

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

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The meeting will be held at **7.00 pm** on **9 November 2021**

Training Room, The Beehive Community Resource Centre, West Street, Grays, RM17 6XP

Membership:

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

Substitutes:

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

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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3 Urgent Items	
To receive additional items that the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972. To agree any relevant briefing notes submitted to the Committee.	

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Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

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Agenda published on: **1 November 2021**

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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

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

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

Non- pecuniary

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



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

Our Vision and Priorities for Thurrock

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

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

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

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

Minutes of the Meeting of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 14 October 2021 at 7.00 pm (this was the postponed meeting of 21 September 2021)

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

Carol Purser, Housing Tenant Representative

In attendance: Councillor Luke Spillman, Portfolio Holder for Housing
Jo Broadbent, Director of Public Health
Peter Doherty, Strategic Lead - Housing Operations
Ryan Farmer, Housing Strategy and Quality Manager
Ewelina Sorbjan, Assistant Director of Housing
Ben Tovey, Strategic Lead for Housing Solutions
Grace Le, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Due to the cancellation of the Cabinet meeting on the previous night, the Chair stated that she had sought advice on the Housing O&S meeting from the Council's Monitoring Officer to ensure that the Housing O&S meeting was able to go ahead and that all publication had legally complied with legislation.

The Chair stated that as this meeting was being held in South Essex College instead of the Council Chamber, there was a time limit for the use of this venue which is until 9.30pm. If the items on the agenda were not concluded by 9.30pm, the meeting would be adjourned and recommence at the next Housing O&S meeting.

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.

8. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2021 were approved as a true and correct record.

The Vice-Chair asked that future minutes refer to him as Councillor Ononaji and not the Vice-Chair.

9. Urgent Items

There were no items of urgent business.

There had been one briefing note circulated to Committee Members on 27 July 2021 - Void Numbers and Process Followed. Members did not agree this

briefing note as it had been sent months ago and asked for the briefing note to be circulated again.

10. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

11. Portfolio Holder Verbal Update

Councillor Spillman gave the following update:

- Homelessness figures had dropped from 293 – 218 which was good news but a contingency plan was needed in case the situation became worse again.
- With out of borough placements, this figure had reduced to two families being placed out of boroughs.
- With Mears and general repairs, there were concerns on supply issues but this was being monitored and Mears remained at an exceptional standard.
- In regards to NEET and development, he had engaged with the Chair and local Ward Councillors and was working with other Council departments to ensure that young people had the opportunity to go into training and be supported in the housing side.
- The service had looked at the CO1 site and potentially, it would be possible to build full Council flats on that site.

Councillor Spillman said that he was impressed with the Housing Team and was encouraging the department to think bigger and be more ambitious for the borough as finances were in a better position.

Councillor Fletcher commented that it was good to hear that finances were good. In regards to the CO1 site and the rest of the borough, he asked what the plans for social housing were. Councillor Spillman said that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) had the capacity to build social homes but the risk were the costs of materials. He explained that he would be meeting with Ward Councillors to identify where social housing was needed and which sites were suitable for this.

The Chair sought clarification on the housing plans for CO1 and if the housing would be for private ownership. She pointed out that the plan had not been through formal discussions or through scrutiny. Councillor Spillman answered that the plan before was for private homes but he had felt that this was not good enough for Thurrock. He said that the financial model suggested that other plans were viable. He stated that only informal discussions had taken place for the CO1 site and that no decisions had been made yet so was not part of the formal decision making process yet.

Councillor Fletcher mentioned that he had been a member of the Planning Committee for a few years but had not seen an application for social housing in that time. He questioned when there would be an application for social

housing. Councillor Spillman answered that this would be submitted as soon as possible. He stated that he was committed to building council housing for social housing and that good quality sites needed to be brought forward.

The Chair asked whether the previous Housing Site Options List had been removed. Councillor Spillman explained that the viable sites would go forward and no new sites had been added since. He referred to the previous process of sites which was no longer in place and said that individual sites were for the Planning Committee to discuss if it became an application.

Carol Purser said that she was from the Tilbury Hub and that developers had engaged residents in previous housing development plans. Residents had identified issues and developers were able to resolve these.

The Chair sought clarification on why there were different levels of rent in social housing. Ewelina Sorbjan explained that there was a formula that set a target rent as the government had adjusted the rents which had not been growing in line with inflation. Therefore someone moving into a property may pay a higher rent than the previous person or a neighbour but the difference was a couple of pounds.

The Committee thanked Councillor Spillman for his update.

12. Housing Strategy 2022-27 - Engagement Programme

The report was presented by Ryan Farmer.

Referring to page 16, Councillor Redsell noted the points on complaints and on the safety of flats and said that the flats in Blackshots were concerning with damp issues. She went on to say that more bungalows were needed for older generations. Referring to page 24, she queried why Ward Councillors were not on the list for consultation. Ryan Farmer apologised and said that it was the service's intention to include Ward Councillors in consultation. He referred to paragraph 8.4 and said that the right to accommodate housing options addressed housing needs such as bungalows and would go through the Local Plan process for assessment. He explained that the White Paper on Social Housing addressed how residents could complain and would be incorporated into the Housing Strategy. He said that there was an aspiration for people to live as safe as possible and that the Housing Strategy would be addressing these issues.

Regarding complaints, Councillor Fletcher pointed out that complaints were addressed but 'regurgitated'. The process needed to change as complainants were often told what action had been taken only. Regarding damp issues, he said that other areas in the borough also had significant levels of damp and needed to be taken into account. He also asked what the process was for housing stock that was nearing its end. Ryan Farmer answered that with complaints, the service was learning from complainants. Regarding damp issues, he said that other strategies worked alongside the Housing Strategy which would look to have a robust mechanism in place to ensure residents

were supported and look at the housing stock. He referred to Alexander Court as a good example of this which had reached the end of its life. It would be decanted and residents there would be supported positively and moved to other accommodation such as Calcutta Road in Tilbury within the borough.

Referring to paragraph 5.2, Councillor Pearce noted the points made on violence against women and girls and asked whether men and boys at risk of violence had a refuge to go to as well. Ryan Farmer stated that the Council did not intend to exclude anyone at risk of violence and said that the strategy included all those at risk of violence.

Regarding damp and mould in council properties in Tilbury, Carol Purser pointed out that the Council's contractor, Mears, painted over the mould. However, the mould would come back again a few months later.

The Chair thanked Ryan Farmer for attending community forums. Referring to HMOs, she said that private landlords and sheltered accommodations needed to be included as part of the strategy consultation process. She stated that paper based surveys were needed and not only online surveys as not everyone could access this. She said that houses in Thurrock needed to be 'Thurrock affordable'. She noted that page 33 highlighted that 33% households could not afford a one bed median rent property and pointed out that rents were increasing but not wages. She went on to say that new homes needed good insulation, electric vehicle charging points and should not be built cheaply. Ryan Farmer answered that the consultation process would take place until the first week of January and the engagement for this had been in person with no online engagement yet. The service would also attend forums and have paper based surveys. In regards to 'Thurrock affordable', he said that the service was working with other Council departments to ensure this. For sustainable homes, the Asset Management Strategy would cover this. The Chair said that the service could engage with the Over 50s Conference with Jerry Corbett for the consultation process.

RESOLVED:

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee were asked to note the contents of this report and comment on the emerging themes presented, in particular, to highlight the priority areas which committee members feel should be considered for inclusion within the Housing Strategy 2022-27.

13. Health and Wellbeing Strategy Refresh

The report was presented by Jo Broadbent.

Referring to physical activity, Councillor Redsell said that Friends of Blackshots had been trying to acquire equipment for the area but had been turned down several times. She said funding had been granted for another organisation instead. Jo Broadbent answered that facilities should address all

ages but was not clear on the grants process. However, there was some funds in Active Thurrock which could be incorporated into the wider plan.

Councillor Fletcher said that facilities such as Grangewaters were under threat and that the service needed to look at what was already operating in Thurrock to make use of these. Councillor Redsell commented that houses could be built around the peripheral of Grangewaters to develop the area.

Referring to page 37 on the life expectancy gap, the Chair commented that this had not changed. Referring to the Local Plan and anti-social behaviour, she commented that the borough was safe ten years ago but people no longer felt safe. She pointed out that more serious crimes were happening and this needed to be recognised as Thurrock was not 'levelling the field' as the report highlighted. She said areas such as Tilbury needed to be addressed for these issues. Jo Broadbent said that the latest life expectancy gap had reduced to 9 years lower for men and 6 years lower for women. There was a difference in affluent and less affluent areas which had reduced a lot. This was in part due to improvements in healthy lifestyles over time however Covid-19 would likely have had a negative impact on life expectancy. Referring to the risk and fear of crime, she referred to the annual public health report 2019 on youth crime and said that the Violence and Vulnerability Board was managing these issues and working with young people to try to prevent those at risk. There were mechanisms in place but it could be some years before an impact could be seen.

Councillor Redsell commented that the service needed to engage with parents first in their preventative measures in youth crime. Carol Purser pointed out that there was no longer a PCSO in Tilbury to support the area which was why crimes were occurring regularly. Councillor Fletcher mentioned that the police in Ockendon were always changing officers and there was no community relationship there. The Chair stated that more police presence was needed throughout Thurrock.

RESOLVED:

The Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee was invited to comment on the project scope outlined in the attached slide set (Appendix A) and the arrangements for completing the strategy refresh:

- **The overarching Vision for the refresh should be “Levelling the**
- **Playing Field”, with each chapter identifying ambitious actions required to do that.**
- **The actions to Level the Playing Field will be arranged around 6 key influences on health and wellbeing, including wider determinants of health, around which the strategy will be structured:**
 - 1. Quality Care Centred Around the Person**
 - 2. Staying Healthier for Longer**
 - 3. Building Strong & Cohesive Communities**
 - 4. Opportunity for All**

5. Housing & the Environment

6. Community Safety

- **Review and sign-off of the draft strategy document will be at the**
- **HWB Board meeting in March 2022, and thereafter by Full Council.**
- **Operational oversight of the refresh process will be via: HWB**
- **Strategy / TICP Strategy Group, AD Oversight Group, and HWBS**
- **Engagement Group.**
- **The Strategy will be launched in July 2022.**

14. Homelessness Update - Everyone In

The report was presented by Ben Tovey.

The Committee queried where the Stifford Clays B&B was as there were no B&Bs in that area. Officers confirmed that the name of the B&B was called Stifford Clays Farmhouse B&B.

Councillor Fletcher commented that the service did not seem to be prepared for people who were about to become homeless. He felt there needed to be better collaboration between the relevant council teams. He asked what improvements had been made in the service and whether the service asked people to find a second job to prevent homelessness. Ben Tovey answered that there were cases where people had to be placed in temporary accommodation before they became homeless. The service supported people at risk if the service was made aware and aimed to help people to stay in their current accommodation. He said that the service had restructured since the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and that there was a government funded Employment Officer to help people into more secure jobs to prevent them from becoming homeless. He explained that it was part of the Council's duty to refer a person at risk of homelessness within 56 days to refer the person to the service.

Carol Purser mentioned that there had been cases where families were told to wait for an eviction notice. Ben Tovey explained that the first notice of eviction enabled the Council a few months to start work on the case and that the eviction process was long.

The Committee raised issues of staff training, contacting the homeless service and queried the staff turnover in the service. Ben Tovey explained that when he had joined the team, the majority of the team had been agency staff with a turnover of 40 staff members in 18 months. However, the team in place now was permanent and highly trained but would have more training. He said that there was always a staff member on duty at night.

The Chair sought clarification on whether there were enough funds to support the homelessness issues and if this had put a pressure on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Ben Tovey explained that the government had covered the shortfall the previous and current year but would not be covering it in the next year. He said that the service would not be able to afford the high

amounts seen during Covid-19 and this was why the service's ambition was to buy more stock.

The Chair thanked the service for their work during Covid-19 and in finding a home for the homeless. She noted that voluntary groups, community groups, youth officers and individual residents had supported people during the pandemic and thanked them for their hard work as well. She asked how many street homeless were still on the streets and whether this had increased since Covid-19. She said that she was aware that some of the homeless may not wish to be accommodated. Ben Tovey said that the homelessness situation had been worse before the 'Everyone In' scheme had launched. There was a period where there was no one on the streets but recently, there was an increase in reports and some were of people sleeping in cars but would move on to another area and of street beggars but not necessarily homeless. At the moment, there were currently five rough sleepers which the service was supporting. He said that there were some people who had presented themselves to a number of authorities to try to get housing as well.

RESOLVED:

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

15. Property Audits (aka Tenancy Audits)

The report was presented by Peter Doherty.

Referring to paragraph 6.1 in relation to looking at house conditions, Councillor Redsell sought clarification on whether this was the surroundings inside or outside of the home. On 6.2, she pointed out that 30% of housing stock surveyed was appalling and needed to be undertaken more regularly. She stated that some properties were missed out, not fit for people to live in and the service needed to be aware of these. Officers explained that house conditions were checked within the vicinity of the home where the service was able to manage. In regards to the stock condition survey, Officers explained that it was not industry standard to undertake these every year. The survey looked at one third of the Council's stock, then the other third was looked at in the next survey and then the remaining third in the survey after. When works were carried out on houses, these were updated in the asset management details to ensure an up to date picture of the housing stock. Officers explained that there was a service review on managing the wider environment such as estate inspections with residents or Ward Councillors. There would be improvements made to current processes following on from this review.

