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**AGENDA FOR THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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Members of the Housing Scrutiny Committee are summoned to Council Chamber on, **8 January 2024 at 7.30 pm.**

Enquiries to : Ola Adeoye  
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Despatched : 29 December 2023

Membership

Councillor Jason Jackson (Chair)  
Councillor Ilkay Cinko-Oner (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Phil Graham  
Councillor Valerie Bossman-Quarshie  
Councillor Michael O'Sullivan  
Councillor Mick Gilgunn  
Councillor Gulcin Ozdemir  
Councillor Ernestas Jegorovas-Armstrong  
Dean Donaghey (Resident Observer) (Co-Optee)  
Rose Marie McDonald (Resident Observer) (Co-Optee)

Substitute Members

Councillor Jilani Chowdhury  
Councillor Ben Mackmurdie  
Councillor Heather Staff  
Councillor Rosaline Ogunro  
Councillor Caroline Russell  
Councillor Marian Spall  
Councillor Dave Poyser

**Quorum is 4 Councillors**



**A. Formal Matters**

**Page**

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declaration of Substitute Members
3. Declarations of Interests

If you have a **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest\*** in an item of business:

- if it is not yet on the council's register, you **must** declare both the existence and details of it at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent;
- you may **choose** to declare a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest that is already in the register in the interests of openness and transparency.

In both the above cases, you **must** leave the room without participating in discussion of the item.

If you have a **personal** interest in an item of business **and** you intend to speak or vote on the item you **must** declare both the existence and details of it at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent but you **may** participate in the discussion and vote on the item.

**\*(a) Employment, etc** - Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.

**(b) Sponsorship** - Any payment or other financial benefit in respect of your expenses in carrying out duties as a member, or of your election; including from a trade union.

**(c) Contracts** - Any current contract for goods, services or works, between you or your partner (or a body in which one of you has a beneficial interest) and the council.

**(d) Land** - Any beneficial interest in land which is within the council's area.

**(e) Licences** - Any licence to occupy land in the council's area for a month or longer.

**(f) Corporate tenancies** - Any tenancy between the council and a body in which you or your partner have a beneficial interest.

**(g) Securities** - Any beneficial interest in securities of a body which has a place of business or land in the council's area, if the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body or of any one class of its issued share capital.

This applies to **all** members present at the meeting.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting
5. Chair's Report
6. External Attendees (if any)

1 - 10

7. Order of Business
8. Public Questions

For members of the public to ask questions relating to any subject on the meeting agenda under Procedure Rule 70.5. Alternatively, the Chair may opt to accept questions from the public during the discussion on each agenda item.

<b>B. Items for Decision/Discussion</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. Main Scrutiny Review 2023/24 -New Homes Build in Islington: - witness evidence- To follow	
2. Damp and Mould - officer update	11 - 14
3. Quarterly Review of Housing Performance (Q2 2023/24)	15 - 26
4. Housing Ombudsman Action Plan Update	27 - 34
5. Work Programme 2023/24	35 - 36

**C. Urgent non-exempt items (if any)**

Any non- exempt items which the Chair agrees should be considered urgent by reason of special circumstances. The reasons for urgency will be agreed by the Chair and recorded in the minutes.

**D. Exclusion of press and public**

To consider whether, in view of the nature of the remaining items on the agenda, any of them are likely to involve the disclosure of exempt or confidential information within the terms of the Access to Information Procedure Rules in the Constitution and, if so, whether to exclude the press and public during discussion thereof.

**E. Confidential/exempt items** **Page**

**F. Urgent exempt items (if any)**

Any exempt items which the Chair agrees should be considered urgently by reason of special circumstances. The reasons for urgency will be agreed by the Chair and recorded in the minutes.

The next meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee will be on 6 February 2024

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London Borough of Islington

## **Housing Scrutiny Committee - 7 November 2023**

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 7 November 2023 at 7.30 pm.

**Present:**      **Councillors:**      Jackson (Chair), Cinko-Oner (Vice-Chair), Graham, Bossman-Quarshie, O'Sullivan, Gilgunn, Ozdemir and Jegorovas-Armstrong

### **Councillor Jason Jackson in the Chair**

44      **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)**

There were no apologies for absence.

45      **DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)**

There were no declarations of substitute members.

46      **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Item 3)**

There were no declarations of interest.

47      **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2023 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

48      **CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 5)**

Chair informed meeting that he recently met with Matt West, Director of Housing Property Services to discuss scaffolding in and around housing estates, that an officer update will be scheduled for consideration by committee at a future meeting.

49      **EXTERNAL ATTENDEES (IF ANY) (Item 6)**

None

50      **ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item 7)**

The order of business would be B1,B2,B4 and B5.

51      **PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 8)**

In response to a question from a member of the public about the Council's engagement process and a statement by the interim corporate director of Community Engagement and Wellbeing, Nadeem Murtuja who expressed an interest

in non-Eurocentric engagement methods, the Interim Corporate Director of Homes and Neighbourhood acknowledged that this is being considered.

**52** **HOUSING OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REVIEW 2022/2023**  
**SYNOPSIS (Item B1)**

Item was taken in conjunction with B2

Meeting received a synopsis of Housing Ombudsman Annual Complaints Review 2022/23, details of which are the following:

- The Annual Complaints Review has revealed a sharp increase of severe maladministration findings, as individual performance reports were published for 163 landlords where the Ombudsman made most findings.
- The figures revealed a challenging picture of social housing complaints, which has seen a huge spike due to poor property conditions, legislative changes, media attention and the inquest into the death of Awaab Ishak a child who sadly died in Rochdale due to Damp and Mould.
- The Annual Complaints Review provides a unique and comprehensive assessment of complaints in social housing, that the Ombudsman received over 5,000 complaints for the first-time last year, a 28% increase on the previous year.
- Ombudsman has written to Chief Executives of landlords who have a maladministration rate of over 50% to bring urgent attention to the figures, that there are 91 landlords with a maladministration rate above 50%, with 25 landlords being above 75%.
- Islington Council received letter from Housing Ombudsman on the 11<sup>th</sup> October 2023. Review looked at Complaints Handling Failure Orders (CHFOS) and a number of key issues for the first time.
- The Ombudsman issued 146 CHFOS last year, mostly for failing to progress complaints in line with its Complaint Handling Code, with 73% of those being for landlords with over 10,000 homes. Islington Council received two complaint handling failures.
- In terms of what residents were complaining about, property condition was once again the leading category, with the Ombudsman making almost 2,000 findings where the failure rate has increased dramatically from 39% to 54% this year.
- The Ombudsman also found a 52% maladministration rate for health and safety complaints.
- Another key element of the Annual Complaints Review is the regional data which indicates Southwest as having the lowest overall maladministration rate, as well as having a significantly lower maladministration rate on health and safety complaints and the Northeast and Yorkshire having the lowest severe maladministration rate.

