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# Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The meeting will be held at **7.00 pm** on **14 March 2016**

**Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, Essex, RM17 6SL**

## Membership:

Councillors Cathy Kent (Chair), Chris Baker (Vice-Chair), Jan Baker, Clare Baldwin, Sue MacPherson and Tunde Ojetola

Lynn Mansfield, Housing Tenant Representative

## Substitutes:

Councillors Yash Gupta (MBE), Graham Hamilton, Barry Johnson, Steve Liddiard and Joycelyn Redsell

## Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 17 February 2016.	
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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.	
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**Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:**

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Agenda published on: **4 March 2016**

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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.

**Vision: Thurrock:** A place of **opportunity**, **enterprise** and **excellence**, where **individuals**, **communities** and **businesses** flourish.

To achieve our vision, we have identified five strategic priorities:

**1. Create** a great place for learning and opportunity

- Ensure that every place of learning is rated “Good” or better
- Raise levels of aspiration and attainment so that residents can take advantage of local job opportunities
- Support families to give children the best possible start in life

**2. Encourage** and promote job creation and economic prosperity

- Promote Thurrock and encourage inward investment to enable and sustain growth
- Support business and develop the local skilled workforce they require
- Work with partners to secure improved infrastructure and built environment

**3. Build** pride, responsibility and respect

- Create welcoming, safe, and resilient communities which value fairness
- Work in partnership with communities to help them take responsibility for shaping their quality of life
- Empower residents through choice and independence to improve their health and well-being

**4. Improve** health and well-being

- Ensure people stay healthy longer, adding years to life and life to years
- Reduce inequalities in health and well-being and safeguard the most vulnerable people with timely intervention and care accessed closer to home
- Enhance quality of life through improved housing, employment and opportunity

**5. Promote** and protect our clean and green environment

- Enhance access to Thurrock's river frontage, cultural assets and leisure opportunities
- Promote Thurrock's natural environment and biodiversity
- Inspire high quality design and standards in our buildings and public space

## Minutes of the Meeting of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 February 2016 at 7.00 pm

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**Present:** Councillors Tunde Ojetola, Graham Hamilton (Substitute) (substitute for Chris Baker), Steve Liddiard (Substitute) (substitute for Clare Baldwin) and Joycelyn Redsell (Substitute) (substitute for Sue MacPherson)

Lynn Mansfield, Housing Tenant Representative

**Apologies:** Councillor Jan Baker

**In attendance:** Dermot Moloney, Strategic Lead Housing  
Susan Cardozo, Housing Asset Investment & Delivery Manager  
Dawn Shepherd, Strategy Manager, Housing, Business Improvement  
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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

### **33. Minutes**

The Minutes of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on the 6 January 2016, were approved as a correct record.

### **34. Urgent Items**

There were no items of urgent business.

### **35. Declaration of Interests**

Councillor Hamilton declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of the Agenda as he was a landlord.

### **36. Changes to Extra Care Services**

The Officer presented the report to Members which outlined the changes and the implications for residents at the extra care schemes at Piggs Corner and Kynoch Court.

The report was presented as considerable savings to budgets had to be made and to achieve this one area identified was the provision of extra care housing.

It was noted that a report had been presented to Members at the January Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee outlining the proposed changes on the social care provided. The comments received by Members were noted and were recommended to Cabinet on the 10 February where it was agreed.

As of 1 April 2016, a concierge service will be introduced at Piggs Corner; this will be manned 24 hours a day, 365 days per year. This service will provide:

- Reception Service
- Controlled Access
- Help with Enquiries
- Daily Safety and Security Inspections

A dedicated sheltered housing officer will also be recruited to manage the scheme during office hours.

The Officer stated that the new service will incur an extra cost which will be added to weekly rent. This charge will attract Housing benefit subsidy, therefore tenants in receipt of housing benefit will be able to claim the additional cost as part of their benefit claim.

Tenants who are not in receipt of housing benefit will have the extra charge met through transitional relief so that no existing tenant will be worse off financially.

Tenants at both schemes were originally consulted on the potential changes and will now be written to outlining the changes.

The Officer confirmed that during the course of transition, each resident will be assessed to ensure that the necessary arrangements for their care and support were maintained.

Current residents at Kynoch Court would be offered the opportunity to move to Piggs Corner or Elizabeth Gardens if they preferred, based on property being available. The Officer confirmed that current residents would be given priority. It was also confirmed that at this time only one resident had requested to move.

Councillor Liddiard agreed with the recommendations and said it made sense to move residents if they preferred.

Councillor Redsell stated her concern that Elizabeth Gardens was not now the home that it had started out to be, with the increase of dementia residents now in situ.

All Members and Co-optee Member agreed that the report should have come to Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee before it went to Cabinet in February. This would have allowed Members to comment and not just have the opportunity to note the changes. It was agreed that minutes from this

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be forwarded to Cabinet Members for their information.

Councillor Ojetola agreed to take this to the Constitution Working Group to which he is a member and clarify the role of scrutiny committees.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the changes outline in the report.**

### **37. Housing Investment & Development Programmes (2015/16)**

The Officer presented the report to Members that provided an overview of the key achievements in the first three quarter of 2015/16 relating to the management of Council Housing Assets through the Housing Investment and Development Programme.

The Officer provided a detailed briefing on the continued progress made in the delivery of the various components of the housing repairs, maintenance and capital works programme. Members were referred to figures in the report that detailed the progress made and that figures were being monitored monthly.

The Officer produced a leaflet on “Damp Condensation and Mould” that Thurrock Council was being used to educate residents on these issues. Copies of the leaflet were handed out to all committee members.

