

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Tenants' Strategic Group – 27th March 2023

Name of Report – Damp & Mould Action Plan update

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member for Housing.

Report Authors: Chris Brown

1. Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

The report is to update the Tenants' Strategic Group on progress of the Damp & Mould Action Plan since its approval in January 2023 by officers and the Tenants Damp and Mould Working Group in March.

2. Recommendations

The Tenants' Strategic Group is asked to note this report.

3. Background and Full details of the Report

A tenants Damp and Mould Working Group has been meeting for twelve months and has helped the Council place a spotlight on the issue of Damp and Mould. The national spotlight was also focused on Damp and Mould towards the end of 2022 with the tragic death in Rochdale of Awaab Ishak where Damp and Mould was considered to be a contributory factor in his death.

As a result of national and customer concerns the service has reviewed its approach to Damp and Mould and identified an action plan, appendix 1. The action plan contains a number of themes aimed at responding in a timely and appropriate way to case of damp and mould and seek proactive approaches to invest in advance of problems being reported. The action plan includes six key areas of focus which are;

1. Review Current Practices
2. Create a Policy Statement and Procedure
3. Awareness Raising & Communication
4. Reporting, data lodging and proactive interventions
5. An enhanced role for Asset Management
6. Ownership and Monitoring

The service has completed a review of its current practices and compared its practice against the housing ombudsman's recommended best practice. The Council has also responded to the Minister in December on the Council's position in relation to Damp and Mould. The officer review and the work of the Tenants working group has led to the production of the Damp and Mould Action Plan. The tenants working group endorsed the action plan at its meeting 3rd March.

The Council has now agreed a new Damp and Mould policy statement which reads;

'The Council is committed to providing safe and dry homes which meet high standards of repair, allowing tenants to enjoy where they live.

We operate both a proactive and reactive approach to damp and mould. We use our knowledge of our properties to reduce instances of damp and mould, and respond in a timely way to our tenants' concerns through our maintenance and repair services. Our robust internal procedures and effective communication help us to deliver our commitment.

The Council recognises the requirement to comply with our statutory obligations, including the Landlord and Tenant Act (1985), Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act (2018) and the Decent Homes Standard'.

The action plan contains fifty-two actions of which about half rely on the production of a new procedure capable of tracking reports of damp and mould from the first report through to a successful closure of a case. This new procedure is essential in order to track cases and produce information to generate performance reports or key performance indicators (KPIs).

The procedure is taking slightly longer than anticipated to produce due to the various software system which are involved in each repair. A senior officer group will also meet frequently to have oversight of Damp and Mould cases. Once established the lead officer will be able to feedback progress and KPIs to the tenants Working Group at their meetings.

The Tenants Working Group's new Damp and Mould leaflet is now being used when visiting homes. The language developed by the group has also been used within the new tenants' handbook and the wording for the new Somerset Council's webpage on Damp and Mould.

Training is being rolled out with a number of officers booked onto a Housing Health and Safety Rating System courses in Spring and more courses will follow.

Some of the more innovative proposals include the training of officers who enter homes the most, primarily the gas team, to carry out a simple ten point check list including asking questions to the tenant and making observations in reference to Damp and Mould and disrepair. The Tenants Working Group has offered to support officers develop around five questions and five observations to create this practical checklist.

Since January twelve of the fifty-two actions of the plan have been completed. Fourteen actions are partially complete and eleven are behind schedule. Those behind schedule primarily relate to the development of a new damp and mould procedure. Fifteen actions are not yet due to commence.

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?

The Damp and Mould Action Plan will require resources, and these will be found from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The service is working through any revenue costs associated with staffing commitments and an initial annual capital sum has been created for investment to ventilation. However, within the current medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and in the grant funds the Council is receiving there is significantly more funding to help make properties more thermally efficient and improve ventilation.

6: Are there any Equality and Diversity Implications?

There are no equality implications directly to do with this report.

7. Are there any Data Protection Implications?

There are no data protection implications of this report.

