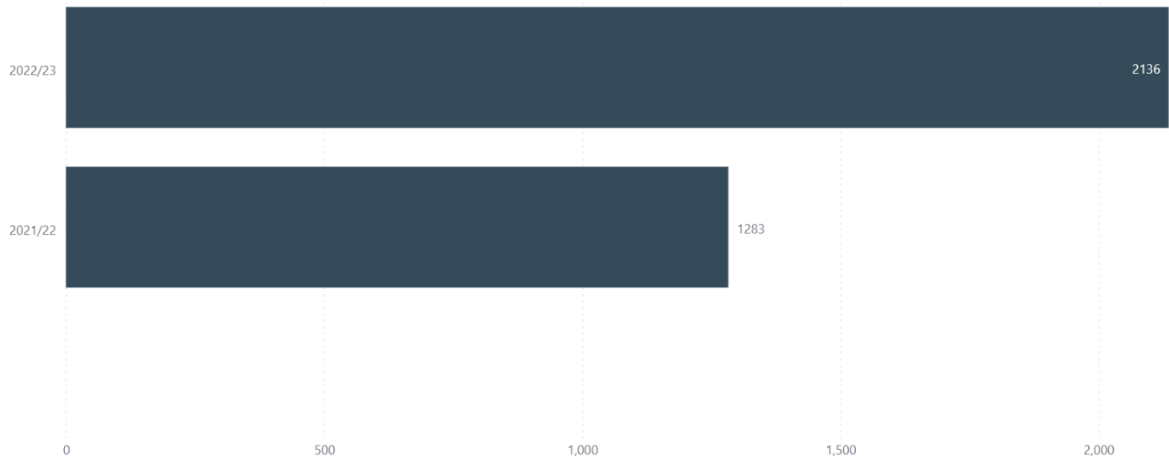
2.21 When conflated, the new methods of pro-actively detecting unreported damp and mould repairs as well as repairs issued as a result of the traditional reactive approach to addressing damp and mould through tenants reporting repairs have increased repair demand in 2022/23 significantly in comparison to previous years. This is a positive outcome and demonstrates the success of the new pro-active methods of detecting unreported damp and mould repairs in line with the Ombudsman’s recommendations. A total of 844 repairs were issued in 2022/23, which represents almost 40% of damp and mould repairs demand in year, as a result of pro-active detection methods.

Damp and Mould Repairs Issued by Detection Method (2022/23)



2.22 As a result of increased number of repairs issued throughout 2022/23, there has been a significant increase in the number of repairs completed in 2022/23 in comparison with 2021/22.

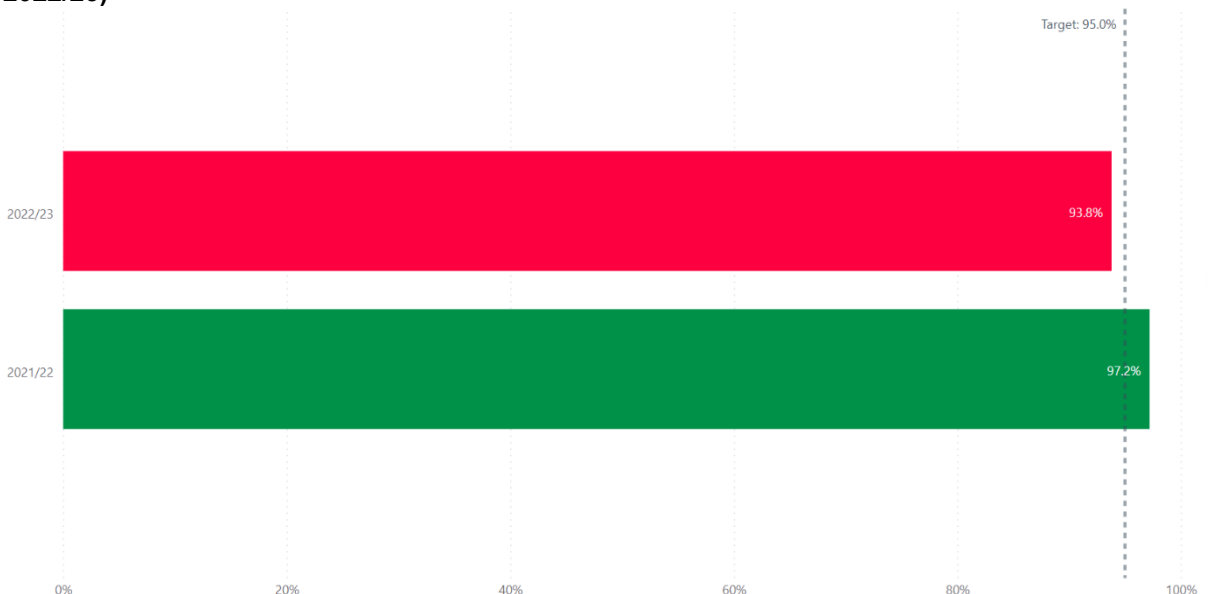
Number of Damp and Mould Repairs Completed by Financial Year (2021/22 Vs. 2022/23)



2.23 In 2021/22, 1,283 damp and mould repairs were completed overall. Of the 1,283 repairs completed, 1,247 repairs were completed on time which represents a repair completed on time rate of 97.2% and 2.2% above the 95% target.

2.24 In 2022/23, 2,136 damp and mould repairs were completed overall. Of the 2,136 repairs completed, 2,004 were completed on time which represents a repair completed on time rate of 93.8% and 1.2% below the 95% target. This is an increase in the number repairs completed of 853 (66.5%) and a decrease in repairs completed on time of 3.4% in repairs completed on time in comparison with 2021/22 which can be mainly attributed to significantly increased demand levels.

% of Damp and Mould Repairs Completed On Time by Financial Year (2021/22 Vs. 2022/23)



- 2.25 Addressing fabric failure and undertaking treatment works to address damp and mould will go some way to tackling the problem. However, the council is working more closely with residents to build better understanding around moisture and condensation management within the home. Our residents need to feel they will be supported and receive non-judgemental person-centred care to assist with the condensation within their homes. There is considerable on-going work in building more collaborative relationships with residents to manage condensation and ensure their homes are kept free from damp and mould.
- 2.26 Tenancy audits are being undertaken by the Housing Tenancy Teams. In the first instance a risk-based approach will be adopted with households where there have been recurrent issues with mould. Assessment of risk will include susceptibility of the property as well as supporting households to engage with the management of condensation within the home. These visits to tenants' households enables officers to work with residents to identify and report damp and mould in properties. Officers are also able to link residents to wider support services for social care, fuel poverty and financial initiatives as well as connect to wider health and wellbeing support.
- 2.27 The tenancy audits can be supplement by targeted publicity campaigns and awareness raising on damp and mould. Easy to follow guides and information can be distributed along with offer to survey homes and signposting to the dedicated email and repairs telephone lines to report damp and mould.
- 2.28 Building more positive non-judgemental engagement with residents is a key feature in tackling damp and mould in households and will enable the council to offer the best possible outcomes for residents experiencing damp and mould.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The reports to Overview & Scrutiny in November 2021 and November 2022 identified the council's planned capital investment priorities and programmes in the housing stock to improve the energy efficiency and performance of these properties and included:
- replacement heating:
 - window and door replacements,
 - roof renewals,
 - improved insulation,
 - replacement of rainwater goods
 - remediation of structural defects that have caused damp problems.
- 3.2 The Stock Condition Surveys and the data driven pilot approaches will ensure more intelligence-based service and investment decisions to managing and tackling damp and mould within the housing stock. The business intelligence data combined with customer complaints data and the stock condition survey

have informed a proactive pilot intervention from the council targeting known properties with recurrent damp and mould problems.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 The Ombudsman's 26 recommendations fall under four key themes:

- From reactive to proactive approach to tackling damp and mould
- From inferring blame to taking responsibility
- From disrepair claims to resolution
- From a complaints to a learning culture.