The Officer briefed Members on the development of the Housing Asset Management Strategy and the delivery of housing repairs, investment and regeneration programmes. Work is underway to draw the agreed principles together into the new Strategy which will set in place the approach, principles and objectives for the housing asset management to go forward. The three proposed objectives for a new Housing Asset Management Strategy were:

Objective 1 – Maintaining and Improving Housing Standards in Existing Stock

Objective 2 – Understanding and Optimising Performance

Objective 3 – Informing the standards and performance in new build council owned properties

Councillor Redsell noted the introduction of the mobile phone “App” and asked that consideration be given to those residents who do not the facility of an IOS or Android smart phone and that some residents like to talk to someone to register an issue. The Officer confirmed that the call centre will continue to be available for those residents.

Councillor Redsell asked the Officer the names of the 3 high rise blocks currently undergoing lift refurbishment in Grays. The Officer stated that the information was not to hand but this would be forward to Members.

Councillor Hamilton stated that all contractors should display an identity badge with their full name, contractor name and if possible their qualification/trade.

All Members and Co-Optee Member stated that they had experienced complaints from residents in their wards that contractors were not displaying these, that contractors arrived late or arrived at very inconvenient times with no warning and some contractors did not even speak English.

The Officer confirmed that all contractors were required to carry identity badges and only attend by appointment. The Officer suggested that for any further specific cases received these could be forwarded to the team for investigation.

The Chair asked Officers if a reminder could be sent to residents, especially the elderly residents, to ask and check for identity of contractors before letting them into their premises.

The Officer stated that this is already being done with posters advertising this on premises, in hubs and that letters sent out remind residents to check identity badges.

Lynn Mansfield stated that it was unfair to ask elderly residents to check identity when they were already feeling valuable.

A discussion between Members and Officers took place on voids and how important it was to reduce the turnaround time. Officers confirmed that this was being achieved by identifying as soon as possible when a property will be available but a process still needs to be followed.

The Officer advised that up to six potential residents may be considered for shortlisting after the bidding cycle closes so that documentation can be checked beforehand to confirm eligibility. In this way void times are minimised.

Councillor Hamilton asked Officers if Housing had to pay council tax on void properties. The Officer confirmed that the information was not to hand but this would be forward to Members.

Councillor Ojetola stated that it would have been useful for Officers to have presented the Annual Report with an update from 2014/2015. Members agreed that the item be added to the work programme for the next municipal year.

Councillor Ojetola asked Officers what the void period for standard properties in number of days now stood at. The Officer confirmed that this was currently 32 days year to date.

Councillor Ojetola asked Officers how many people were involved in the Resident Satisfaction Surveys reported. The Officer confirmed that the information was not to hand but this would be forward to Members.

Councillor Liddiard asked Officers for progress on the new build plans for Calcutta Road in Tilbury. The Officer confirmed that activity continues on this site with the plans being refreshed and re-designed.

The Chair asked Officers that were all new builds built under the required standards, with particular attention to the specification around safety.

The Officer confirmed that yes safety is the highest priority and that each new development is designed to meet stringent safety standards.

Councillor Hamilton asked if Carbon Monoxide detectors were installed in new builds. The Officer confirmed that the information was not to hand but this would be forwarded to Members.

Lyn Mansfield asked Officers why new buildings with 2 bedrooms were still being built when the most needed were 1 bedroom properties. The Officer confirmed that this was a learning outcome from developments that had already been built and that greater consideration would be given on future new builds. Assessment of the housing needs of residents can be obtained from the housing register, the detailed housing needs survey undertaken last year in Thurrock and the strategic housing needs analysis.

Councillor Redsell asked Officers if they were aware that National Grid were currently working on the high blocks in Grays.

The Officer thanked Councillor Redsell for drawing this to their attention and stated that they were unaware and would check if the council had been advised in advance.

Lyn Mansfield asked Officers why people who had received allocation letters have not yet moved into Derry Avenue. The Officer confirmed that lettings were at an advanced stage and that residents will be moving in imminently.

The Chair thanked Members for all their comments and asked Officers to consider the recommendations.

## **RESOLVED**

- 1. It was noted that the continued progress made in the delivery of various components of housing repairs, maintenance and capital works programmes which have a positive impact on the living conditions and quality of life for council tenants.**
- 2. It was noted that progress made with the delivery of new homes within the borough.**

3. It was noted and agreed the proposed outline objectives for a new Housing Asset Management Strategy.

### 38. Work Programme

The Work Programme was noted.

#### RESOLVED

1. It was noted that the item Annual Report 2013/14 be added to the work programme for the 2016/17 municipal year work programme.
2. It was noted that the item Mould and Damp will be added to the work programme for the 2016/17 municipal year work programme.

The meeting finished at 8.17 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](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)

<b>14 March 2016</b>	<b>ITEM: 5</b>
<b>Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	
<b>Managing Damp &amp; Mould – Update on Housing Investment &amp; Development Actions</b>	
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Non - Key
<b>Report of:</b> Portfolio Holder for Housing – Cllr Lynn Worrall	
<b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Richard Parkin – Head of Housing	
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Roger Harris – Corporate Director Adults, Housing & Health.	
<b>This report is</b> Public	

## **Executive Summary**

This report provides an update to the committee on the progress of a number of programmes implemented to tackle issues of damp and mould in Thurrock Council housing stock. The committee is asked to note the progress across these various programmes.

This document has been prepared to include an overview of how damp problems affecting the building fabric is being dealt with through capital and repairs programmes delivered in the Housing department. Thurrock Council's approach is prioritised to bring about the most effective and efficient long term resolution whilst minimising disruption to the resident.

This report will outline the approaches that are taken through the delivery of our programmes including high level overall delivery figures.