Name of Contact Officers: Chris Brown

Telephone number: 07919 210653

Email address: c.brown@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Appendix 1 – Damp & Mould Action Plan

| No | Theme | Task | Link to Ombudsmans Spotlight report | Owner | Lead | Start Date | End Date | Status | Comments |
|----|-----------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|-------|--------------|------------|------------|--|---------------------------|
| 1a | Review of current practices | Review current practices and respond to Ministers questions | 1 | JB | JB | 01/11/2022 | 31/01/22 | Complete | One off |
| 1b | Review of current practices | Housing Managers to be provided with and confirm read Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Report (26 good practice messages) | Jan-26 | JB | CR | 19/01/2023 | 13/02/2023 | Partial (50%) | One off |
| 2a | Policy Statement & Process | Produce a D&M Policy Statement as an amendment to the repairs policy | 1, 2, 26 | CB | CR/SW/RP/HH | 19/01/2023 | 25/02/2023 | Complete | One off then BAU |
| 2b | Policy Statement & Process | Complete the Repairs Action Plan. | 3, 5, 12, 13, | IC | SW | 01/10/2022 | ? | | One off then BAU |
| 2c | Policy Statement & Process | Produce a D&M Proceedure and flow chart as an amendment to the repairs proceedure and flow chart | 1, 2, 26 | IC | CR | 09/01/2023 | 28/02/2023 | Commenced but will require additional time and service alignment | One off then BAU |
| 2d | Policy Statement & Process | D&M process and flow chart to be created as an amendment to the Repairs Proceedure and Flow chart to include customer contact points and tenant expectations in terms of engagement, feedback and engagement as their repair progresses | 13, 17, 18 | IC | SW/CR | see 2c | see 2c | Current practice has been mapped, a number of recommendedn dation need | One off then BAU |
| 2e | Policy Statement & Process | All D&M reports regardless of who reports (tenant/officer) will be logged on xxx system (schedulers?Open Housing?). | 5, 7, 12, 13 | IC | SW/CR/HH/RMc | see 2c | see 2c | Initial report to be coded to 112024. Process needs embedding | One off then BAU |
| 2f | Policy Statement & Process | All D&M logged repairs will be logged by call centre and schedulers. | 5, 12, 13 | IC | SW/CR/HH/RMc | see 2c | see 2c | Action amended - Call centre briefed, embed the process | One off then BAU |
| 2g | Policy Statement & Process | Repairs process flow chart D&M amendment to clarify when independent specialist advice is required and contractors will adopt SWTs customer engagement requirements as expressed in contract documents | 15, 16, 21, 24 | IC | SW/CR | see 2b, 2c | se 2b, 2c | | One off then BAU |
| 2h | Policy Statement & Process | Review Complaints, compensation policy to ensure it covers D&M (Repair failure) | 18, 19, 24, 25, 26 | SH/IC | CR | 19/01/2023 | 25/01/2023 | Complete | Review only |
| 2i | Policy Statement & Process | Produce a disrepair process and flow chart as an amendment to repairs process and flo chart | 17, 24 | SH/IC | CR | see 2c | see 2c | Partial | One off standard practice |