4.2 A workplan detailing the council's response to the Ombudsman's 26 recommendations are appended to this report. Section 3 above has highlighted the proactive measures that have been implemented to assess, survey, identify and remediate condition issues with the housing stock before they become very serious.

4.3 The council progressing with online training module for all officers and wider partner agencies. This will enable existing officers to receive online guidance, information and refresher training. This will also form part of the induction process for new starting officers. This online training provision will be designed to be clear and factual as well aim to engender an empathetic, non-judgemental approach to informing and supporting residents on condensation management in their homes. This measure will enable a consistent corporate approach.

4.4 The council is exploring new approaches with its repairs contractor to treating properties with repeated or more pervasive damp and mould within the property where there is no external fabric issues or ingress of moisture. These approaches include installing internal thermal wall lining to absorb excessive moisture or applying alternative chemical antimicrobial treatments. The council will also consider the roll out of pro-active property MOTs to identify the onset of mould in its early stages. Mould is a living organism, which literally takes root in the porous surfaces (brick, wood, plaster) throughout the home. These approaches will be piloted and trialled in a number of properties during the summer/autumn months and monitored for effectiveness over the winter period.

4.5 In summary, the council has made steady and positive progress against all of the Ombudsman's recommendations. There are a number of measures that are in progress and require further development such as:

- A widescale publicity and campaign plan for greater engagement with residents
- Online Training resources for staff
- User friendly resources for residents (mini treatment kits).

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

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 The Resident Excellence Panel has regularly reviewed the detailed performance data on our repairs and maintenance contractor through participation in monthly contract governance meetings.

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

- 6.1 The ongoing investment, maintenance and improvement of the council's housing stock supports the council's key strategic priorities as articulated through the Housing Asset Management Strategy through the provision of quality housing and estates people are proud to live on.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

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

The required works detailed within the report will be contained within the Housing Revenue Account, there are no direct implications for the council's General Fund

The works are included within the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, and the annual budget makes provision for the ongoing investment in the existing housing stock.

This will be financed from the funding which has been identified to facilitate ongoing maintenance and improvements, though a combination of the routine repairs workstream budget, and in some instances, may extend to the larger works budgets. Where relevant, some of the works may be charged to the HRA capital programme budget, where they meet the qualifying criteria.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Deirdre Collins**
Principal Barrister

Simon Scrowther
Litigation and Housing Lawyer

As set out in this report the council has a responsibility under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 as amended by the Housing (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act to ensure that their property is fit for human habitation at the beginning of

the tenancy and for the duration of the tenancy; and where a landlord fails to do so, the tenant has the right to take action in the courts for against the council breach of contract on the grounds that the property is unfit for human habitation.

To address this duty the council needs to have a planned maintenance programme with periodic inspections and an effective responsive repairs service. The council's obligations as landlord to repair and maintain council properties are set out in the tenancy agreement. In addition, section 11 of the Landlord Tenant Act 1985 sets out statutory obligations to ensure that the structure of homes are repaired and the repairs are carried out within a reasonable time. Given this is an update report and the nature of the recommendation to the committee, there are no legal implications directly arising from the recommendation.

As this report is an information item there are no direct legal implications.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
**Community Engagement and Project
Monitoring Officer | Adults, Housing &
Health**

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.

All information regarding Community Equality Impact Assessments can be found here: <https://intranet.thurrock.gov.uk/services/diversity-and-equality/ceia/>

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, and Impact on Looked After Children

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):

- Report to Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee November 2022, Damp and Mould in Council Housing Properties

9. Appendices to the report

- Council Response to Ombudsman's 26 Recommendations - workplan
- Thurrock Damp and Mould Policy

Report Author

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Housing Repairs and Planned Maintenance Manager

Housing Damp and Mould Policy

Thurrock Council

April 2023

Contents

Aims and Purpose	3
Corporate Context	4
Legislation, Regulation and Best Practice Framework	5
National Context	5
Local Context.....	6
Section 1 - Understanding Damp and Mould.....	7
Building Fabric	7
Rising damp	7
Penetrating damp.....	7
Condensation damp.....	7
Mould	7
Section 2 – Council Owned Properties.....	8
Council Responsibilities	8
Section 3 – Council Tenants and Temporary Accommodation	9
Section 4 – Thurrock Council Leaseholders.....	10
Section 5 – Temporary Accommodation	10
Private Sector	10
Section 6 - Private Rental Sector Tenants	12
Monitoring, Measuring and Review	13
Version Control.....	14
Appendix 1 – Approach for Thurrock Council Properties	15
Appendix 2 – Approach for Private Rental Sector	16

Aims and Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the approach Thurrock Council and partners will take to resolve issues of damp and mould within the borough. The policy covers a range of tenure types, including council-owned homes, leasehold properties in council-owned blocks, and homes in the private sector. Although it is recognised the process may be different between tenures, the overriding response and approach will remain the same.

The policy aims to ensure a considered and effective response to reports of damp and mould, such as:

- the language used when addressing issues of damp and mould
- working with internal and external partners for a holistic solution
- proactively resolving underlying causes of damp and mould
- following recommendations made by both the Ombudsman and Central Government

This policy is implemented with the support of and consideration to the following partners:

- Assets, Repairs and Compliance
- Tenancy Management
- Homeownership Service
- Private Housing Team
- Finance
- Public Health
- Legal
- Children's Services
- Adult Social Care
- Housing Repair and Maintenance Contractors
- Housing Ombudsman
- Temporary Accommodation
- Health Partners through the NHS

Although this policy directly relates to damp and mould, there are several wider documents that both support and drive this policy:

- Housing Strategy
- Asset Management Strategy
- Repairs Policy
- Thurrock Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Better Care Together Thurrock: The Case for Further Change

Corporate Context

The council's vision is for Thurrock to be **an ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future.**

Sitting alongside the vision are the three corporate priorities of People, Place and Prosperity.

People – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay.

This means:

- 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

As part of the people priority, it is essential residents have access to high quality services which are right first time. Although there are several strategies and policies across the Council which ensures this is possible, the Housing Damp and Mould Policy plays a pivotal role in ensuring best practice is embedded within the Housing service.

Place – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future.

This means:

- 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

Prosperity – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations.

This means:

- 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

As part of the place and prosperity priorities, it is recognised having access to housing which protects residents is a key foundation for living a fulfilling and healthy life. By having an effective approach to damp and mould, the Council can ensure homes within Thurrock are safe and suitable to live in, allowing residents to thrive within Thurrock.

Legislation, Regulation and Best Practice Framework

- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Housing Act 1985
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (S11)
- Housing Act 2004 (HHSRS)
- Decent Homes Standards
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Children Act 2004 (S11)
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Regulator of Social Housing – Home Standard
- Housing (Suitability of Accommodation) 2012

National Context

Over the past 18 months, there has been a significant culture change for damp and mould.

In October 2021 the Housing Ombudsman published a [spotlight report on damp and mould](#) in recognition of the complexities of damp and mould for both landlords and tenants. The report identified 26 recommendations to assist social landlords with the management of damp and mould within its housing stock, presented across four key themes:

- from reactive to proactive
- from inferring blame to taking responsibility
- from disrepair claims to resolution
- from complaints to a learning culture

The spotlight on damp and mould intensified with the sad passing of Awaab Ishak, whose death was attributed by the unresolved presence of damp and mould within his home. Awaab's death has spurred a call for further change in relation to damp and mould, specifically greater regulation, stronger tenant empowerment and more meaningful action from landlords.

