
Subject:	HOUSING STOCK COMPLIANCE
Meeting and Date:	Cabinet – 1 March 2021
Report of:	Roger Walton, Strategic Director (Operations and Commercial)
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Derek Murphy, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health
Decision Type:	Non-Key Decision
Classification:	Unrestricted

Purpose of the report: To update Cabinet on the current position in relation to the compliance status of the Council's housing stock.

Recommendation: 1. That Cabinet notes the contents of this report which relates to statutory Health & Safety compliance matters associated with managing the housing stock, as well as the actions being taken to verify the accuracy of compliance data.

1. Summary

- 1.1 This is the fifth monthly compliance report since the housing service reverted to the direct control of Dover District Council from East Kent Housing on 1st October 2020. The report outlines: progress towards creating the requisite reliable compliance management and reporting framework and reporting performance based on this verified data. The Council's digital team has started working with the Assets & Building Control team on the upgrade of the SAM database, which will become Dover's central tool for compliance management.
- 1.2 The report draws attention to the features and constraints of the reporting system in order that members have a deeper understanding of the significance of the data being reported. In particular, the reporting figures can only indicate performance at a specific moment in time. Compliance is dynamic because individual certificates expire, necessitating retesting and possibly remedial actions.
- 1.3 In all of the sixteen information streams the accuracy of the data has now been verified.
- 1.4 The verified performance data, accurate at 5th February 2021. Appendix 1 gives details of the verification status and performance figures for each distinct area of compliance. When reporting in January officers alerted members to the fact that anecdotally contractors were starting to struggle to undertake surveys and any subsequent remedial actions. Performance figures this month are starting to reflect those difficulties, most noticeably in relation to the contractors undertaking fire risk assessments where there has been a 9% drop to 87%. Members can however take comfort in the fact that the reduction in performance signifies lapsed fire risk assessments as opposed to buildings having never had a fire risk assessment at all. It is therefore anticipated that when the risk assessments are carried out any risks discovered will be of a minor nature.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 This is the fifth monthly compliance report since the housing service reverted to the direct control of Dover District Council from East Kent Housing. The first report was considered by cabinet on 9th November 2020 and stressed the importance of establishing a master data base, which for Dover District Council is the Strategic Asset Management (SAM) system, a module of the Northgate Housing System. Dover District Council's digital team has successfully led the project to separate Dover from the other Councils completing the task on 11th January. They are now spearheading the upgrade of the SAM data base, which again is legacy work that should have been completed some time ago by East Kent Housing. The project needs close collaboration with and considerable support from the Assets & Building Control team to ensure the software enables effective delivery of the service.
- 2.2 This report outlines subsequent progress towards creating the requisite reliable compliance management and reporting framework, establishing accurate raw data and reporting performance based on this verified data.
- 2.3 The verification of sixteen information streams has been completed.

3. **Compliance Management and Reporting Framework**

- 3.1 Work continues to refine the Compliancy Data Management and Data Storage Manual document which will be used by everyone delivering compliancy. The manual translates the policies into a working document for officers that describes the scope of each compliance area, the data that needs to be collected for that particular compliance area, why this data is necessary, how and where the data is stored and the measures needed to verify the data. The act alone of writing the manual focusses minds on the processes and procedures involved and acts as a tool for uncovering and rectifying any weakness in the system.
- 3.2 A series of workshops for managers and lead officers for each of the main compliance areas took place in late December and January. The workshops achieved the planned outcomes of equipping those running the service with the latest information so that they are fully conversant with new procedures and facilitating discussions about operational issues that can help shape the manual to cover all the practicalities on site. Feedback from the workshops is being incorporated into amended working practices.
- 3.3 The review of the policies drafted by Pennington Choices on behalf of the four Council's as part of the recovery plan is virtually complete. Any minor adjustments to the policies will be formally adopted by the Strategic Director (Operations and Commercial) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health, under the delegated powers authorised by cabinet on 1st June 2020.
- 3.4 The Council received formal written confirmation from the Regulator for Social Housing on 11th January 2021 that its voluntary undertaking had been accepted. During the progress review meeting, held on 14th January, officers informed the regulator that lockdown three has seen a rise in the number of tenants refusing access to contractors for the purposes of inspection and carrying out compliance remedial works. It was emphasised that the Council still intends to deliver in accordance with the Voluntary Undertaking but that a prolonged lockdown will most probably lead to some delays. This agreement underpins the recovery programme. Part of the undertaking concerns the requirement for the emerging systems to be exposed to independent audits, designed to ensure that past weaknesses and flaws have been eradicated and that there is a plan and programme to remediate legacy

compliance issues. At the heart of the audit will be robust testing of compliance data management and the knowledge of those using that data

4. Establishing Accurate Raw Data

- 4.1 The paramount importance of complete, accurate data in ensuring all properties are safe has been recognised by both members and officers. The considerable amount of work needed to regain control of the information is complete and this is a pertinent opportunity to recognise the tenacity and sheer hard work of those officers given the task. It is important to note that the officers concerned have gone out of their way to uncover discrepancies, inaccuracies and missing information in order to ensure that the data is robust, even if that created additional detective work and rectification actions.

5. Compliance Performance

- 5.1 The compliance performance figures are attached at appendix 1. These figures relate to performance as at 5th February 2021.
- 5.2 The performance data demonstrates the immense efforts since 1st October 2020 to find collate and interrogate intelligently the compliance data. Managers now understand and can rely on data in planning and executing actions to improve performance. The majority of compliance streams are at, or close, to expected performance despite the added complications of Covid and lockdown 3. The performance data clearly identifies the areas that had been allowed to slide under the previous management regime. The quantum of work needed to be done to redress this issue should not be underestimated but the performance figures demonstrate on-going improvement.

6. Identification of Options

- 6.1 This report has been produced in response to the cabinet decision to seek regular updates with respect to the compliancy aspects of the housing maintenance service. Identification of options is thus not relevant

7. Resource Implications

- 7.1 This report appertains to the current compliance position hence there are no direct resource implications. Compliance is at the heart of the wider management of the service and the resources needed to manage compliance have been included with the housing asset team structure.

8. Climate Change Implications

- 8.1 The compliance report does not have an impact, either negative or positive, on climate change. Where actions are taken to improve compliance, these will be reviewed on a case by case basis with one of the goals being to reduce carbon emissions as much as is practically possible.

9. Corporate Implications

- 9.1 Comment from the Section 151 Officer: Accountancy have been consulted and have no further comments to add. (AC)
- 9.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council. "The Solicitor to the Council has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no further comments to make".

- 9.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: This report does not specifically highlight any equality implications, however in discharging their duties members are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149> (KM)
- 9.4 Comment from the Climate Change & Energy Conservation Officer: “The Climate Change & Energy Conservation Officer has been consulted and has no further comments to add”. (AM)
10. **Appendices**
- Appendix 1 - Compliance Performance Table
11. **Background Papers**

Contact Officer: Martin Leggatt – Head of Assets and Building Control