### **1. Recommendation(s)**

- 1.1 That the programmes being undertaken to address issues of damp & mould, as described in this report, be noted.**
- 1.2 That the Committee support the move to a more planned, efficient and effective means of asset management.**

### **2. Introduction and Background**

- 2.1 Damp and mould is recognized to be one of the biggest issues among all social landlords alike and at this stage, damp and mould contributes to approximately 4% (1732) of repairs service demand for the Housing Department and where the issues occur there is a potentially significant impact on the lives of residents.

- 2.2 At the initiation of the ongoing Transforming Homes programme £2m was allocated to deal with damp problems. This report provides an update on the progress in this and wider programmes underway.
- 2.3 As identified in the 2015 update, damp, condensation and associated mould can be regarded as deriving from two distinct, though potentially overlapping issues: problems with the fabric of the property itself; and, problems deriving from resident behaviour. Therefore a resolution to damp and mould problems requires an approach which recognises and addresses these distinct issues and provides options which tackle underlying causes.
- 2.4 This approach moves Thurrock Council from a reactive means of dealing with damp & mould, typically not addressing long-term factors, to a more effective, economic, proactive and permanent resolution which better serves both the resident and the maintenance of property.
- 2.5 Due to the nature of the geography of the borough and the archetypes of some homes Thurrock has a number of ongoing issues with regards properties which suffer from damp problems exacerbated by a periodically high water table. These issues are being addressed through both capital and repairs & maintenance works streams and in conjunction with Thurrock Council's Flood Risk Manager and statutory bodies like Anglian Water in addressing flooding risk in the borough of which is also a factor.
- 2.6 While damp problems caused by a combination of high water table and building fabric contribute to a number of damp-related repairs, resident behaviour can also contribute to problems associated with damp & mould. Poor ventilation, heating and airflow can all contribute to condensation and mould build up in a property, which is subsequently observed in problems of mould and apparent damp. Therefore residents also play a role in resolving issues deriving from condensation. The Council has undertaken a programme of communications and guidance to improve resident awareness of these behavioural issues.
- 2.7 This report provides an overview of these two strands of the damp & mould programme being undertaken by Thurrock Council, detailing the extent and nature of progress to date.

### **3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

#### **3.1 Surveys & Works Undertaken**

- 3.1.1 Thurrock Council are taking a strategic approach to addressing problems of damp occurring in properties, by initially identifying the nature and extent of the problems and undertaking the required remedial works under the most appropriate programme to address the issue whilst causing minimal disruption to the resident.

Figure 01 below sets out numbers associated to damp and mould throughout the delivery of the transforming homes and responsive repairs programmes in 2015/2016.

**Figure 01 Damp & Mould survey & remedial works (2015/16)**

Work Stream	Number of Jobs
Transforming Homes Mould Surveys	253
Transforming Homes Remedial Works	214
Responsive Mould Surveys	884
Responsive Remedial Works	550

3.1.2 Figure 01 demonstrates that through the delivery of the Transforming Homes Programme in years 3 to date, the demand for damp surveys has been approximately 20% of the overall allocation of 1260 properties with follow on remedial works currently at 17%.

This figure compared to year 2 of the transforming homes programme: a total of 1858 properties were completed with 362 (19%) of these properties requiring some form of remedial works associated to damp and mould.

3.1.3 Works undertaken under the Transforming Homes programme has included those properties where there are more substantial issues, including for example where there are issues relating to rising or penetrating damp. Where this is the case the contractor will typically

- Ensure external ground levels are 150mm below internal floor levels where possible, with external render to same distance above the external ground level;
- Overhaul drainage and rainwater systems where required;
- Internal surface treatment;
- Install mechanical extraction fans in composite areas and ensure installed ventilation is in full operation;
- Improved heating system;

3.1.4 In addition under the Transforming Homes programme in year three, we are currently upgrading existing single glazed windows with new double glazed units to 235 properties of which will increase thermal efficiency and in turn support residents to control the environment within their home with regards to managing condensation.

3.1.5 Figure 01 also provides an overview with regards to numbers of damp and mould surveys / works completed under the responsive repairs programme for 2015/16. Out of the 1732 reported repairs related to damp and mould, this has led to 884 specialists to be undertaken with 550 properties requiring some form of remedial works based on these surveys.

3.1.6 The Repairs & Maintenance contractor will undertake a damp and mould survey as a direct result of demand from residents, Following the survey, where the remedial works are not extensive these are also undertaken through the responsive repairs service, where more extensive remedial works are identified these are generally referred to and prioritised within the Transforming Homes programme. Outline below are works generally undertaken through the responsive repairs service.

- Biological wash and scrub down to all damp and mould affected areas;
- Application of the anti-fungicidal product which treats and seals the affected areas;
- Application of a further mould treatment product that also includes a painted finish.
- Instillation of mechanical extraction

### 3.2 Resident Communications Programme

3.2.1 A key issue that has emerged through analysis of repairs data, consultation and engagement with staff and residents, was the conflation of damp and condensation either of which can result in mould growth.

3.2.2 In order to establish an effective and long-term resolution to condensation and mould issues, it is necessary to engage residents in being able to recognise condensation problems, as well as changing behaviour to address these underlying issues. In implementing a programme which seeks to bring about this effective change, a range of communications and guidance for residents has been developed and has been sent to all residents.

3.2.3 A guidance leaflet has been issued to all residents in October 2014 which includes advice on recognising damp, mould and condensation, as well as how to manage these issues. This information is replicated online, where residents can review this information within the Housing & Tenancy information section of the Thurrock Council website ([www.thurrock.gov.uk/damp-and-mould/overview](http://www.thurrock.gov.uk/damp-and-mould/overview)).

3.2.4 In recognising and managing condensation, residents are advised

- Moisture from every day activities, poor ventilation and cold temperatures contribute to condensation;
- Clear moisture wherever possible using a cloth;
- Improve ventilation and air flow in rooms and around furniture;
- Ensure extractor fans are used wherever possible;
- Dry clothes outside, or in a well ventilated room;
- Draught-proof and insulate wherever possible, and keep background level heating on in cold weather.

