

**Title:** Damp and Mould Programme Update – November 2023

**Information/Discussion Report – Discussion**

**Recommendations:** The DMC is asked to note the report and comment.

**Report Summary:** This report provides an update on the Council's proactive programme to address damp and mould.

## **1. Background and Context**

- 1.1 Following the Council's proactive communications campaign to encourage residents to contact it if they had damp and mould in their property, the Council has actioned and closed over 6,100 reports of damp and mould since December 2022.

## **2. Progress to Date**

- 2.1 Over 5,000 properties had a mould inspection and over 2,000 have had a subsequent mould wash was carried out. 72 cases were classed as 24-hour emergency requests, and 15 households required a decant move due to the seriousness of the mould in the property.
- 2.2 The commitment of having a business-as-usual damp and mould operation in place by the end of August 2023 has been achieved, which has been down to a clear and managed way of working across operations and back-office functions. The Council currently has 430 active cases on hand, and the Damp and Mould Team is working hard to action these as a matter of urgency before the expected winter peak of cases.
- 2.3 The Council continues to proactively engage with residents through its ongoing outbound call campaign via our provider, KWEST. If the Council has had no further contact following an initial report of mould, or there have been two no-access attempts, then the Council will send a letter to the resident and advise them that as we have not heard from them, it will close their case and request they contact the Council again. However, the Council passes these 'closed cases' to our outbound call provider, KWEST, who will try to call them to confirm this is still the case. Recent

feedback from KWEST is that approximately 25% - 30% are still reporting mould or damp, so another appointment will be booked.

- 2.4 The Council has also been contacting again approximately 1,000 households designated as high-risk vulnerable residents, as it did earlier this year, to check if they are having any damp or mould issues. The Council acknowledges that there has been a high volume of cases and it has not always co-ordinated its actions in the best way. The Council now has all casework managed by one team and will look to closely co-ordinate actions in the future.
- 2.5 Since January, the Council has had 16 Ombudsman cases where damp and mould were listed as a factor and recently received a severe maladministration finding on a case related to 2021, prior to the Council introducing its new approach in December 2022. The Council will carry out a review and provide a copy of the final report to the Housing Scrutiny Committee. Members of the committee can then discuss and agree how it will oversee the implementation of recommendations made following the review. The Council will also provide a copy of its findings to the Ombudsman.

### **3. Moving Forward**

- 3.1 Recognising the need to continue providing this service as part of the Council's operational demand but aware of budget constraints, it has changed the operation and how it works.
- 3.2 The Repairs Service reviewed the operation of the previous 23 staff who were separately covering inspection and mould wash tasks, and now has 12 on-the-ground staff members who cover both elements of the work. This is proving to be a more efficient approach in terms of staff time and also for residents.
- 3.3 As part of this revised approach, the Repairs Service has made diary changes to allow the inspection and any mould wash ideally to be completed on the first visit. This slightly extended appointment time from 45 minutes to 1 hour means the Repairs Service can reduce the need for further appointments and eliminate the mould during the first visit.

**Report Ends**