## Housing Scrutiny Committee - 7 November 2023

- London continues to be where the Ombudsman makes most of its determinations, even accounting for the quantity of social homes in the region. It had the highest maladministration rate and accounted for 77 of the 130 severe maladministration findings last year.
- The rate of maladministration for local authorities was slightly higher than housing associations, 62% compared to 50%. The Housing Ombudsman have found that due to less resources, it is harder for local authorities to offer reasonable redress, therefore ending up with more maladministration findings.
- The Annual Complaints Review shows that London has the highest number of determinations, even accounting for quantity of housing stock in region.
- The London region also has the highest maladministration rate at 58% and the highest maladministration rate for property condition at 58%.
- It was noted that of the 131 severe maladministration findings last year, 77 of these were for London landlords.
- Meeting was advised that Islington Council had a 56.8% of maladministration findings, with 74 landlords having a higher percentage maladministration finding compared to Islington.
- Committee will receive annual reports in the future to hold the Homes and Neighbourhood service to account which will help drive service improvements for residents. Also the strategic action/improvement plan which addresses most of the issues highlighted by the Housing Ombudsman.
- On whether any of the works carried out could be attributed to contractors, the Director advised that housing ombudsman's findings does not distinguish contractors from social landlords and that, all contractors and inhouse staff are provided mandatory training.
- Meeting was advised that properties managed by Partners Improvement falls within the same regulatory regime as social landlords.
- In response to a finding for Islington's Chief Executive to personally apologise to tenants for its maladministration, the meeting was advised that due to changes in leadership in the last few months this had not occurred, but will be actioned when the new Chief Executive is in post.
- The Executive Member for Homes and Neighbourhood reiterated that when these issues have arisen and brought to her attention either via case work or at committee she has apologised, reminding residents to contact the council directly first than wait to be approached by 'ambulance' chasing lawyers.
- On the question about first time repairs and slippage and its monitoring, the Chair requested that this issue be considered by committee in the next few months.
- With regards to the 21 recommendations and the associated 20 actions, the Interim Corporate Director Homes and Neighbourhood advised that Committee will receive a detailed report which will link the recommendations to the respective actions so that members will be able to monitor its progress.
- On the issue of scaffolding, meeting was reminded that a review was carried out years ago with Partners Improvement nothing the misconception that contractors leave scaffolding up on estates due to lack of storage so prefer to leave it up until they move onto another site.

## Housing Scrutiny Committee - 7 November 2023

- In response to the above, the Director of Property Services acknowledged that there is room for improvement especially in the area of how it communicates with its residents, that residents need to be kept informed at all the various stages and works being carried out or ongoing when scaffolding is erected on estate buildings.
- The Chair requested officers provide an update on scaffolding and first-time repairs ahead of the next meeting as it needs more clarity.
- On whether the implementation of the recommendations were realistic, the Corporate Director acknowledged that the Council aims to keep to the timelines, that officers will be clear and transparent if there are any slippages, noting that all lead/contact officers had an input to each recommendation.
- Meeting was advised that there is ongoing cross over work with other services in areas, one of which is addressing anti-social behaviour.
- Member queried the culture within the ASB team especially in light of the recent Clarion resident who committed suicide, that there is a view that enforcement is not taken seriously, that tenants are not being held to account especially as some of these activities are likely to be a breach of their tenancy agreement.
- In response to the above, the Director of Housing Needs acknowledged that historically this issue had not been robustly addressed however there have been some improvements for example where previously there was one housing officer responsible for managing 1250 homes, now it is one officer to 500 homes, noting also that more enforcement such as evictions have been carried out in the last 6 months in comparison to the last 6 years.
- On the issue of funding, meeting was advised that officers are working with Executive Members to articulate a response to central government on this issue.

### **RESOLVED:**

- That the annual report be noted
- That the action/improvement plan be noted

## **53 HOUSING OMBUDSMAN SPECIAL REPORT ON ISLINGTON COUNCIL (Item B2)**

Item was taken in conjunction with item B1

- Committee received the Housing Ombudsman Special Report on Islington Council and the following issues were noted:
- The investigation commenced in December 2022, and the special investigation report into Islington Council was published by the Housing Ombudsman on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October 2023.
- Meeting was advised that the Housing Ombudsman makes final decision on disputes between residents and Council and Housing Association landlords.



- Members were informed that the special report attached as Appendix One to this report follows an investigation conducted under paragraph 49 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, which allows the Housing Ombudsman to conduct further investigations to establish whether any presenting evidence is indicative of a systemic failing.
- The cases considered as part of the special investigation include complaints that were with the landlord between February 2019 and 24 November 2022. Therefore, the complaints cover a three year and nine-month period.
- The special investigation considered all housing services provided by Islington Council and the related complaints for all these services and that the investigation report and work identified underlying causes which have led to failings in three principal areas of the landlord's service provision where the Housing Ombudsman see repeated failings and include Disrepair including Damp and Mould, Anti-social behaviour and Complaint handling.
- Meeting was advised that the complaint handling by Islington Council had been the subject of a Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman investigation, an LGSCO report produced was referenced within the Housing Ombudsman report on pages 41 to 44 relating to complaint handling by the council.
- The Corporate Director informed committee Islington Council fully accept the Ombudsman's report and recommendations, that Council wants everyone in Islington to have a safe, decent, and genuinely affordable place to call home.
- It was also noted that tenants and leaseholders within the borough deserve a high-quality service, which Council sadly acknowledge has not always delivered in the past.
- The Corporate Director reiterated that Islington Council have been working to put things right and note that this report further clarifies the actions and resources needed, building on the external critical appraisal Council have sought from partners over the last two years.
- Islington Council are committed to delivering a number of improvements in an extremely challenging environment of long-term underinvestment in social housing, the challenges our residents face with the cost-of-living crisis, and a severe shortage of affordable housing in one of London's densest Boroughs.
- In June 2022 Islington Council set up a Housing Improvement Board to raise standards and respond to new regulatory requirements and that Council will build on this and deliver the Ombudsman's recommendations through an expanded Improvement Plan, including:
- Introducing a new, place-based approach, Getting repairs right, Delivering our five-point-plan on damp and mould, Tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB), Transforming our complaints service. Attached as Appendix Two to this report is the draft Improvement/Action Plan to address the findings and recommendations contained and connected with the special investigation report produced by the Housing Ombudsman.

Committee received presentations from Stephen Nash, Interim Director Strategic Development & Delivery on how it consults and engages with the different stakeholders in the delivery of its new homes and Alistair Gale, Head of Programming, Design and Customer Care on partnership working.