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| 3a | Awareness Raising & Communication | Complete the reform of Call Centre efficiency - repair call answering, correct recording of customer request, correct forwarding to schedulers, D&M category | 2, 3 | IC/SL | SW/HH | Ongoing | | Ongoing | Ongoing activity |
| 3b | Awareness Raising & Communication | Place Policy Statement on SWT Website | 2, 3 | SH/IC | CR | 25/01/2023 | 03/02/2023 | Complete | One off |
| 3c | Awareness Raising & Communication | Promotion and training on Repair/D&M procedure and flow chart | 2, 3 | All | ADs/CR | 28/02/2023 | 01/05/2023 | | One off then BAU |
| 3d | Awareness Raising & Communication | Produce a D&M information leaflet (TAG produced leaflet) | 2, 3 | SH | CR/SS | 01/01/2023 | 25/01/2023 | Complete | One off |
| 3e | Awareness Raising & Communication | Promote D&M messages in tenancy handbook | 2, 3 | SL/SH | SB/CR | 01/01/2023 | 10/02/2023 | Complete | One off |
| 3f | Awareness Raising & Communication | Develop capacity to provide alerts on various matters inc. D&M - Portal pop ups, customer care scripts, messages on satisfaction cards, strap lines on letters and emails | 2, 3 | SH | ? | 17/01/2023 | 01/11/2023 | | NEW |
| 3g | Awareness Raising & Communication | Promote routes for reporting repairs and D&M. Where there is a instance of damp and mould this should be reported as a repair and dealt with as a responsive repair. | 2, 3, 18 | IC | CR | see 2c | see 2c | see 2c | One off then BAU |
| 4a | Reporting, data lodging and proactive intervention (damp & mould assessment/survey) | Gas team to be trained in HHSRS and D&M identification and assessment. | 4, 5, 7, 15, 16, 20 | IC | RP/DS | 01/03/2023 | 01/08/2023 | Will be mainly in second HHSRS training post May 2023 | NEW |
| 4b | Reporting, data lodging and proactive intervention (damp & mould assessment/survey) | Asset surveyors/validators to be trained in HHSRS and D&M identificaion and assessment | 4, 5, 7, 15, 16, 20 | CB | DS | 01/03/2023 | 01/08/2023 | HHSRS Training May 2023 (16 staff) | NEW |
| 4c | Reporting, data lodging and proactive intervention (damp & mould assessment/survey) | Compliance team (those who enter properties) to be trained in HHSRS and D&M. | 4, 5, 7, 15, 16, 20 | IC | AE/DS | 01/03/2023 | 01/08/2023 | HHSRS Training May 2023 (16 staff) | NEW |
| 4d | Reporting, data lodging and proactive intervention (damp & mould assessment/survey) | Repairand Asset Surveyors to be trained in HHSRS and D&M identification and assessment | 4, 5, 7, 15, 16, 20 | IC | RP/DS | 01/03/2023 | 01/08/2023 | HHSRS Training May 2023 (16 staff) | NEW |
| 4e | Reporting, data lodging and proactive intervention (damp & mould assessment/survey) | On line hand held/phone based 10 point property checklist to be used on all property inspections/gas visits by trained HHSRS Gas engineers, asset surveyors and caompliance team. Checklist to include D&M visual and tenant question. The 10 point check may also include a check on the efficiency of the kitchen and bathroom ventilation to ensure compliance with building regs part F. Tenant groups to help create the 10 point checklist. | 5, 12, 13 | IC/CB | RP/DS/AE | 01/04/2023 | 01/09/2023 | | NEW |
| 4f | Reporting, data lodging and proactive intervention (damp & mould assessment/survey) | D&M process and flow chart to include requirement for adjacent properties to be assessed for D&M following an accepted case of D&M. Existing data will be acceptable if no more than 6 months old and or data from live property humidity monitoring. Asset management will use reports to understand patens of investment required. | 4, 5, 12 | IC | CR/RMc | see 2c | see 2c | see 2c | One off then BAU |
| 4g | Reporting, data lodging and proactive intervention (damp & mould assessment/survey) | On line D&M awareness training to be available for housing and call centre staff | 4, 5, 7, 12, 15 | IC | SW/CR/HH/RMc | see 2c | see 2c | see 2c | One off then BAU |
| 4h | Reporting, data lodging and proactive intervention (damp & mould assessment/survey) | Repair Reporting procedure to claify how HHSRS cat 1 & 2 hazards are to be logged by HHSRS qualified staff. | 4, 5 | IC | SW/CR/RMc/HH | see 2c | see 2c | see 2c | NEW |
| 4i | Reporting, data lodging and proactive intervention (damp & mould assessment/survey) | Policy statement and reporting arrangement for Damage, Repair and Damp and Mould to be developed as a procurment document. Maintenance and compliance contractors sign up to reporting as part of contact T&Cs, likewise tenant engagement and vulnersble customer statements. | 15, 16 | IC/CB | MO'H/C R/DS/KA | see 2c | see 2c | see 2c | NEW |