3.2.5 In recognising and addressing mould:

- Recognising relationship with condensation and damp which underlie mould;

- Where mould occurs, the appropriate washing and cleaning using specialised cleaning products.

3.2.6 The leaflet also set out the different types of damp and provided residents with an outline of how the Council was addressing these issues as detailed below:

- Penetrating damp: due to leaking drainage or guttering, or water ingress through cracks in wall or around windows and doors;
- Rising damp: failed damp proof membrane, or external ground level being higher than damp proof membrane;

### 3.3 Thermal efficiency and looking forward

3.3.1 In addition to the above programmes covered in this report, over the last two years, Thurrock Council's housing department has also delivered two separate "thermal efficiency" programmes by way of completing external wall insulation to solid wall properties within the borough. Across the 2014/15 & 2015/16 financial years, a total of 342 properties have formed part of these programmes. While this programme is not specifically designed to address damp and mould, improving thermal properties of the building fabric is actively supporting our residents in addressing condensation within their home.

3.3.2 Damp and Mould is a shared agenda across all large social landlords and therefore, in September 2015, Thurrock Council hosted a "Damp and Mould Conference". This conference was attended by over 40 representatives from 14 different Local Authorities and other Social Landlords. The basis of this conference was to have shared learning with neighboring local authorities and private social landlords to provide a platform to different methods taken in addressing this and how effective they have been.

A copy of the leaflet for this event is appended to this document.

3.3.3 Through the delivery of our planned programmes, the Housing Department review the latest technologies in the industry to ensure we are installing the latest most efficient products in to the housing asset. As an example of this, at present, we are reviewing electrical heating systems installed within our housing stock, 14% of properties are solely dependent on an electrical form of heating only. Looking at the issue of heating and damp & mould combined, we have recently been trialing infrared heating solution within one Thurrock Council's properties. This technology is designed to heat the building fabric and therefore, significantly reduces the occurrence of condensation related mould within the dwelling, whilst also documented to be up to 70% more fuel efficient than the traditional electrical heating systems. This trial will provide a true worked example within the Thurrock Borough.

Figure 02 below demonstrates how infrared heating is designed to operate against traditional forms of electrical heating system such as storage radiators.

Figure 02 Infrared heating Solution:



#### 4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 This report is provided as a means of updating the committee on the progress of programmes implemented to address damp & mould in Thurrock Council properties. This update is intended to provide members with further information on the approach taken by Thurrock Council in addressing what is recognised as a key issue, particularly in parts of the borough more prone to experience issues with damp & mould.

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

5.1 The damp and mould programmes established across capital and repairs & maintenance work streams, follow a period of consultation with residents that took place ahead of the initiation of the Transforming Homes programme. In February 2013, the Council approved a report detailing an outline indicative programme of the capital works programme, and the report seeking approval included reference to the period of consultation undertaken with residents as a means of developing this programme. The residents panel, investment forums, and residents excellence panel, were engaged in consultation in order to understand issues and priorities with regard to housing, and as part of this consultation areas prone to damp and mould problems were highlighted. The update provided in the current report provides a continuation of Thurrock's focus on service provision that directly addresses and resolves residents concerns.

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

6.1 This report and its contents directly address an issue of priority for residents regarding damp and mould issues, and this aligns to the Council's vision and priority regarding the improvement of health and well-being in the borough. Key to this vision is the aim to 'make sure people stay healthy longer, adding years to life and life to years'.

6.2 Recognising and addressing problems of damp and mould, as well as providing residents with the support to recognise and address these issues, furthers the Council's vision in tackling an issue that has a potential impact on both the health and quality of life of residents.

## 7. Implications

### 7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Julie Curtis**  
**HRA and Development Accountant**

No financial Implications arising from this report

### 7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Martin Hall**  
**Housing Solicitor / Team Leader**

There are no legal implications arising from this report, save to say that mould and damp are common issues raised by tenants in claims against the Council, therefore the programmes referred to above will go some way to minimise exposure to such claims in the future.

### 7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**  
**Community Development Officer**

Whilst there are no diversity implications arising from this report specifically, measures to reduce damp, mould and condensation will support the health and wellbeing of our residents and will mitigate the long term impacts on health otherwise arising from an untreated home.

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

Not Applicable

## 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**

Appendix 1 – Thurrock Council Damp & Mould Conference September 2015.

**Report Author:**

Alistair Wood

Technical Services Delivery Manager

## Damp & Mould Conference Technical solutions, operational management & shared learning

Follow up:  
solutions & shared learning  
from the conference

### Damp & Mould Conference September 2015

Condensation, damp and mould present considerable and reoccurring issues for social landlords and residents alike. Understanding underlying causes for condensation, damp and mould, as well as the different range of options to tackle these issues, is key to implementing effective and sustainable solutions.

Taking forward this need to address root causes of damp and mould, and more effectively manage resident experience of the issues, this conference sought to:

- Promote engagement & consultation with partner organisations – driving development of initiatives;
- Share & expand knowledge – through shared experience solutions & efficiencies can be found;
- Identify best practice – ensuring optimal solutions are shared and established for the benefit of all organisations.

Representatives from a large number of social landlords and partnering organisations attended the conference, bringing forward a range of experience and knowledge from across the social housing sector. Taking Thurrock's experience and solutions, innovative technology from Eco Langley, with the expert knowledge presented by the guest speaker, workshops provided a means for attendees to share knowledge and experience.

Key outcomes of the conference focused on:

- Working smarter: effectively implementing new working processes to manage residents & stakeholders, as well as identifying & planning works programmes;
- Improving communications: optimising content & delivery best achieve results;
- Using innovative solutions & technology: identifying new and innovative solutions to drive forward improvements in identifying and managing damp & mould.



