

Housing Damp & Mould Policy (Housing, Maggie Ward)

Synopsis of report:

This policy outlines the way Runnymede Borough Council will deal with reports of damp and mould in its stock.

Recommendation(s):

Members approve the Housing Damp & Mould Policy (Appendix A)

1. Context

- 1.1 There is increase in the level of damp, mould and condensation issues being reported within the Council's owned homes. This is partly due to the installation of energy efficiency measures and reduced air circulation, which in turn increases the amount of moist air within a property and therefore creating excess condensation which if left un-treated, can cause mould to form.
- 1.2 A policy is required to ensure that the Council actively tackles incidents of damp and mould.

2. Report

- 2.1 This policy sets out specific guidance to ensure that the Damp & Mould present in Runnymede Borough Council's properties is managed effectively. It also aims to proactively manage the prevention of Damp & Mould in properties which are on estates where Damp & Mould has previously been reported.
- 2.2 The primary aims of this policy are to:
 - Ensure that our tenants have a safe home to live in.
 - Ensure the sustainability of our properties by managing damp & mould problems as they emerge, so that they do not contribute to potential structural problems.
- 2.3 The Housing Service has set out a clear approach for the management of damp & mould in our properties, which will include:
 - Monitoring properties where there is potential for Damp & Mould to develop. This will be achieved by tracking the frequency of Damp & Mould repairs in each of our estates and certain construction types
 - Monitoring the condition and age of the components of our properties (for example doors & windows) through our capital investment works.
 - Using the processes available in our Damp & Mould procedure to inspect and monitor the progress of reported Damp & Mould in our properties.
 - Performance Monitoring on complaints, number of repairs, MP and Councillor enquiries, and the number of disrepair cases which mention Damp & Mould.

2.4 A technical officer will complete an appropriate property inspection when a report of damp & mould is received by the Council. If appropriate it will be a joint inspection with the Area Housing Manager

2.5 Where inspections are carried out, factors to be considered include:

- Insulation (Loft and wall)
- Window fittings
- Fuel poverty
- If there are factors that might be within the tenant's control to affect the presence of damp & mould, for example:
 - Heating (with due consideration to the financial position of the tenant);
 - Ventilation
 - Arrangements for drying clothes;
 - Overcrowding
 - Construction design
- Inspectors will routinely provide information leaflets and letters regarding damp & mould.

2.6 RBC will provide a package of works as appropriate and work with the tenant to understand the causes of damp and mould and positive actions which can / need to be taken to avoid the build-up.

2.7 Potential works

- Increased passive ventilation
- Mechanical ventilation to areas of high humidity
- Increase in loft insulation and or top up to existing
- Mould treatments to affected areas
- Referrals to our capital works programmes for new windows and doors
- Thermal insulation (internally)
- Replacement of rainwater goods and or repairs if applicable
- Humidity sensors

2.8 Once the Council is satisfied that any construction, ventilation and heating issues have been addressed the tenant will be advised of this and be provided with information on any issues within the property that they need to manage.

3. Consultation

3.1 As this policy relates to a significant health and safety issue and ensures that the Council is not in breach of its duties it is not recommended that there is a period of consultation on the policy.

4 Policy framework implications

4.1 The Tenancy Agreement outlines both the landlord and tenant responsibilities in relation to repairs and maintenance and ensuring the property is kept clean.

4.2 The agreement is currently being reviewed – as highlighted in the Housing Services Area plan 2023/24. A refreshed version will be presented to Housing Committee in June 2024.

5. Resource implications

- 5.1 There will be costs associated within the implementation of this policy but they will be contained within existing budgets and staffing resources.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 The policy takes into account the following legislation;

Landlord & Tenant Act 1985
Defective Premises Act 1972
Environmental Protection Act 1990
Equality Act 2010
Right to Repair Regulations 1994
Building Regulations
Health & Safety at Work Act 1974
The Housing Acts 1985 & 1996
Housing Act 2004 – Housing Health and Safety Rating System
Homes (Fitness for Human habitation) Act 2018
Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 Section 11 - Repairs and Maintenance
Decent Homes standards
Housing Ombudsman

6. Equality implications

- 6.1 As the policy applies to all tenancies, it is believed that there will be no negative impact on the experience of residents with Protected Characteristics. Limited data is currently available on the link between reports of Damp & Mould in RBC properties and the Protected Characteristics of our tenants.
- 6.2 It is anticipated that our data quality will improve due to the changes proposed to RBC's approach to Damp & Mould. In the medium to long term, reports may be generated regarding these potential links.

7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

- 7.1 Addressing damp and mould effectively helps to ensure that our tenants living in suitable, good quality housing.
- 7.2 Failure to address damp and mould issues has potentially serious health implications for tenants and their household.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 Members are asked to approve the Damp & Mould Policy for implementation.

(To Resolve)

Background Papers

None