Councillor Redsell asked for a report on animals in Council properties as there were some properties that had an excessive amount of pets. Peter Doherty said that the Council tenancy agreement highlighted the control of animals as a condition of living in a council property.

Councillor Ononaji noted that fraud was mentioned in paragraph 2.1 but not again in paragraph 4.1. He sought clarification on whether fraud was still a concern and priority. He said that fraud needed more attention as there were issues of illegal subletting. Peter Doherty explained that fraud was still a focus but had expanded into other Council departments. He said that fraud cases were reported to the Fraud Team and the service ensured to support its most vulnerable residents.

The Chair said that she welcomed the idea of estate inspections as Officers needed to be familiar with the areas they managed. She commented that the external appearance of a property could indicate how a property could be managed inside and suggested that officers knock on doors in these cases. She asked how many face to face visits were now conducted and whether officers had a target to reach each month. Peter Doherty explained that the housing stock was divided in thirds as discussed before. Officers were tasked with a set number of tenancy audits to undertake along with emergency evacuation plans. This was all monitored and performance related.

RESOLVED:

The Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee were invited to comment on the Council's approach to property audits carried out by the Tenancy Management Team within general needs housing.

16. Work Programme

The following changes were made:

- Animals in Council Properties – added to 11 January 2022.
- Private Sector Stock Condition Survey – moved to 2 March 2022.

The meeting finished at 9.13 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

9 November 2021	ITEM: 5
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Housing Development Programme Update	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A
Report of: Keith Andrews, Strategic Lead – Housing Development	
Accountable Assistant Director: Keith Rumsey, Interim Assistant Director – Regeneration and Place Delivery	
Accountable Director: Sean Clark, Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

This report seeks to update members on the revised approach to consider suitability of Council sites for development of new Council housing and to update on significant milestones on sites already under consideration.

1. Recommendation(s)

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to:

1.1 Comment on the revised approach to consider the suitability of Council owned sites for redevelopment of new Council housing involving engagement with Councillors, stakeholders and communities.

1.2 Note the project updates.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Reports are presented regularly to Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the progress of the Councils housing development programme and projects. This report updates Members on a revised approach to the assessment of sites suitable for housing development and gives an update on progress of a number of projects.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

Site Review Process.

- 3.1 Since February 2020 Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee have received update reports on sites identified as potentially being suitable for redevelopment and inclusion on a Site Options List. The purpose of this approach was to provide greater transparency in the identification of sites at a very early stage.
- 3.2 Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members have expressed a preference to review the operation of the sites option list. Concern was expressed that local residents were not fully consulted in advance of sites being placed on the options list and that Members wished to have earlier opportunity to comment.
- 3.3 It was agreed at June Housing Overview and Scrutiny that a review of the process be carried out and that any revised proposals be brought back to a future meeting of this committee.
- 3.4 A revised process is now proposed which replaces the sites option list with an early review of a housing development proposal by Councillors. In this way each new site being brought forward will be considered on a site by site basis by the Portfolio Holder for Housing, the Chair of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Ward Members for the location of the site proposed. This housing development project review group will receive details of project proposals to enable Councillors to inform and advise on issues arising.
- 3.5 If supported by the Portfolio Holder a professional team will then be appointed and a detailed development proposal is then prepared to a stage appropriate for resident consultation. This process will be undertaken for new sites once initial feasibility work has been completed in order to allow an informed view to be reached. It is not intended to be retrospective.
- 3.6 The process of resident consultation previously agreed at Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2020 has been broadly positive and will continue to ensure local residents and stakeholders are fully consulted on development proposals.

Project Updates

- 3.7 Planning permission was granted, subject to conditions, for the development of 173 new homes including 62 affordable homes on the site of the former **Culver Centre and Field** in South Ockendon at Planning Committee on 23rd September. Members will receive reports in due course seeking approval to dispose of the site to Thurrock Regeneration Limited for construction.
- 3.8 A revised planning application for 4 new Council homes at **Loewen Road, Chadwell St Mary** was due to be considered at Planning Committee on 28th October. This application was resubmitted with a reduced number of homes following refusal at Planning Committee earlier in the year. These new homes with associated parking are to be let in line with the Council's Housing Allocation policy. The scheme has been designed to a high quality and seeks

to make use of renewable and low carbon technologies by being a zero gas development and providing vehicle electric charging points.

- 3.9 Resident consultation events on development proposals have taken place at **Vigerons Way, Chadwell St Mary and Broxburn Drive, South Ockendon**. Residents were invited to comment on proposals through a range of media including on-site face to face events, a consultation website, by e-mail and Freephone. Information leaflets were also issued to local residents. Resident's feedback on proposals have been collated and are being used to inform and influence the next stage of design.
- 3.10 The 35 unit Council housing **Calcutta Road** project in Tilbury for older people has been designed to the HAPPI standard which provides generous internal space, plenty of natural light in the home and circulation spaces, avoids single aspect design apartments and promotes the use of balconies and provision of outdoor space for the residents. Progress towards completion has been significantly delayed by Covid related matters and the availability of materials, in particular, concrete, tiles and paving. Material availability will determine whether final handover and completion will be in late 2021 or January 2022.
- 3.11 New occupant surveys have been completed in respect of both the new build projects at **Alma Court** (Tops Club) in Grays and **Heathlyn Close** (Claudian Way) in Chadwell St Mary. The purpose of these surveys is to understand what the new tenants liked and what could be improved upon. The learning is then incorporated into the specification of future projects. Surveys are carried out 6 months after completion and repeated at 12 months when residents have had the opportunity to settle in fully. The survey is carried out by an independent organisation.
- 3.12 94% of the Alma Court residents were either very or fairly satisfied with their new home, with the general layout, heating, kitchens and bathrooms recording high levels of satisfaction overall. The area with the lowest rating was regarding satisfaction with the play area where concerns raised were regarding anti-social use rather than the provision or layout of the play equipment. Housing Services are aware that there were complaints received regarding anti social behaviour in the play area when it first opened, however no further complaints have been received within the last six months and the block is regularly visited by the Tenancy Management Team. The Seabrook Estate Residents Association will resume meetings in the near future and this will provide residents with another route to raise areas of concern. The building has also been shortlisted for an award in the national Inside Housing Development Awards for Best Affordable Housing Development in the less than £10m category. The awards were due to be announced early November.
- 3.13 For Heathlyn Close at the 6 month survey stage 79% of the new residents were very or fairly satisfied. The main areas where dissatisfaction was with contractor's maintenance of the landscaped areas which has been addressed with the contractors and is kept under review. The ease of use of the new home user guide which contains details on operating instructions for

equipment such as boilers and other information about the building was also an area of lower satisfaction although 82% of new occupants did find it helpful and easy to understand.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 A revised process for consultation on potential housing development sites has been brought forward in recognition of members concerns. The new approach enables Councillors to have an early opportunity to review proposals and retains the detailed resident and stakeholder consultation should sites progress.

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

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

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

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

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

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

There are no financial implications directly arising from this update report. The financing of the schemes are considered as part of the HRA 30 year business plan.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Gina Clarke**
Corporate Governance Lawyer

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

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Smith**
Strategic Lead: Community Development and Equalities

There are no equalities implications to this update report.

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

None

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

- Cabinet, 15 January 2020, Housing Development Process
- Cabinet, 12th February 2020, Housing Development Options List.

9. **Appendices to the report**

None

Report Author:

Keith Andrews

Housing Development Manager

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9 November 2021	ITEM: 6
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Fees & Charges Pricing Strategy 2022/23	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key
Report of: Kelly McMillan, Business Development Project Manager	
Accountable Assistant Director: Ewelina Sorbjan, Assistant Director, Housing	
Accountable Director: Ian Wake, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

Local Authorities are involved in a wide range of services and the ability to charge for some of these services has always been a key funding source to Councils.

This report specifically sets out the charges in relation to services within the remit of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The charges dealt with are for the General Fund by the Housing Service. Charges will take effect from the 1st April 2022 unless otherwise stated. In preparing the proposed fees and charges, directorates have worked within the charging framework and commercial principles set out in the report.

The full list of proposed charges is detailed in appendix 1 to this report.

1. Recommendations

1.1 That Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the revised fees, including those no longer applicable, and that Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee comment on the proposals currently being considered within the remit of this committee.

2. Background & introduction

2.1 The paper describes the fees and charges approach for the services within the Housing Scrutiny Committee remit for 2022/23 and will set a platform for certain pricing principles moving forward into future financial years.

2.2 The paper provides narrative for the General Fund aspects of the housing area and includes:

- Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licence
- Housing Enforcement Notices
- Penalty Charges – Housing Planning Act 2016
- Penalty Charges – Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Alarm Regulations 2015
- Energy Efficiency Regulations 2015
- Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector [England] Regulations 2020
- Mobile Homes Act 2013
- Travelers' Sites

2.3 The fees & charges that are proposed are underpinned by statutory, regulatory and discretionary conditions.

3. Thurrock Charging Policy

3.1 The strategic ambition for Thurrock is to adopt a policy on fees and charges that is aligned to the wider commercial strategy and ensures that all services cost recover.

3.2 Furthermore, for future years, while reviewing charges, services will also consider the level of demand for the service, the market dynamics and how the charging policy helps to meet other service objectives.

3.3 Rather than set a blanket increase across all service lines, when considering the pricing strategy for 2022/23 some key questions were considered.

- Where can we apply a tiered/premium pricing structure
- How sensitive are customers to price (are there areas where a price freeze is relevant)
- What new charges might we want to introduce for this financial year
- How do our charges compare with neighbouring boroughs
- How do our charges compare to neighbouring boroughs and private sector competitors (particularly in those instances where customers have choice)
- How can we influence channel shift
- Can we set charges to recover costs
- What do our competitors charges
- How sensitive is demand to price
- Statutory services may have discretionary elements that we can influence
- Do we take deposits, charge cancellation fees, and charge an admin fee for duplicate services (e.g. lost certificates.)

3.4 For housing, a number of different methods to tier their charges depending on the service area are used:

- **Houses in Multiple Occupation** – are tiered based on the number of rooms, and whether the landlord is accredited or unaccredited.
- **Enforcement Notices** – are tiered around the number of hazards in conjunction with the number of bedrooms in the accommodation.

- **Mobile Homes Licencing** – these charges are tiered around number of pitches
- **Civil Penalty Notices** – these are tier charges based on severity of the offence, potential harm and considers the landlord’s income and track record.

3.5 The key following points should be noted for 2022/23 fees and charges:

3.6 The Private Housing Enforcement Policy is regularly updated as required to meet the changing circumstances caused by COVID19 to ensure a pragmatic approach is taken when dealing with landlords and the council continue to emphasis the importance of keeping properties free from hazardous conditions.

- **Houses in Multiple Occupation.** These charges will increase by an average of 2.3% (£23), as rounded to the nearest pound.
- **Assisting with licencing applications.** These will increase by an average of 3.05% (£2), as rounded to the nearest pound.
- **Enforcement Notices.** These will increase by an average of 10% (£60), as rounded to the nearest pound.
- **Penalty Charges – Housing Planning Act 2016.** These charges were introduced in 2018/19 and are scaled up to the maximum sum allowed.
- **Penalty Charges – Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Alarm Regulations 2015.** These charges are scaled in line with industry standard.
- **Penalty Charges – Energy Efficiency Regulations 2015.** These charges are scaled in line with industry standard.
- **Penalty Charge – The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector [England] Regulations 2020.** These charges are scaled in line with industry standard.
- **Mobile Homes.** The application fees have increased by an average of 2.2% (£9), as rounded to the nearest pound, and a new charge for “mobile homes fit and proper person test” has been added for 2022/23.
- **Travellers’ Sites.** These will increase by 3.57% (£4), as rounded to the nearest pound.

4. Proposals and Issues

4.1 The fees and charges for each service area have been considered and the main considerations are set out below.

4.2 The increased fees and charges are challenging and represent our commercial ambitions as a Council.

4.3 Unless indicated otherwise, fees and charges for 2022/23 will increase in line with forecast inflation (subject to rounding).

4.4 The following sections outline the fees and charges implications for the individual service streams.

5. Mandatory and Additional Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO)

Licences

- 5.1 The HMO licence fee is regulated under Section 63(3) of the Housing Act 2004. This allows the Council to set its fee taking into account all costs it incurs in carrying out its licencing function. This has been done for all licence applications for up to five years.
- 5.2 The regulations do not allow the Council to make a surplus by increasing its licence fee above the fully loaded costs of issuing a licence.
- 5.3 Additional licencing of Houses of Multiple Occupation came into force on 1st June 2019 for shared houses let to three to four unrelated persons in certain parts of the borough. It lasts for five years ending on 31st May 2024.
- 5.4 Legislative changes require the HMO fee structure to be split into two parts to take into account of the actual staff time required to process HMO licences.

