

7 January 2015		ITEM: 8
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Managing Damp & Mould – Update on Housing Investment & Development Actions		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non - Key	
Report of: Portfolio Holder for Housing – Cllr Lynn Worrall		
Accountable Head of Service: Kathryn Adedeji – Head of Housing – Investment and Development and Commercial Services		
Accountable Director: Barbara Brownlee – Director of Housing		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

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

Included here is an overview of how damp problems affecting the building fabric are dealt with through capital and repairs programmes, being prioritised to bring about the most effective and efficient long term resolution whilst minimising disruption to the resident. Also included is an overview of how mould issues deriving from condensation and resident lifestyle is being addressed, including a programme of communications and guidance to residents.

1. Recommendation(s)

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

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 It is recognised that there is an ongoing issue in a number of properties in the borough with regards to damp and mould. Damp and mould contributes to approximately 1,500 (4%) of repairs service demand and where the issues occur there is a potentially significant impact on the lives of residents.**

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

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 Surveys & Works Undertaken

- 3.2 Thurrock Council are taking a strategic approach to addressing problems of damp occurring in properties, identifying the nature and extent of the problems and undertaking works in the most appropriate programme. In this way the greatest benefit can be made of the ongoing Transforming Homes programme. Where contractors are undertaking improvement works in residents homes, it is also then optimal – in terms of both programming works,

value for money and minimising disturbance to the resident – to undertake any damp-related works at the same time.

- 3.3 Table 1 provides an overview of the surveys and works undertaken to date on the Transforming Homes programme. 487 properties have received damp and mould surveys, of which 410 homes had remedial works undertaken such as damp proofing to reduce the risk of damp and any associated mould reoccurring. The table shows that where Transforming Homes are being undertaken, repairs and maintenance works relating to damp & mould are being carried out by the Transforming Homes contractors.
- 3.4 Works undertaken under the Transforming Homes programme will include those properties where there are more substantial issues, including for example where there are issues relating to rising or penetrating damp. Where this is the case the contractor will typically
- Ensure external ground levels are 150mm below internal floor levels where possible, with external render to same distance above the external ground level;
 - Remove internal wall plaster to a height of 1m, with associated works, and following drying of walls apply damp proof course where required;
 - Overhaul drainage and rainwater systems where required;
 - Install extract fans and ensure installed ventilation is operative.

Table 1: Damp & Mould surveys and works – capital programme*

Ward	Number of Damp Surveys	Number of remedial works req..	Estimated Costs
Aveley and Uplands	3	3	£3K
Belhus	44	40	£46K
Chadwell St. Mary	32	32	£193K
Chafford and North Stifford			
Corringham and Fobbing	1	1	£2K
East Tilbury	4	2	£5K
Grays Riverside	18	12	£52K
Grays Thurrock	16	15	£99K
Little Thurrock Blackshots	15	5	£5K
Little Thurrock Rectory	1	1	£0K
Ockendon	27	23	£58K
Orsett	2	1	£25K
Stanford East and Corringha..	13	8	£39K
Stanford-le-Hope West			
Stifford Clays	5	3	£4K
The Homesteads			
Tilbury Riverside and Thurr..	105	97	£243K
Tilbury St Chads	125	101	£583K
West Thurrock and South Sti..	10	9	£52K
Grand Total	421	353	£1,409K

*Excludes 66 properties surveyed, of which 57 require remedial works, where detailed validation is in progress

3.5 Table 2 provides an overview of the surveys and works undertaken to date on the Repairs & Maintenance works programme. Data shows that where specific remedial work cannot address the issue a further repair is undertaken.

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

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

Table 2: Damp & Mould surveys and works – repairs & maintenance programme

Ward	No. of Mears Damp & Mould Surveys / Treatment	No. of Mears Damp & Mould Works	Works Value
Aveley and Uplands	60	24	£2.2K
Belhus	142	62	£16.8K
Chadwell St. Mary	163	62	£14.0K
Chafford and North Stifford	1	0	£0.0K
Corringham and Fobbing	5	1	£0.5K
East Tilbury	4	3	£0.6K
Grays Riverside	32	21	£7.0K
Grays Thurrock	53	39	£4.7K
Little Thurrock Blackshots	14	9	£3.7K
Little Thurrock Rectory	10	8	£2.1K
Ockendon	104	54	£10.0K
Orsett	13	9	£0.7K
Stanford East and Corringha..	65	36	£3.7K
Stanford-le-Hope West	37	18	£4.7K
Stifford Clays	45	24	£1.6K
The Homesteads	6	5	£0.5K
Tilbury Riverside and Thurr..	45	46	£9.1K
Tilbury St Chads	28	31	£1.4K
West Thurrock and South Sti..	96	42	£5.0K
Grand Total	923	494	£88.4K

3.7 Resident Communications Programme

- 3.8 A key issue that has emerged through analysis of repairs data, consultation and engagement with staff and residents, was the conflation of damp and condensation either of which can result in mould growth.
- 3.9 In order to establish an effective and long-term resolution to condensation and mould issues, it is necessary to engage residents in being able to recognise condensation problems, as well as changing behaviour to address these underlying issues. In implementing a programme which seeks to bring about this effective change, a range of communications and guidance for residents has been developed and rolled out through October and November 2014.
- 3.10 A guidance leaflet has been issued to all residents through the October rent statement, which includes advice on recognising damp, mould and condensation, as well as how to manage these issues. This information is replicated online, where residents can review this information within the Housing & Tenancy information section of the Thurrock Council website (www.thurrock.gov.uk/damp-and-mould/overview).

3.11 In recognising and managing condensation, residents are advised:

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

3.12 In recognising and addressing mould:

- Recognising relationship with condensation and damp which underlie mould;
- Where mould occurs, the appropriate washing and cleaning using specialised cleaning products.

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

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

4. Reasons for Recommendation

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

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

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

focus on service provision that directly addresses and resolves residents concerns.

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

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

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

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Mike Jones**
Management Accountant

No financial Implications arising from this report

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Alison Stuart**
Principal Solicitor

No legal implications arising from this report

7.3 Diversity and Equality

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

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

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

Not Applicable

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

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix A – Tackling Damp, Condensation and Mould

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