

Committee(s): Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee	Dated: 28/11/2024
Subject: Housing Complaints Update	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	3
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Judith Finlay, Executive Director of Community & Children's Services	For Decision, Information and Comment
Report author: Peta Caine, Assistant Director – Housing	

Summary

The purpose of this report is to update members of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub-Committee on some key issues currently being dealt with by the Social Housing Team. Namely:

For Decision

- Approval of the following policies-
Compensation Policy – Appendix 1
Fire Safety Policy – Appendix 2
Repairs and Maintenance Policy – Appendix 3
Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy – Appendix 4
The Empty Property (Voids) Policy – Appendix 5
Observations Received – Appendix 6

For Information and Discussion

- An update on our risk register – Appendix 7
- The Housing Damp and Mould Self-Assessment – Appendix 8

For Information

- Staffing Update
- Grenfell Enquiry Phase 2 Report Toolkit

This report will outline the work being done by the team to keep abreast of these and other issues.

Recommendation

Members are asked to approve the following policies attached at appendices 1-5:

Compensation Policy
Fire Safety Policy
Repairs and Maintenance Policy
Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy
Empty Properties (Voids) Policy

and note the observations included in appendix 6.

Main Report

1. Policy Approval

Members are asked to:

- **Approve the Compensation Policy for use by the Housing Division**

The Compensation policy establishes a fair, transparent, and standardised approach to compensating residents for disruption to or issues with our services. It supports the Complaints policy and aims to address situations where residents experience disruption or inconvenience due to repair delays, maintenance issues, or other service failures.

The policy provides a structured approach to enhancing accountability, recognising residents' rights and strengthening resident satisfaction. The guidelines help manage resident expectations, reducing potential disputes and promotes efficient handling of compensation claims. Approving this policy demonstrates our commitment to providing quality services and enhancing resident wellbeing, contributing to a more positive housing environment and ensuring compliance with regulatory standards.

- **Approve the Fire Safety Policy for use by the Housing Division**

The Fire Safety policy is crucial to ensure that our homes comply with safety standards and legislation, reducing risks for our residents. Poor fire safety can lead to devastating consequences, not only for residents but also for our reputation. Tragedies such as the Grenfell Tower fire have highlighted the importance of rigorous fire safety in social housing. Implementing this policy mitigates the risk of future incidents, protecting both residents and the City of London's reputation while preventing costly damages.

Implementing this policy demonstrates our commitment to proactive fire prevention, compliance with legal requirements and resident wellbeing.

- **Approve the Repairs & Maintenance Policy for use by the Housing Division**

The Repairs & Maintenance policy supports the responsive upkeep of our homes. Regular maintenance preserves the condition of our housing assets, prevents costly future repairs, and ensures that homes remain safe and comfortable for residents.

The responsive maintenance contract is currently being retendered; to ensure a smooth transition the policy outlines the Housing Division's expectations to maintain quality housing and a good service for residents and staff. The policy also aims to ensure compliance with legal standards and legislation, helping avoid legal disputes or enforcement action by regulatory bodies.

We continually aim to improve resident satisfaction. This policy addresses our approach to achieve an effective and efficient repairs service to promote a better

quality of life for residents, reduce complaints and contribute to a positive reputation for the Housing Division.

- **Approve the Damp, Mould & Condensation Policy for use by the Housing Division**

In recent years, there has been increased awareness and media attention to the harmful effects of damp and mould in social housing. High-profile cases and resident complaints have brought the issue to the forefront for all social housing providers.

The Damp, Mould & Condensation Policy demonstrates our commitment to proactive maintenance and resident care. The policy is essential to addressing health risks related to dampness, mould growth, and poor ventilation. It promotes a healthy living environment, enabling early detection and remediation to minimise health risks. By adopting this policy, we will demonstrate our commitment to resident well-being, preventive maintenance and regulatory compliance, while also protecting the long-term value of our assets.

- **Approve the Empty Properties (Void) Policy for use by the Housing Division**

The Empty Properties Policy outlines our aims to reduce the time homes are left vacant, ensuring quick turnaround and occupancy. The policy highlights our commitment to help reduce lost rental income, meet housing demand, and provide quicker access to homes for people on the waiting lists. The policy outlines clear standards, roles and responsibilities to ensure that void properties are inspected, repaired, and re-let in a timely manner.

The implementation of the Empty Properties Policy reinforces our commitment to maximising housing availability, meeting community needs, and supporting financial stability through efficient void management.

2. Risk Profile Update

Members are asked to review the risk register

At Appendix 7 please find attached our latest risk register sorted by risk score and excluding completed actions. The register details the actions being taken to mitigate our risks. The Committee is asked to note the inclusion of the Statutory Compliance risk and the steps being taken and planned to mitigate this risk. Members are asked to review the report.

3. The Housing Damp and Mould Self-Assessment

Members are asked to review the self-assessment

At Appendix 8 please find attached a self-assessment led by the Head of Repairs and Maintenance against the Housing Ombudsman's Spotlight Report on Damp and Mould. Completion of a self-assessment is not a statutory requirement, but many landlords completed them to identify weaknesses in their approach to dealing with damp and mould and as good practice. The Housing Ombudsman's

Service asked us to submit our self-assessment following several complaints about damp and mould. The self-assessment was submitted earlier this month.

4. Staffing Update

Members are asked to note the staff update

- Greg Wade has joined us from Poplar HARCA as the new Head of Major Works. His key priorities will be delivering the major works programme efficiently whilst maximising resident engagement in the works being carried out to and in their homes.

5. Grenfell Inquiry Phase 2 Report Toolkit

Members are asked to note the development of the Grenfell Inquiry Phase 2 Report Toolkit

The toolkit developed with the London Councils is designed to highlight lessons from the Phase Two report and to help collaboratively drive change across housing services in London. There is a focus on listening to residents, keeping them safe and the responsibility that housing providers have for stewardship of assets on behalf of residents. The senior management team will review the toolkit and produce an action plan that we will share with Members at a future meeting.

Key Data

Key data contained in Appendices 1 - 8

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications – none

Financial implications – none

Resource implications – none

Legal implications - none

Risk implications – none

Equalities implications – none

Climate implications – none

Security implications – none

Conclusion

Members are asked to approve the policies presented in appendices 1-5, review the risk register and the damp and mould risk assessment.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Draft Compensation Policy

Appendix 2 – Draft Fire Safety Policy

Appendix 3 – Draft Repairs and Maintenance Policy

Appendix 4 – Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy

Appendix 5 – The Empty Property (Voids) Policy

Appendix 6 – Observations received on the policies

Appendix 7 – Risk Register Update

Appendix 8 – Housing Damp and Mould Self - Assessment

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