Part 1 – the amount that becomes payable on application

Part 2 – the amount that becomes payable on the grant of a licence

Both parts give a total for licencing a dwelling.

All licencing income must be ring fenced to administer the licencing scheme as per the regulatory guidance on HMO licence fees.

- 5.5 Mandatory and additional licencing fees will increase by an average of 2.3% for the financial year 2022/23.

6. Housing Enforcement Notices

- 6.1 Housing enforcement notices are discretionary charges. The council will only serve an improvement notice on the landlord if this is the 'only way' of protecting the health and safety of the occupiers requiring the landlord to meet the minimum housing standards. The Housing Act 2004 allows the Council to charge for the service of legal notices under the act. The regulations state the costs should be reasonable and auditable.

- 6.2 These charges will increase by an average of 10% for the financial year 2022/23.

7. Penalty Charges – Housing Planning Act 2016

- 7.1 Legislative changes under this act allow the Council to serve civil financial penalties for certain housing offences under the Housing Act 2004.

- 7.2 Civil penalties cover:

- Failure to comply with an improvement notice [section 30]
- Offences in relation to licencing of HMO [section 72]
- Offences in relation to licencing of houses under Part 3 of the Act [Section 95]

- Offences of contravention of an overcrowding notice [section 139]
- Failure to comply with management regulations in respect of HMO [section 234]

- 7.3 The standard of proof must meet a criminal prosecution standard to serve a Civil Penalty Notice.
- 7.4 The Council charge applied is scalable from the published minimum fee up to a maximum of £30k; at the discretion of the Private Housing Service based on the severity, repetition and cooperation of the third party in resolving the issues.
- 7.5 Under this framework the Council retain the financial penalty imposed rather than the courts for the fine paid as punishment for the offence. This new income from civil penalties must be ring fenced on private housing enforcement activities as per the regulation guidance.
- 7.6 This will be a transparent process which will be outlined in the council statement of principles, to be issued with the new fee structure. Appeals may also be made against the civil penalty charge, with the charge varied or waived dependent on individual mitigating circumstances. Where non-payment occurs the civil debt recovery process will be used to recover the outstanding liabilities.
- 7.7 These charges are scaled in line with industry standard for 2022/23.

8. Penalty Charges - Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Regulations 2015

- 8.1 Legislative changes under this act allow the Council to require the Landlord to pay a penalty charge for failing to comply with a remedial notice in regard to installing smoke and carbon monoxide alarms within a single dwelling private rented home. The amount to be charged has not been prescribed by the regulations; however, it must not exceed £5k.
- 8.2 The setting of a minimum charge of £1k increasing to the maximum sum of £5k allowed will be levied for repeated breaches within two years.
- 8.3 The service expects most landlords to comply with the law than face this financial penalty imposed by the Council.
- 8.4 These charges are scaled in line with industry standard for 2022/23.

9. Penalty Charge - Energy Efficiency [Private Rented Property] 2015

- 9.1 This legislation requires private landlords of single dwellings to reach an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of E before granting a tenancy from 1st April 2018 and will continue to apply to all tenancies from 1st April 2020. Landlords with an EPC rating of band F or below G may not grant a tenancy to new or existing tenants unless an exemption is registered if they want to continue to let it.

9.2 The Private Housing Service can impose a civil penalty notice if it is satisfied that a property has been let in breach of the Regulations or if the landlord has lodged false information on the PRS Exemption Register. A publicity campaign raising awareness of the changes in the private rented sector has been done.

9.3 The council will impose a civil penalty if the landlord has let a substandard property in breach of the regulations for a period of less than three months scalable up to £4k at the discretion of the Private Housing Service. Also, if the landlord has registered false formation or misleading information on the PRS Exemptions Register it will impose the maximum fine of £1k.

9.4 These charges are scaled in line with industry standard for 2022/23.

10. Penalty Charge - The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector [England] Regulations 2020

10.1 This legislation came into force on 1st June 2020, to improve electrical safety in all residential premises.

10.2 Landlords of privately rented accommodation must:

- Ensure national standards for electrical safety standards are met as set out in the 18th edition of the wiring regulations
- Ensure all electrical installation in their rented properties are inspected and tested by a qualified person at least every five years
- Obtain a report conducting the inspection and test which gives the results and sets a date for the next inspection and test
- Supply a copy of this report to the existing tenant within 28 days of the inspection and test
- Supply a copy of this report to a new tenant before they occupy the premises
- Supply a copy of this report to any prospective tenant within 28 days of reviving a request for the report
- Retain a copy of the report to give the inspector and tester who will undertake the next inspection and test
- Where the report shows that further investigative or remedial work is necessary, complete the work within 28 days of any shorter period
- Supply written confirmation of the completion of the further investigative or remedial work from the electrician to the tenant and the local authority within 28 days of completion of the works

10.3 The Council may impose a civil penalty notice, which is scalable up to £30K, on those who are in breach of their duties under regulations and on failure to take remedial action to make their electrical installation safe. This income must be ring fenced on private housing enforcement activities. This is a new charge for 2022/23.

11. Mobile Homes Act 2013

- 11.1 The Mobiles Homes Act provides greater protection to occupier's rights of residential park homes and caravans with planning permission under Part III of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
- 11.2 Under this act it allows for licencing of '*relevant protected sites*' to ensure they are properly managed and health safety standards are maintained. A relevant protected site is defined in the act as any land to be used as a caravan site with planning consent.
- 11.3 The Council can charge a licencing fee for this function that includes:
- A licence fee for application to grant or transfer a licence or an application to alter the conditions of a licence
 - An annual licence fee for administering and monitoring licences
- 11.4 Examples of relevant protected sites are typically residential parks, mobile home parks, and or traveller sites.
- 11.5 There are exemptions to this legislation where a caravan site licence is not required under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960. For example:
- Use within curtilage of a dwelling house
 - Use by a person travelling with a caravan for one or two nights
 - Use of holdings of five acres or more in certain circumstances
 - Sites granted for holiday use only
 - Travelling Showman sites are exempt from licencing
 - It does not include sites that are owned by the council
- 11.6 The application fees have increased by an average of 2.2 and a new charge for "mobile homes fit and proper person test" has been added for 2022/23.

12. Travellers' Sites

- 12.1 The travellers' sites charges for 2022/23 will be increased by 3.57% to manage this function. The Council has three travellers' sites with a total of 64 operational plots. The Gammon Field site is at risk by the proposed Thames Level Crossing to be relocated elsewhere in the borough. Housing remains engaged in discussions about the site's future with Highways England.

Location	Number of Plots
Ship Lane, Aveley, RM15 4HB	21 plots
Gammon Field site, Long Lane, Grays, RM16 2QH	21 plots
Pilgrims Lane site, North Stifford, Grays, RM16 5UZ	22 plots

- 12.2 An average of 66% of the residents receive full or partial Housing Benefit. The reduction from last year on this figure is due to the increased in Universal Credit applications. We are working with those who have moved across to set up direct payments to cover rental changes.

Location	HB Percentage
Ship Lane, Aveley, RM15 4HB	76%
Gammon Field site, Long Lane, Grays, RM16 2QH	62%
Pilgrims Lane site, North Stifford, Grays, RM16 5UZ	59%

13. Reasons for Recommendation

- 13.1 The setting of appropriate fees and charges will enable the Council to generate essential income for the funding of Council services.
- 13.2 Under Directors’ delegated authority, fees and charges can be varied within the financial year in response to commercial requirements.

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

- 14.1 Consultations will be progressed where there is specific need. However, with regard all other items, the proposals in this report do not affect any specific parts of the borough. Fees and charges are known to customers before they make use of the services they are buying.

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

- 15.1 The changes in these fees and charges may impact the community; however, it must be taken into consideration that these price rises include inflation and no profit will be made on the running of these discretionary services.

16. Implications

16.1 Financial

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

The effect of any changes to fees and charges on individual income targets will be determined as part of the 2022/23 budget setting process in which Corporate Finance and service areas will review anticipated level of demand, fee increases, previous performance and potential associated costs. Future reports will set out the 2022/23 targets across all directorates.

16.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Ian Hunt**
Deputy Head of Law and Deputy Monitoring Officer

Fees and charges generally fall into three categories – Statutory, Regulatory and Discretionary. Statutory charges are set in statute and cannot be altered by law since the charges have been determined by Central government and all authorities will be applying the same charge.

Regulatory charges relate to services where, if the Council provides the service, it is obliged to set a fee which the Council can determine itself in accordance with a regulatory framework. Charges have to be reasonable and must be applied across the borough.

Discretionary charges relate to services which the Council can provide if they choose to do so. This is a local policy decision. The Local Government Act 2003 gives the Council power to charge for discretionary services, with some limited exceptions. This may include charges for new and innovative services utilising the Council's general power of competence under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. The income from charges, taking one financial year with another, must not exceed the cost of provision. A clear and justifiable framework of principles should be followed in terms of deciding when to charge and how much, and the process for reviewing charges.

A service may wish to consider whether they may utilise this power to provide a service that may benefit residents, businesses and other service users, meet the Council priorities and generate income.

Decisions on setting charges and fees are subject to the Council's decision making structures. Most charging decisions are the responsibility of Cabinet, where there are key decisions. Some fees are set by full Council.

16.3 Diversity and Equality

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

The Council is responsible for promoting equality of opportunity in the provision of services and employment as set out in the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty. Decisions on setting charges and fees are subject to Community Equality Impact Assessment process and the Council's wider decision making structures to determine impact on protected groups and related concessions that may be available.

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

None

17. 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

18. Appendices to the report

Appendix 1 – Schedule of Proposed Fees and Charges for 2022/23

Report Author:

Kelly McMillan
Business Development Project Manager

Details					2021/22 - Charges		2022/23 - Charges				Changes from 2021/22			
Name of fee or Charge	Directorate	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Owner	Stat / Disc	Total Charge	VAT	Net Charge	VAT Amount	Total Charge	Net Change	VAT Amount	Total Change (£)	Total Change (%)	
HMOs 5 year License (Fees for single tenancies and shared houses) - 2 to 5 rooms - Landlord Accredited (Application Fee £550, License Fee £425)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 975.00	O	£ 999.00	£ -	£ 999.00	£ 24.00	£ -	£ 24.00	2.46%	
HMOs 5 year License (Fees for single tenancies and shared houses) - 2 to 5 rooms - Non Accredited (Application Fee £625, License Fee £505)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 1,130.00	O	£ 1,158.00	£ -	£ 1,158.00	£ 28.00	£ -	£ 28.00	2.48%	
HMOs 5 year License (Fees for single tenancies and shared houses) - 6 to 10 rooms - Landlord Accredited (Application Fee £570, License £455)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 1,025.00	O	£ 1,050.00	£ -	£ 1,050.00	£ 25.00	£ -	£ 25.00	2.44%	
HMOs 5 year License (Fees for single tenancies and shared houses) - 6 to 10 rooms - Non Accredited (Application Fee £650, License Fee £530)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 1,180.00	O	£ 1,209.00	£ -	£ 1,209.00	£ 29.00	£ -	£ 29.00	2.46%	
HMOs 5 year License (Fees for single tenancies and shared houses) - 11 to 15 rooms - Landlord Accredited (Application Fee £680, License Fee £450)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 1,130.00	O	£ 1,158.00	£ -	£ 1,158.00	£ 28.00	£ -	£ 28.00	2.48%	
HMOs 5 year License (Fees for single tenancies and shared houses) - 11 to 15 rooms - Non Accredited (Application Fee £780, License Fee £520)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 1,300.00	O	£ 1,332.00	£ -	£ 1,332.00	£ 32.00	£ -	£ 32.00	2.46%	
HMOs 5 year License (Fees for single tenancies and shared houses) - 16 to 20 rooms - Landlord Accredited (Application Fee £670, License Fee £565)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 1,235.00	O	£ 1,265.00	£ -	£ 1,265.00	£ 30.00	£ -	£ 30.00	2.43%	
HMOs 5 year License (Fees for single tenancies and shared houses) - 16 to 20 rooms - Non Accredited (Application Fee £770, License Fee £565)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 1,335.00	O	£ 1,368.00	£ -	£ 1,368.00	£ 33.00	£ -	£ 33.00	2.47%	
New HMOs 5 year License (Fees for single tenancies and shared houses) - 21 to 29 rooms - Landlord Accredited (Application Fee £760, License Fee £660)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 1,420.00	O	£ 1,450.00	£ -	£ 1,450.00	£ 30.00	£ -	£ 30.00	2.11%	
New HMOs 5 year License (Fees for single tenancies and shared houses) - 21 to 29 rooms - Non Accredited (Application Fee £870, License Fee £760)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 1,630.00	O	£ 1,670.00	£ -	£ 1,670.00	£ 40.00	£ -	£ 40.00	2.45%	
New HMOs 5 year License (Fees for single tenancies and shared houses) - 30 or more rooms - Landlord Accredited (Application Fee £900, License Fee £745)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 1,645.00	O	£ 1,680.00	£ -	£ 1,680.00	£ 35.00	£ -	£ 35.00	2.13%	
New HMOs 5 year License (Fees for single tenancies and shared houses) - 30 or more rooms - Non Accredited (Application Fee £1,025, License Fee £865)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 1,890.00	O	£ 1,930.00	£ -	£ 1,930.00	£ 40.00	£ -	£ 40.00	2.12%	
Renewable HMO's License (5 year-no changes or management regulation breaches) - 2 to 5 rooms - Landlord Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 485.00	O	£ 495.00	£ -	£ 495.00	£ 10.00	£ -	£ 10.00	2.06%	
Renewable HMO's License (5 year-no changes or management regulation breaches) - 2 to 5 rooms - Non Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 560.00	O	£ 573.00	£ -	£ 573.00	£ 13.00	£ -	£ 13.00	2.32%	