In the coming months it is anticipated the Social Housing Regulation Bill will lead to big changes in the expectation of landlords and damp and mould:

- Awaab's Law to provide tenants with more rights and protection
- the HHSRS being reviewed and updated
- introduction of a Private Rented Landlord Ombudsman
- national Damp and Mould Standard

Local Context

The council seeks to provide good quality housing for current and future residents, delivering continuous improvements and maintenance to the properties in Thurrock.

There is an ongoing need to invest in the council's housing stock to ensure the integrity of the asset is maintained so that the council fulfils its duty to provide residents with quality and affordable homes. The council is also committed to working alongside landlords operating in Thurrock to ensure those living in the private rental sector also have access to quality and affordable homes.

The issues around damp and mould and delivering successful solutions through remedial work, partnership working with multi-agencies and our residents is a priority to the council.

Section 1 - Understanding Damp and Mould

Building Fabric

The fabric of a building is any structure, surface, fixture or fitting associated internally or externally with a property.

Rising damp

The movement of moisture from the ground rising up through the structure of the property through capillary action.

Penetrating damp

This is where water penetrates the external structure of the property or internal leaks that cause damp, rot and damage to internal surfaces and structure. The cause of this may include:

- water ingress due to defective or poor original design / workmanship of the structure
- defective components for example roof coverings, external wall doors and windows
- defective or blocked rainwater gutters and pipes
- defective or leaking internal waste pipes, hot and cold water and heating systems
- flooding due to burst pipes

Condensation damp

Condensation occurs when moisture held in warm air comes into contact with a cold surface and then condenses producing water droplets. The property conditions and features that can increase the risk of condensation include:

- inadequate ventilation, either not in place or not used, such as natural opening windows, trickle vents and mechanical extraction in bathrooms and kitchens
- inadequate heating, such as undersized radiators
- inadequate thermal insulation, such as defective wall and loft insulation
- poor building design and construction, such as specific cold areas (bridging) which are integral with the building construction
- defective insulation, such as dislodged insulation in lofts

The living conditions that can lead to condensation include:

- lack of ventilation – not opening windows, blocking up vents, not turning on extractor fans, not allowing air to circulate around furniture
- lack of adequate heating – not heating the house which can be a result of fuel poverty
- high humidity - not covering pans when cooking and drying laundry inside the house can contribute to this
- lack of space around possessions and storage, that prevents air flow through the property
- overcrowding which can exacerbate contributing factors causing condensation

Mould

Mould is a natural organic compound that develops in damp conditions and will grow on damp surfaces. This is often noticeable and present in situations where condensation is present.

Section 2 – Council Owned Properties

Council Responsibilities

The Council shall investigate to determine the cause of damp, mould and condensation in all council owned properties. The Council will carry out remedial repairs and actions including:

- maintaining the fabric of the property, to avoid penetrating and rising damp, carrying out remedial action if these do occur
- maintaining properties in accordance with current government guidance/regulations to help address the causes of condensation occurring
- promote and provide general advice and guidance on how to manage damp and mould
- promoting and delivering training to council staff to effectively understand and deliver this policy
- informing the individual of findings following a contractor visit, including identifying possible causes, recommending effective solutions, all necessary remedial works, and the estimated timescales to complete the works
- make best use of data held to guide our interventions and work proactively with residents
- where the causes of the damp and mould cannot be rectified or done so in a reasonable timeframe the council will look at alternative solutions in line with the current Housing Allocations Scheme
- where the causes of damp and mould are not related to the fabric of the property the council will work alongside partner agencies
- work with landlords and residents to provide and maintain dry, healthy homes for use as temporary accommodation outside of our own stock

Section 3 – Council Tenants and Temporary Accommodation

Council Responsibilities

Thurrock Council and their contracted partners will review all reports of damp and mould. Depending on the severity of the issue one of the following two approaches will take place:

- for severe cases of damp and mould within a property, a survey will take place by a Thurrock Council Building Surveyor – any required repairs identified by the surveyor will take place as a routine repair within the 20-day target time
- minor mould growth caused by condensation and attributed to housekeeping will be addressed under a batch programme following a review by our contracted delivery partners
- following all repairs, a customer satisfaction survey is sent out which gives the opportunity to raise concerns of damp and mould

Tenant Recommendations and Responsibilities

- maintain the property in a good state of repair
- regularly check for and clean signs of mould as soon as they are discovered
- report evidence of damp and mould to the Council as soon as they are discovered, and faulty equipment that will hamper the management of damp and mould
- allow access for inspections and for the carrying out of remedial works
- to attempt to keep the presence of moisture to a minimum e.g., covering pans when cooking, drying laundry outside where possible, keeping the bathroom door closed when bathing and kitchen door closed when cooking
- adequately heating rooms
- keep the house well ventilated e.g., opening windows when cooking and bathing, turning on and ensuring that the extractor fan is working if applicable, keeping trickle vents in windows open, and allowing air to circulate around furniture
- keep the council informed of any changes to your household which has led to overcrowding so the best support can be given.

How to report any concerns regarding damp and mould

Council Tenant

- via the phone on 0800 074 0169 or via email: repairs@thurrock.gov.uk
- directly to your Tenancy Management Officer, including specific reference to damp and mould during tenancy audits

Temporary Accommodation

- email ta@thurrock.gov.uk or call 01375 652 652 to report issues of damp and mould, an Accommodations Officer will then report the issue to Mears and progress the repair
- For timeframes, please see appendix 1

Section 4 – Thurrock Council Leaseholders

Council Responsibilities

Where the council has identified the cause of damp and mould is relating to the fabric of the building please see section 2 – council owned properties for details.

Where the council has identified the cause of damp and mould is not relating to the fabric of the building the council will:

- refer to partner agencies for support in alleviating the main causes
- raising invoices for chargeable works carried out

Leaseholder Responsibilities

- to report to the Council as soon as they are discovered, evidence of rising and penetrating damp
- allow access for inspections and for the carrying out of remedial works
- to keep the property in a good state of repair
- regularly check for and clean signs of mould as soon as they are discovered

How to report any concerns regarding damp and mould

- via the phone on 0800 074 0169 or via email: repairs@thurrock.gov.uk
- For timeframes, please see appendix 1

Section 5 – Temporary Accommodation

Private Sector

The Council will provide support and assistance to ensure the individual is able to raise concerns or issues relating to damp and mould. If the landlord does not respond in a satisfactory manner, further support will be provided as below:

Council Responsibilities

- work with landlords, owners, and residents to provide and maintain dry, healthy homes for use as temporary accommodation outside of our own stock
- advise individuals of who their landlord is and how to report issues
- support individuals when an issue has been raised, ensuring repairs and measures are being taken by the landlord
- work with individuals and landlords to take appropriate action to rehome if the issue is unable to be rectified whilst living at the property or is detrimental to health in line with the current Housing Allocations Scheme

Resident Responsibilities

- heating and ventilating the property adequately throughout the term of their tenancy
- wiping down condensation on windows and treating any areas of mould growth which appear using a fungicidal treatment

- the tenant is expected to give the landlord reasonable access to obtain quotes and carry out the works
- items of disrepair need to be reported in a reasonable time frame

How to report any concerns regarding damp and mould

- directly to the landlord whilst making the Accommodations Officer at the Council aware
- For timeframes, please see appendix 2

Section 6 - Private Rental Sector Tenants

The Council will provide support and assistance to ensure the individual is able to raise concerns or issues relating to damp and mould. If the landlord does not respond in a satisfactory manner, further support will be provided as below:

Council Responsibilities

- we will work with landlords, owners, and residents to provide and maintain dry, healthy homes for our residents
- we shall investigate complaints to determine the cause of damp and mould, notifying the landlord and tenant of the findings to make sure their property is safe and free from hazards
- under section 4 of the Housing Act 2004, the Private Sector Housing Team must carry out an inspection if disrepair is brought to its attention. If category 1 hazards are identified under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) a course of part 1 action must be taken.
- ensure relevant staff understand the aims of this policy and can support and deliver it
- where the causes of damp and mould are not related to the fabric of the property the council will work alongside partner agencies

