



**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE
HELD ON 11th FEBRUARY 2025**

PRESENT: Councillor C Bain (Chair), Councillors R Claymore, S Doyle, H Hadley, P Pallett, P Turner and A Wells

CABINET Councillor Ben Clarke

The following officers were present: Paul Weston (Assistant Director Assets), Leanne Costello (Senior Scrutiny and Democratic Services Officer) and Laura Sandland (Democratic and Executive Support Officer)

51 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Bailey and N Statham.

52 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 27th November 2024 were approved as a correct record.

(Moved by Councillor M Bailey and seconded by Councillor N Statham)

53 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

54 UPDATE FROM THE CHAIR

There was no update

55 RESPONSES TO REPORTS OF THE HEALTH & WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chair updated the Committee that following on from the last meeting they attended Cabinet on 12th December to present the Committees recommendation to appoint a food champion which was approved.

56 CONSIDERATION OF MATTERS REFERRED TO THE HEALTH & WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FROM CABINET OR COUNCIL

There were none.

57 UPDATE ON HEALTH RELATED MATTERS CONSIDERED BY STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

The Chair confirmed that no digest had been received and there was no attendance today from the County Councillor.

The Chair confirmed that the dental strategy is to be considered by county in March and an end-of-life working has also been established which was to report back in 2026.

58 UPDATE ON HOUSING DAMP & MOULD

The Chair welcomed the Assistant Director Assets and the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Homelessness and Planning to present the report to provide an update on the Councils approach to Damp & Mould in housing properties.

The Portfolio Holder provided a summary of the report. The Officer confirmed that this is an area of interest to the Social Housing Regulator, and they wanted to see that the Council had a process and monitoring in place. There is a spotlight on damp and mould and the Council were required to do a self-assessment.

As of Monday there were 37 live cases in the MLDINS code – averaging about 18-20 a cases per month.

Since the policy was produced the Council have been working with contractors on a contract reset process to strengthen procedures around damp and mould and provide more oversight around responses, however there would be resource implications for this.

The Council now have access to specialist contractors for more complex cases, which is a costly service but enables a better response.

There is a link to information and videos on dealing with damp and mould on the website.

Progress is being continually monitored as well as follow up calls being made after a case is closed.

There are no obvious trends in areas or archetype however family homes do seem to be worse.

The policy is evolving, and will need refreshing regularly.

The Committee made the following comments/observations and asked the following questions:

- 1) Are there any common trends at all identified in terms of property type/area?

The Officer confirmed that there was a problem identified with properties with concrete balconies, so they have had insulation fitted on them, but generally there are no obvious trends. With low figures of 18-20 a month this can make it difficult to identify trends however the use of the MDLNIS code allows us to complete a breakdown and analysis.

- 2) With changes in legislations, are we doing enough horizon planning as we go forward, have targets been set and are these resourced? How are future proofing and planning as age of stock declines there will be a rising cost to keep properties up to date?

We have built in costs to look at insulation and other energy efficiencies in homes and this is being looked at as to whether this is affordable. As more stringent requirements come in, more resources (which may be external) will need to be built in.

At the moment targets sit within the repairs policy, but this will change under Awaabs law, and in severe cases the Council will need to respond within 24 hours and work is being done with Equans around this.

In an ideal world we don't want any issues with damp and mould but there will always be some. It was explained that of the 18-20 reported some of these will only be slight (i.e. damp around windows) and some may not an inherent damp problem but the aftermath of another problem, i.e. a leak.

With maintenance and upkeep Council properties can last. There are other costs but there will be some properties that will have to be looked at the future, as to whether stock clearance and regeneration need to be considered.

- 3) Should we be looking at experimenting with a green model, i.e. solar panels etc to see if that provides a saving over a longer term?

The Officer confirmed that there is some funding that is being used on a project to look at upgrades to outsource heat pumps, additional insulation and solar panels to see the impact that would have, however the Council needs to appreciate that this is expensive, and the tenant will see a financial saving but the council may not.

Members noted that the financial offset may be worth it.

- 4) Clarification around detailed property inspections carried out every five years which seems like a large number? The Committee noted that the data suggested that the borough was not in a bad place based on 2000 surveys.

The Officer confirmed that the inspections are outsourced, and the survey goes beyond damp and mould. There is currently a full stock condition survey being completed and generally the stock within Tamworth is good, this opinion was echoed by Truman Change who did a tour of stock and commented that the stock is fairly good. The Social Housing Regulator requires Councils to have an up to date picture of their stock. A full stock condition survey hasn't been done in a long time, as usually they would use a sample but are they are expecting the current survey to allow for about 85% of the stock (due to issues with access).

- 5) Clarification around the comment in the report that '*consideration is to be given as whether the question of health should be asked of tenants reporting damp and mould?*' and what the Committees thoughts were.

The Officer confirmed that this comes from Awaabs law and welcomed the Committees comments.

The Committee made the following comments –

- The impact of damp and mould on quality of life can be huge and some households are more vulnerable and can be affected more, and the ability of people to respond to Damp and mould is now more difficult due to rising cost of living/energy costs.
- There is sometimes a stigma around discussing health conditions.
- If health issues are there because of the building, then we need to fix them.
- There is nothing wrong with inviting people to disclose their health conditions in particularly if they are exacerbated by damp and mould.

The Officer confirmed not knowing about tenants health conditions does not mean that the job would not get done just that the response time would be different. They also confirmed that the team could refer to the tenancy sustainment team who would help tenants to see if they could find support with energy costs.

- 6) Clarification around the data as it appeared to be incomplete and shows a job was open for four months.

The Officer confirmed that the report is snapshot in time and is run weekly to give the Council a chance to chase up jobs with contractors. It was confirmed that complaints are monitored.

- 7) What information is available for those that cannot access the internet?

It was confirmed that there is literature available at the front desk and literature is also given to anyone who make a report of damp and mould. They had looked in to whether general information could go out with the rent statements, but these are generated and sent out automatically, so this is not possible.

Members asked if a copy of the literature could be shared with them.

- 8) Whether literature was produced by the Council and whether it was suitable for the visually impaired? If not could this be look in to?

It was confirmed this is produced by a third party but branded for the Council, they were not aware if this was suitable but that this could be picked up by the communications teams.

The Committee moved a recommendation in relation to this.

The Portfolio Holder highlighted that work was being done with the 'Getting to know you survey' around how tenants want to communicated with, with a view to putting together a communication strategy.

Members commented that it is important that the feedback be actioned, and that policies and procedure make this work for the resident

Resolved that the committee

1. noted the contents of this report which has been provided as

an update only.

The Committee moved an additional recommendation to ask to Cabinet to ensure:

2. The literature around damp and mould is reviewed to make it more accessible to people with a visual impairment.

(Moved by Councillor S Doyle and seconded by Councillor A Wells)

59 WORKING GROUP UPDATES

There were none.

60 HEALTH & WELLBEING SCRUTINY WORK PLAN

The Chair highlighted that the next municipal year was going to be important for the Committee with the changes expected to the NHS and Health and Social Care over the next 12-18 months.

The Chair confirmed that the next meeting is on 20th March 2025 we have the safeguarding update and have been asked to consider the following reports –

- Tamworth Community Grants and Funding Options 2025 onwards
- Honest Conversations Community Cohesion Report and Workplan

The Committee agreed with these being added to the agenda for the next meeting.

61 FORWARD PLAN

There were no new items identified from the Forward Plan.

The Chair closed the meeting at 7:00pm.

Chair

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