Renewable HMO's License (5 year-no changes or management regulation breaches) - 6 to 10 - Landlord Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 515.00	O	£ 527.00	£ -	£ 527.00	£ 12.00	£ -	£ 12.00	2.33%
Renewable HMO's License (5 year-no changes or management regulation breaches) - 6 to 10 - Non Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 590.00	O	£ 604.00	£ -	£ 604.00	£ 14.00	£ -	£ 14.00	2.37%
Renewable HMO's License (5 year-no changes or management regulation breaches) - 11 to 15 - Landlord Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 565.00	O	£ 578.00	£ -	£ 578.00	£ 13.00	£ -	£ 13.00	2.30%
Renewable HMO's License (5 year-no changes or management regulation breaches) - 11 to 15 - Non Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 650.00	O	£ 665.00	£ -	£ 665.00	£ 15.00	£ -	£ 15.00	2.31%
Renewable HMO's License (5 year-no changes or management regulation breaches) - 16 to 20 - Landlord Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 615.00	O	£ 630.00	£ -	£ 630.00	£ 15.00	£ -	£ 15.00	2.44%
Renewable HMO's License (5 year-no changes or management regulation breaches) - 16 to 20 - Non Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 710.00	O	£ 725.00	£ -	£ 725.00	£ 15.00	£ -	£ 15.00	2.11%
Renewable HMO's License (5 year-no changes or management regulation breaches) - 21 to 29 - Landlord Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 710.00	O	£ 725.00	£ -	£ 725.00	£ 15.00	£ -	£ 15.00	2.11%
Renewable HMO's License (5 year-no changes or management regulation breaches) - 21 to 29 - Non Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 815.00	O	£ 835.00	£ -	£ 835.00	£ 20.00	£ -	£ 20.00	2.45%
Renewable HMO's License (5 year-no changes or management regulation breaches) - 30 or more units - Landlord Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 820.00	O	£ 840.00	£ -	£ 840.00	£ 20.00	£ -	£ 20.00	2.44%
Renewable HMO's License (5 year-no changes or management regulation breaches) - 30 or more units - Non Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 945.00	O	£ 965.00	£ -	£ 965.00	£ 20.00	£ -	£ 20.00	2.12%
Other Misc. Income - Change of Manager - Accredited landlord	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 150.00	O	£ 153.00	£ -	£ 153.00	£ 3.00	£ -	£ 3.00	2.00%
Other Misc. Income - Change of Manager - Non Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 173.00	O	£ 177.00	£ -	£ 177.00	£ 4.00	£ -	£ 4.00	2.31%
Assisting with Licensing application (First 30 minutes free for accredited landlords, thereafter £50.00 per hour pro rata) - Landlord Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 65.50	O	£ 67.50	£ -	£ 67.50	£ 2.00	£ -	£ 2.00	3.05%
Assisting with Licensing application (First 30 minutes free for accredited landlords, thereafter £50.00 per hour pro rata) - Non Accredited	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 65.50	O	£ 67.50	£ -	£ 67.50	£ 2.00	£ -	£ 2.00	3.05%
Failure to comply with an improvement notice [section 30] - Minimum Charge, capped at £30k maximum	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 1,545.00	O	£ 1,580.00	£ -	£ 1,580.00	£ 35.00	£ -	£ 35.00	2.27%
Offences in relation to licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation [section 72] - Minimum Charge, capped at £30k maximum	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 2,500.00	O	£ 2,555.00	£ -	£ 2,555.00	£ 55.00	£ -	£ 55.00	2.20%

Offences in relation to licensing of houses under Part 3 of the Act [Section 95] - Minimum Charge, capped at £30k maximum	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 2,500.00	O	£ 2,555.00	£ -	£ 2,555.00	£ 55.00	£ -	£ 55.00	2.20%
Offences of contravention of an overcrowding notice [section 139] - Minimum Charge, capped at £30k maximum	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 1,000.00	O	£ 1,025.00	£ -	£ 1,025.00	£ 25.00	£ -	£ 25.00	2.50%
Failure to comply with management regulations in respect of Houses in Multiple Occupation [section 234] - Minimum Charge, capped at £30k maximum	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 1,550.00	O	£ 1,585.00	£ -	£ 1,585.00	£ 35.00	£ -	£ 35.00	2.26%
Travellers Charges - Rent/ Water/ Amenity	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 112.00	O	£ 116.00	£ -	£ 116.00	£ 4.00	£ -	£ 4.00	3.57%
Offences for Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Alarm Regulations non compliance (Initial fine followed by repetition within 2 years)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£1,000 then £5,000	O	£1,000 then £5,000	£ -	£1,000 then £5,000	£ -	£ -	£ -	0.00%
Private Housing Services - Housing Enforcement Notices - 1 to 4 Hazards - 1 Bed accomodation	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 375.00	O	£ 415.00	£ -	£ 415.00	£ 40.00	£ -	£ 40.00	10.67%
Private Housing Services - Housing Enforcement Notices - 1 to 4 Hazards - 2 Bed accomodation	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 422.50	O	£ 465.00	£ -	£ 465.00	£ 42.50	£ -	£ 42.50	10.06%
Private Housing Services - Housing Enforcement Notices - 1 to 4 Hazards - 3 Bed accomodation	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 466.00	O	£ 515.00	£ -	£ 515.00	£ 49.00	£ -	£ 49.00	10.52%
Private Housing Services - Housing Enforcement Notices - 1 to 4 Hazards - 4 Bed accomodation	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 562.00	O	£ 620.00	£ -	£ 620.00	£ 58.00	£ -	£ 58.00	10.32%
Private Housing Services - Housing Enforcement Notices - 1 to 4 Hazards - 5 or 6 Bed accomodation	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 608.00	O	£ 670.00	£ -	£ 670.00	£ 62.00	£ -	£ 62.00	10.20%
Private Housing Services - Housing Enforcement Notices - 1 to 4 Hazards - over 6 Bed or HMO accomodation	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 730.00	O	£ 805.00	£ -	£ 805.00	£ 75.00	£ -	£ 75.00	10.27%
Private Housing Services - Housing Enforcement Notices - 5 or more Hazards - 1 Bed accomodation	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 466.00	O	£ 515.00	£ -	£ 515.00	£ 49.00	£ -	£ 49.00	10.52%
Private Housing Services - Housing Enforcement Notices - 5 or more Hazards - 2 Bed accomodation	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 514.00	O	£ 570.00	£ -	£ 570.00	£ 56.00	£ -	£ 56.00	10.89%
Private Housing Services - Housing Enforcement Notices - 5 or more Hazards - 3 Bed accomodation	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 562.00	O	£ 620.00	£ -	£ 620.00	£ 58.00	£ -	£ 58.00	10.32%
Private Housing Services - Housing Enforcement Notices - 5 or more Hazards - 4 Bed accomodation	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 665.00	O	£ 735.00	£ -	£ 735.00	£ 70.00	£ -	£ 70.00	10.53%
Private Housing Services - Housing Enforcement Notices - 5 or more Hazards - 5 or 6 Bed accomodation	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 715.00	O	£ 790.00	£ -	£ 790.00	£ 75.00	£ -	£ 75.00	10.49%
Private Housing Services - Housing Enforcement Notices - 5 or more Hazards - over 6 Bed or HMO accomodation	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 795.00	O	£ 880.00	£ -	£ 880.00	£ 85.00	£ -	£ 85.00	10.69%
Private Housing Services - Housing Non Statutory work for Border Agency (per case)	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 175.00	O	£ 180.00	£ -	£ 180.00	£ 5.00	£ -	£ 5.00	2.86%
Offences for Energy Efficency Regulations 2015 non compliance - registered false or misinformation on PRS Exemption Register capped at 1k	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 1,000.00	O	£ 1,000.00	£ -	£ 1,000.00	£ -	£ -	£ -	0.00%
Offences for Energy Efficency Regulations 2015 non compliance - sub standard property let with EPC F or G, capped at 4k	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	< 3 mnths £2,000 > 3mnths £4,000	O	< 3 mnths £2,000 > 3mnths £4,000	£ -	< 3 mnths £2,000 > 3mnths £4,000	£ -	£ -	£ -	0.00%

Mobile Home Licensing Fee [1- 10 pitches]														
Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D											
Mobile Homes initial set up - Application Fee	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 556.00	O	£ 568.00	£ -	£ 568.00	£ 12.00	£ -	£ 12.00	2.16%	
Application to Transfer a Site Licence	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 253.00	O	£ 259.00	£ -	£ 259.00	£ 6.00	£ -	£ 6.00	2.37%	
Application to Amend a Site Licence	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 319.00	O	£ 326.00	£ -	£ 326.00	£ 7.00	£ -	£ 7.00	2.19%	
Mobile Home Licensing Fee [11- 20pitches]														
Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D											
Mobile Homes initial set up - Application Fee	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 600.00	O	£ 615.00	£ -	£ 615.00	£ 15.00	£ -	£ 15.00	2.50%	
Application to Transfer a Site Licence	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 253.00	O	£ 259.00	£ -	£ 259.00	£ 6.00	£ -	£ 6.00	2.37%	
Application to Amend a Site Licence	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 319.00	O	£ 326.00	£ -	£ 326.00	£ 7.00	£ -	£ 7.00	2.19%	
Mobile Home Licensing Fee [21- 50 pitches]														
Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D											
Mobile Homes initial set up - Application Fee	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 644.00	O	£ 650.00	£ -	£ 650.00	£ 6.00	£ -	£ 6.00	0.93%	
Application to Transfer a Site Licence	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 253.00	O	£ 259.00	£ -	£ 259.00	£ 6.00	£ -	£ 6.00	2.37%	
Application to Amend a Site Licence	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 319.00	O	£ 326.00	£ -	£ 326.00	£ 7.00	£ -	£ 7.00	2.19%	
Mobile Home Licensing Fee [51 -99 pitches]														
Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D											
Mobile Homes initial set up - Application Fee	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 688.00	O	£ 705.00	£ -	£ 705.00	£ 17.00	£ -	£ 17.00	2.47%	
Application to Transfer a Site Licence	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 253.00	O	£ 259.00	£ -	£ 259.00	£ 6.00	£ -	£ 6.00	2.37%	
Application to Amend a Site Licence	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 319.00	O	£ 326.00	£ -	£ 326.00	£ 7.00	£ -	£ 7.00	2.19%	
Mobile Home Licensing Fee [100 pitches +]														
Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D											
Mobile Homes initial set up - Application Fee	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 732.00	O	£ 750.00	£ -	£ 750.00	£ 18.00	£ -	£ 18.00	2.46%	
Application to Transfer a Site Licence	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 253.00	O	£ 259.00	£ -	£ 259.00	£ 6.00	£ -	£ 6.00	2.37%	
Application to Amend a Site Licence	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£ 319.00	O	£ 326.00	£ -	£ 326.00	£ 7.00	£ -	£ 7.00	2.19%	
Offences of contravening electrical safety standard regulations 2020 'minumum charge' capped at £30k	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D	£500 - £30K	O	£500 - £30K	£ -	£500 - £30K	£ -	£ -	£ -	0.00%	
Mobile Homes Fit and Proper Person Test	Adults, housing and Health	Housing	Dulal Ahmed	D		O	£ 323.00	£ -	£ 323.00	£ 323.00	£ -	£ 323.00	0.00%	
Sheltered Housing Visitor's Room - Per night per person	Adults, Housing and Health	Housing	Sue Kane	D	£ 12.00	O	£ 15.00	£ -	£ 15.00	£ 3.00	£ -	£ 3.00	25.00%	

Dispersed Alarms - Lifeline Private	Strategy; Engagement & Growth	Housing	Tina Mitchell	D	£ 20.40	S	£ 17.33	£ 3.47	£ 20.80	£ 0.33	£ 0.07	£ 0.40	1.96%
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9 November 2021		ITEM: 7
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Damp and Mould in Council Housing Properties		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key	
Report of: Susan Cardozo, Strategic Lead Assets, Repairs and Compliance		
Accountable Assistant Director: Ewelina Sorbjan, Assistant Director for Housing		
Accountable Director: Ian Wake, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report is being presented to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide an update following meeting held in June 2021.

This report provides further information on how Thurrock manage damp and mould within the housing stock it is supplementing the June 2021 report and the background information included in the June report has not been repeated here.