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| 5a | Repair, Voids, Maintenance and Capital Investment - Responsive Repairs/Voids | Tool box talk and more focused training to cover - Repair procedure/flow chart, D&M, Disrepair ammendments and complaints process | 4, 5, 7, 12, 15 | IC | RP/OW/CR | see 2c | see 2c | see 2c | BAU |
| 6a | Repair, Voids, Maintenance and Capital Investment - Voids | Void works to be specified in line with Asset Management requirements and Low Carbon Retrofit standards inc pathway to zero carbon architype studies | 10 | CB/IC | OW/DS | 01/02/2023 | 01/05/2023 | see 2c | One off then BAU |
| 7a | The role of Asset Management | Introduce remote monitoring technology as part of Major works investment and retrofit - target 500 units by 2025 - product agreed 01/04/2023, product roll out 01/05/2023 | 4, 5 | CB | DS/WL | 01/02/2023 | 31/03/2025 | 3 pilots to take place - Oake/NTWP/ Disrepair & D&M cases | NEW |
| 7b | The role of Asset Management | Investment assumptions re properties for disposal and regeneration to be assumed to be status quo in MTFP and budgets for repair not reduced in advance of demolition or sale | 6 | CB | DS/CC | 01/02/2023 | 01/03/2023 | Complete | One off then BAU |
| 7c | The role of Asset Management | All mutual exchange applications to ensure the mutual exchange procedure is followed and that incoming tenants are informed of any work planned for the property and the timing of the works. | 9 | SL | SB/DS | 01/02/2023 | 01/03/2023 | Complete but need embedding | BAU |
| 7d | The role of Asset Management | Retrofit investment to comply with the Low Carbon Retrofit Strategy and Delivery Plan and inparticular the 'pathways to zero carbon architype studies' and their recommendations in relation to ventilation systems | 10 | CB | DS/CB/IS | 01/02/2023 | BAU | Ongoing and capacity required for embedding | BAU |
| 7e | The role of Asset Management | Asset management will hold and approve all specifications for M&E components, retorfit, heating, heating controls, remote monitoring, insulation, decent homes components regardless if these components are for capital investment, compliance, void or repair. | 10 | CB | DS | 01/03/2023 | BAU | Ongoing and capacity required for embedding | NEW |
| 7f | The role of Asset Management | PAS Surveys/assessments and design will inform asset management proposals for investment where there is grant funding. | 10 | CB | DS | 01/09/2022 | BAU | Ongoing and capacity required for embedding | BAU |
| 7g | The role of Asset Management | Block investment plan will be developed to ensure a whole building approach is applied when investment is being planned | 10 | CB | DS | 01/01/2023 | 01/09/2023 | | One off then BAU |
| 7h | The role of Asset Management | All HRA procurements should include at the tender stage the councils policy on tenant engagement, support to vulnerable customers | 22 | CB | DS/KA | see 2c | see 2c | See 2c | One off then BAU |
| 8a | Regeneration | Officers to promote service BAU during regeneration programmes and encourage repair reporting inc D&M | 6 | CB | DS/JW | 01/02/2023 | 01/02/2023 | Complete but need embedding | BAU |

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| 9a | Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs | D&M leads for each AD area RP (Repair), DS (Asset Investment), SB (Tenancy Advice). One officer will be nominated as lead and two will deputise | 18 | IC/CB | RP/DS/SB | 01/04/2023 | BAU | | NEW |
| 10a | Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs | D&M leads will review D&M cases monthly - Repair, Asset Investment, Tenancy Advice | 18 | IC/CB | RP/DS/SB | 01/04/2023 | BAU | | NEW |
| 10b | Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs | Tenants receiving works will be surveyed following works for satisfaction, Surveys will permit types of repair to be quantified separately and satisfaction understood | 11 | IC | RP/KA | 01/04/2023 | BAU | | One off then BAU |
| 10c | Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs | All stage 1 D&M complaints to be reported at H | 3, 11, 18, 19 | IC/SH | RM | 01/02/2023 | BAU | To commence March 2023 | One off then BAU |
| 10d | Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs | All disrepair cases reported to Performance Board and HSMT | 5, 11 | IC/SH | RM | 01/02/2023 | BAU | To commence March 023 | One off then BAU |
| 10e | Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs | Number of D&M reports to be reported to Performance Board each month | 12 | IC | RP | 01/04/2023 | BAU | | One off then BAU |
| 10f | Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs | Number of accepted D&M cases to be reported to Performance Board each month | 12 | IC | RP | 01/04/2023 | BAU | | One off then BAU |
| 10g | Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs | Number of resolved D&M to be reported to Performance Board each month | 12 | IC | RP | 01/04/2023 | BAU | | One off then BAU |
| 10h | Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs | Number of D&M cases referred to external specialists | 21 | IC | RP | 01/04/2023 | BAU | | One off then BAU |
| 10i | Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs | Number of missed repair appointments (inc D&M) to be reported to Performance Board each month | 14 | IC | RP | 01/04/2023 | BAU | | One off then BAU |
| 10j | Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs | Number of void properties identified with D&M to be reported to Performance Board each month | 12 | IC | OW | 01/04/2023 | BAU | | One off then BAU |
| 10k | Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs | Review TSG performance report to include D&M stats/performance along with other repair stats/performance | 8 | SH | ADs | 01/06/2023 | BAU | | One off then BAU |
| 10l | Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs | Tenants D&M Working Group to monitor Action Plan at each meeting and receive updates | 8, 11 | IC | ? | 01/02/2023 | 01/01/2024 | Principle agreed CB attended 3.3.23 | One off then BAU |
| 10m | Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs | D&M to be placed on the risk register - score to be agreed following understanding of performance | 12 | IC | CR | 01/02/2023 | BAU | Complete | One off then BAU |