Resident Responsibilities

- heating and ventilating the property adequately throughout the term of their tenancy
- wiping down condensation on windows and treating any areas of mould growth which appear using a fungicidal treatment
- the tenant is expected to give the landlord reasonable access to obtain quotes and carry out the works, Private Housing service may be withdrawn if access is continuously refused by the tenant
- items of disrepair need to be reported in a reasonable time frame

How to report any concerns regarding damp and mould

- items of disrepair need to be reported to the landlord in the first instance before contacting the Private Sector Housing Team for assistance
- Private housing residents can use the [e-form](#), via phone 01375 652391 or via email at private.housing@thurrock.gov.uk or well.homes@thurrock.gov.uk
- For timeframes please see appendix 2

Monitoring, Measuring and Review

There are a number of ways in which the damp and mould policy will be monitored and measured:

- resident engagement such as tenant satisfaction measures
- complaint process
- political scrutiny
- use of data systems such as repairs and asset management

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or in line with the following:

- changes in legislation and regulation
- recommendations from the Housing Ombudsman
- in response to learning from monitoring and measuring
- adopting best practice from other local authorities

Version Control

Version Details

Author	-Claire Devonshire and Robyn Riseborough
Owner	-Ewelina Sorbjan
Date drafted	-April 2023
Approved by	-
Date approved	-
Version	-
Next scheduled review date	-

Amendment Record

Version Number	Date	Summary of changes
1.0	-	Original version

Appendix 1 – Approach for Thurrock Council Properties

- Tenants and Thurrock council leaseholders raise a repair directly with Mears to report an occurrence of damp and/or mould.
- If this is the first report of damp and mould Mears will attend the property within five working days to carry out an inspection
- If any follow-on works are identified, they will be completed by Mears within 15 working days
- If this is a repeat occurrence and Mears have attended the property within the last six weeks this will be escalated to a Mears supervisor for a review of the previous treatment.
- If there is a re-occurrence which is longer than 6 weeks but within a three year period a desktop review will be carried out and the tenant/leaseholder will be advised if a surveyor needs to attend.

Appendix 2 – Approach for Private Rental Sector

- each case will be treated individually, with no assumptions being made on the cause even where similar cases have been seen before
- an officer shall contact the tenant in the first instance to gather further information and to give advice, we aim to do this within 5 working days
- an inspection shall then be arranged and a HHSRS assessment undertaken
- a Part 1 consultation notice shall be drafted after the inspection and served on all interested parties giving them 21 days to respond to the proposed action. If agreed with the landlord, works can progress informally without the need for formal part 1 action to be taken. If no proposals are agreed or if insufficient progress is made, part 1 enforcement action shall be taken by the Private Sector Housing Team.
- there is a discretion to take a course of part 1 action for category 2 hazards
- if after 21 days of issuing an informal schedule of works there is no reasonable progress by the landlord to carry out the works within a reasonable period, formal enforcement will be taken straightaway
- if the landlord fails to comply with an enforcement notice we shall consider works in default, including obtaining quotes, carrying out the necessary works and recovering the fees from the owner
- if the tenant is a housing applicant, the Private Sector Housing Team can contact Housing with a recommendation to award an appropriate banding

Housing Ombudsman Recommendations – Damp and Mould

	Chapter 1: From reactive to proactive	Position as at November 2021	Position as at June 2023
1	Landlords should adopt a zero-tolerance approach to damp and mould interventions. Landlords should review their current strategy and consider whether their approach will achieve this.	<p>Any works that we undertake, planned and capital investment are considering the implications of damp and mould as part of the overall asset strategy.</p> <p>A number of programmes since 2014 have been delivered to improve thermal efficiency but also targets to address properties with inherent issues with D&M. However, there are a significant number of properties in the housing portfolio still uninsulated.</p>	<p>New Housing Asset Management strategy has been developed for 2022-2027 and approved at Cabinet. This includes the Council's approach regarding the prevention of damp and mould.</p> <p>Internal guidance and processes relating to the Council's agreed approach has been reviewed and continues to be reviewed.</p> <p>Pro-active surveys undertaken in order to identify any early indications of damp and mould, this has been completed to properties where there has been repeat reports of issues of this nature. In addition to this, a planned programme of surveys and any identified remedial works were undertaken. Two examples include Teviot Avenue and properties across South Ockendon.</p>
2	Landlords should consider whether they require an overall framework, or policy, to address damp and mould which would cover each area where the landlord may be required to act. This would include any proactive interventions, its approach to diagnosis, actions it considers appropriate in different circumstances, effective communication and aftercare.	To be reviewed as part of the new strategy.	<p>A new Housing damp and Mould policy has been developed and approved. The policy has been discussed with resident representatives at the Tenant Excellence Panel and will be circulated to elected members at the Sept 2023 Housing Overview and Scrutiny committee.</p> <p>Damp and Mould Policy has also been developed and pending sign off.</p>

3	<p>Landlords should review the accessibility and use of their systems for reporting repairs and making complaints to 'find their silence'.</p>	<p>Repairs system in place between Thurrock and Repair Partnering contractors, Repairs can be reported via email, telephone.</p> <p>Mobile reporting app for repairs was explored – duplicate orders were being generated meaning the mobile app was not implemented.</p> <p>Implemented closer working between Thurrock and Mears in regards to repeated cases of D&M. This does need more work including members of the teams working at Mears to go through cases on a weekly basis during applicable seasonal months.</p>	<p>High Rise properties will receive a tenancy audit annually for a person centre fire risk assessment and will be an opportunity to ask about any tenant experiences with damp and mould in the property. In the first instance a risk based approach will be adopted with households where there have been recurrent issues with mould. Assessment of risk will include susceptibility of the property as well as capacity of the household to engage with required actions.</p> <p>Damp and Mould e-learning training for all staff is in development stages. This is to ensure a person centred approach is adopted and a consistent approach.</p> <p>Damp and Mould leaflet has been developed and in use. This is being provided at the time of property lettings as part of the tenancy sign up pack, Surveyor inspections and as part of routine repair inspections.</p> <p>Specific designed KWEST customer satisfaction surveys was implemented, in order to capture feedback from residents and to 'find the residents silence'. Damp and mould alerts have been implemented as part of our regular tenant satisfaction surveys in order to identify damp and mould which hasn't been reported. Tenants' responses to specifically designed questions relating to damp and mould results in an instant alert sent directly to Mears for a repair to be raised in order to remedy the issue. In 2022/23, 597 works orders were raised as a result of damp and</p>
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			mould alerts which accounted for 28.2% of damp and mould repair demand in year.
4	Landlords should identify opportunities for extending the scope of their diagnosis within buildings, for example by examining neighbouring properties, to ensure the response early on is as effective as possible.	<p>2017/18 Stock condition surveys undertaken – a number of programmes have been developed and amended as a result of the findings.</p> <p>Further stock condition surveys being undertaken 2021/22, to further improve our stock condition data and to allow for a specific review of damp and mould.</p>	<p>Further stock condition surveys of properties has been completed. A damp and mould specific report was produced and data is now being analysed in order to allow for the data to be uploaded into the new Asset Management database, this will assist in further informing a new 30 year programme of works.</p> <p>Damp and mould is considered as part of all Transforming Homes and capital works surveys on a property and block basis.</p> <p>Zero Carbon reduction measures are fully considered as part of all capital works these works are in turn delivered in accordance with PAS 2030/2035. This ensures a holistic whole house approach is adopted to thermal improvements and ventilation.</p> <p>Resident engagement events held as and when required where there are a cluster of similar issues / projects</p> <p>A condensation management plan is developed with all households to help build resident awareness and capacity on managing household moisture levels.</p>
5	Landlords should implement a data driven, risk-based approach with respect to damp and mould. This will reduce over reliance on residents to report issues, help landlords identify hidden issues and support landlords to anticipate and prioritise	<p>Data analyst reviews data for repairs. Review of SOR codes to allow more detailed review of themes and trends.</p> <p>Further stock condition surveys being undertaken 2021/22, to further improve our</p>	Housing management IT system upgrade currently in progress and due to go live at the end of June 2023, this includes the new Asset Management database.