## Review of conference sessions

### Thurrock Council: damp & mould management

A presentation from members of the Thurrock Council Housing Team sought to demonstrate the holistic approach the authority is implementing to tackle issues of condensation, damp and mould. Thurrock increasingly uses intelligent data and performance analysis, with resident feedback, to develop and target programme scope and delivery. Key objectives in this approach are:

- Delivering a targeted service: using limited resources where most required, ensuring residents are best placed to have improved housing conditions;
- Delivering service efficiency: optimising delivery of solutions through efficient programme provision;
- Long term asset management: optimising asset management through delivery of works appropriate to asset condition, in view of long term costs of asset maintenance.

Taking this approach delivers a number of targeted solutions through Thurrock Councils five year flagship Transforming Homes Programme, its responsive repairs programme and also its Thermal Efficiency Programme. It also underlies Thurrock's approach to investigating new technological solutions, including those currently being assessed in conjunction with Eco Langley – and the possibility of integrating these technologies in to the Housing asset. Effective asset and programme management is further supported through intelligent performance and data analysis using Horus-IM dynamic reporting solutions.



## Review of conference sessions

### Thurrock Council: damp & mould management

Using a partnership approach provides Thurrock with a range of innovative opportunities to deliver cutting edge solutions to historical social housing issues – delivering benefits in service, performance and economic advantages.

The conference overview of Thurrock's programmes provided an illustration of how a local authority may take forward a new approach and solutions within the context of wider constraints – and progressing a new approach to social housing management.



### Eco Langley: innovative technological solutions

Addressing damp and mould requires a multi faceted approach – addressing building fabric issues, as well as those of resident lifestyle and livelihood. Innovative technological solutions have the potential to target these multiple underlying issues – with Eco Langley demonstrating infrared heating as a means of addressing costly heating systems replacement and renewal, as well as addressing running costs which underlie fuel poverty.

## Review of conference sessions

### Medway Council & Mears: repairs partnering approach

Implementing a partnering approach, Medway Council with Mears have developed a comprehensive service to address condensation, damp and mould. Staff are fully trained in the range of underlying factors contributing to the visible signs of damp and mould, with a range of diagnosis and delivery options:

- Tools for diagnosis (including damp meter, infrared thermometer and borescope),
- Halophen and Bacdet applications
- Positive input ventilation systems
- Envirovent filterless extractor fans
- Tenant awareness through publications, forums, and social media

### Guest Speaker: Mike Parrett, damp expert

Providing a broader understanding of the topic, world renowned independent damp expert Mike Parrett presented updates on best practice within organisations and the industry. Highlighting current processes and approaches, his substantial experience provided revealing background on the effectiveness of frequently used approaches to damp issues. Linking to other conference themes, there was further insight on new and emerging technologies including their effectiveness in damp and condensation reduction and ultimately eradication.



## Focus: working smarter

### Improving staff awareness and knowledge:

A common theme of the conference was the increasing awareness and knowledge of condensation, damp and mould amongst the wider organisation – beyond those dealing directly with repairs on a day-to-day basis. Establishing this knowledge base underlies the ability to identify and address condensation, damp & mould from the earliest opportunity, thereby targeting lifestyle changes or repairs works to address issues from the outset.

- Medway Council highlighted the efforts of their income officers to provide support and information around managing finances amongst their tenants with the aim of raising awareness between this and lifestyle choices that contribute to condensation issues in a property.
- Common experience suggested landlords provide awareness workshops to their estate officers and staff to enable them to identify the difference between condensation and damp and mould where lifestyle has been identified as one of the contributing factors. This will allow councils to respond quicker to queries as well as provide an opportunity for one to one talks with the residents.
- Basildon Council shared their experience in providing training to their Councillors to ensure they have the technical knowledge to provide information to residents at surgeries and visits within the community.

### Planned approach to asset management

Across the organisations attending, experience suggested a critical factor to effectively and efficiently addressing issues underlying damp and mould is the implementation of a planned approach to asset management. Limited resources can be wasted in operating a service focused on responsive repairs – while failing to address underlying issues with the building fabric:

- Programmes to pre-empt occurrences of damp by ensuring essential cyclical maintenance programme are completed – including roof and guttering works, drainage checks, insulation and rendering;
- Thurrock Council have a number of programmes running via its Repairs and Maintenance Programme – initiating batch programmes for common damp related repairs. Intelligent data and performance analysis underlies identification of repairs programmes.

### Focus: improving communications

Across organisations attending the conference, a consistent message was the effectiveness of targeted and appropriate communications to residents – using a range of measures to improve understanding of condensation, damp & mould issues. Communication with residents included a range of channels – across resident forums, leaflets and posters, as well as social media.

- A range of approaches to content – from comprehensive and wide ranging, to targeted and specific – with a balance for each communication channel used. Critical is the communication of specific actions for residents to easily adopt in everyday life within their home;
- Timing of communications is further critical, with awareness leaflets targeted prior to the start of winter advising on how to manage condensation during the winter time;
- Various other methods have been adopted by the other landlords using social media such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter – Medway Council have a YouTube video which is linked to their Facebook page to educate residents, which is proving to be successful.

### Focus: using innovative solutions & technology

The conference provided an opportunity to review technological solutions social landlords are using to drive forward improvements in identifying and resolving issues related to condensation, damp and mould:

- Haringey Council demonstrated how they provide and utilise humidity monitors (battery powered ETI hygrometers) that allows the resident to see when they need to take action to reduce humidity in their home to avoid the condensation forming throughout their property;
- Eco Langley presented Infrared heating benefits and how they are very energy efficient up to 60% less than storage heaters;
- Mears presented a MGC vinyl product currently being tested, comparing winter to winter results to measure its effectiveness and benefits;
- Medway, in partnership with Mears, are implementing Positive Input Ventilators – to be fitted in each flat, and following 18 months operation are proving to be 100% successful;
- Housing Associations such as Grainger detailed how they have providing pacifier vents in their housing stock and how these have proved an effective solution to certain cases.

