

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Tenants Strategic Group – 27th March 2023

Damp & Mould Start and Finish Group outcome report

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member for Housing

Report Author: Luke Manning / Sharon Yarde

1. Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

The report is to update the Tenants Strategic Group on the outcomes of the Damp & Mould Start and Finish Group.

The Tenants Strategic Group is asked to note this report and are invited to ask questions and agree/disagree with the recommendations.

2. Purpose of Report

To report back to the Tenants' Strategic Group the outcomes of the Damp and Mould Start and Finish Group. To request that the group continues to meet as a new group with an amended ToR (Appendix 1).

3. Background

This start and finish group was set up in response to the increasing awareness of the prevalence of damp and mould in social housing, due to the exposure of this issue on national television and a report issued by the Housing Ombudsman in October 2021. The group was due to end in December 2022.

3.1 Findings

During the lifetime of The Damp and Mould Group Start and Finish Group, the following has been achieved:

- Have own surveyor for D&M in repairs (Mike Parsons)
- Created an inspection form for surveyors to use
- Staff using 3 new pieces of technology, humidity and temp reader, moisture metre and Thermal meter.
- The surveyors and managers in repairs have undertaken a day course with Safeguard UK to better understand Damp and Mould.
- Surveyors have completed a certified qualification, level 3 surveyor in dampness.
- Putting humidity reader in all void properties
- Found a treatment solution, thermal panels which will be installed in void properties if required and used to treat ongoing cases.
- Damp and Mould Leaflet
- Draft Damp and Mould procedure
- Abolished triage for Damp and Mould at Customer service stage
- Better repair approach
- Scrutiny/monitoring of the Capital works programme
- New website page with boiler instructions

The objectives for the group and expected outcomes were as follows:

1. Produce a database which enables us to evaluate the most effective approach to reducing the incidence of damp and mould.
2. Understanding of best practice for dealing with damp and mould, and incorporate into our procedures.
3. Develop a new procedure for dealing with damp and mould.
4. Produce updated guidance for tenants in various accessible formats.

5. Monitor and review progress of how effectively cases of damp and mould are resolved, and produce a final report on the work of the group.

All of the objectives, except number 1 have been achieved.

Despite the original objectives of the Group (except for 1) being met, Damp and Mould is an ongoing problem that the Ombudsman has asked all landlords to address. In response to this SWT have put together a Damp and Mould Action Plan headed by Chris Brown.

The Action Plan includes 51 actions, categorised into 10 headings. The production of a database is included in this action plan.

3.2 Considerations

During the time of the Group the Chair changed several times. This was because James White (Repairs Manager) left SWT, in his absence, Stephen Boland was asked to step in, Paul Clifford took back the chair appointment and when he left, Stephen Boland was asked to step in again. Due to this and group members absence, the November meeting did not take place until January 2023. Therefore, the group ran from November 2021 -January 2023.

To be effective, The Damp and Mould Action Plan needs to be implemented and followed.

3.3 Recommendations

That the Damp & Mould Start and Finish Group ends and the new Damp and Mould Action Plan Task Group continues to meet every other month with a new ToR (appendix 1) until such time that the Damp & Mould Action plan has been fully implemented. The group will monitor the progress of the Damp and Mould Action Plan and help with the delivery of the action plan where required.

To continue to monitor the Capital Works Programme.

4. Risk Assessment (if appropriate)

A risk assessment is not required to accompany this report.

5. **Are there any Finance / Resource, Legal implications directly to do with this report?**

There are no financial implications directly to do with the recommendations in this report

6: Are there any Equality and Diversity Implications?

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There are no equality implications directly to do with this report

7. Are there any Data Protection Implications?

There are no equality implications directly to do with this report

Appendix A - New ToR for the group

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Appendix a

Damp and Mould Action Plan Task Group Terms of Reference

Introduction

This group has been set up in response to the implementation of the Damp and Mould Action Plan, led by Chris Brown.

Purpose

The Group's purpose is to monitor the implementation of SWT's Damp and Mould Action Plan. To ensure that is delivered as promised within a reasonable time scale. To continue to monitor the Capital Programme by a nominated representative (Sam Rickward) and to help deliver the Damp and Action Plan where required.

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Objectives

- To ensure the effective delivery of the Damp and Mould Action Plan

Membership

Colin England – TSG

Samantha Rickward - TSG

Luke Manning - TSG

Ivor Hussey – TSG

Wayne Hobson – TAG

Maintenance Manager-Chair

Mike Parsons – Specialist Surveyor, Responsive Repairs

Stephen Boland – Specialist, Housing Landlord

Sharon Yarde - Customer Experience Lead

Sharon Sloan - Case Manager, Housing Customer Experience

In the absence of a staff member, a representative from their area should attend.

Chairing of the Meeting

The group will nominate a tenant member to work closely with the chair and between them they will chair the meeting.

Frequency

Meetings will be held 2 monthly.

Expected Duration of Meetings

90 – 120 minutes.

Format

Members will be invited to each meeting and given a timescale to submit items for the agenda.

Agenda items will be agreed with the Chair of the group prior to the meeting.

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Meetings should not be cancelled or postponed except in very exceptional circumstances. Where postponement is necessary, an agreed date of the next meeting should be made and announced as soon as possible.

Submissions of suggested agenda items will only be considered if there is:

- A sufficiently detailed reason for request for inclusion in the agenda.
- A clear definition of what needs to be debated, discussed or shared.

Once the agenda items have been agreed, a copy will be circulated to the members prior to each meeting.

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Record Keeping and Administration

- Agendas will be prepared in a standard template.
- The minutes will record issues raised, decisions reached, proposed actions and timescales. Copies of the minutes will be recorded by the Housing Performance team and promptly provided to Group members.
- The group will be chaired by a tenant member.
- The group will be non-political.
- The group may invite other SWT staff or external experts to join meetings where additional insight, advice or learning would be helpful.
- The group will report recommendations to the Housing Senior Management Team for authorisation
- The group will report on outcomes to the Tenants' Strategic Group at the end of the 12 month period

Expected Behaviours

- All group members agree to adhere to the Code of Conduct

Outputs

- To ensure the effective delivery of the Damp and Mould Action Plan

Working Group Code of Conduct

1. It is your responsibility to attend all meetings arranged by the group to advance the project, and to arrive at those meetings on time.

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2. If you can't attend a meeting of the group, you should send your apologies to the Housing Performance team as soon as possible and consider providing your input in written form and giving this to the Housing Performance team prior to the meeting.

3. Only one person will speak at a time and everyone in the group will be given the opportunity to speak.

4. Any conflict of interest must be declared to the Group at the start of the meeting.

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5. Speakers will keep to the subject under discussion.

6. Members will be open and honest in their dealings and show respect for other members, the use of discriminatory or abusive language will not be tolerated.

7. You have the right, naturally, to challenge other's opinions but this must be done respectfully in a non-aggressive way.

8. Members will agree to respect the confidentiality of information provided to them.

9. When you agree to undertake a task that has been assigned to you, you must work to the agreed deadline since failure to do so could impede the progress of the whole project.

10. No member of the Group should behave in a way likely to bring the reputation of the Group into disrepute.