	interventions before a complaint or disrepair claim is made.	stock condition data and to allow for a specific review of damp and mould.	
6	Where properties are identified for future disposal or are within an area marked for regeneration, landlords should proactively satisfy themselves that residents do not receive a poorer standard of service or lower living conditions, that steps are taken to avoid homes degrading to an unacceptable condition and that they regularly engage and communicate with these residents.	Blackshots currently under consideration for the effects of cladding removal ahead of decants Resident consultation undertaken at Blackshots and Teviot Ave	The Council continues with its commitment to ensure that repairs are undertaken as required, for any property and/or estate which is considered for regeneration.
7	Landlords should avoid taking actions that solely place the onus on the resident. They should evaluate what mitigations they can put in place to support residents in cases where structural interventions are not appropriate and satisfy themselves they are taking all reasonable steps.	Each case is assessed on an individual basis. For high priority cases, residents have more engagement in regards to managing the environment in the home.	<p>Engagement with residents will be given priority on greater awareness on condensation and managing condensation within the household.</p> <p>The Fit to Let standards for bringing void properties back to decent homes/lettable standards includes the following measures to address and minimise the risk of damp and mould and maintain energy efficiency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extractor fans installed /overhauled • Trickle vents renewed/overhauled • Loft insulation installed • Replacement of misted units where these are completely • obscure • Replacement of windows where there is significant damage – • these may be added to a Capital programme if required • Thermal boarding for external walls where cold spots or • defects identified • Drill-checks for cavity wall insulation • Energy efficient light bulbs installed

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Damp and mould leaflet provided in hand over pack <p>Ongoing resident awareness raising and engagement as part of a coordinated communication strategy to ensure consistent messaging and partnership approach.</p> <p>Adoption of a multi-agency approach – health and social care teams, so that services are person centred.</p>
8	Together with residents, landlords should review the information, materials and support provided to residents to ensure that these strike the right tone and are effective in helping residents to avoid damp and mould in their properties.	<p>Revision of the Council's website and damp and mould leaflet.</p> <p>The Damp and Mould leaflet has been sent to the Tenant Excellence panel – for them to review.</p>	<p>The damp and mould leaflet has been revised and implemented, as above.</p> <p>The damp and Mould section of the Council's website has also been updated to ensure this is accessible for residents.</p>
9	Landlords should be more transparent with residents involved in mutual exchanges and make the most of every opportunity to identify and address damp and mould, including visits and void periods.	The void stage includes a review of repairs history.	<p>Historic data on damp and mould in properties to be accessible to housing officers prior to mutual exchange visit so that any corrective treatment works can be implemented prior to letting to new tenants?</p> <p>This will also be incorporated into tenancy audits.</p>
10	Landlords should ensure their strategy for delivering net zero carbon homes considers and plans for how they can identify and respond to potential unintended consequences around damp and mould.	Both Ground Source Heat Pumps and Non-traditional refurbishment projects working to new Public Accessible Specification 2035 standards	<i>All carbon reduction projects to follow PAS 2035 guidance and engage retrofit co-ordinator to identify potential unintended consequences and risk mitigation strategies.</i>
	Chapter 2: From inferring blame to taking responsibility		

11	Landlords should review, alongside residents, their initial response to reports of damp and mould to ensure they avoid automatically apportioning blame or using language that leaves residents feeling blamed.	<p>We have changed the wording we use in regards to residents managing the environment within the home.</p> <p>Call script review undertaken and further training for call centre staff at Mears in regards to initial conversations with residents.</p>	<p>Damp and Mould e-learning training for all staff is in development stages. This is to ensure a person centred approach is adopted and consistent.</p> <p>A review of internal guidance and processes regarding the approach to dealing with issues of this nature has been undertaken.</p> <p>A new Damp and Mould Policy has been developed and is awaiting sign off.</p>
12	Landlords should consider their current approach to record keeping and satisfy themselves it is sufficiently accurate and robust. We would encourage landlords to go further and consider whether their record keeping systems and processes support a risk-based approach to damp and mould.	<p>Repairs data and complaints data.</p> <p>Data analyst reviews data for repairs. Review of SOR codes to allow more detailed review of themes and trends.</p>	<p>Power BI dashboards specific to damp and mould have been developed and made available to the service for use. These dashboards leverage responsive repairs data and allows the service to monitor repairs demand, monitor how repairs are identified, identify which rooms are most affected by damp and mould and review repairs histories at address level for damp and mould repairs. The dashboards also allow the service to identify specific properties with multiple damp and mould repairs as well as property types in specific areas of the borough with greater prevalence of damp and mould allowing for a targeted approach to identifying and remedying issues where repairs may not have been reported by the tenant.</p>
13	Landlords should ensure that their responses to reports of damp and mould are timely and reflect the urgency of the issue.	<p>A review of the timeframes for survey and remedial works has been undertaken (20 days for both now)</p>	<p>A review of internal guidance and processes regarding the approach to dealing with issues of this nature has been undertaken.</p> <p>A new Damp and Mould Policy has been developed and approved.</p>
14	Landlords should review the number of missed appointments in relation to damp and mould cases	<p>Damp and mould appointments are not cancelled down if there is a missed</p>	<p>If there are ongoing access issues after initial attempts to access, a referral is made</p>

	and, depending on the outcome of any review, consider what steps may be required to reduce them.	appointment. Further appointments are re-booked – 3 attempts.	to the Tenancy Management team, for assistance with access.
15	Landlords should ensure that their staff, whether in-house or contractors, have the ability to identify and report early signs of damp and mould.	Damp and mould training undertaken within Housing, including TMO's, Technical Services and QA Teams and also contractors.	New damp and mould e-learning training for all staff is in development stages. This is to ensure a person centred and consistent approach. This will also include joint workshops with internal colleagues and contractors.
16	Landlords should take steps to identify and resolve any skills gaps they may have, ensuring their staff and contractors have appropriate expertise to properly diagnose and respond to reports of damp and mould.	Technical Team members have received training specific of D&M and also rolled out training for wider housing team in 2017/18. Purchased specific surveying equipment to inform survey.	New damp and mould e-learning training for all staff is in development stages. This is to ensure a person centred and consistent approach. Corporate fuel poverty training has been refreshed and rolled out across all council staff.
17	Landlords should ensure that they clearly and regularly communicate with their residents regarding actions taken or otherwise to resolve reports of damp and mould. Landlords should review and update any associated processes and policies accordingly.	Ongoing review of tenant engagement processes	A review of processes with our contractors regarding the overall management of works orders including resident communications and service standard expectations has been undertaken with new process maps developed. These are reviewed on a quarterly basis.
18	Landlords must ensure there is effective internal communication between their teams and departments, and ensure that one individual or team has overall responsibility for ensuring complaints or reports are resolved, including follow up or aftercare.	The QA Team co-ordinate and respond to all complaints, in liaison with relevant colleagues including Technical Services and contractors, whilst reviewing repair history. Agreed follow up actions in regards to remedial works from	Consistent and ongoing engagement with residents by Tenancy Management to support households with managing condensation build up as many cases are not just building fabric related and have links

