

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PLACE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE
Council Chamber - Town Hall
1 July 2025 (7.00 - 8.30 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group	David Taylor (Chairman), Ray Best and +Damian White
Havering Residents' Group	Philippa Crowder, Robby Misir and John Wood
Labour Group	Matthew Stanton (Vice-Chair)
East Havering Residents Group	Vacant

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

80 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Councillor Laurance Garrard and Councillor Osman Dervish. +Councillor Damian White substituted for Councillor Dervish.

81 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There was no interest disclosed at the meeting.

82 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of the sub-committee on 3 February, 19 February and 6 March 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

83 ADDRESSING DAMP AND MOULD

At the request of the sub-committee, the Assistant Director of Housing Property Services provided Members with the Council's current Damp and Mould Policy and the recent revisions relating to Awaab's Law.

The Assistant Director of Housing Property Services advised the sub-committee of some of the measures that are currently being undertaken to ensure compliance.

A new Damp and Mould policy was approved by Cabinet on 11th June 2025. The revised policy sets out how the Council will deal with Dampness and Mould and clarifies the Council's commitment to supporting residents' health and wellbeing, through addressing any detected presence of damp and mould in its properties.

The new Damp and Mould Policy is based on the proposed Awaab's Law, the Housing Act 2004 and the Decent Homes Standard and sets out to clarify the Council's commitment to supporting residents' health and wellbeing, through addressing any detected presence of damp and mould in its properties.

The Sub-Committee was advised that the policy confirms the Council's commitment to comply with the current legislation and explains the circumstances in which we will manage the treatment of damp and mould.

The Assistant Director of Housing Property Services stated that the Damp and Mould issue within Havering is a complex matter with many contributing factors:

- The Havering housing stock consists of older buildings which often come with low thermal efficiency.
- Low thermal efficiency can create surface areas that are more prone to condensation. If left untreated, condensation allows mould to occur.
- Housing pressures and overcrowding with larger families residing within smaller dwellings allows for excess moisture production.
- Cost of living pressures prevent residents from heating their homes effectively.
- Complex residents require additional support and strains already stretched services.

Members were advised that Havering have introduced the Damp and Mould MOT approach to help support residents over the cold winter periods when some of Havering's property archetypes are prone to condensation based mould. This provides mould treatments once a month for 4 months with a surveyors inspection which can determine and raise any required or additional remedial works.

The Sub-Committee noted the service are actively collecting and using data to highlight areas that are more prone to condensation based mould. This includes short-term and longer-term environmental monitoring, and thermal imaging surveys at scale.

Following discussion and question, Members agreed the following recommendations for officers to take away and consider for follow-up action.

Recommendations:

1. Data Analysis & Predictive Modelling

The Sub-Committee to follow up with the officers/service regarding the feasibility of predicting damp and mould issues using demographic and community group data. This will support targeted intervention efforts.

2. Councillor Training

The Sub-Committee suggested providing training for councillors on identifying early signs of damp and mould. While this has already been raised at Cabinet level, it was agreed it should be reiterated as a formal recommendation.

3. Annual Resident Communication

The Sub-Committee recommended the introduction of an annual communication to all residents regarding damp and mould issues. This information should also be included in the resident welcome packs for new tenants.

4. Review of Housing Policy

It was proposed that the housing policy be reviewed to ensure adequate priority is given to residents experiencing damp and mould, even prior to formal medical diagnosis.

5. Follow-Up Reporting

Officers are asked to return to the sub-committee in December to provide an update on the use of demographic data to identify households at risk of damp and mould.

6. Communication Strategy

The communications team should actively promote current advice and preventative information via social media, particularly during seasonal spikes in reported damp and mould issues.

7. Exploration of Additional Metrics

Officers are to explore the feasibility of identifying further metrics that correlate with the presence of damp and mould. This would allow for a more proactive, group-level response where appropriate.

8. Annual Follow-Up Strategy

It was proposed that an annual follow-up with affected households be built into the wider strategy to monitor long-term progress and outcomes.