- Meeting was advised that besides delivering new affordable high-quality homes it is important for residents to understand why Council is building new homes on their estate, why it has to sell homes to pay for the works, and how people can apply for newly built homes. This is possible through its consultation and engagement process.
- The New Build Team does not determine whether a scheme goes ahead, that lies primarily with the Council's Planning Committee.
- The Team ensures that all relevant voices are heard, how it influences our buildings and spaces and the need to continue involvement.
- Interim Director highlighted its engagement process with internal stakeholders with its initial fact finding; design guide; stakeholder workshops; building control and technical reviews; members meetings and updates.
- Throughout the engagement process, the New Build Team aims to put residents at the heart of the process by involving them in both design and implementation phases.
- In terms of community engagement, meeting was advised that local knowledge and feedback helps improve council schemes and enhance the social value that developments can deliver and this is done via exhibitions and drop in sessions, residents meeting the Design team to talk about the built environment; Steering groups and design workshops; feedback surveys; newsletters and posters and visiting residents.
- Meeting was also informed that the New Build Team engage with residents that do not live on the estate so as to get their perspective on the impact of the new scheme.
- Resident engagement continues during construction and onto when scheme is completed and handed over as new schemes can have an impact on resident amenity with possible closures of access roads and noises from construction activities and its impact on residents well-being.
- The new build team provides regular newsletters, organise 'meet the contractor' event, having in place a dedicated resident liaison officer; use of online project webpages, attendance of TRA/TMO meetings and including a contractor 'Social Value' clause.
- A successful engagement process will ensure that process is tailored to the needs of the projects as it is important to recognise that there is a no 'one-size-fits-all'. The process will make use of local knowledge and feedback to develop and refine proposals, that it will allow for a 'win/win' approach whereby existing / and future residents will benefit, achieve an acceptable balance of time/cost/quality for the Council New Build once construction is underway.
- Meeting was informed of the recent changes within the New Build Team, that previously the engagement process was managed by a Project Manager, a Strategic Engagement Manager and Officer has been proposed to manage

the process with tasks of reviewing how the Team currently engages; filter out what works, what doesn't, what could be done better; speak to other developing boroughs and incorporate the best that they do; work closely with LBI Engagement and Participation Team and Communications Team; meet the requirements of the GLA / Social Housing Regulator and other relevant bodies etc.

- In terms of Cross Public Sector Working, One Public Estate supports locally-led partnerships of public sector bodies to collaborate around their public service delivery strategies and estate needs, an example being the funding of (some) ground works to Parkside Estate. It was also noted that more lobbying would need to be done regarding TFL as they remain one of the few large landowners in the borough.
- The New Build team engages with the Islington Local Estates Forum and has resulted in projects such as Vorley Road (37 council homes, new medical centre, new library), the Finsbury Leisure Centre (100 council homes, new leisure centre, new medical centre, new energy centre) and Daylight New Park (new council homes, new medical centre, new adult day centre) etc.
- GLA funds have resulted in the building of council homes for Londoners and Affordable Homes programme for sale, which is to be welcomed.
- In terms of best Practice and Knowledge Sharing, the new team is part of the Local Authority Design Working Group (LA DWG).
- The team also engages in various networking activities such as the Housing Forum which supports Council's at different stages in delivering more quality homes for their communities nationwide; London Councils (LC); LC London Housing Developers Group; Neighbouring developing councils and Contractors & consultants.
- Meeting was advised that LBI being one of the founding members of the Benchmarking Construction for London group, is able to upload tender award data and supporting information that helps to produce construction cost benchmarks so that it obtains best value for money especially in terms of construction costs.
- On the possibility of further collaboration with similar schemes such as the Richard Cloudsley School, meeting was advised of the unique circumstances which made it possible, however if such opportunity arises in the future the Team will take it up.
- Meeting was informed of cross working with other services, that the team has links with the Adult and Social Care Services which helps in identifying local housing demands and under-occupiers.
- In response to suggestions that Council build on top of existing residential buildings or build downwards, the Executive Member for Finance, Planning and Performance reminded the meeting of successful conversion of garages and undercroft spaces, and that Council have no plans to build below ground.
- The interim Director advised that fun day events were sometimes organised in estates with a view to design play areas, an opportunity to obtain feedback from children and young people's.
- In response to a question about previous collaboration exercises with smaller housing associations to build new homes, the interim Director advised that this was possible previously when council had small sites within the borough.

The New Build Team provides support and advice to small housing associations when seeking planning permission.

- On the question of abandoned projects and if it could be attributed to failure with the engagement process, meeting was advised that only one out of 40 schemes was abandoned and this was due to challenging circumstances from the economic climate.
- Committee will have an opportunity to consider the experiences of neighbouring boroughs as part of the review into new build homes.
- On the suggestion of extending the invitation to experts and academics, this was noted by officers.

Chair thanked both Stephen Nash and Alistair Gale for their presentations and that he and the vice chair would be meeting the New Build

**RESOLVED:**

That the presentation be noted.

**55      MAIN SCRUTINY REVIEW 2022/23 - OVERCROWDING STRATEGY - FINAL REPORT AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS (Item B4)**

Ian Swift, Director of Housing Needs Operations advised the meeting that following the review exercise, a number of recommendations had been produced which has been shared with all stakeholders for their comments.

The Director informed meeting about the under-occupation scheme report attached and recommendations on page 135-136 of the agenda

That Recommendations include the recruitment of an additional officer in the mobility team; relaunching the downsizer scheme; prioritising downsizers for a greater pool of lettings; raising the financial incentive from £500 per bedroom up to £2,000; increasing the removal expenses up to £750 for all downsizers; raise awareness among other teams and departments ;cross matching the under-occupier register with Adult Social Care records; review the Council's webpages related to the Downsizer Scheme; creating a dedicated phone line and mailbox and to explore the implications of promotion of Shared Lives and Home share schemes to under-occupiers.

A member suggested that in addition to the recommendation of increasing financial support, Council should consider other officer support as a package.

In response, the Executive Member for Homes and Neighbourhood acknowledge that in light of the ongoing cost of living challenges there is a recognition that the recommended financial increase may not be sufficient as an incentive for under-occupiers to release their homes and move on and that this issue will be revisited sometime in the near future.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the report be approved and referred to the Executive for consideration

- (b) That an interim progress on the recommendations be reported to committee in the next 6 months
- (c) That the report on under occupation scheme and recommendations be appended onto the report.

**56 FIBRE BROADBAND -UPDATE (Item B5)**

The Director of Housing Needs and Strategy informed committee that presently cabling has now been completed for 2379 properties or 7% of the Council's properties, that officers continue to consult regularly with colleagues across the council to maximise partnership working with the providers, making introductions to colleagues where appropriate, provide input where useful and to extract community value from the programme.