In this report data held from our responsive repairs contract from 2015 onwards has been reviewed to provide a comprehensive oversight to reported numbers of damp and mould over that period.

The report also provided a detailed explanation of the improvements being made to processes for managing cases of damp and mould, future plans and the planned capital investment which will assist in the reduction of damp and mould cases.

Key themes from the analysis are:

- Damp and mould is not a systematic issue affecting our entire stock
- A relatively small proportion of stock is affected
- The number of affected properties has been generally falling over the years
- The causes of damp are not recorded historically but changes have been introduced to the repair process to enable future reporting
- Improvements have been made to ensure sensitive communication with residents
- In most cases the problem is being dealt with effectively when reported, with a smaller number of cases leading to reoccurrences

- Changes to service delivery have been made which aim to further reduce the rate of re-occurrence

1. Recommendation(s)

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

2. Introduction and background

- 2.1 The housing service acknowledge that mould and damp is a persistent problem in a percentage the housing stock. However, the numbers demonstrate that on balance this is not a systemic issue, nor is it caused by any specific building defects.
- 2.2 This report is seeking to further inform members on the specifics within the Thurrock council housing stock and what measures the service are currently taking, and plan to take in the future, to remediate this and to further support our residents.
- 2.3 The housing service are entirely committed to the management and investment required to tackle and minimise cases of damp and mould within our residents homes. However, it is recognised that it is not possible to fully eradicate the presence of damp and mould due to the multitude of factors that cause this. The service seeks to develop and deliver a proportionate approach to the issue.

3. Identifying the causes and remediation of damp and mould

- 3.1 Damp and mould in social housing is an issue across the UK. It is widely recognised as one of the most challenging aspects for landlords and residents to prevent and manage. It is for this reason that the Housing Ombudsman is currently undertaking a 'thematic investigation' on the subject with the aim of identifying recommendations to assist social landlords with the management of the issue.
- 3.2 Identifying the causes of damp and or mould is relatively straight forward because, as identified in the June 2021 report to this committee, each of the causes have common visual characteristics which will identify the underlying cause. This combined with the use of surveying technology and the surveyor's knowledge in building pathology, means that the Council is able to quickly identify causes of specific damp and mould in most instances.
- 3.3 Officers of the Council's in-house technical team have the qualification and the experience in building surveying and this allows them to work with our partnering contractors to ensure that everyone is up to date with applicable technical literature and guidance notes in regard to the subject matter of this report. This is combined with the skills and resources from our contractors to

ensure that we develop and deliver the best advice, repairs and home improvements for our residents

- 3.4 It is currently not possible to identify the underlying causes of damp and mould for individual properties from the responsive repair data due to the way in which the data is captured. This is because the level of detailed information is not currently recorded as part of a works order.
- 3.5 We are currently working with our partnering repairs contractors to enhance their damp and mould data provision to the Council to include a greater level of information. This will include the identification of the cause of damp and mould and the room locations. This will enable us to better understand damp and mould occurrences on an individual property basis through data analysis and make the most appropriate interventions where required through better business intelligence. This new method of data capture has taken effect from 1 October 2021.
- 3.6 A number of other improvements have been made in recent months. In addition to improved recording and reporting with our responsive repairs contractors, we are also making improvements to the integrated working practices with our in-house technical team. This will assist in identifying early interventions so better first time fix rates for damp and mould cases can be achieved providing a better experience for residents.
- 3.7 Since reporting in June 2021 the time frames for attendance, when a report of damp and mould is received from a resident, have been reduced. Our responsive repairs contractor will now attend on the initial inspection within 5 working days with required works completed within a 15 working day time frame. This is to ensure that the length of time a resident is living with damp and or mould within their property is reduced.
- 3.8 All Thurrock's housing repair contractors have been requested to check for and report any issues with damp and mould whenever they visit a property for whatever reason. This may include asking the residents if they are experiencing any problems. This is then reported back to Thurrock to ensure that these properties are surveyed and the necessary remedial works undertaken. This additional intelligence is being undertaken with the aim of capturing any properties that have not previously reported instances with damp and mould.
- 3.9 Reporting of any repairs or damp and mould issues is also part of the tenancy audits. A tenancy audit involves a home visit by a Tenancy Management Officer, during the visit the officer will also check the condition of the property including any issues with damp and mould. Any incidences are then reported to the repairs service, surveyed and remedial works undertaken.
- 3.10 The most challenging aspect of managing and preventing damp and mould in the housing stock is due to the most common cause which is condensation. Thurrock Council are not unique in identifying condensation as the predominant cause of mould in their housing stock. There are a number of

key publications on this subject including the World Health Organisation which identify measures in controlling environments in the home to prevent the formation of condensation and the associated mould that can grow if left unmanaged. ¹

- 3.11 There has been some misconception that social landlords seek to avoid accountability where condensation related mould is identified. The Council is fully aware that condensation related mould is not solely caused by resident's behaviour and in most cases where condensation related mould has been identified there are other factors. These other factors include: building age, age and condition of building elements, build type and location, fuel poverty and household makeup. However, the advice that both the Council and partners give to residents is factually based and is delivered in a manner aimed to inform and support our residents because addressing damp and mould in the home has to be a joint effort between the Council and the resident. Ensuring the resident is sufficiently informed in relation to how to manage the environment in their home and maintaining this alongside general household practices is the only way of preventing condensation related mould in the first instance.
- 3.12 In June 2021 members of this committee raised the matter of how advice was delivered to residents. We are seeking to assure members that the messages and advice that we give to residents is not given in a manner that is seeking to appoint accountability, but in a supportive manner that will help them in preventing condensation related mould where applicable. Consideration is given to the cost of heating a home. It is recognised that a significant number of residents experience fuel poverty and resident liaison officers are now trained in fuel poverty assessments and have been talking to residents about how to manage their energy bills.
- 3.13 The Housing department is always looking to ensure that resources are used effectively to benefit as many residents as possible in its programme delivery. Members will be aware of the significant market factors that are currently affecting the construction industry and this is adding to the challenges of programme delivery. Where possible we are seeking support from different external funding grants for scheme delivery and we are hopeful to obtaining some significant funding through ECO and the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. This will enable the further the expansion of improvement measures across the assets.
- 3.14 The Council will continue to undertake any necessary repairs when damp and mould is found to be caused by building fabric failure and this will continue to be done at the earliest opportunity. We actively encourage residents to report any case of mould that they find in their home to allow an early assessment and early intervention. This ensures we are able to undertake any necessary works at an early stage alongside the provision of specific advice to our residents.

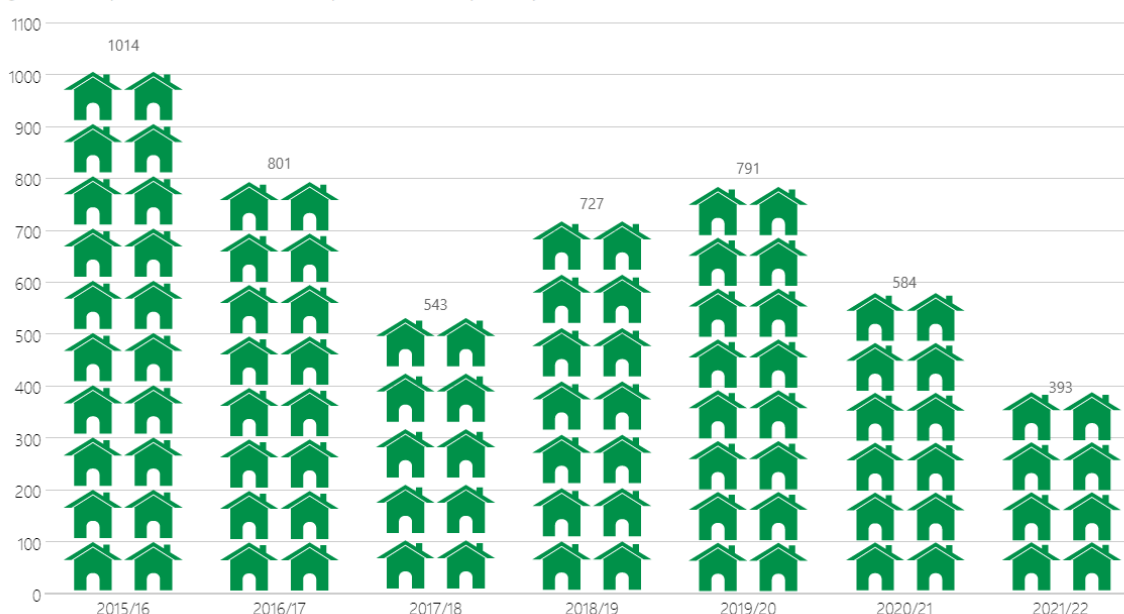
¹ The WHO Guide for Indoor Air Quality: World Health Organisation 2009

4. Reported cases of damp and mould

4.1 This section of the report provides an analysis of damp and mould repairs data run directly from our housing management system to give an overview of reported cases of damp and mould within the housing stock since the 2015-2016 financial year to early September 2021.

4.2 Figure 1 visualises the number of unique addresses with damp and mould repairs completed by year with each unique address counted once each year irrespective of the number of works orders completed. This provides a true reflection of the number of properties affected by damp and mould within each year.

Figure 1: Unique Addresses With Damp and Mould Repairs by Year



**2021/22 represents the year to date position as of September 2021*

4.3 The number of properties affected by damp and mould each year has reduced since 2015/16. In 2020/21 584 individual properties were affected by damp and mould which represents a 42.4% reduction in comparison with 2015/16 and a 26.2% reduction in comparison with 2019/20. 584 properties equates to around 5.9% of current stock levels and demonstrates that approximately 94.1% of the current housing stock did not report damp and mould in 2020/21.

4.4 Figure 2 visualises the percentage of the current housing stock with zero or one occurrence of damp and mould since the beginning of the 2015/16 financial year to date. This provides a true reflection of the proportion of the housing stock which have not reported multiple occurrences of damp and mould since April 2015.

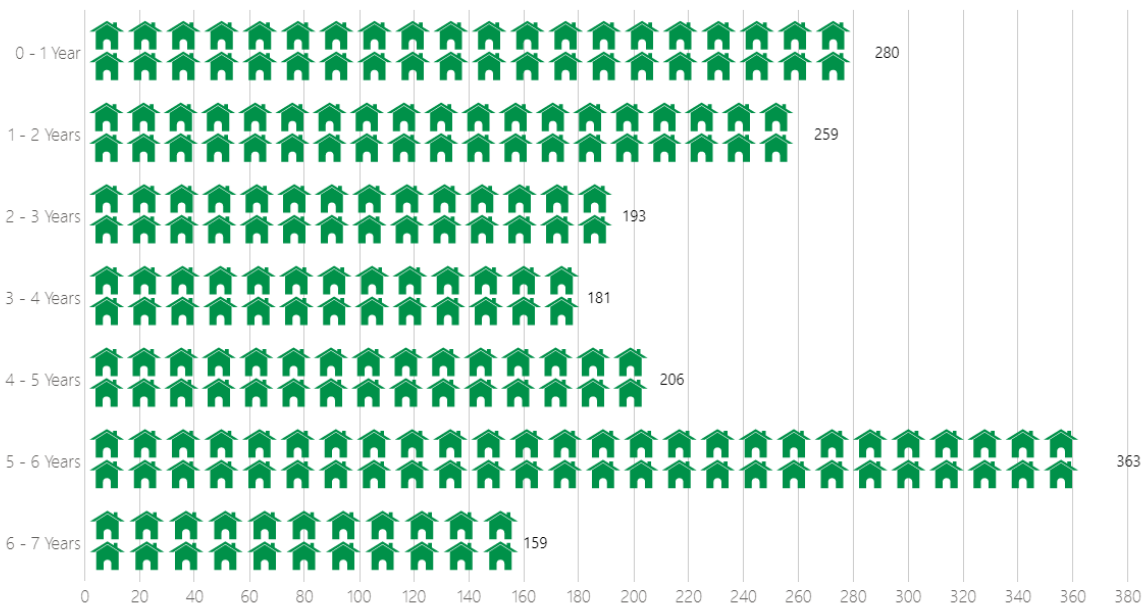
Figure 2: % of Current Stock With 0 or 1 Occurrence(s) of Damp and Mould Since 2015/16 (88.9%)



4.5 Over a period of more than 6 years, 88.9% (almost 9 in 10) of the current housing stock has not had more than 1 occurrence of damp and mould. Of this cohort of properties, 7,113 (72.2% of stock) have not reported damp and mould at all and 1,641 (16.7% of stock) have only reported damp and mould once. This demonstrates that the vast majority of the current housing stock does not have ongoing or systemic issues with damp and mould which is clearly evidenced by the number of occurrences.

4.6 Figure 3 visualises the number of the properties which have reported one occurrence of damp and mould broken down by the time which has elapsed since the last damp and mould repair. This demonstrates the effective management of damp and mould where properties have reported damp and mould once during the reporting period and have not needed to report subsequent repairs.

