

14 March 2016		ITEM: 5
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: Richard Parkin – Head of Housing		
Accountable Director: Roger Harris – Corporate Director Adults, Housing & Health.		
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.

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

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

1. Recommendation(s)

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

2. Introduction and Background

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

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

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 Surveys & Works Undertaken

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.2 Resident Communications Programme

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

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

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

3.2.4 In recognising and managing condensation, residents are advised

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

3.2.5 In recognising and addressing mould:

- Recognising relationship with condensation and damp which underlie mould;

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

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

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

3.3 Thermal efficiency and looking forward

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

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

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

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

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

Figure 02 Infrared heating Solution:



4. Reasons for Recommendation

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

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

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

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

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

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

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

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

No financial Implications arising from this report

7.2 Legal

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

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

7.3 Diversity and Equality

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

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

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

Not Applicable

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

None

9. Appendices to the report

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

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