Meeting was also advised that the Community Centre at Peregrine House has now a live connection.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted

**57 WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24 (Item B6)**

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted

The meeting ended at 9.55 pm

**CHAIR**

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Homes and Neighbourhoods

Islington Council

222 Upper Street

N1 1XR

**Report of: Matt West, Director of Housing Property Services**

Meeting of: Housing Scrutiny Committee

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024

# Damp, Condensation and Mould Programme Recommendations

## 1. Programme overview

- 1.1. It has been one year since the damp, condensation and programme was established.
- 1.2. Numbers of damp surveys over the past three years shows a steep increase in demand. Which put additional pressure on council services, resources and on the individuals and families living in homes with these conditions.
  - October 2021: 225 damp surveys
  - October 2022: 178 damp surveys
  - October 2023: 452 damp surveys
  - November 2021: 224 damp surveys
  - November 2022: 478 damp surveys
  - November 2023: 600 damp surveys

- December 2021: 185 damp surveys
  - December 2022: 463 damp surveys
  - December 2023: 282 damp surveys (up to 19<sup>th</sup> December)
- 1.2.1. We have increased the number of surveyors from four to eight.
  - 1.2.2. In addition, we have procured additional contractors to support the treatment works.
  - 1.2.3. The online reporting form is in the process of being updated so that residents are empowered to provide more information when reporting damp and mould and officers can assess and triage quickly and more accurately.
  - 1.2.4. The Repairs Policy has been revised and updated and includes damp, condensation and mould. This is due to go through governance and signed off early 2024.
  - 1.2.5. The Major Works Transfer procedure has been updated. This procedure explains the process for agreeing temporary or permanent moves of tenants when there are works that need to be carried out in their homes. The procedure also sets out where tenants are eligible for compensation and a Home Loss payment.
  - 1.2.6. Enhanced and clarified damp and mould process that ensures all completed damp and mould work is subjected to a formal review to establish how successful the intervention has been.
  - 1.2.7. The One View dashboard has influenced a new operational dashboard, it allowed us to communicate to a wide audience the overview of damp and mould in Islington bringing together the power of joining datasets, enabled prioritising risk and highlighted gaps.
  - 1.2.8. Based on the One View dashboard, a new damp and mould dashboard is in the process of being created to track live damp and mould cases. This dashboard will improve operational and strategic oversight.
  - 1.2.9. The Housing Ombudsman has commended the programme and recognised the dedicated work of all involved: “The landlord’s actions to improve its response to damp and mould should result in improvement in residents’ experience, and some should also have wider impact, improving the response to repairs more generally.”
  - 1.2.10. Tenancy and property visits pilot has been hugely beneficial in identifying damp and mould in homes, their root causes and other repairs issues that could lead to damp and mould. A total of 521 households was involved in the pilot. Among them, we attempted visits to 331 homes. During these visits, 155 households answered the door, and 110 of them granted us access to their residences. 50 homes had visible damp and mould which were referred to the Repairs team.



- 1.2.11. The Partnership referral form was initially piloted with Andover Medical Practice and will be extended out other medical practices and services.
- 1.2.12. As part of preparing for winter there is a programme of proactively testing the performance of boilers and communal heating, and have began to install remote monitoring devices that help identify the increase in humidity in a property so that the Repairs team can proactively prevent damp, condensation and mould in homes.
- 1.2.13. An extensive training programme is in place, with damp and mould awareness briefings and updates included in inductions and meetings
- 1.2.14. Since January 2023 the High Profile Damp Case Taskforce has worked on 131 cases, closed 90 cases and has significantly reduced the risk of these cases from high to low.
- 1.2.15. We are working with University College London in conducting a net zero and damp and mould research study to best prepare us for reducing damp and mould in Islington Council properties and meeting our net zero carbon aims.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. This report provides the Housing Scrutiny Committee with information and progress made to date on the damp, condensation and mould programme since the previous update to the Housing Scrutiny Committee in September 2023.
- 2.2. Officers encourage the Housing Scrutiny Committee to appraise this work and make suggestions of how the council's work in this critical area can be improved.
- 2.3. Members of the committee are asked to amend add and approve the draft recommendations for presentation to the council's executive committee.
- 2.4. An update on the damp, condensation and mould programme to be presented in a future Housing Scrutiny Committee as determined by the committee:
  - 2.4.1. Performance data based on the key performance indicators that have been agreed.
  - 2.4.2. Tenancy and property visits phase two pilot findings and overview of how the work is embedded in the service.
  - 2.4.3. Overview of how data and systems have been used and developed to improve service delivery.
  - 2.4.4. A review of how the service better communicates the process for damp and mould and how it acts for different causes.
  - 2.4.5. The service is to explore combining cyclical safety visits to properties to improve access and reduce disruption of tenants.

- 2.4.6. The service reviews its investment work to target damp and mould as well as other priorities such as decent homes, fire safety, net zero carbon.
- 2.4.7. The service completes and considers its pilots in to remote technology.
- 2.4.8. Update on the development of referral pathways for other services such as GPS and Health Practitioners.
- 2.4.9. Overview of blocks with high level of damp and mould prioritised for capital work and investment.
- 2.4.10. Action plan implemented from the recommendations set out in the Housing Ombudsman's paragraph 49 special investigation report.
- 2.4.11. Overview of the Social Housing Regulators pilot inspection and any learning that can improve services for residents in relation to damp and mould.

Directorate of Homes and Neighbourhoods

222 Upper Street  
N1 1XR

Report of: Acting Corporate Director Homes and Neighbourhoods

Meeting of: Housing Scrutiny Committee

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> of January 2024

Ward(s): All

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Subject: **Quarter 2 Performance Report: Housing**

## Synopsis

- 1.1. The council has in place a suite of corporate performance indicators to help monitor progress in delivering the outcomes set out in the council's Corporate Plan. Progress on key performance measures is reported through the Council's Scrutiny Committees on a quarterly basis to ensure accountability to residents and to enable challenge where necessary.
- 1.2. This report sets out Quarter 2 progress against targets for those performance indicators that fall within the Housing outcome area, for which the Housing Scrutiny Committee has responsibility

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To note performance against targets in Quarter 2, 2023/24 for measures relating to housing.

## 3. Background

- 3.1. A suite of corporate performance indicators has been agreed, which help track progress in delivering the seven priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan - *Building a Fairer Islington*. Targets are set on an annual basis and performance is monitored internally, through Departmental Management Teams, Corporate Management Board and Joint Board, and externally through the Scrutiny Committees.

- 3.2. The Housing Scrutiny Committee is responsible for monitoring and challenging performance for the following key outcome area: Housing:Delivering decent and genuinely affordable homes for all.