Figure 3: Properties With 1 Occurrence of Damp and Mould by Years Since Last Repair

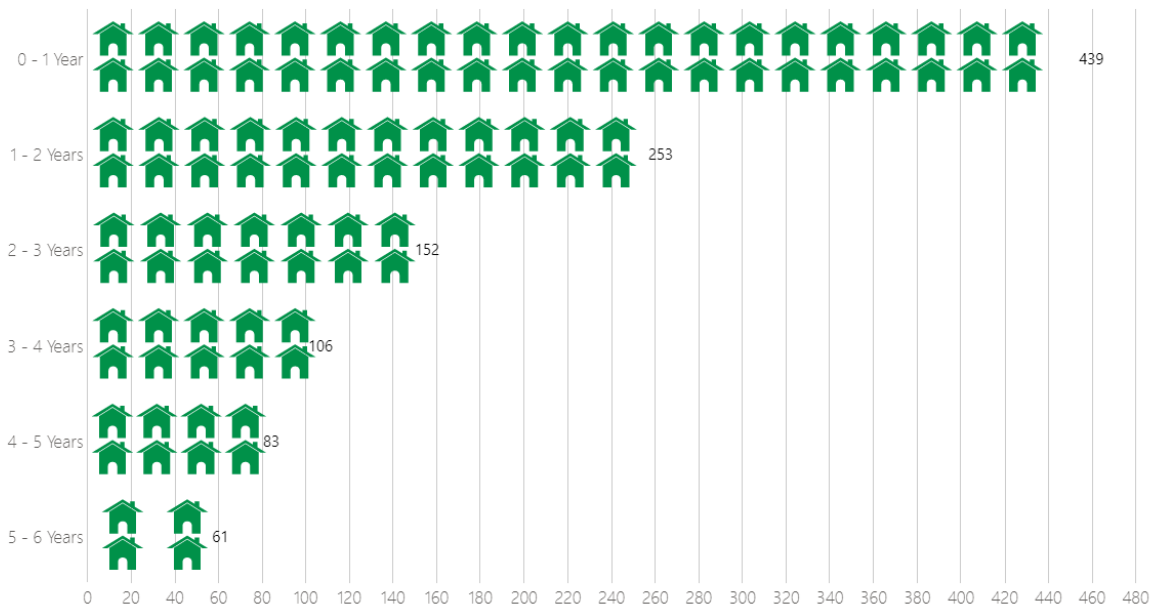


*Year bands shown in figure 3 straddle financial years and as a result are not directly comparable to the numbers in figure 1

4.7 Of the 1,641 properties that have reported damp and mould once, 1361 (82.9%) had their last damp and mould repair completed more than one year ago, which suggests that the works undertaken has resolved the issue and demonstrates effective management of damp and mould. 280 (17.1%) properties have reported damp and mould within the last year; these properties have not previously reported damp and mould during the reporting period, which demonstrates these properties have not previously experienced issues with damp and mould.

4.8 Figure 4 visualises the number of the properties that have reported two or more occurrences of damp and mould broken down by the time that has elapsed since the last damp and mould repair. This provides an indication of the number of properties that have had multiple occurrences of damp and mould since April 2015 and could have ongoing issues. Conversely, this also demonstrates the proportion of properties that have had multiple occurrences of damp and mould where the last repair was completed more than a year ago suggesting the issue has been effectively remedied through repairs.

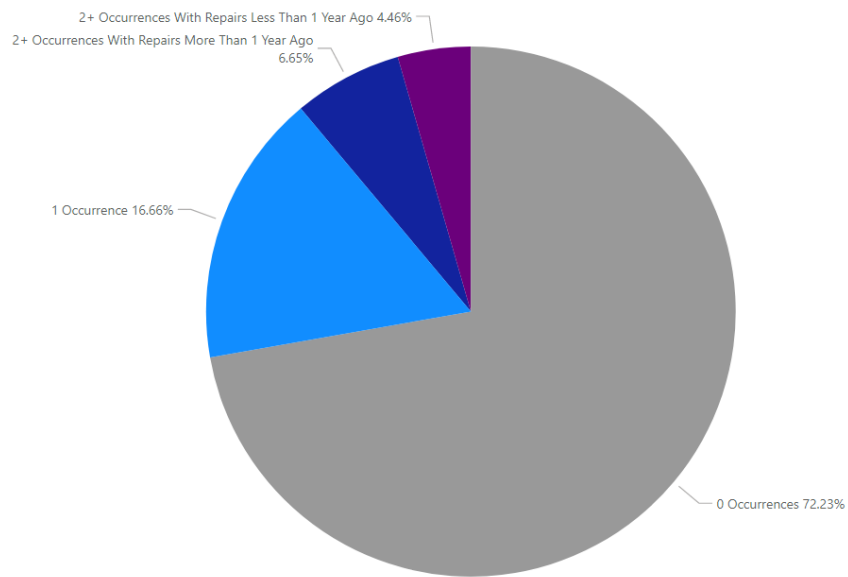
Figure 4: Properties With 2 or More Occurrences of Damp and Mould by Years Since Last Repair



**Year bands shown in figure 4 straddle financial years and as a result are not directly comparable to the numbers in figure 1*

4.9 Overall 1,094 properties (11.1% of the current housing stock) have reported more than one occurrence of damp and mould during the period of more than six years since April 2015. Of these properties, 655 (6.65% of the current housing stock) had their last damp and mould repair completed more than a year ago, which suggests the issue has been effectively resolved and the resident has not needed to report the issue subsequently. The remaining 439 (4.46% of the current housing stock) properties have reported multiple occurrences of damp and mould and have had a damp and mould repair completed in the last year, suggesting a potentially ongoing issue with damp and mould. However, as seen in preceding year bands, it is likely that a proportion of the repairs for this cohort of properties which have been completed in the last year have resolved the issue. These cohorts are shown visually in figure 5 as a proportion of the housing stock as a whole and demonstrates that there are not systemic issues with damp and mould throughout the Council's housing stock.

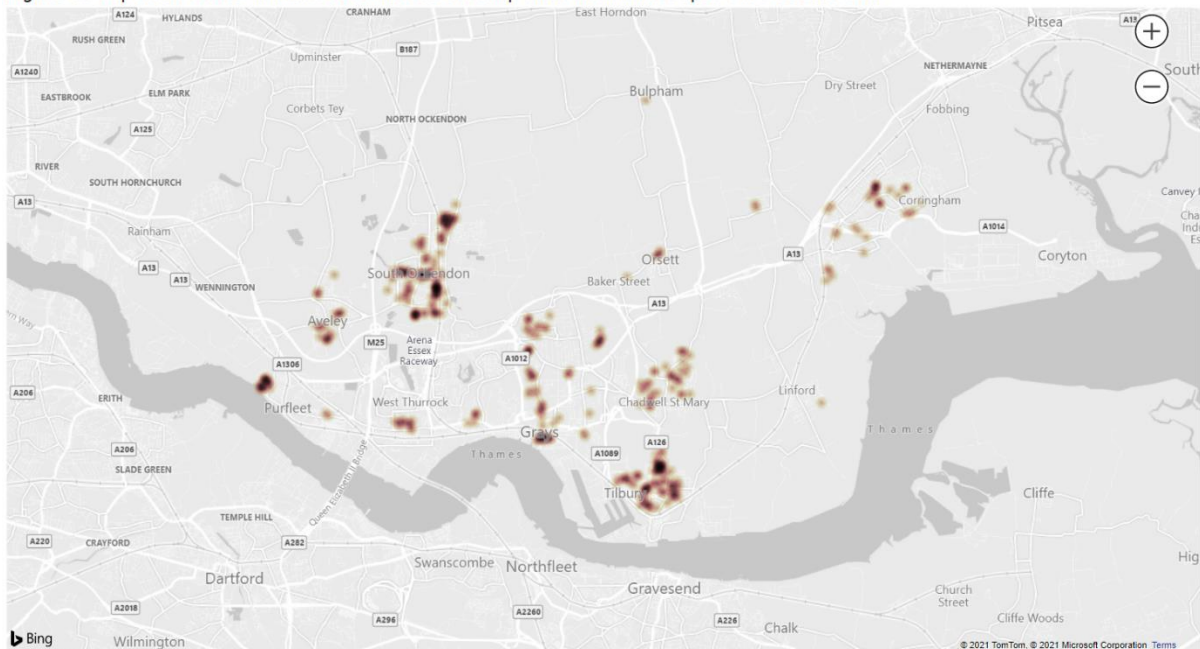
Figure 5: Proportion of Stock by Number of Occurrences of Damp and Mould Since April 2015 and Time Since Last Repair



Cohort ● 0 Occurrences ● 1 Occurrence ● 2+ Occurrences With Repairs More Than 1 Year Ago ● 2+ Occurrences With Repairs Less Than 1 Year Ago

4.10 The following graphic demonstrates the geographic location of the 439 properties (4.46% of stock) with two or more occurrences of damp and mould and repairs in the last year in the form of a heat map. This demonstrates that these properties are spread throughout the borough with the more significant clusters located in South Ockendon, Purfleet, Grays and Tilbury.

Figure 6: Properties With 2 or More Occurrences of Damp and Mould With Repairs In The Last Year



5. Reducing Damp and Mould through Planned Investment

- 5.1 The report in June 2021 identified the significant capital investment that the Council has delivered in recent years to improve the performance and energy efficiency of the buildings. These planned interventions included replacement heating: window and door replacements, roof renewals, improved insulation, replacement of rainwater goods as well as specific remediation of structural defects that have caused damp problems.
- 5.2 In 2015/16, the programme outlined plans to address single glazing. Over recent years this programme has successfully completed the replacement of all the remaining single glazed windows and this has seen significant improvements to the thermal efficiency of homes across the borough and supports residents in the control of the environment within their homes with regards to managing condensation.
- 5.3 Since 2015, under the Transforming Homes programme, all property surveys for internal improvements have included investigation for damp and mould occurrences. Any problems found have been subsequently addressed alongside the improvement works undertaken.
- 5.4 The remediation works subsequently undertaken range from significant structural works such as tanking, external wall insulation, brickwork and render refurbishment and the overhaul of drainage systems, through to localised mould treatments depending on the causes identified.
- 5.5 Figure 7 below shows the percentage of properties that had internal improvements through the Transforming Homes Programme since 2015/16 that also required some level of damp and mould remediation.

Figure 7: % of Transforming Homes Completions Which Required Damp and Mould Works Since 2015/16 (11.8%)



- 5.6 The housing capital programme continues to invest in improvements to the housing stock that will ultimately have a positive impact on their thermal performance and thus reduce the occurrence of problems with damp and mould.
- 5.7 The Transforming Homes programme has recently commenced a new five year programme that will continue to deliver improvements to both internal and external aspects of the properties.
- 5.8 A number of other significant projects are underway including the improvements to the tower blocks in Grays. The works to these blocks includes removal of the existing wall covering and installation of a modernised external wall insulation system, refurbishment of roof surface areas and renewal of windows, all of which will enhance heat retention and thermal

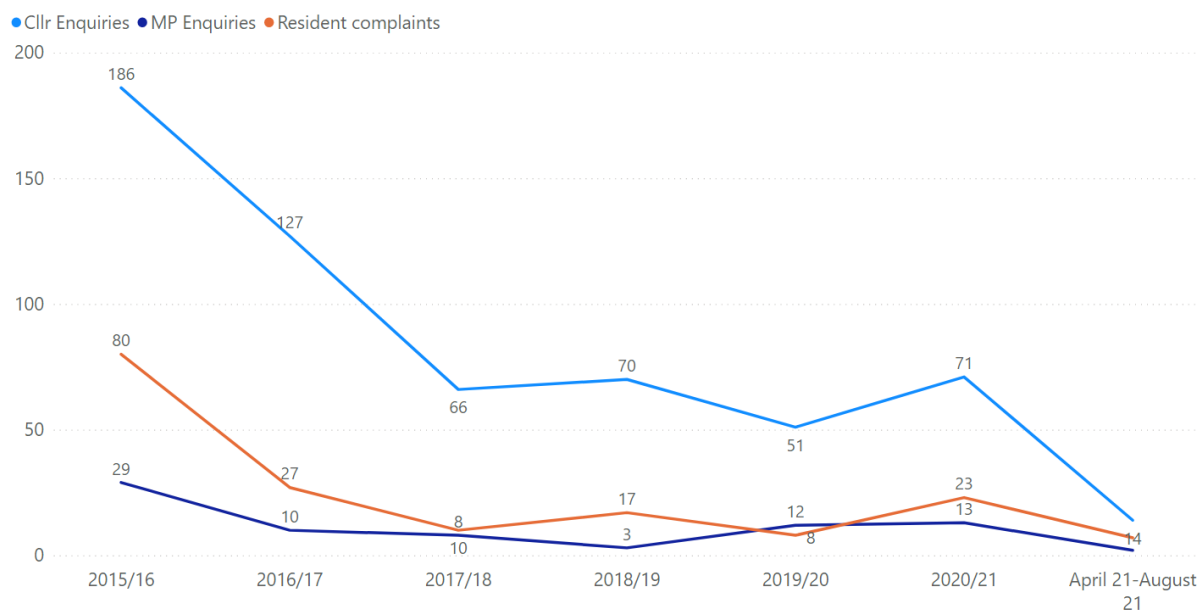
effectiveness of the structures and for the 348 individual households residing there.