### Conference summary

Effectively addressing condensation, damp and mould is critical to the ability of social landlords to implement asset management within limited resources, yet at the same time taking action which substantially improve the health and wellbeing of affected residents. This conference demonstrated a number of key measures and approaches being employed which address issues relating to building fabric, resident lifestyle and staff and stakeholder awareness.

Thurrock Council hope this conference, and the associated speakers and workshops, proves beneficial to furthering shared knowledge and experience in the capacity of social landlords to tackle issues relating to condensation, damp and mould.



Investment & Development Services  
**Thurrock Council Civic Offices**  
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<b>14 March 2016</b>	<b>ITEM: 6</b>
<b>Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	
<b>Update on Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategies</b>	
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Yes
<b>Report of:</b> Councillor Lyn Worrall, Portfolio Holder for Housing	
<b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Dermot Moloney, Strategic Lead, Housing	
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing & Health	
<b>This report is Public</b>	

## Executive Summary

Thurrock Council adopted two key strategies in 2015:

- The Housing Strategy
- The Homelessness Prevention Strategy

Action plans were developed for both strategies in order to drive through the identified actions within the strategies.

This report provides an update on those action plans.

### 1. Recommendation(s)

**That Housing Overview and Scrutiny committee note and comment on the updates in this report.**

### 2. Introduction and Background

In March 2015 Cabinet approved the Council's strategic vision for housing 2015-20. The new housing strategy set out an ambitious programme through its action plan.

Subsequently, in October 2015 Cabinet approved a five year homeless prevention strategy which dovetailed with the Housing Strategy. This met the statutory requirement to produce detailed actions for how the local authority

would prevent homelessness in the borough and how it would provide accommodation for those who became or were likely to become homeless.

It is anticipated that both actions plans will develop and change throughout their life as identified needs and available resources change.

To ensure that the action plans continue to meet their objectives, Housing Overview and Scrutiny members will be invited to review and comment on the updated action plans at regular intervals.

This report highlights ongoing projects and what has been achieved to date.

### **3. Issues, Options and Analysis of options**

#### **3.1 The Housing Strategy**

Implemented in March 2015, the Housing Strategy 2015-2020 is nearing the end of its first year. During this time progress has been made towards completing many actions, and a number have already been achieved. The Housing Strategy has been split into three core priorities – Raising the Bar, In on the Ground Floor, and Looking Ahead. Each core priority is subsequently split into further objectives.

##### **3.1.1 Raising the Bar - Deliver tailored and needs led services to all residents**

A Resident Involvement register has now been developed and introduced to the Council's website, allowing tenants to register and interest to engage with the Council. There are also seven community days which have been arranged for the summer of 2016 where members of the Excellence Panel will be present to inform people and encourage them to join.

A 'mystery shopping' approach has also been implemented which will allow tenants the opportunity to test services within Housing and provide feedback to ensure that necessary improvements can be identified. It is hoped that two areas will be tested in the coming quarter.

SMART meters have been installed at all three travellers' sites in Thurrock which has resulted in a large increase in the payment of rent. The installation of the meters has been well received and residents have been shown how to operate the SMART meter functions. Additional monies are also being collected to recover arrears on a weekly basis. It should also be noted that Q3 marks the first time that no callouts were received regarding electrical payment or supply issues over a Christmas period.

##### **3.1.2 Raising the Bar – Provide high quality council housing**

Over 5400 properties have now benefitted from Transforming Homes improvement works and at the end of Q3 the programme had achieved an 81% good to excellent customer satisfaction rating.

In December 2015, Cabinet reviewed the financial implications of the Housing and Planning Bill and Welfare Reform Bill and as such approved the extension of the Transforming Homes programme by up to one year for internal improvements and up to three years for external improvements.

A new Repairs Policy has been implemented which encourages shared responsibility for the maintenance of let properties and includes provision for enhanced support for vulnerable residents. The void fit to let standard has also been revised and to support the introduction of the new policy. In partnership with Mears, a new repairs reporting app for smartphones is being introduced which provides a quick and easy way for residents to report required repairs at their property and will ensure that more repairs can be completed during the first visit.

Performance monitoring of the caretaking service is ongoing, and has benefitted from the introduction of a number of new resources such as a smartphone app and customer contact slips to monitor the standard of work carried out. This is in order to increase customer satisfaction of Estate Management services by 5%. Preparation is also underway to launch a consultation for areas currently without caretaking services.

Housing Enforcement has adopted a robust approach to anti-social behaviour and has developed a prevention, intervention and enforcement (PIE) model. Within Q3, this approach has led to 30 joint visits and estate patrols with Essex Police. Communication with victims and perpetrators include 313 telephone conversations, 361 emails and letters sent, and 160 visits. By utilising these key approaches of prevention and intervention throughout Q3, it was only necessary for the team to take enforcement action on one occasion during this period through the issue of a notice of seeking possession (NOSP) or demotion notice.

### 3.1.3 Raising the Bar – Enhance the quality of housing in the private sector

A new Landlord Forum is currently under development with the new financial year as a targeted implementation date. Further to this, it is anticipated that there will be an increase in the number of accredited landlords, which currently stands at 189.

Feedback from a survey completed by residents during Q3 who had experienced improvements to their home as part of the Well Homes initiative indicated that 100% of residents now felt that their home was a healthier and safer place to live. During Q3, 72 of the improved dwellings were occupied by a vulnerable household, 80 housing hazards were removed and 61 homes received security improvement installations.