<b>4. Quarter 2 performance update – Housing</b>									
<b>4.1 Key performance indicators relating to Housing.</b>									
#	Indicator	2020/ 21 Actual	2021/ 22 Actual	2022/ 23 Actual	<b>2023/24 Q2</b>	<b>Targets</b>	On target?	Q2 last year	Better than Q2 last year?
H1	Percentage of homeless decisions made in the target timeframe	40%	68%	77%	<b>61%</b>	80%	No	70%	No
H2	Number of households in temporary accommodation per 1,000	5.1 per 1,000	8.1 per 1,000	9.3 per 1,000	<b>10.4 per 1,000</b>	NA	NA	8.7 per 1,000	No
H3	Number of households in nightly booked temporary accommodation per 1,000	4.4 per 1,000	4.4 per 1,000	5.2 per 1,000	<b>5.7 per 1,000</b>	NA	NA	4.8 per 1,000	No
H4	Number of homeless preventions	947	701	808	<b>303</b>	425 (850 annual)	No	449	No
H5	Number of people sleeping rough	11	6	6	<b>9</b>	0	No	9	Similar
H6	Percentage of all lettings provided to council tenants securing a transfer	35%	29%	32%	<b>28%</b>	35%	No	34%	No
H7	Percentage of LBI repairs fixed first time	92.9%	88.5%	88.0%	<b>86%</b>	85%	Yes	90%	No
H8	Rent arrears as a proportion of the rent roll – LBI and partners	4.8%	4.7%	4.8%	<b>4.9%</b>	Target TBC	N/A	4.9%	Similar

4.2 Tenancy Satisfaction Measures					
#	Indicator	Q1 2023/ 24	Q2 2023/ 24	6 Month Cumulative Figure	Target
H10	Overall satisfaction	64%	<b>63%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<p><i>New Indicators</i></p> <p><i>This is the first quarter reporting these indicators. Some indicators are being newly collected.</i></p> <p><i>Once regular benchmarking and trends are available, targets will be set.</i></p>
H11	Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard	8%	<b>4%</b>	<b>4%</b>	
H12	Repairs completed within timescale – Non-emergency	69%	<b>72%</b>	<b>70%</b>	
H13	Repairs completed within timescale – Emergency	92%	<b>94%</b>	<b>93%</b>	
H14	Gas Safety checks	97%	<b>98%</b>	<b>98%</b>	
H15	Fire Safety checks	71%**	<b>100%**</b>	<b>91%**</b>	
H16	Asbestos Safety checks	2%**	<b>15%</b>	<b>9%</b>	
H17	Water Safety checks	33%**	<b>29%</b>	<b>27%</b>	
H18	Lift Safety checks	24%**	<b>NA</b>	<b>NA</b>	
H19	Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord (per 1000 homes)	1.7 per 1000***	<b>2.7 per 1000***</b>	<b>4.4 per 1000***</b>	
H20	ASB cases that involve hate crime incidents (per 1000 homes)	0 per 1,000***	<b>0 per 1,000***</b>	<b>0 per 1,000***</b>	
H21	Complaints relative to size of the landlord - stage 1 (per 1000 homes)	19.2 per 1000	<b>16.9 per 1000</b>	<b>38 per 1000</b>	
H22	Complaints relative to size of the landlord - stage 2 (per 1000 homes)	3.9 per 1000	<b>5.2 per 1000</b>	<b>9.1 per 1000</b>	
H23	Complaints responded to within the Complaint Handling Code timescales - Stage 1	43%	<b>81%</b>	<b>60%</b>	
H24	Complaints responded to within the Complaint Handling Code timescales - Stage 2	88%	<b>96%</b>	<b>94%</b>	

\*TSM survey was taken August-September 2023. Most recent data available had been included in this report

\*\* These indicators are impacted by only reporting 1 quarters worth. For building safety measures this is because works happen at different points throughout the year, the accurate figures won't be available till year end.

\*\*\* Measures are impacted by data quality

#### 4.3

##### *H1: Percentage of homeless decisions made in the target timeframe*

61% of homeless decisions were made in the target timeframe in Q2. Performance is below the annual target of 80% (stretch target of 90%). The service has continued to experience a significant increase in demand as homelessness increases across the borough and London as a whole. In August 2023, London Councils published an article stating that one in 50 Londoners are now either homeless or living in temporary accommodation. The increase has stemmed from homeless applicants approaching due to a combination of domestic abuse, disrepair (damp/ mould/ condensation), lack of private sector housing and cost of living.

An improvement plan is being implemented in Islington to address this performance. The service continues to have a weekly focus on performance for this indicator, increasing the officer target for decision reached and provision of overtime for high performing officers to reach decision within the target time frame. The service has set an ambitious target and if achieved this will result in the council being placed in the top quartile of performance.

There are more homeless households than at any time in the country's history.

#### 4.4

##### *H2: Number of households in temporary accommodation per 1,000*

The number of households in temporary accommodation per 1,000 is a new indicator in the housing scrutiny report. In Islington in Q2, 10.4 per 1,000 households were in temporary accommodation (1,099 households). Although rates have increased and performance is higher than Q2 last year, performance is still below London (London = 17 per 1,000 households, England = 4 per 1,000). The latest government statistics on homelessness in England, show that the number of households in temporary accommodation has increased nationally, and there are more homeless households living in temporary accommodation in England than at any time in our history.

Nationally, the number of households with dependent children housed in B&Bs more than doubled in final quarter of 2022 compared with the same period the year before to 2,980 – a rise of 129% in a year. There has also been a 50% rise in homelessness due to no-fault evictions in the past year. Additionally, an estimated 700,000 UK households missed or defaulted on a rent or mortgage payment last month, according to data issued days before another expected rise in the cost of borrowing. Missed housing payments were “particularly high” among renters, affecting one in 20 tenants surveyed. One child in every classroom in London is now living in temporary accommodation.

#### 4.5

##### *H3: Number of households in nightly booked temporary accommodation per 1,000*

There were 5.7 per 1,000 households in nightly booked temporary accommodation (607 households). A target of no more than 550 households was set last year meaning performance is above target. Although the number of households is above target, Islington rate is similar to London, where 5 per 1,000 households are in temporary accommodation. Islington has 0 households in bed and breakfast. Across London 4,620 households are in bed and breakfast hotels (1 per 1,000) and in England 10,000 households (1.0 per 1,000).

Based on the most recent benchmarking and the increase in demand, Islington Council's overall performance in managing temporary accommodation is excellent. However, further reductions in the use of private sector properties are urgently needed going forward and we should not be complacent. The council has set a stretching target to eliminate the use of expensive nightly paid temporary accommodation to provide greater security for our homeless residents. The team are continuing to work to discharge ineligible households as quickly as possible, to bring the number down further.

#### 4.6

##### *H4: Number of homeless preventions*

There were 303 households that were prevented from being homeless this year, figures are below the quarterly target of 425. We believe performance this year has been impacted by various challenges. These include the increase in rents in London which will make securing private sector accommodation more challenging, corresponding decrease in affordability due to the cost-of-living crisis, energy costs, inflation etc which will impact

more acutely on those on low and moderate incomes. Concerns about the affordability of social housing properties owned by Housing Association and a further increase in homeless presentations from September 2022, as initial six-month placements through the Homes for Ukraine scheme end. Homelessness is expected to increase throughout 2023/2024 financial year because of the cost-of-living crisis and people being unable to afford the basics of heating their homes, food for the households, and stable/secure accommodation.

The Bureau of Investigative Journalism identified that there are no Private Rented Sector rents in Islington set at or below the Local Housing Allowance. Therefore, it is not possible to prevent homelessness into the or from the Private Rented sector. Across London Private Rented sector rents have increased by 12% in the last 12 months and the number of Private Rented Sector properties have reduced by 41% since the end of the pandemic.