		<p>a complaint or enquiry are monitored within QA and the complaints team and our contractors customer care teams.</p>	<p>to other tenancy sustainment issues and fuel poverty, overcrowding, hoarding etc</p> <p>A boroughwide task and finish group has been set up, attendees include wider housing providers, to identify and establish best practice in communicating with residents on damp and mould issues to ensure a consistent, person centred approach. The task group includes representatives from Thurrock Council, contractors and Housing associations including Swan Housing, Peabody and Moat.</p> <p>In addition, where required, Resident Liaison Officers will assist in supporting and engaging with residents, to assist with the management of the environment within the home. This includes individual condensation management plans which are produced for residents on an individual basis and monitored by the Resident Liaison Officers.</p>
19	<p>Landlords should ensure that their complaints policy is effective and in line with the Complaint Handling Code, with clear compensation and redress guidance. Remedies should be commensurate to the distress and inconvenience caused to the resident, whilst recognising that each case is individual and should be considered on its own merits.</p>	<p>The corporate complaints team recently changed their complaints process in line with the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, including changing from a 3 stage to a 2 stage complaint process. There is no corporate compensation policy and any compensation is offered in line with Ombudsman suggested remedies and guidance.</p>	<p>The council's complaints procedure is in-line with the Complaint Handling Code.</p> <p>The council's complaints procedure sets out a range of remedies that are considered when resolving complaints. Remedies offered will be clear and are tracked by the Complaints team, to ensure they are actioned by individual service areas.</p> <p>A separate compensation policy is currently under review.</p>

	Chapter 3: From disrepair claims to resolution		
20	Landlords need to ensure they can identify complex cases at an early stage, and have a strategy for keeping residents informed and effective resolution.	Where a repair report is received and complex / high level works are identified, this is referred from the contractor to the Council for a Surveyor to attend and lead on an inspection and remedial works, including monitoring through to completion and ensuring the resident is kept updated of progress.	<p>Our contractors have now increased their resourcing including a damp and mould task team and specific contractors. This ensures a person centred approach and consistent service.</p> <p>We have also worked with our multiple contractors to adopt a consistent approach to identifying housing condition issues, so this can be raised with the Council for intervention as required.</p> <p><i>Where multiple elements within the property require to be addressed this is considered for inclusion on the capital works transforming homes programme</i></p>
21	Landlords should identify where an independent, mutually agreed and suitably qualified surveyor should be used, share the outcomes of all surveys and inspections with residents to help them understand the findings and be clear on next steps. Landlords should then act on accepted survey recommendations in a timely manner.	<p>Surveyor already currently advises resident of finding onsite and informs them of repairs to be raised.</p> <p><i>Mears referrals on repeat cases.</i></p> <p>In exceptional circumstances the Council have previously used external consultancy services to undertaken surveys.</p>	Where identified as required, Resident Liaison Officers will assist in supporting and engaging with residents, to assist with the management of the environment within the home. This includes individual condensation management plans which are produced for residents on an individual basis and monitored by the Resident Liaison Officers.
22	Where extensive works may be required, landlords should consider the individual circumstances of the household, including any vulnerabilities, and whether or not it is appropriate to move resident(s) out of their home at an early stage.	If extensive works are required, we would assess on a case by case basis, taking into consideration resident vulnerabilities and where required, the Council's decant process would be implemented and has been in a number of cases.	If extensive works are required, we would assess this on a case by case basis, taking into consideration resident vulnerabilities and where required, the Council's decant process/policy would be implemented and has been in a number of cases.

23	Landlords should promote the benefits of their complaints process and the Ombudsman to their residents as an appropriate and effective route to resolving disputes.	The corporate complaints team recently changed their complaints process in line with the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. Residents are advised at early stages of the right to contact the Ombudsman and or escalate their matter through the complaints process, which is also reflected in responses at earlier stages of the process.	<p>The complaints procedure is available on our website and details the stages and timeframes for responding to each stage and the escalation process.</p> <p>The complaints procedure is also communicated to individuals as part of a communications schedule that is in place to promote the wider benefits and/or awareness</p>
24	Landlords should continue to use the complaints procedure when the pre-action protocol has commenced and until legal proceedings have been issued to maximise the opportunities to resolve disputes outside of court. Landlords should ensure their approach is consistent with our jurisdiction guidance and their legal and complaint teams work together effectively where an issue is being pursued through the complaints process and protocol.	When a complaint is received, which relates to a Legal Repair matter, we respond to the complaint as usual with all repair history included and then also confirm that a legal repair was received and when along with the current status of that. Where required, we also link in with Legal for any comments they wish to add. This is best practise and as a result, we never cancel/not respond to a complaint due to this being subject to Legal Repair.	Complaints relating to legal repair matters are responded to, with a summary of the repair history and current status of the legal repair. The Council's Legal team are also asked to provide comments, where necessary. This is best practice and in line with Ombudsman guidance.
	Chapter 4: From a complaints to a learning culture		
25	Landlords should consider how best to share learning from complaints and the positive impact of changes made as a result within the organisation and externally. Systems should allow the landlord to analyse their complaints data effectively and identify themes, trends and learning opportunities	Monthly review of learnings from complaints is undertaken. Learning Action Plans are submitted to complaints on a monthly basis. Year end learnings and commitments are also provided to complaints. All of this feeds into the corporate annual complaints reports.	<p>The council report back on learning and improvement from complaints via its annual report. This report goes to senior management and then onto Standards and Audit Committee.</p> <p>Learning from complaints is shared with our Tenants Excellence Panel and is also a key part of our communication schedule, with learning information provided via Housing</p>

			Newsletters and Resident Engagement Social Media channels.
26	Landlords should ensure they treat residents reporting damp and mould with respect and empathy. The distress and inconvenience experienced by residents in this area is some of the most profound we have seen, and this needs to be reflected in the tone and approach of the complaint handling.		Response template letters are used to ensure responses are consistent and user friendly across all areas. Responses produced by the service are quality checked by the Complaints Team before sending and any amendments made as necessary, to the tone as well as the content. Responses are written in a way that does not attribute blame, whether upheld or not.

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28 September 2023		ITEM: 6
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Housing Development Programme Update		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A	
Report of: Keith Andrews, Strategic Lead – Housing Development		
Accountable Assistant Director: Ewelina Sorbjan, Assistant Director of Housing		
Accountable Director: Ian Wake – Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report seeks to update members on progress on various sites considered for housing development . The report sets out a reduction in the overall programme of new homes for rent within the housing development pipeline since last reported to this committee. This number now stands at 338. The reduction is a consequence of scheme amendments and a number of projects no longer progressing.

The largest projects remaining active are those where the existing stock is to be redeveloped due to their condition. The projects are the three towers at Blackshots and the non-traditionally constructed flats at Teviot Avenue. In each case more dwellings are proposed to be constructed than currently exist with 240 homes currently proposed for Blackshots and 48 at Teviot Avenue.

The report sets out the present position with the development pipeline for new build homes for rent within the HRA focussing on three underused or vacant garage sites at Vigerons Way, Lyndhurst Road and Broxburn Drive. In total these would see 46 new homes being built. The report also notes the position with two sites previously agreed for development by Thurrock Regeneration Limited at Culver Centre and Field which has a planning consent for 173 homes and Belmont Road which could deliver 80 new homes for sale and rent. The former is now intended for open market sale and a decision is still to be made regarding the future of the latter.

Government Intervention & Section 114

In July 2022, the Council was made aware of concerns around the valuation of specific investments. A review process commenced, and the initial findings highlighted significant concern with three investments and the position was shared informally with the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

On the 2 September 2022 DLUHC announced directions to implement an intervention package at the Council.