### 3.1.4 Raising the Bar – Deliver value for money with high levels of customer satisfaction

A number of contracts have been reviewed and re-procured which have led to a number of savings, for water mains replacement (50% reduction) and lift servicing, maintenance and refurbishment (50% reduction). A final year savings figure will be calculated at the end of Q4.

New planned maintenance programmes and batch repair programmes have been identified and integrated in order to drive down the number of responsive repairs, leading to reduced repair costs and greater value for money.

Customer satisfaction monitoring is underway, including tenancy management, housing options and complaints. Analysis of this information will ensure that services are responsive to customer needs.

### 3.1.5 In on the Ground Floor – Empower residents to make informed choices with access to advice and support

All Housing frontline workers are equipped to work mobile with smartphones and/or mobiles and the upcoming introduction of the new housing management system Northgate will allow staff to access information remotely via a web app.

Housing advice training is being delivered to volunteers at the Community Hubs including information regarding Thurrock Choice Homes, Housing Benefit & Council Tax Support claims and Universal Credit. The Community Hubs will also have hot desk capabilities, providing areas in the community for staff to drop in and work flexibly.

### 3.1.6 In on the Ground Floor – Support our residents through prevention and early intervention to sustain their homes and avoid crisis

A new incentive scheme has been developed for landlords in order to secure properties in the private rental sector for homeless households and those at risk of homelessness. This is currently being advertised and includes cash payments as well as financial support towards landlord rental insurance and the fees for landlord accreditation.

The Housing Options service continues to work with the national Gold Standard challenge and has been awarded the Bronze Standard by the National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS). There have been delays experienced in progression towards the Silver Standard due to changes in the way NPSS assess applications. Work is ongoing towards achieving the Silver Standard.

### 3.1.7 In on the Ground Floor – Support residents to maintain and improve their independence

Where residents require adaptations to their properties as part of the Transforming Homes programme, these are generally being completed within

60 days. Referrals made from Adult Social Care are also being completed in a timely fashion, however further improvements are achievable. This is to ensure that residents live in suitable accommodation which supports independent living.

Housing staff are being trained on safeguarding and the vulnerable people protocol. Bespoke training is being introduced to caretaking staff and additional support is being provided to those who are not computer literate to ensure that they receive the same level of knowledge.

All sheltered housing officers have also received dementia friends training, ensuring that the service has a good level of knowledge in order to assist residents to maintain their independence.

### 3.1.8 In on the Ground Floor – Create employment pathways and support residents to access these

Significant investment in Housing has seen 27 apprenticeships created across the Housing Investment programmes. In addition to this, figures show that 32% of the delivery workforce is based locally, 20% of supply chain partners are registered in Thurrock and over 30% of programme spend is within the local economy.

In addition to the above, 68 residents have been supported through pathway programmes and 127 young people have benefitted from support from the Prince's Trust with 78% moving into employment, education, training or volunteering.

### 3.1.9 Looking Ahead – Boost the housing market delivering new affordable homes to meet local need

One new development (Bruyns Court, South Ockendon) has been completed and has 25 new units of sheltered accommodation. There are three new developments currently on site and a further four in development.

A review of extra care provisions within the Council's housing stock has been carried out, with changes to be introduced from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016. A new onsite concierge service and dedicated sheltered housing officer for Piggs Corner complex will allow care staff more time to provide care and support to residents. Kynoch Court will no longer be designated as an extra care complex but current residents will have the choice to either remain at Kynoch Court with appropriate care delivered via a domiciliary service, or the option to move to Piggs Corner or Elizabeth Gardens.

### 3.1.10 Looking Ahead – Increase housing supply, working collaboratively with the private sector

64 units of affordable accommodation with registered providers are currently on site, with ongoing work with developers and registered providers to

continue to deliver affordable housing across the borough. Discussion are currently underway for several potential sites, however there is a risk to future developments due to the 1% rent cuts and potential change in the definition of affordable housing with regards to starter homes.

Housing Zone status has been awarded and funding has been secured to progress estate regeneration. Discussions to secure partners for the progression and delivery of projects are continuing.

### 3.1.11 Looking Ahead – Ensure the sustainability of our homes to meet residents' needs now and in the future

All properties within new developments are designed and built to London Space Standards and meet Lifetime Homes criteria, with each scheme reviewed for sustainability of the construction and materials used. The Bruyns Court development at Derry Avenue, South Ockendon consists of 25 units which have been built to HAPPI Standards. The first Gloriana site at St Chads, Tilbury won the Project Award at the Housing Design Awards 2015.

342 homes have benefitted from external wall insulation and as part of the Transforming Homes programme over 1300 homes have improved energy efficiency through the installation of A grade boilers.

A review of the Council's housing stock has also identified three sheltered housing schemes for decommissioning which are no longer deemed to be fit for purpose for reasons such as accessibility. These schemes are Nottage Close, St Cedds Court and Chichester Close. The decommissioning of these schemes is currently underway and a timetable has been agreed.

## 3.2 Homelessness Prevention Strategy

Although only implemented in October 2015, a number of actions have been achieved, or are well on their way to being so.

### 3.2.1 Quarterly Homelessness forum

The homelessness forum has been set up with over 60 identified members. It will be the driving force behind the action plan and the first group meeting was on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2016 – with over 30 people attending representing 13 different agencies.

A number of work programmes have subsequently been identified for task and finish projects with cross agency working.

### 3.2.2 Development of a schools programme

Parental eviction is one of the highest reasons for homelessness in Thurrock. In order to ensure young people understand the implications of homelessness, and those working with them can sign post and contact the

appropriate services for assistance, an educational programme has been implemented.

In September 2015 a conference was held for representatives from all of the secondary schools in the borough. A variety of speakers helped representatives to understand some of the first signs of breakdown within the home and who to contact for assistance.