The Sub-Committee proposed to Officers to report back within two months on demographic-based predictive analysis and return with a written update to Members in December 2025.

84 VOIDS OVERVIEW

The Assistant Director of Housing Property Services provided the sub-committee with an overview on Voids. Members received an update report

on the progress of the Council's management of void properties within its housing stock.

Members noted that the key objectives for the housing service are to make void properties available for letting as quickly as possible, minimising rent loss and maximising the housing available. It is also to ensure that the homes we provide are clean, safe, secure and comply with the Council's ready to let standard.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the council manages approximately 9,250 homes including Private Sector Housing (PSH) of which approximately 757 became vacant last year. It was noted that on average, there are around 80 voids with the maintenance & lettings service at any one time. Last year we received 14.5 voids per week.

The Assistant Director of Housing Property Services stated that the council's customer satisfaction data relating to void performance was poor. Members were advised that the service have just launched customer satisfaction postcards that gathers resident's feedback in relation to the voids and lettings service.

The sub-committee service is also implementing a pre-exit process lead by the re-housing and terminations team. During this time, a pre exit survey will be undertaken identifying resident recharges thus reducing the costs of works and the amount of work required. The introduction of the advance notice period will also allow for the pre-organisation and allocation of the correct resources

The Assistant Director of Housing Property Services advised that the historic void process was cumbersome with multiple tasks required prior to the raising of the main voids works order. The time between notification and the raising of the primary void works order was between 5-10 working days.

It was stated that all of the tasks have now been streamlined into the main voids works order eliminating the pre void period of 5-10 days. The only void work order raised is the primary void basket rate and this is raised and processed on day one.

The Sub-committee noted that Havering's void performance when benchmarking against our London peers is not only top quartile performance, but also significantly outperforming top quartile performance. Top quartile performance is considered 66.27 days with The London Borough of Havering's current void performance is achieving an impressive 55.13 days.

The benchmarking data used is based on 2023-24 HouseMark Annual benchmarking for the same indicator measures (keys to keys) the average end-to-end time London council peer group.

The keys to keys turnaround times' year-end 2024-25 returned a performance of 55.1 days against year-end 2020-21 80.2 days. The

comparisons demonstrate the significant improvement in current Key-to-key performance of 25.1 days.

Following discussion and question, Members agreed the following recommendations for officers to take away and consider for follow-up action.

Recommendations:

1. Key-to-Key Process Data

The Sub-Committee requested detailed data on the key-to-key process, including:

- The point at which works are deemed complete.
- The time taken from completion of works to property being re-let.
- A breakdown of turnaround times by property type (e.g. General Needs, PSA, Hostels).

2. Scale of Works – Voids Classification

Members asked for data on the scale of works required across void properties, specifically:

- The number of properties falling into V1, V2, and V3 classifications.

3. Assessment of Works Required (Basket of Works)

Further clarity was requested on the process used to assess the scope of work required for void properties. The committee would like additional information on:

- How the “basket of works” is determined.
- The methodology used to assess and transition voids from one category to another.

4. Cost Recovery from Former Tenants

A request was made for information regarding the Council's approach to recovering costs from former tenants, including:

- Processes in place.
- Success rates and performance outcomes.

5. 360° Property Viewings

The Sub-Committee Stanton proposed that existing 360° property viewings be made available on the Council's lettings website. The sub-committee supported:

- A feasibility review to determine whether these virtual tours can be published online.
- A suggested approach of uploading template 360° tours for each of the main property layouts (e.g. left-handed and right-handed variants), estimated to be 24 templates in total.

6. Feasibility of Early Tenant Move-In

The Sub-Committee proposed a feasibility study into the option of allowing prospective tenants to move into properties before non-essential (primarily cosmetic) void works are completed. The request includes:

- An assessment of the pros and cons of such an approach.
- Identification of which works could be safely deferred without impacting habitability.

The Sub-Committee proposed to Officers to return with the requested data and feasibility assessments as outlined above, Timelines for follow-up to be confirmed.

Chairman