The Secretary of State exercised his powers under section 15(11) of the Local Government Act 1999 to give a Direction without complying with the requirement at section 15(9) to give Thurrock an opportunity to make representations about the Directions, as he considered the failures of the Council's compliance with its Best Value duty in respect of the functions specified in the Directions sufficiently urgent. This was because of the following:

- the scale of the financial and commercial risks potentially facing the Authority, which were compounded by the Authority's approach to financial management and the seriousness of the allegations that were made by third parties about the processes applied to the operation of the Authority's commercial strategy, and;
- the failure of the Authority to provide assurance to Ministers and the Department on the adequacy of the actions that they were taking to address the issues, taking account of the scale and pace of the response required.

The Secretary of State nominated Essex County Council to the role of Commissioner. On 19 December 2022, the Council's Acting Director of Finance & Section 151 Officer issued a report under Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. This advises Councillors that the Council faces 'a financial situation of an extremely serious nature.'

Since that period the Council has continued to operate under the s114 Notice and is working alongside Commissioners to tighten its financial management procedures

1. Recommendation

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to:

1.1 Note the updates on sites being considered for housing development.

1.2 Note that the sites at Aveley Library, Darnley Road, Corve Lane and the CO1 building as part of the civic estate are no longer being considered for Housing Revenue Account housing development

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Reports are presented periodically to Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the progress of the councils housing development programme. This report updates on the current position with the development programme, those projects underway to redevelop failing housing stock, and proposed new build developments.

2.2 The development pipeline has reduced since last reported at Committee. This is largely due to a combination of projects being removed from the programme for disposal as a result of the council's need for capital receipts, and design revisions as projects progress.

2.3 The scale of the existing development programme is under review due to the council’s financial position. Any approvals to procure building contractors will be carefully considered on a case-by-case basis. Similarly, the identification and development of any new sites are dependent on resources being available. Although unlike many other forms of capital investment housing development does have the ability to fund borrowing through the rental income it generates and has access to subsidy by way of retained right to buy receipts. It is still subject to the Council’s overall borrowing limits and may therefore be constrained at this time. The programme set out in the paper is therefore subject to change.

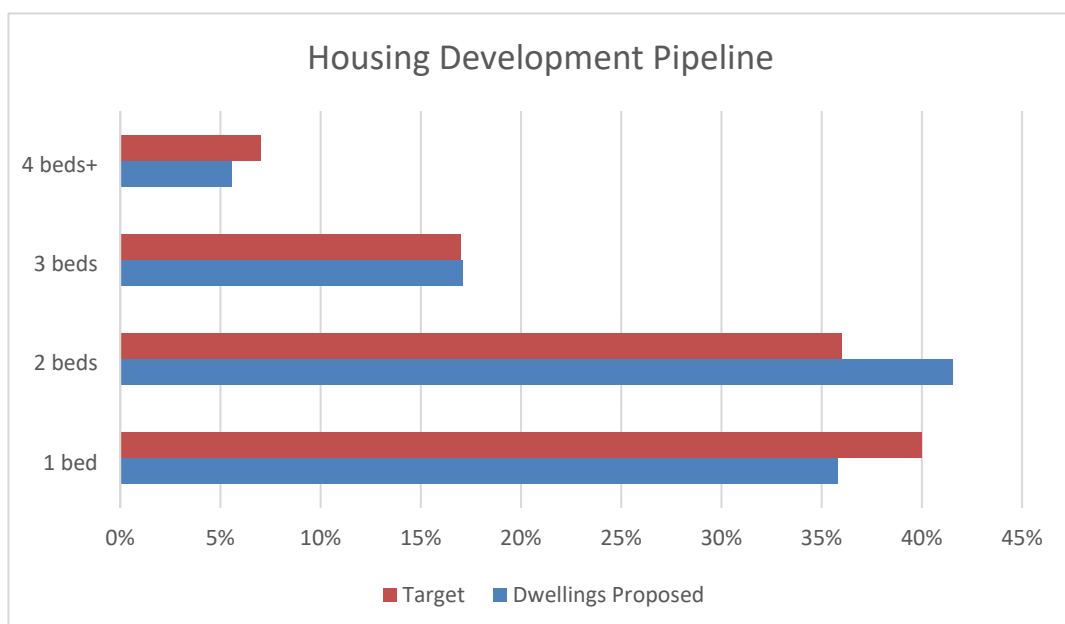
3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

Current Programme

3.1 The total number of potential new or replacement dwellings in the development programme is currently 338. This is a reduction from the position reported in September 2022 of 505 dwellings. The current programme includes the addition of 240 homes potentially to be built under the proposed redevelopment of the Blackshots tower blocks.

3.2 As noted above this programme reduction is a consequence of some sites being considered for disposal to increase capital income. It also reflects the changes and amendments made to individual schemes as a result of public consultation and detailed engagement with the council’s planning service.

3.3 The chart below shows the dwellings planned against a percentage target of different size homes within the overall programme. The target is derived from the numbers of people requiring general needs housing on our housing register.



- 3.4 This chart demonstrates that there is currently a fair mix of planned dwellings against the target. It should be acknowledged that for those projects at an early stage such as Blackshots, the actual mix will change over time according to site requirements and consultation feedback.
- 3.5 There is one housing development project currently on site. Four new three-bedroom homes for affordable rent are due to be completed in September 2023 at Loewen Road, Chadwell St Mary. These new homes with associated parking are to be let in line with the council's Housing Allocation policy. This allows with three of the four homes to be allocated under a local lettings policy which prioritises local residents. The project is completing on time in September 2023 and on budget. As part of the social value element of the project the contractor made a contribution to the council's warm spaces initiative held at the nearby Alf Lowne Court complex. This initiative provides a space for local residents to go to avoid social isolation, take part in activities and provides practical advice and support to help with the cost of living.

Housing Stock Redevelopment

- 3.6 The major projects within the housing development programme relate to the renewal of existing defective property at Blackshots and Teviot Avenue

Blackshots

- 3.7 In March 2023 Cabinet approved a range of recommendations to progress the planned redevelopment of three tower blocks at Blackshots, subject to a final business case demonstrating viability to Cabinet programmed for January 2024.
- 3.8 There are 168 flats in the existing three tower blocks and early designs suggest a redevelopment of 240 new homes may be possible.
- 3.9 A consultancy team has been procured to develop design and cost planning, prepare the business case, undertake resident engagement and to provide an independent tenant and leaseholder service to the affected residents.
- 3.10 Cabinet approvals were given to start the vacation of the blocks by offering tenants alternative accommodation in line with the council's decant policy and to commence the purchase of leaseholder's homes. A programme of resident engagement has commenced which includes written information, one to one visits to residents, estate consultation events and use of the council's online consultation portal. This covers both the arrangements for individual residents moves and wider community consultation in respect redevelopment proposals.
- 3.11 The programme of planned events takes place over summer and autumn of 2023.

- 3.12 The process of offering alternative accommodation to those tenants in situ, and negotiation to purchase leasehold interests is underway. It is anticipated that full vacant possession of the blocks will be achieved by March 2025
- 3.13 The current timeline for actions up to the business case is:

Item	Programme 2023
Resident Engagement Events	July, August, September, October 2023
Final Design Stage for Business Case	September 2023
Financial Modelling for Business Case	To run alongside above items
Planning pre-application meeting	September/ October 2023
Business Case	October 2023
Housing Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet	January 2024

- 3.14 Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet will be asked to consider the business case with the intention that authority will be sought to commence procurement for a main contractor to develop and submit a planning application and construct the new homes.