Teaching materials were provided including on line classroom materials and lesson plans; an educational version of You Tube (“True Tube”) which provides films on a variety of topics affecting young people has been promoted; training on loan sharks and money management and what happens when young people are evicted from the family home.

The first conference proved very successful and the next is planned for September 2016. This will provide further training and information on other relevant subjects and will be extended to include primary school staff.

### 3.2.3 Extending the use of mediation for young people being evicted

A programme of mediation between evictors and young people under 18 being asked to leave the family home, has been running for some time and is managed by Family Mosaic. Commissioning of the service has been extended to include young people up to the age of 21 and is proving successful in preventing homeless cases with 16 cases of prevention since the service started in November 2015.

### 3.2.4 A dedicated housing & welfare advice officer

The strategy identified the need for a dedicated welfare advice officer within the homeless team, especially in light of the impending welfare reforms and subsequent changes to Housing Benefit rules.

An officer was recruited and works alongside the team to provide financial and benefit advice.

### 3.2.5 Tenants accreditation scheme

A new Thurrock Tenancy Essentials programme has been set up to assist Council tenants in understanding their rights and responsibilities as tenants. In a bid to encourage more private landlords to let to Thurrock residents, the new Tenancy Essentials programme will eventually be offered to private tenants enabling them to understand their rights and responsibilities as tenants and to know where they can get assistance should they need it.

This will provide a tenants accreditation scheme which landlords should recognise as an advantage, encouraging them to give priority to tenants who have undertaken the programme. Work will be undertaken through the landlords forum to encourage private landlords to sign up to the scheme.

### 3.2.6 Housing First programme

Officers are investigating a Housing first programme which seeks to address the housing issues of people with very complex needs including drug and alcohol dependence and enduring mental and physical health problems. The programme will provide supported accommodation to alleviate the initial housing need and then provide intensive support to deal with the longer term complex needs.

A number of agencies have already indicated their support for the programme resulting in a cross party project group who will be working with the charity St Mungo's to develop suitable offers of accommodation and support across the borough. A visit to a working programme in Camden is being arranged.

A nationwide campaign "Housing First England" is being launched by the charity Homeless Link. Officers will link in with the charity to obtain training and peer support.

### 3.2.7 Training resource programmes on Homelessness

A homelessness training session for Local area co-ordinators and social workers has been held and more are planned.

An online resource is being developed which will allow Members and staff to access information around what to do when someone comes to them with a homeless related issues.

### 3.2.8 Right size programme

The strategy identified that under occupation is a big problem within the borough, across all tenures. A project to assist older owner occupiers into sheltered housing appropriate to their needs, in return for leasing their larger property to the Council was identified within the strategy.

A project team is being established, to include housing and social care colleague in order to set up a one year pilot programme.

## 4. **Reasons for Recommendations**

This report makes no recommendations – it is an update regarding ongoing work and is for noting and comments.

## 5. **Consultation**

Not applicable – this is an update only.

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

Not applicable – this is an update only.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Julie Curtis**  
**HRA and Development Accountant**

There are a number of financial implications especially around the repairs programmes but these were all considered when the initial strategies were implemented. This report only provides an update on the progress made to date and has not identified any changes to the initial assessments.

### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Martin Hall**  
**Housing Solicitor/Housing Team Leader**

There are a number of legal implications especially around the downsize project and the work with private landlords but these were all considered when the initial strategies were implemented. This report only provides an update on the progress made to date and has not identified any changes to the initial assessments

### **7.3 Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**  
**Community Development Officer**

Equality impact assessments were carried out when both these strategies were first implemented. This report only provides an update on the progress made to date and has not identified any areas where the impacts may have changed.

## **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 Authors:**

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**Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee  
Work Programme  
2015/16**

Dates of Meetings: 17 June 2015, 2 September 2015, 30 November 2015, 6 January 2016, 17 February 2016, 14 March 2016

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Date</b>
Housing Investment and Development	Kathryn Adedeji	17 June 2015
Homeless Prevention Strategy	Dermot Moloney	17 June 2015
Right to Move	Dermot Moloney	17 June 2015
Update on Repairs Policy	Kathryn Adedeji	2 September 2015
Homelessness Prevention Strategy	Dawn Shepherd	2 September 2015
Elizabeth Gardens – local lettings plan (exception for 2 bed properties)	Dawn Shepherd	2 September 2015
Local Lettings Plan - Seabrooke Rise and Derry Avenue	Dawn Shepard/Kathryn Adedeji	30 November 2015
Impact Assessment of Housing and Planning Bill on HRA Business Plan	Kathryn Adedeji	30 November 2015
Thurrock Choice Homes Adverts	Dermot Moloney	30 November 2015
Shaping the Council Budget Update - Change to the Fees and Charges	Sean Clark	6 January 2016

Updated: 6 January 2016

Allocation Policy Update	Dermot Moloney	6 January 2016
Rent Setting	Richard Parkin/Mike Jones	6 January 2016
Flexible Tenancies	Dermot Moloney	6 January 2016
Right to Move – Brief Only	Dermot Moloney	6 January 2016
Housing Investment & development Programmes (2015-16)	Richard Parkin	17 February 2016
Rent Setting - Verbal Brief	Richard Parkin/Mike Jones	17 February 2016
Changes to Extra Care Services	Dermot Moloney	17 February 2016
Shaping the Council Budget Update on themed items as and when required	Sean Clark	14 March 2016
Damp and Mould Update	Richard Parkin	14 March 2016
Housing Strategy Action Plan and Update on Homelessness Prevention – End of Year Update	Dermot Moloney	14 March 2016

Action Points:

- Homelessness Strategy will be added to the 2016/17 Work Programme for September 2016.
- Fixed Term Tenancies will be added to the work programme when further information is available.
- Improving Energy Efficiency will be added to the work when further information is available.