4.7

*H5: Number of people sleeping rough*

The number of people sleeping rough this quarter (9) is above last years end of year performance (6) but better than Q1 (11 people). Rough sleeping is increasing across London. However, Islington Council continues to re-house people from the streets as no one should be sleeping on the streets of Islington. The increase in people sleeping on the streets is being driven by several councils closing covid accommodation for people with no recourse to public funds and Councils going back to business as usual and assessing people under the Homeless Reduction Act for interim temporary accommodation. This has led to rough sleepers moving into Islington due to the lack of provision in the boroughs the rough sleepers were previously in. The service continues to offer accommodation in our emergency off the street hotels. The service has 4 outreach shifts per week along with new navigator posts to work with people with complex needs.

Islington has the lowest number of people sleeping rough compared to all other central London councils.

4.8

*H6: Percentage of all lettings provided to council tenants securing a transfer*

This indicator shows how many of the council's existing tenants have been successful in moving to a more suitable social rented home, alleviating overcrowding for example and freeing up council homes for those in need. Lettings performance in Q2 is 28%, below target (35%). Performance being off target is partly due to the delay of expected new build properties which are mainly let to transferring tenants. This is also impacted by the increase in temporary accommodation and housing our homeless customers.

The service continues to focus on downsizers to release larger properties for households that need them and encouraging social housing tenants to consider the mutual exchange scheme to increase the lettings to those seeking a transfer.

4.9

*H7: Percentage of LBI repairs fixed first time*

86.0% of repairs have been fixed first time this year. Performance is above the annual target of 85%. Although performance is below last year Q2 (90%), significantly more jobs



are being completed compared to last year. Around 4,000 more repairs have been completed in Q1 and 2 this year compared to last year. Some of this increase is due to the insourcing of PFI however the remainder is due to a range of factors the service is still exploring.

4.1

*H8: Rent arrears as a proportion of the rent roll – LBI + Partners*

In Q2, rent arrears as a proportion of rent roll was 4.9%. In April 2022 the Council took back the management of PFI2 housing stock, approximately 3,000 properties which has resulted in the proportion of rent arrears of the rent roll for LBI increasing.

37% of the former PFI2 accounts are in arrears, which represents between 4% to 8% more arrears accounts than for LBI patches. Rent values for PFI properties are up to 25% higher than pre-existing LBI managed stock and the average arrears value of these accounts is also £417 higher compared to pre-existing LBI managed properties. A detailed review of PFI2 accounts has been undertaken since handover resulting in a significant number requiring enforcement action to bring them in line with the LBI arrears process.

Reducing rent arrears over the next year will be a significant challenge, due to the increase in the cost of living and fuel bills, which will adversely affect a majority of our residents and limit their ability to make rent payments.

5.0

## **Tenancy Satisfaction Measures**

The Social Housing (Regulation) Bill has introduced a set of measures to improve standards for people living in social housing. These measures were confirmed on 21st September 2022 and are part of a new system developed by the Regulator of Social Housing to assess social housing landlords, on their provision of good quality homes and services. There are 22 measures, 12 of which are collected via tenant perception surveys and 10 of which are generated via management information.

Currently, the 10 management indicators are being measured on a regular basis and included in this report.

5.1

*H10: Overall Satisfaction*

The results of the new monthly survey showed that overall satisfaction levels (64%) have increased across all questions when compared to the 2021 results. When benchmarked, Islington is performing better than the London median (60.8%). England median = 72.3%.

5.2

*H11: % Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard*

A decent homes deep dive and quality assurance process was actioned in Q1. Since this deep dive and improvements in data quality, performance has improved and now 4% of homes are non-decent (in Q1 12% of homes were non-decent). When benchmarked, Islington is performing better than the London median (12.5%). England median = 0.3%.

5.3

*H12: Repairs completed in target timescale – Non-emergency*

In quarter 2, 70% of non-emergency repairs were completed within target timescale. When benchmarked, Islington is performing lower than the London median (78.6%). England median = 82.7%.

5.4

#### *H13-H17 Building safety measures*

All 5 building safety measures (gas, fire, asbestos, water and lift safety) will be accurate at year end. This is due to the nature of the work happening at different points of the year. For monitoring purposes they will be included in the report but caveated. When benchmarked across these indicators, Islington is generally similar to London. Further benchmarking is needed to accurately understand how we rank against other London boroughs.

5.5

#### *H18 & H19 – Anti-social Behaviour*

As this is a newly reported measure, there is ongoing work to understand how our collection and reporting fits into the wider context of other boroughs and checking the accuracy/appropriateness of how ASB and Hate crime is recorded internally. We have undertaken an internal benchmarking process to address this. End of year projections would benchmark Islington in the lower quartile; however we are aware that this could be due to the data quality challenges mentioned above.

5.6

#### *H20 – H22 – Complaints*

Overall, stage 1 complaints performance has been impacted by recording challenges in quarter 1. It is important to note that there is ongoing work to improve the data quality of complaints data.

As of quarter 2, there were 38 per 1,000 properties stage 1 complaints raised. This is lower than the London median (42.7 per 1,000). 60% of stage 1 complaints were responded to within timescale, this is below the London median of 77%.

For stage 2, there were 9.1 complaints raised per 1,000 properties. This is above the London median (7.4 per 1,000). 94% of complaints were responded to within timescale. This is above the London median (49%).

## **4. Implications**

### **4.1. Financial Implications**

4.1.1. The cost of providing resources to monitor performance is met within each service's core budget.

### **4.2. Legal Implications**

4.2.1. There are no legal duties upon local authorities to set targets or monitor performance. However, these enable us to strive for continuous improvement.

4.3. **Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030**

4.3.1. There are no environmental impact arising from monitoring performance.

4.4. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

Report authors should send reports to [equalities@islington.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@islington.gov.uk) for sign-off at least 5 working days in advance. The equalities implication section should reflect the outcome of EQIAs, which should also be sent to the Equalities Team for quality checking and sign-off.

4.4.1. The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

4.4.2. An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required in relation to this report.

## 5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

5.1. The Council's Corporate Plan sets out a clear set of priorities, underpinned by a set of firm commitments and actions that we will take over the next four years to work towards our vision of a Fairer Islington. The corporate performance indicators are one of a number of tools that enable us to ensure that we are making progress in delivering key priorities whilst maintaining good quality services. Please provide a short conclusion and summarise the reasons for the recommendations.

