

**Classification:** Public

**Key Decision:** No

## Gravesham Borough Council

**Report to:** Housing Cabinet Committee

**Date:** 21 March 2023

**Reporting officer:** Nicole Arthur, Service Manager (Housing Operations)

**Subject:** Damp, Mould, and Condensation Policy

### Purpose and summary of report:

1. To inform the Housing Services Cabinet Committee of the proposed Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy and seek comments prior to the policy being agreed by Cabinet Member, Housing Services.

### Recommendations:

1. For Housing Services Cabinet Committee to discuss and provide feedback on the proposed Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy for the Cabinet Member, Housing Services to consider prior to authorising the policy

<b>Key Implications:</b>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Implications</b>
<b>Legal</b>	The Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 amended the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, with the aim of ensuring that all rented accommodation is fit for human habitation. While it did not create new obligations for landlords, it required landlords to ensure their properties are fit for human habitation at the beginning of, and throughout, the tenancy. The Landlord and Tenant Act does not define “fit for human habitation”, but consideration should be given to repair, stability, freedom from damp, internal arrangement, natural lighting, ventilation, water supply, drainage and sanitary conveniences, facilities for preparation and cooking of food, the disposal of wastewater and any prescribed hazard.
<b>Finance and Value for Money</b>	There is a cost associated with not dealing with issues of damp and mould appropriately, both in regards to disrepair litigation but also compensation. The Housing Ombudsman investigated 410 complaints <b>nationally</b> over the last two financial years, 56% resulted in findings of maladministration, 501 orders were made to social housing providers to put something right with 288 additional recommendations, and £123,094.57 in compensation was ordered across 222 cases, with sums over £1,000 being ordered in 21 cases.
<b>Corporate Plan</b>	<b>People:</b> Protected Environment - enforce high regulatory requirements and carbon neutral borough. Quality Living - safeguard residents and putting our customers first.

	<b>Place:</b> Connected Community - improve resident well-being <b>Progress:</b> Entrepreneurial Authority - deliver a more resilient, creative and cost effective council
<b>Climate Change</b>	As outlined in the Council's Climate Change Strategy 2022-2030, a programme of investment is being delivered to reduce carbon emissions and improve the energy performance of the housing stock. This includes upgrading insulation and providing more efficient heating and ventilation to increase thermal comfort and reduce the risk of damp and mould occurring in our homes.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Following the tragic death of two-year-old Awaab Ishak from Rochdale, which was attributed to health issues arising from mould in the family's home it has highlighted the serious nature of damp and mould in homes.
- 1.2 On 28 November 2022, the Council released a statement on its social media including its website encouraging its tenants to report any cases of damp and mould to the Housing Repairs team and providing advice on how to reduce condensation in the home. The news release was also picked and used positively by local media.
- 1.3 On 22 March 2022, a report was taken to Housing Cabinet Committee following the release of the Housing Ombudsman report addressing the issue of damp and mould called "Spotlight on: Damp and mould. It's not lifestyle". The report outlines the Council's intention to reduce damp and mould in its homes by introducing a damp and mould action plan.
- 1.4 On 13 December 2022, a report was taken to Management Team with our submission for 'Assurance on addressing risks related to damp and mould in tenants' homes' following the letter sent to chief executives of large and small registered social housing providers by the Regulator of Social Housing requesting this assurance.
- 1.5 As a provider of socially rented homes, the Council is committed to maintaining its homes to a high standard. Maintaining high quality and secure homes can improve the lives of our tenants and achieve high levels of tenant satisfaction and kept free of mould. It is recognised that in providing homes as a space for households to live and grow, they must be kept free of mould and the council and its tenants must work together to achieve this.
- 1.6 The introduction of a Damp, Mould, and Condensation policy by the Council is important to ensure that we provide and maintain dry, warm, healthy homes for our tenants and to ensure that the fabric of our homes is protected from deterioration and damage resulting from damp and mould and ensure the relevant repairs are raised and completed.
- 1.7 Regardless of the cause, the Council will ensure that tenants feel supported and listened to when they report cases of damp, mould, and condensation.

## 2. The Policy

- 2.1 The proposed policy outlines the processes when damp, mould and condensation is reported by tenants or identified by the Council and the action that will be taken and support that will be given to tenants to resolve the issues. It also includes how

damp and mould should be reported by tenants and ensuring that the process for them to do so is straightforward.

- 2.2 The policy also outlines what the Council do to ensure that preventative measures are in place to reduce the number of cases that we receive including the introduction of an 'Every Visit Counts' approach ensuring all frontline officers across the Housing directorate, who carry out home visits, take responsibility for reporting damp, mould, and condensation in our homes.

### **3. Background Documents**

- 3.1 Appendix 1 – Housing Cabinet Committee Report 22 March 2022 - Housing Ombudsman- Damp and Mould Action Plan [Appendix 2- Damp Mould Action Plan.pdf \(gravesham.gov.uk\)](#)

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<b>Secondary Implications</b>	
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	There are a number of risks of not dealing with damp and mould promptly both through disrepair and the Council's reputation alongside the risk to the health of our tenants.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	<p><i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i></p> <p>a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of <a href="#">personal data</a> or <a href="#">special category data</a> or <a href="#">criminal offence data</a>? A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website via the above links. No</p> <p>b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice? N/A</p> <p>c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at <a href="mailto:gdpr@medway.gov.uk">gdpr@medway.gov.uk</a>. N/A</p>
<b>Equality Impact Assessment</b>	<p>a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer. No</p> <p>b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer. No</p> <p><i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i></p>
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	N/A
<b>Digital and website implications</b>	N/A
<b>Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults</b>	N/A