- 5.9 The project to carry out significant improvement works to a number of non-traditional construction properties in our housing stock has begun to mobilise in September. The programme consists of 76 properties that will benefit from extensive internal and external refurbishment. The works include removal of the existing cladding and encapsulation with an external wall insulation system or insulated cavity brickwork. This will increase the surface temperature of the external walls to alleviate cold bridging and greatly reduce the risk of condensation occurring on the internal surfaces within these properties.
- 5.10 We are currently in the process of procuring a contractor to deliver the first ground source heat pump system to three high rise blocks in Chadwell St Mary. This type of system makes use of the energy stored in the ground and is free from carbon emissions. It will be a more cost effective and energy efficient way for residents to heat their homes. It will deliver heating and hot water in the same way as a conventional heating system via radiators and hot water tanks which are controlled using a simple time clock and central thermostat and will bring significant savings to the cost of heating these homes.

6. Resident and Member Enquiries

- 6.1 In order to understand the volumes of concerns raised by residents relating to issues with damp and mould, the total numbers of all MP, councillor enquiries and resident complaints since April 2015/16 have been reviewed.
- 6.2 It should be noted that the number of enquiries below are not in addition to the overall reported figures, all these cases are within the recorded data and have been completed with our responsive repairs contractor.
- 6.3 We also ask members to note that the figures from 2020/2021 have included all the complaints and enquiries that were received as a result of the press enquiries, Facebook posts seen and referred by councillors along with national news coverage which was seen earlier this year which indicates why there is an increase from the previous year.
- 6.4 Figure 6 below shows the number of complaints received from the different cohorts.

Figure 7: Cllr Enquiries, MP Enquiries and Resident complaints by Year



7. Improved resident communications

- 7.1 We are working with our responsive repairs contractor to improve the way we engage with our residents when they make contact to report damp and mould. We have updated all staff training for call handlers to ensure that they understand what the various causes of damp and mould are and how that impacts on people's lives. We have also updated the call script information to ensure we capture what is relevant without our residents feeling as though we are blaming them and assuming the damp and mould is always caused by condensation.
- 7.2 During and after any works are completed our resident liaison officers (RLO) have been trained by the NEA (National Fuel Poverty Charity) so as well as advising on how to best manage the home environment, they are able to help residents to understand how to manage their financial resources and their heating systems.
- 7.3 Where necessary the RLO can help residents claim fuel poverty grants and liaise with our financial inclusion officers to ensure they are accessing all the financial support they are entitled to.
- 7.4 The information on the Council's website about damp and mould has been fully reviewed and updated to provide our residents with as much detailed information as possible. It also gives advice on what to expect from us when they report damp and mould, alongside tips and videos to help them maintain their homes.
- 7.5 A new more informative leaflet has been developed to help residents understand damp and mould and give advice on how to report any repairs to us the leaflet will be given at the start of all new tenancies and at any attended repairs relating to damp and mould.

8. Future planning

- 8.1 The Council is currently in the process of procuring a survey of the overall condition of the housing stock to supplement the data which was captured in the previous 2017 survey.
- 8.2 This stock condition survey will have a specific focus on the identification on any mould that is witnessed and any property that has reported damp and mould on more than three occasions within the last 18 months is to be included. The stock condition survey is purposely being undertaken across the winter months as this is when reported damp and mould cases are more prevalent the findings of these surveys will be fundamental in future asset investment planning.

9. Reasons for Recommendation

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

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

- 10.1 Housing carry out customer satisfaction surveys on individual repairs; and hold a bi-annual STAR survey. The performance data for these are reported to Housing Overview and Scrutiny.
- 10.2 The Resident Excellence Panel have regularly review the detailed performance on our repairs and maintenance contractor through participation in monthly contract governance.

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

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

12. Implications

12.1 Financial

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

The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan makes provision for the ongoing investment in the existing housing stock. These works will be financed from the funding which has been set to facilitate ongoing maintenance and improvements.

12.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Gina Clarke**
Corporate Governance Lawyer

The Council's obligations as landlord to repair and maintain Council properties are set out in the tenancy agreement. In addition section 11 of the Landlord Tenant Act 1985 sets out statutory obligations to ensure that the structure of homes are repaired and the repairs are carried out within a reasonable time. Given this is an update report and the nature of the recommendation to the Committee, there are no legal implications directly arising from the recommendation.

12.3 Diversity and Equality

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

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

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

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

None

13. 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):

- Housing Overview and Scrutiny June 2021 report 'Damp and Mould in Council Properties'

14. Appendices to the report

None

Report Author:

Susan Cardozo

Strategic Lead Assets Repairs and Compliance

9 November 2021	ITEM: 8
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Garage Project Update	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A
Report of: Peter Doherty, Strategic Lead – Housing Operations	
Accountable Assistant Director: Ewelina Sorbjan, Assistant Director of Housing	
Accountable Director: Ian Wake, Corporate Director for Adults, Housing and Health	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

This report identifies and updates on the main focuses of the Garage Service developments and improvements over the last year.

1. Recommendation:

1.1 It is recommended that Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive this report for information and comment.

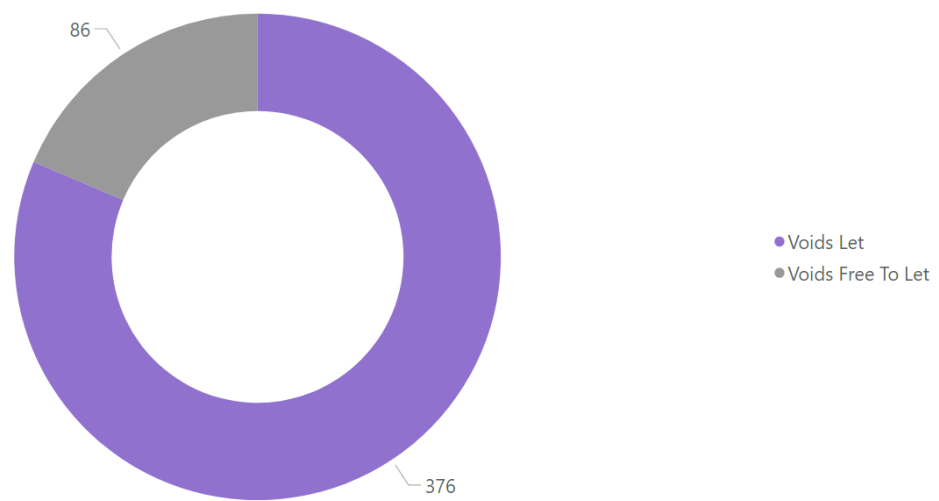
2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Thurrock Council holds a stock of 2275 garages and 290 garage plots located across the borough. The garages are brick or concrete purpose-built structures which are located in a number of settings varying from standalone blocks in large sites, to small isolated buildings on small sections of land, to garages located under town houses and blocks of flats. The garage plots are individual hard standings or section of land on which tenants construct their own garages structures or use the space for allocated parking. There are garage plots located on 27 sites across the borough.

2.2 At the end of second quarter of 2021/22, there are 1936 garages let and 339 are void. Of these void garages, there were 86 are free to let and 201 are being held for major works such as structural repairs and roof replacements or are being considered for redevelopment. The remaining 36 are currently being repaired or awaiting clearance. An additional 17 lettings have been carried out in the first week of October.

- 2.3 There are 252 garage plots let and 38 are void. Of these void plots, 6 are free to let and the other 32 are awaiting clearance.
- 2.4 The scheduled programme of works set up to clear the historic backlog of void garages is largely completed. Since the last report in September 2020, 462 garages have been made void, checked, repaired, cleared and made ready for re-let. 376 of these garages have now been let and 86 are free to let. This has also involved carrying out more than 900 void inspections and post-repairs inspections. Figure 1 shows a breakdown of these 462 garages by status.

Figure 1: Voids Since September 2020 by Status



- 2.5 We have been reviewing long term regeneration and development opportunities across the borough. As part of this process, the Council are currently in the process of procuring a professional consultancy practice to undertake a stock condition survey of the garage portfolio. This survey including a structural appraisal is anticipated to commence in early 2022 with a view of receiving the report around May 2022.

The detailed survey and appraisal will allow the Council to firstly ensure that the garage portfolio is being managed and maintained appropriately to ensure all of these assets are in a safe and secure condition. Additionally, the survey will allow the service to fully inform the housing service to take a holistic view of the garage portfolio and inform a longer term investment and management strategy. This strategy will also include a long-term view in regards to what assets can receive the appropriate level of long term investment, but also potentially identify garage sites that are not suitable for significant investment and can be considered for other uses that would better serve the community and the wider Thurrock borough.

3. Garage updates

- 3.1 From the start of the garage repairs contract with Mears in April 2019, repairs and capital works has increased significantly. The table below indicates 2020/21 spend and 2021/22 forecast spend on capital works (i.e. roof replacements, new doors) and repairs (i.e. lock changes, door overhauls):

Budget Type	2020/21		2021/22	
	Budget	Year-end spend	Budget	Forecast Year-end spend
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Capital	212	205	507	507
Repairs & Maintenance	75	93.81	75.75	75.75

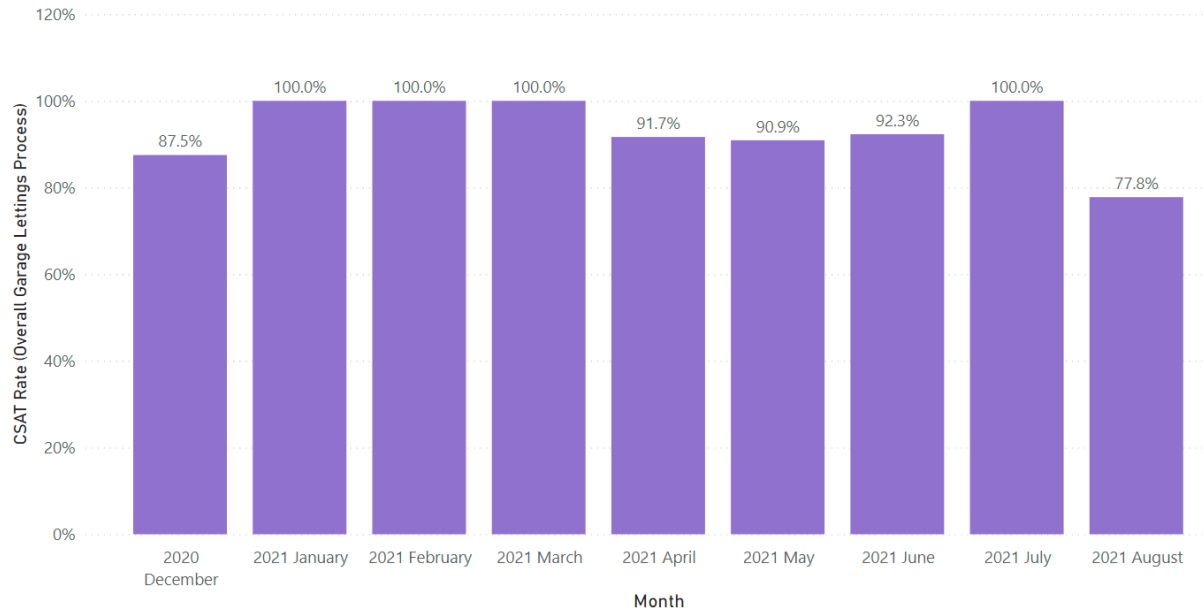
In addition, the garages income generation in 2020/21 and 2021/22 is as set out in the table below:

	Budget	Income	Variance (Under)/Over recovery
	£'000	£'000	£'000
2020/21	879	863 (Actual)	(16)
2021/22	879	959 (Forecast)	80

- 3.2 Garages services back office procedures are under continuous review and a number of documents have been considered and updated to ensure they are robust and fit for purpose. We have streamlined processes and undertaken a number of data cleansing exercises.
- 3.3 We have been reviewing front office processes in order to improve the customer experience of Garages Services. There has been significant progress made to improve the garage re-let turnaround times and many garages that have been unused for years have now been let. There continues to be a very high demand for garages across the borough with approximately 1100 applicants currently on the garage waiting list. In addition, 80 - 100 applications are submitted on line each month, though this does include a number of duplicates. Lettings continue to be carried out in line with waiting list and garage demand. Information on the Thurrock's website has been reviewed and updated to ensure it is sufficient, clear and easy to use and new electronic application and termination forms are available online.
- 3.4 The positive work we have done to improve office processes, continuing to clear the backlog of free to let garages, processing of the garage applications

and carry out lettings is clearly reflected in the excellent performance shown in the Customer Satisfaction surveys which were introduced in December 2020. Figure 2 shows new tenant satisfaction with the lettings process. As at the time of this report overall satisfaction with Garage Services is 92.3%.