### Final report clearance:

Signed by: Jed Young

**Corporate Director of Housing**

Date: 21<sup>st</sup> December 2023

Report Author: Evie Lodge, Principal Analyst Housing and Adult Social Care  
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Financial Implications Author: [name and job title]

Tel:

Email:

Legal Implications Author: [name and job title]

Tel:

Email:

## **Appendix 1: Tenancy Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)**

The Social Housing (Regulation) Bill will enact a set of measures to improve standards for people living in social housing. These measures were confirmed on 21st September 2022 and are part of a new system developed by the Regulator of Social Housing to assess social housing landlords, on their provision of good quality homes and services. There are 22 measures, 12 of which are collected via tenant perception surveys and 10 of which are generated via management information.

Earlier this year, London Housing Directors' Group commissioned Housemark to undertake a survey of stock-holding London borough TSMs. The Housemark report was finalised and published in March 2023. Data for twenty-six London boroughs is included but their responses are anonymised.

The summary below shows the benchmarked data for Islington. Going forward, TSMs will be monitored on a quarterly basis and embedded into the scrutiny performance report.

<b>TSM</b>	<b>Islington Council</b>	<b>London Councils lower quartile</b>	<b>London Councils median</b>	<b>London Councils upper quartile</b>	<b>National median</b>
<b>TP01 – Overall satisfaction</b>	<b>65.00</b>	60.2	64.5	79.3	69.0
<b>RP01 – Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard</b>	<b>9.51</b>	0	0.56	10.73	0
<b>RP02 – Repairs completed within target timescale</b>	<b>82.69%</b>	76.3	80.5	89.2	85.2
<b>BS01 – Gas safety checks</b>	<b>99.21%</b>	98.76	99.54	99.93	99.99
<b>BS02 – Fire safety checks</b>	<b>100%</b>	99.1	100	100	100
<b>BS03 – Asbestos safety checks</b>	<b>100%</b>	100	100	100	100
<b>BS04 – Water safety checks</b>	<b>100%</b>	100	100	100	100
<b>BS05 – Lift safety checks</b>	<b>86.51%</b>	100	100	100	100
<b>CH01 – Complaints per 1,000 properties</b>	<b>27</b>	38.6	61.5	92.6	27.4
<b>CH02 – Complaints responded to within timescales</b>	<b>80%</b>	63.5	78.7	93.2	80.3
<b>NM01 – Anti-social behaviour cases per 1,000 properties</b>	<b>8</b>	55.4	60.4	69.8	49.9



Homes and Neighbourhoods  
222 Upper Street, London, N1 1RX

Report of: Corporate Director of Homes and Neighbourhoods

Meeting of: Housing Scrutiny Committee

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Ward(s): All

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## Housing Ombudsman Action Plan Update

### 0. Synopsis

- 0.1. As reported to the Housing Scrutiny Committee at their last meeting in November the Housing Ombudsman concluded their special investigation into Islington Council in October 2023 and published their finding [Special Islington Council Report | Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#). The council accepted the finding and confirmed their commitment to service improvement on publication of the report. As well as finding areas for improvement the Housing Ombudsman commended Islington on its proactive approach to remedying areas identified for improvement and those having begun ahead of the launch of the investigation.
- 0.2. A draft action plan was shared with the Housing Scrutiny Committee at their last meeting and work has begun on delivering the action plan as well as refining it since then. This report sets out the progress that has been made.
- 0.3. Further the Corporate Director, Homes and Neighbourhoods will meet again with the Housing Ombudsman in January 2024 to discuss progress and their plans for monitoring arrangements following their report.

### 1. Recommendations

- 1.1. That the Housing Scrutiny Committee note the progress made against the Housing Ombudsman Action plan since November and the refined version of the action plan and provide feedback on the work so far.

### 2. Background

- 2.1. As reported to the Housing Scrutiny Committee at their last meeting in November the Housing Ombudsman concluded their special investigation into Islington Council in October 2023 and published their finding [Special Islington Council Report | Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#). The council accepted the finding and confirmed their commitment to service improvement on publication of the report. As well as finding areas for improvement the Housing Ombudsman commended Islington on its proactive approach to remedying areas identified for improvement and those having begun ahead of the launch of the investigation. The Housing Ombudsman has announced a number of further special investigations this year for social landlords and details of this can be found on their website [News - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#).
- 2.2. An action plan has been developed to respond to the 21 recommendations made by the Housing Ombudsman, a draft of which was shared with the Housing Scrutiny Committee at their last meeting. Since then work has continued on delivering the action plan, as well as refining and consolidating some of the actions and delivery timescales, as the service has developed its response. This report sets out the progress that has been made under the four areas of recommendations made by the Housing Ombudsman – cross-cutting issues, disrepair (including damp and mould), anti-social behaviour and complaints handling.
- 2.3. The Corporate Director, Homes and Neighbourhoods will meet again with the Housing Ombudsman in January to discuss the council's progress and to better understand the Housing Ombudsman's plans for monitoring progress in service improvement following from their report.
- 2.4. The draft action plan has been tidied to contain 81 actions in response to the 21 recommendations. 21 of the 83 actions have been completed or are in place already, 43 are in progress with many of the remaining following on from other actions once complete. The below progress update provides a summary of the work undertaken within Homes and Neighbourhoods so far.
- 2.5. **Progress update**
- 2.6. Cross cutting recommendations 1 – 6. These recommendations focused on the council's need to improve:
- service improvement plans, ensuring they have senior level buy-in and clear success measures and outcomes,
  - collaborative working across services and our partner organisations,
  - frontline interactions with residents, through better investigation of what the resident seeks as an outcome and better communication on next steps,



- oversight of record keeping, offering a better resident experience and efficiency of dealing with service requests from residents,
- consideration of resident vulnerabilities and how they should influence our response as a landlord.

2.7. The council has:

- Developed a departmental format for action plans, which ensures SMART objectives and Senior Responsible Officers are in place for all action.
- A staff survey has been designed for implementation during December and January to seek feedback on staff empowerment and support staff need to feel more empowered in their roles. An action plan will be developed from this.
- A programme of communications training is under development for all staff, which will focus on staff interactions on the frontline supporting staff to providing high quality interactions and clear follow up actions to residents. The training will incorporate the importance of record keeping as part of our commitment to good communications.
- The Housing Ombudsman training on Knowledge and Information Management is compulsory for all managers to complete and recommended learning for staff. Managers are to complete this during January and completion will be monitored.
- Work has started on developing a Vulnerabilities Policy, a draft policy will be developed by February for consultation with stakeholders and residents, before being finalised for sign-off by the Council's Executive. The Housing Ombudsman is due to issue a spotlight report on the subject and any further learning from this will also be considered.
- 180 staff in Tenancy, Housing Needs, Housing Options and Income teams have completed Trauma Informed Practice training – this is now compulsory for staff in these areas and will be included in new staff inductions. The training is being rolled out into Housing Direct and for the surveying team who deal with complex repairs and disrepair and further roll out will be considered after this within Housing Property Services.

