

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PLACE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE
Council Chamber - Town Hall
14 December 2023 (7.00 - 9.30 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group David Taylor (Chairman), Ray Best and Jason Frost

**Havering Residents'
Group** Gerry O'Sullivan and Bryan Vincent

Labour Group Matthew Stanton and +Patricia Brown

+Councillor Tumilty was substituted by Councillor Pat Brown.

The Chairman reminded Members of the action to be taken in an emergency.

37 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received for the absence of Councillors Brian Eagling, Natasha Summers and Katharine Tumilty.

38 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interests.

39 MINUTES

The minutes of the sub-committee meeting held on 14 September 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

40 TACKLING DAMP AND MOULD

The Sub-Committee was presented with a report on the current issues relating to damp and mould including some of the measures that are currently being undertaken in relation to the issue.

It was stated that the damp and mould issues within Havering is a complex matter with many contributing factors including historic building deficiencies that create surfaces areas that are more prone to condensate.

The housing stock in Havering comprised of a large number of dwellings constructed in and around the 1960's. it was stated that dwellings constructed in the period were not subject to current building regulations and therefore lack the thermal values of modern construction.

The sub-committee was informed that the amount of condensation and mould can be increased by factors such as overcrowding and furniture, clothing, and bags being placed close to external walls as airflow is restricted and moisture containing air can settle more easily.

This can often result in resident's belongings becoming damp and spoiled and consequently complaints and frustration from resident.

The cost of living crisis is also adding additional pressure, whereby residents cannot afford to use there heating.

Many families within Havering are not legally overcrowded even though their living conditions may be very cramped. Larger families within smaller dwelling that have the building deficiencies highlighted in some of housing most common Archetypes will be at a far greater risk of condensation occurring.

The table in the presentation detailed how much moisture was created by daily tasks. It was explained that in supporting residents the service have improved processes to report a damp and mould concerns. It was stated that all residents who report damp and mould issues will be offered a surveyor's inspection within a target time of 3 weeks.

Officer explained that surveyor undertake a detailed property inspection identifying any building defects, raising works orders to remedy any defect identified. The service will look at measures designed to help, such as installing better mechanical ventilation where appropriate. Officers will fully explain the cause of the mould to the resident and offer advice on moisture reduction and management, explaining the underlying issue that makes the dwelling more prone to condensation and how adjustments to life style can dramatically improve conditions and reduce condensation and subsequently mould.

It was stated that the repairs and capital teams liaise with each other on a regular basis to identify any problem blocks and look at developing its future capital programmes to alleviate some of the current issues through the service retrofit agenda.

The service indicated that it was exploring further external grant funding options such as Wave Three Decarbonisation Funding, that is yet to be announced by the government. Officers explained that the service was

allocating £7million in 24/25 and £11million in 25/26 for energy efficiency measures on council properties which will help to address some of the current issues.

The sub-committee was informed that the damp and mould issues within Havering is a complex matter with many contributing factors including historic building deficiencies that create surfaces areas that are more prone to condensate. In response officers outlined the following responses:

- Continuation of survey and inspection of every property where damp and mould issues have been reported and take remedial actions where needed.
- Providing residents with detailed advice on how they can prevent mould growth in properties and offer advice on moisture reduction and management.
- Offering all resident assistance in the form of a Damp & Mould MOT that includes a regular monthly mould wash programme over a four month period during the colder winter months.
- Looking at measures such as improved extractor fans, draft excluders, window overhauls etc. where appropriate.
- Identifying any problem blocks and consider whether these issues can be rectified as part of future capital programmes.
- Exploring further external grant funding opportunities.

The Sub-Committee **noted** the report.

41 **HOUSING RESIDENT SAFETY AND COMPLIANCE PERFORMANCE**

The report provided an update to sub-committee of the position of Housing services resident safety and compliance programmes against its statutory and regulatory duties including duties under the Building Safety Act 2022.

As agreed by Cabinet the Place Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee will be provided with regular reports on the Housing compliance performance as part of the internal governance approach and performance is also scrutinised monthly by both the Compliance board and the Asset Management Sub Steering Group.

The report detailed the following compliance areas regarding resident safety:

- Gas Safety – all gas appliances should be inspected annually and a Landlord Gas Safety Record (LGSR) provided.

- Electrical Safety – all social rented properties must have an electrical inspection (EICR) every 10 years, although recent regulation changes require private landlords to have 5 year inspections and this is considered best practice in social rented properties and the approach we have adopted.
- Lift Safety – Monthly inspections and planned maintenance regimes and an annual certificate provided by our insurer.
- Water Safety – all relevant water systems must be checked for legionella risk, this is based on a risk based approach which could be a cyclical programme every 2 years. All actions flowing from the legionella inspection must be completed within prescribed timescales.
- Fire Safety – All relevant properties must have a valid Fire risk assessment (FRA) undertaken on a risk based approach which can be on a cyclical programme between 1 and 3 years. All actions flowing from the FRA must be completed within prescribed timescales.
- Asbestos – under the asbestos regulations all communal areas must have a valid management level asbestos survey which must be held on a relevant asbestos register. In addition, completing a survey programme of all domestic properties to ensure risk is managed, this is not however a statutory requirement under the asbestos regulations.
- Fire Door Checks – Carrying out flat entrance door checks in all tower blocks. Monitoring has been ongoing since June 2023 as part of the new requirements under the 2022 Building Safety Act. In addition, the service was completing fire door checks in all blocks with communal heating to ensure risk was appropriately managed. These additional checks are not a statutory requirement under the new Building Safety Act.

It was noted that all resident safety key performance indicators (KPIs) are set at 100% as shown in Appendix 1. After a significant programme of work the service has been able to complete most programmes and ensure the relevant evidence was in place to support this position.

It was to be noted that given the seriousness of resident safety all KPIs are set at 100% as shown in Appendix 1. After a significant programme of work LBH has been able to complete most programmes and ensure the relevant evidence was in place to support this position.

The sub-committee was informed that there were a number of EICRs to complete, these were hard to reach properties and work was being done to

resolve these. All action from the Building Safety Act are captured on the Action plan in appendix 2.

Officers highlighted some new legislation introduced which flowed from the Grenfell Enquiry, The Fire Safety Regulations 2022 to the sub-committee. It was stated that the service had introduced some additional monitoring regimes to ensure compliance such as communal doors checked every 3 months and flat front entrance doors checked every 12 months. These have now been included in the report.

The legislation also introduced some additional requirements around way finding signage requirements, floor plans, lifts and essential firefighting equipment which the service is working to ensure compliance.

The sub-committee was informed that in order to achieve this requirement the service was exploring a tool which has allowed for 3D model of each high rise building. Officers are now able to identify all relevant equipment, isolation of services and other relevant information. The service is still populating the tool and are now sharing some sections with the London Fire Board (LFB).

It was stated that there are plans to share relevant sections with residents as part of the service engagement strategy. This will also be the core methodology for providing information to the new Building Safety Regulator as part of the building safety case file.

The Sub-Committee **noted** the report.

Chairman