Teviot Avenue

- 3.15 Proposals to redevelop three low rise flat blocks at numbers 158-228 (evens) Teviot Avenue are progressing and appear in detail on a separate report to Committee. The existing 36 flats are constructed of pre-cast reinforced concrete of the 'Cornish' type and designated as defective initially under the 1984 Housing Defects Act, (consolidated into the 1985 Housing Act), due to their construction material and manufacture.
- 3.16 The flats have several issues including inherent structural defects due to the construction method used and can only be remediated by substantial reconfiguration of the overall structure. The problems relate to the pre-cast reinforced concrete elements including balconies and fixtures externally, requiring installation of new concrete wall panels, plinths and columns, together with ad hoc door and window replacement, enhanced roof insulation and support and new internal fit out. To repair, the balconies would require decoupling and replacement taking support from the new walls and footings. The building foundations would also require underpinning and enhancement to take the additional weight.
- 3.17 Whilst detailed design assessment on proposals for the replacement dwellings continues, the evidence is that the significant cost of remedial works to the existing blocks over the next 30 years means redevelopment is a more viable approach. This is because the construction of new homes, set against the cost of repair works averted is a more financially viable position even after inclusion of the costs required to vacate the blocks.

- 3.18 Current proposals would see an increase in the number of homes provided within the HRA from 36 to 48. Authority will be sought at Cabinet to start the process of offering alternative accommodation to existing tenants, to negotiate the purchase of leasehold interests and to commence procurement of a contractor to undertake the construction project.
- 3.19 The design proposals to demolish and redevelop the existing blocks has been through revisions of design and cost planning to reduce the construction costs. This has caused some delay to the project.
- 3.20 Planning permission is timetabled for late 2023 and procurement of a main contractor in summer 2024.

Discontinued Projects

- 3.21 Members are asked to note that since the last development update report four projects previously considered for affordable housing development are no longer progressing.
- 3.22 As set out in a previous briefing note to this committee the proposals to redevelop that part of the council's offices known as CO1 for an affordable housing project has ceased. The project was no longer financially viable. Key to the changes in financial viability were rising project costs driven by an unprecedented period of build cost inflation which significantly affected the viability of projects across the sector. Rapidly rising material costs, increasing labour and energy costs were key components. In addition, rises in the Public Works Loan Board interest rate from 2.8% to 5% increased borrowing costs by over £11m. The impact of the rise in borrowing costs alone were sufficient to make the scheme unviable as an affordable housing project.
- 3.23 The council's Assets Disposal Team is preparing a report to be submitted to Cabinet the for the September meeting confirming the decision to dispose of the property. In the meantime, CO1 will be fully exposed to the market to establish the level of interest for the asset. There is also an ongoing project, being led by the Facilities Management Team, to ensure that the Councils interests are protected with regard to the potential physical separation of CO1 from CO2 together with any relevant services.
- 3.24 The council's financial position has also meant that some other sites within the general fund could no longer be considered for development and transfer to the Housing Revenue Account, and instead may be sold to generate a capital receipt.
- 3.25 Planning permission was granted subject to conditions for development of 16 one and two-bedroom affordable housing flats on the site of the former Aveley Library and Hall in March 2023. This site is now being prepared for market with the benefit of that consent subject to the necessary approvals. Similarly, a planning application has been submitted for the development of 54 homes on the site of the Darnley and Crown Road car parks. This site may also now

be prepared for sale, again subject to the necessary approvals.

- 3.26 Further, design proposals to develop the site of a former pupil referral unit in Corve Lane, Aveley for affordable housing have been ceased with the site also now being considered for sale.

Housing Development Pipeline

- 3.27 Work has continued to progress on sites within the Housing Revenue Account. These are sites where development is financially viable, where the constructed homes meet established housing need and often where small sites such as underused or demolished garage block sites are subject to anti-social behaviour.
- 3.28 The funding for these sites is a combination of borrowing supported by rental income from the new homes combined with use of Right to Buy receipts retained for this purpose under S11(6) of the Local Government Act 2003 as amended.
- 3.29 At this present time, these sites are still on the list for progression and development. They remain subject to decision on the Council's overall Capital Programme and borrowing ability and this list set out below is still subject to change
- 3.30 All of these sites in the table below are underused or vacant HRA garage sites experiencing anti-social behaviour:

Site Name	Development Mix	Status	Commentary
Vigerons Way, Chadwell St Mary	7 x 2 bed houses	Planning application submitted	Modular construction being considered to reduce the duration of on-site building work.
Lyndhurst Road, Corringham	4 x 3 bed houses 2 x 2 bed houses	Planning application to be submitted July 2023	Site identified by the Housing service as suitable for development. Public consultation undertaken in February 2023 leading to amendments to retain access to existing rear gardens, improved parking provision, preventing overlooking of existing homes, and retaining mature trees
Broxburn Drive, South Ockendon	11 x 1 bed flats 20 x 2 bed flats 2 x 3 bed flats	Planning application submitted	Three phases of resident consultation undertaken. Site subject to elevated levels of anti-social behaviour resulting in a police operation in the locality to tackle youth nuisance and criminal behaviour.

Thurrock Regeneration Limited (TRL) Projects

- 3.31 At the time of writing the future of TRL projects is under review. The Culver Centre and Culver Field scheme had a resolution to grant planning on the 22nd September 2021. The development scheme is for 173 homes including 62 for affordable housing and incorporates landscaping. A Cabinet report on 12th January 2022 resolved to dispose of the site to TRL.
- 3.32 The council's changed financial position has meant that this site is now being considered for disposal on the open market subject to any necessary approvals.
- 3.33 TRL owns the Belmont Road site where a planning permission was granted in 2018 for 80 homes including 28 affordable dwellings. As this planning permission ultimately lapsed, a new application would be necessary. A review on the future of this site is currently underway and will be reported back to members in due course.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 Committee has requested an update on the progress of individual projects under active consideration.

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 development of 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.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

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

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

The progression of schemes will need to be considered as part of the HRA business plan, and the Councils wider prudential borrowing strategy.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Jayne Middleton-Albooye**
Interim Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer

There are no direct legal implications as it is an update report. Full legal implications will be given for reports relating to individual proposals outlined above. In accordance with the remit of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Members are asked to review and scrutinise the updates outlined in this report.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**
Team Manager – Community Development and Equalities

There are no direct equality and diversity implications arising from this update report.

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

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):

None

9. Appendices to the report

None

REPORT AUTHOR

Keith Andrews

Strategic Lead – Housing Development

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**Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Work Programme
2023/2024**

Dates of Meetings: 20 June 2023, 28 September 2023, 21 November 2023, 9 January 2024, 5 March 2024

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member
20 June 2023		
Procurement of Repairs and Planned Maintenance Housing Contracts	Saheed Ullah	Officers
Houses of Multiple Occupation – Update report	Dulal Ahmed	Members
Hostel Management	Ben Tovey	Officers
Terms of Reference	Democratic Services	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing Item
28 September 2023		
Housing Development Programme Update	Ewelina Sorbjan/Keith Andrews	Members
Housing Ombudsman Report: Spotlight on Damp and Mould - Thurrock Council's Response	Ewelina Sorbjan/Saheed Ullah	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing Item

21 November 2023

Blackshots Update	Keith Andrews	
Right to Buy Receipts Refreshed	Mike Jones	Members
Complaints System	Chris Seman / Leigh Henley	Members
Update/Introduction to Regulation Rules of Social Housing	Ryan Farmer / Chris Seman	Members
Year One Strategies Review	Ryan Farmer	Officers
Lyndhurst Road	Keith Andrews	Officers
Teviot	Ewelina Sorbjan/Keith Andrews	Officers
Fees & Charges Pricing Strategy 2023/24	Dulal Ahmed	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing Item

9 January 2024

HRA – Relationship with wider authority		Members
Homelessness Update (Mental Health/Social Care)	Invite Kim Kames, Healthwatch	Members
Value for Money		Members
Anton Road North South	Keith Andrews	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing Item

5 March 2024

Portfolio Holder Report		
Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025	Ryan Farmer	Officers

Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing Item
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Briefing Notes

Garages – Sent to members on the 20 June 2023
Headstart Housing – Peter Doherty
Lowen Road Local Lettings Policy – Ryan Farmer

Clerk: Jenny Shade
Last Updated: June 2023

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