2.8. Disrepair related recommendations 7-14. These recommendations focused on the council's need to improve:

- the number of missed appointments, through better understanding of why these are occurring and how they can be reduced,
- greater oversight of delivery by third party contractors and managing agents,

- proactive mitigation of the impact of complex repairs on residents,
- communications with residents who have previously experienced damp and mould,
- how we ensure void properties are reserviced whilst vacant, and free from long term issues when let,
- our mutual exchange policy, to ensure that there is not an overly onus responsibility place on residents to identify damp and mould or other disrepair,
- our repairs policy to ensure it has clear escalation pathways and is resolution focussed, for repairs that are delayed.

#### 2.9. The council has:

- Introduced a backstop team to prevent missed appointments through reallocations processes. Protocols are drafted and measures of performance for the team are in place, to ensure these measures achieve the required outcomes.
- A damp and mould team in place, with specific timeframe measures – to help isolate and monitor service performance.
- Regular learning/sharing meetings are now in place between the council and Partners to ensure new working is embedded throughout council services.
- Monthly operational meetings with repair contractors are in place and focussed on resolution of outstanding repairs, greater levels of post inspection arrangement are now in place. Further works is underway to seek to implement live updates via contractor PDAs into the council systems – as new contracts come into place.
- Additional checks are in place for complex repairs delivered by Partners and annual performance reporting through Housing Management Team and Political Leadership meetings focusing on Partners performance and improvement programme have been implemented.
- Another round table event sharing learning on damp and mould was held in November and a further meeting is planned for Q4 next year. Partners are a key contributor alongside the council, taking part in this best practice sharing exercise.
- Risk assessment for damp and mould calls has been developed and requires technical updates to the system that will be completed in January.
- Trigger points for damp and mould repairs have been developed ready for roll out.
- Repairs policy revision with dedicated damp and mould section is in draft and being shared with key stakeholders for review.
- Partners are working proactively with the council to imbed changes into their service arrangements and incorporating updated policies and processes.
- Improvements being developed in voids processes to ensure damp and mould and other complex works take place before occupation.

- Mutual exchange process has been updated to remove any onus on residents to identify damp and mould issues and new surveying arrangements will be in place early in the new year.

2.10. Anti-social Behaviour related recommendations 15 – 17. These recommendations focused on the council's need to improve:

- ensure the learning from the Housing Ombudsman's spotlight report 'A Time to be Heard' is embedded in our service delivery,
- how staff are empowered and support to apply procedures for responding to ASB and noise complaints,
- monitoring of officers complying with the processes and policies related to ASB and noise.

2.11. The council has:

- Carried out a self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman 'Time to be Heard' insight report and action plan has been developed.
- The Housing Operations Director and Senior Officers have attended Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee to share how housing management services deliver ASB services – taking part in their scrutiny review to identify service improvements.
- The complaints team will ensure learning is drawn on ASB services from complaints and share them with service leads to develop improvement, this process will be strengthened once the new complaints system is in place early in the new year – providing trend reporting on this and other complaints issues.
- Put in place annual opinion survey for staff, identifying how empowered and supported they feel in delivering services. The survey has been designed for implementation this month and will be carried out annually to monitor staff confidence and improvement in this and other areas each year.
- Good Neighbour Policy has been drafted and is being further developed with residents, partners and stakeholders.

2.12. Complaints related recommendations 18 – 21. These recommendations focused on the council's need to improve:

- Executive and director level oversight of the complaints process, including learning from complaints,

- training for all staff in complaints handlings and learning from complaints – to promote the benefits from and importance of the complaints process,
- our complaints process and procedures to ensure they are clear and have expectations for quality responses,
- that apology letters or stage 2 level responses are brought to the attention of the Chief Executive or suitably senior members of staff.

2.13. The council has:

- Developed a complaints handling training programme utilising the Housing Ombudsman online training courses for all office-based staff – which will start to be rolled out to staff from February as compulsory for these staff. Managers will be required to complete a second unit of training to enhance their understanding of complaints investigation and improve the quality of service responses.
- New complaints reporting format is now in place and consistent across all Homes and Neighbourhoods complaints and will incorporate improvements from trends reporting from the new complaints monitoring system.
- Homes and Neighbourhoods complaints service restructure has been agreed, securing additional resources for the team and ensuring that quality management is at the heart of the service. The restructure process will be rolled out in late January for staff consultation and where needed posts recruited too, once the consultation process is concluded.
- Quality audits by the Customer Solutions Manager will be carried out on a weekly basis from January, ensuring that improvements are being embedded in the service.
- The Corporate Complaints Team will ensure that apology letters are notified to complaints leads and the Chief Executive to ensure visibility and compliance with the Housing Ombudsman’s expectations and stage 2 letters will be signed off by a senior officer (Director).

## 4. Implications

### 4.1. Financial implications

4.1.1 None to be reported.

### 4.2 Legal implications

4.2.1 None to be reported.

### 4.3 **Environmental implications and contribution to achieving net zero carbon Islington by 2023**

4.3.1 None to be reported.

### 4.4 **Equalities Impact Assessment**

4.4.1 The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

4.4.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required in relation to this report, because further guidance on equalities impact assessments is available within the Housing Ombudsman action plan (attached as an appendix/supporting document to this paper) as required for respective actions and successful delivery of associated objectives.

## 5. **Conclusion and reasons for recommendations**

5.1 The Homes and Neighbourhoods Service has ensured focus on progressing areas of service improvement identified both by the council and Housing Ombudsman to improve our repairs, complaints and ASB services and responding to the cross cutting issues identified.

5.1.2 This report summarises the significant progress has been made in the delivery of the Housing Ombudsman Action Plan and more is planned for the coming weeks and months.

### **Appendices:**

- Please see accompanying Housing Ombudsman Action Plan

### **Final report clearance:**

Authorised by: Jed Young

**Corporate Director of Homes and Neighbourhoods**

Date: 21/12/2023

Report Author: Hannah Bowman, Assistant Director, Housing Strategic Business Planning and Investment

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## **HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24**

### **8 JANUARY 2024**

- 1) Main Scrutiny Review 2023/24 -New Homes Build in Islington: – witness evidence
- 2) Damp and Mould – officer update
- 3) Housing Ombudsman Action Plan – Update
- 4) Quarterly Review of Housing Performance (Q2 2023/24)
- 5) Work Programme 2023/24

### **6 FEBRUARY 2024**

- 1) Main Scrutiny Review 2023/24 -New Homes Build in Islington: witness evidence
- 2) Housing Performance Annual Report from Executive Member
- 3) Work Programme 2023/24

### **18 APRIL 2024**

- 1) Main Scrutiny Review 2023/24 -New Homes Build in Islington: – Witness evidence
- 2) Quarterly Review of Housing Performance (Q3 2023/24)
- 3) Communal Heating – 12 Month Report back
- 4) Work Programme 2023/24

### **13 MAY 2024**

- 1) Membership, Terms of Reference and Dates of Meetings
- 2) Draft Work Programme 2023/24 and Potential Scrutiny Topics

### **20 JUNE 2024** provisional date subject to Annual Council in May 2024)

- 1) Draft Work Programme 2024/25

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