

**Scrutiny Meeting
Monday 23 January 2023**

Present: Mike, John, Paul, Helen, Janet, Phil, Alison, Eileen
Rachel Edwards, Ruth Cutler, Joanna Selby, Hazel Clarke

Guests: Linda Colburn- Director of Asset Management and Sustainability
Martin Woods – Head of External Contracts
Lisa Fairlie – Director of Housing Operations

1. Welcome

All were welcomed to the meeting and introductions made.

2. Apologies

Anna, Laura

3. Damp and Mould Update

Linda and Martin gave a power point presentation. Damp and mould are part of the wider asset management of our properties. It explained the circumstances leading to the recent sad death of Awaab Ishak which, following the coroners report, has resulted in the Regulator requiring all Housing Associations to answer 4 key questions -

- Approach to assessing the extent of damp and mould affecting properties including how the prevalence of category 1 & 2 hazards are assessed
- Recent assessments of the extent of damp and mould including the prevalence of category 1 & 2 hazards
- Action being taken to remedy any issues and hazards to ensure homes meet the Decent Homes Standard
- How we ensure individual damp and mould are identified and dealt with promptly and effectively when raised by Tenants and staff.

Platforms response to the Regulator was submitted on 19 December 2022.

Martin shared the detail of the Damp and Condensation Mould Project which incorporates many departments of the business. A new process is being created which will create a damp and condensation mould register keeping all reports in one place and monitor cases from creation to completion.

The presentation outlined the measures Platform are taking including utilising technology as far as possible to help with managing the enquiries, staff recruitment, quick response teams, staff awareness training and use of Switchchee.

Damp can be caused by leaks or a defect in the property (rising or penetrating damp) and require repair. Once repaired the problem should not reoccur.

Condensation mould needs to be dealt with in partnership with customers as this cannot be repaired as moisture meeting a cold surface will always create condensation. This could be helping the customer with equipment or adaptations to help them manage it and the customer using good housekeeping tips to reduce condensation.

The data from the register will inform the Strategy and provide information for common problems such as certain types of property that may be more prone to this issue.

Mike asked if trickle vents are mandatory for every window. Martin advised that it depends on when that requirement was brought in as a building regulation. Any windows installed or replaced from when that was a requirement would have them, but some will not if they were installed prior to this building regulation.

Mike asked if the newsletter could be used for guidance, Martin advised that a range of leaflets had been developed with general and specific advice with the Echelon Group who are a best practice group Platform belong to which will be available on the website. Lisa advised there will be an article in the next edition of the newsletter.

Janet queried if the leaflets would be available in different languages, Martin confirmed they would be translated and available in different languages.

Alison asked if TPAS were providing any guidance or support. Rachel advised that they have training around building regulations but nothing yet specific for damp and condensation mould.

Paul asked if it was possible for new builds to be built that do not get damp issues. Martin advised it was for damp issues as this is a building defect, but condensation will always be present which can turn in to mould. This is why we need to work in partnership with customers to manage condensation.

Phil asked if Platform were looking at damp and mould issues before the tragic death which resulted in the regulators requirements. Martin advised it was being dealt with but based on the new guidance we can do it better and have more streamlined processes.

Phil asked if gas engineers would be included in the training to identify issues as they go in to properties on a yearly basis. Martin advised that everyone is having the awareness training, but they are primarily there to carry out the gas service which is very important. All PPC operatives will have the referral form to highlight any issues they may notice and if they see small problems, they will have equipment to deal with it and be able to signpost customers to further advice. Lisa advised that not all customers have gas so all operatives and visiting officers are key to being proactive by reporting and helping customers with condensation mould.

Alison asked how overcrowding would be dealt with, is this taken in to account. Linda advised this is a key change as previously it would have been identified as an overcrowding or lack of heating problem, but the Ombudsman has made it clear that this can't be a conclusion and these cases would be referred to the Housing Operations team for assistance.

4. KPI Presentation

The current KPI report had been circulated prior to the meeting. Lisa went through the report to outline the suite of KPIs that are monitored on a monthly basis. There is high level information and the RAG rating initially followed by more in-depth commentary and actions being taken to achieve targets.

Lisa advised that we work towards a solution based approach to achieve targets and gave examples of where we are unable to control the circumstances for example cost or shipping of parts.

Affordability of rent was discussed along with cost of living crisis and measures Platform are taking to sustain tenancies.

Alison queried the number overdue fire actions. Lisa advised the overdue ones were mainly bin stores which needed relocating. There are no immediate risk fire actions outstanding.

If anyone has any questions after reading the report let Rachel or Ruth know and they will find the answers.

5. Discussion about new project

A meeting will be arranged in two weeks to allow time for Panel members to consider project suggestions after looking at the KPI information provided and any other issues affecting the sector. There is a meeting next week with the Grounds Maintenance Project Team which will give an indication of the time that will be needed and when for this project for the Panel members working on this.

All Panel members to let Mike know of any ideas they have for future projects.

6. Mutual Exchange Project Update

Lisa thanked the Panel for the amazing and thorough report produced on mutual exchanges. We are currently working on launching Swap Tracker which will address some of the recommendations. A full update on the recommendations will be provided by the end of the week.

7. A.O.B. – None