Figure 2: Satisfaction With Overall Lettings Process by Month



3.5 Critical to customer satisfaction and building the reputation of the service is improving way we engage with others. We value the importance of good working relationships with internal and external colleagues in order to meet the changing needs of residents and provide a relevant, efficient and customer led service. We do this by working in partnership with the Tenancy Management Officers, Neighbourhood Officers, Mears, Police and local resident groups. In collaboration with Environment Enforcement team and the Police we undertook a very successful joint operation in July 2021 to take action on a number of vehicles which had been left in void garages. Operation Cue was part of a wider Police initiative Operation Caesar to tackle nuisance bikers in the Borough. See link - [Nuisance bikes targeted in joint operation | Thurrock Council](#). The day ended with an excellent outcome of 10 vehicles seized including some vehicles identified as stolen and others abandoned. Another similar operation was carried out in September 2021 and we are planning the next operation in the near future.

3.6 The reduction of garage voids and increased income by improving turnaround for both repairs and lettings undoubtedly demonstrates that we are providing better service for money. Over the last year, we have completed ten major works schemes and have more planned for this year. We have undertaken extensive rooftop overgrowth clearances at six garage sites, this was to reduce the risk of roof damage, damp penetration and structural issues. In addition, and as part of our commitment to social value, working with our partners in the Contracts Team and Aaron Services the garage doors at Tamarisk Road blocks were repainted in September 2021 and this has greatly

improved the aesthetics of the area. We will plan to undertake further painting projects in the coming year.

- 3.7 The HUSK development mentioned in last year's report has now been completed. This innovative and pioneering housing solution has seen the conversion of two existing council garage blocks into two residential bungalows in Delargy Close, Chadwell. This unique and creative design provides much needed elderly persons/ disabled adapted housing on brownfield garage sites that did not contribute to the quality of the area because the garages were not in use and have been subject to vandalism, fly tipping and vehicular damage. Effectively, we turned problem sites into assets. Other similar builds will be considered in the future to replace some garage sites where demand or need is low.

Garage area in Delargy Close – before and after

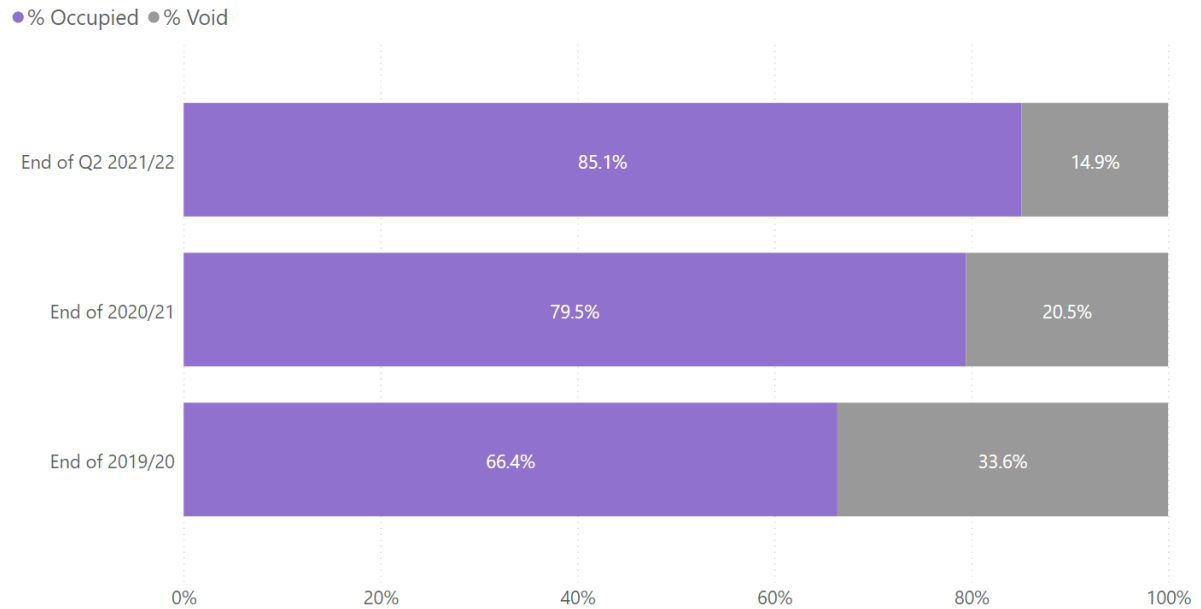


4. Performance

- 4.1 Figure 3 shows a significant increase in the proportion of garages occupied as opposed to void over the last two and a half years. This has meant additional

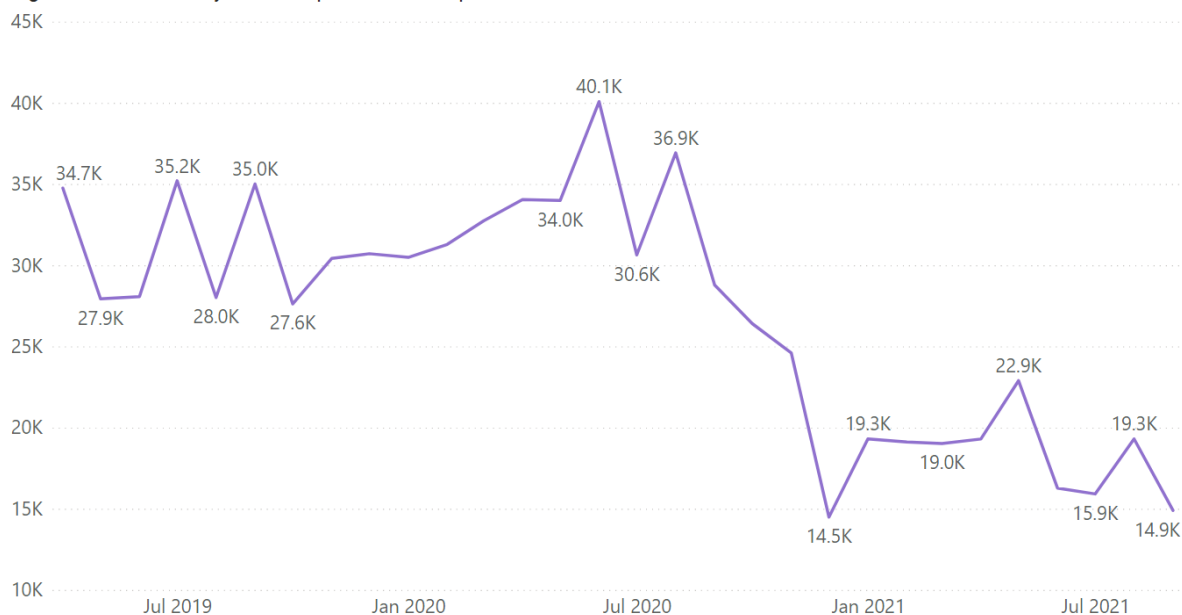
income into the HRA, reducing the garage waiting list and providing residents with a service they want. The hard work of the Garage Services team, particularly during periods of restricted interaction and duties in the pandemic, is evident.

Figure 3: Snapshot of % Occupied and % Void As of End Of Period



4.2 Figure 4 below shows a dramatic reduction in monthly garage void loss. Rent loss has more than halved over the last two years from £34,700 in April 2019 to £14,900 in September 2021. This is primarily due to a continued focus on lettings but also taking out of management a number of long term void garages which are on sites currently being scoped for redevelopment or re-use.

Figure 4: Void Loss by Month (April 2019 to September 2021)



4.3 Working with our colleagues in the Estate Services team, we have cleared over 375 garages of rubbish and abandoned belongings since the last report.

4.4 In line with our commitment to Thurrock’s recycling agenda, we have undertaken the following steps to reuse and recycle as much as possible in the garage clearance phase of the void turnarounds. At present we have 26 storage garages across the borough holding a number of donation/ saleable items including furniture, books, scrap metal, kitchen equipment, CDs, DVDs, etc. These garages will be sorted and efforts made to raise revenue, provide much needed household furnishings to families in need over the next year.

5. Reasons for Recommendation and Considerations

5.1 This report has sought to provide an overview of the service improvements, challenges and actions to date, but also an indication of our continued commitment to improving Garage Services for residents and the local community.

5.2 It is clear significant strides have been made over the last two and a half years, despite the challenges of the pandemic. A dedicated team of a Garage Services Manager and Garage Officer has resulted in a significant increase in the number of lettings, high turnover of garages through repairs and clearance in order for them to be re-let and a clear direction of service development for major works, redevelopment and regeneration being established. As indicated in last year’s report, we have seen an increase in lettings and therefore rental income, a reduction of the number of voids and therefore a reduction in void loss.

5.3 Some of next year’s focuses will be on the following:

- Move forward with the redevelopment opportunities – this includes underutilised garage and plot sites identified with Technical Services and Regeneration teams which could be suitable for redevelopment. Also to build on the success of the pilot HUSK project and consider other similar garage sites with potential for development under this project
- Work with the Police and Environment Enforcement to improve the community safety in garages areas and reducing risks of anti-social behaviour, youth nuisance and crime.
- Continue to improve the appearance of garage and plot sites, including clearing overgrowth, ensuring they are welcoming and attractive and more regularly maintained.

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

- 6.1 This report is an update of garage services in Thurrock, including the current position and planned actions. The Council has undertaken consultation with residents where garages are proposed for redevelopment and this will be further carried out as other redevelopment proposals are put forward.

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

- 7.1 The implications of the recommendations in this report may require a review of local policies and procedures.

8. Implications

8.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Hannah Katakwe**

Housing Accountant, Finance & IT

The Council has an ongoing garages repairs & maintenance budget of £0.075m, and an additional 2021/22 Capital funding of £0.500m has been identified with the HRA capital programme. This will support the delivery of the project outcomes, and is included within the overall HRA business plan.

8.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Gina Clarke**

Corporate Governance Lawyer

Since this is an update report there are no direct legal implications arising specifically from the recommendation set out in this report.

However, where Council has acquired land for one purpose, it cannot be used it for a different purpose unless authorised to do so by statute. Currently,

authorisation is provided by section 122 of the Local Government 1972 Act, as long as the land is no longer required for the purpose for which it had been held before the appropriation. Section 122 of the 1972 Act would require the Council to decide whether or not the land was still required for the purpose for which it was held. In that respect, it has to carry out a conscious deliberative process.

In relation to garages on land held by the Council for housing purposes, which are not part of a house or are not let in connection with a house but are used for more general purposes by members of the public who are not council tenants, an appropriation may be made under s122 of the 1972 Act if the garages are no longer being used by the Council as landlord of Council housing stock. In such a case the Income and expenditure would transfer to the General Fund.

In relation to any garages that are being considered for redevelopment, if it is proposed that the garages are no longer required to be used for the purpose of the Council's housing landlord function, then a decision would be required to appropriate the garages for some other purpose.

Land held by the Council for housing purposes is subject to section 19 of the Housing Act 1985 which requires consent of the Secretary of State to appropriate dwellings from the HRA. Garages are not dwellings, so consent is not required. However, if any redevelopment proposal, proposed use of the garages for other than housing purposes, the Council would have to consider and a decision as to whether the relevant garages are no longer required to be used for housing purposes and appropriate the garages for the proposed use..

By virtue of Section 8 of the Housing Act 1985, in order to deliver its strategic housing role, the Council, as the local housing authority, is empowered to undertake a periodic review of its housing needs, identify housing priorities to reflect trends and dynamics, and the views of local people and stakeholders. In doing this it is imperative that where necessary, the Council should undertake consultation with residents in line with the requirement of the Garage Action Plan, especially where the garages are to be subject to redevelopment.

8.3 Diversity and Equality

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

Whilst there are no direct implications at present arising from this report Community Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out in future against proposals where required.

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

There are no other implications arising from this report.

9. **Background papers used in preparing the report**

None

10. **Appendices to the report**

None

Report Author:

Peter Doherty

Strategic Lead – Housing Operations Housing

Housing

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

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

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member
22 June 2021		
Damp and Mould in Council Housing Properties	Tracy John	Members
Housing Delivery Approach	Keith Andrews/Colin Black	Officers
Housing Development Programme Update	Keith Andrews/Colin Black	Members
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
21 September 2021 – Postponed to 14 October 2021		
Housing Strategy 2022-27 - Engagement Programme	Ewelina Sorbjan	Officers
Portfolio Holder for Housing	Cllr L Spillman	Members
Health and Wellbeing Strategy Refresh	Jo Broadbent	Officers
Homelessness Update – Everyone In	Ben Tovey	Chair
Property Audits (aka Tenancy Audits)	Ewelina Sorbjan	Chair
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item

9 November 2021

Housing Development Programme Update	Keith Andrews	Members
Fees & Charges Pricing Strategy 2022/23	Kelly McMillan	Officers
Damp and Mould in Council Housing Properties	Sue Cardozo	Chair
Garage Project Update	Peter Doherty	Members
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item

11 January 2022

Housing Development Programme Update	Keith Andrews	Members
Culver Centre – Housing Development	Keith Andrews	Officers
Rent Setting	Peter Doherty	Chair
Animals in Council Properties	Peter Doherty	Members
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item

2 March 2022

Housing Development Update	Keith Andrews	Officers
Private Sector Stock Condition Survey	Ewelina Sorbjan	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item