
Subject:	HOUSING STOCK COMPLIANCE
Meeting and Date:	Cabinet – 12 April 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 sixth 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 The verified performance data is accurate at 5th March 2021 and appendix 1 gives details of the verification status and performance figures for each distinct area of compliance.
- 1.4 Generally the performance figures are at or about 100% however there are compliance streams where the performance is not at the desired level and analysis of these figures are assessed in paragraphs 3.2 to 3.6 of this report. The performance levels that Dover District Council were very low and there has been progress.

Introduction and Background

- 1.5 This is the sixth 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..

Work continues on 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 and Housing teams to ensure the software enables effective delivery of the service.

Compliance Management and Reporting Framework

- 1.6 Work continues to refine the Compliance Data Management and Data Storage Manual document which will be used by everyone delivering compliance. 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.
 - 1.7 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.
 - 1.8 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.
 - 1.9 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
2. **Establishing Accurate Raw Data**
 - 2.1 The paramount importance of complete, accurate data in ensuring all properties are safe has been recognised by both members and officers. There is now in place a reliable compliance management and reporting framework with verified data.
3. **Compliance Performance**
 - 3.1 The compliance performance figures are attached at appendix 1. These figures relate to performance as at 5th March 2021. The majority of compliance streams are at, or

close, to expected performance despite the added complications of Covid and lockdown 3. However 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 generally demonstrate on-going improvement.

- 3.2 The three areas of compliance where the inherited performance figures are significantly below the desired levels relate to electrical installation condition reports, fire risk assessments including the remedial actions emanating from them and fire detectors within individual homes.
- 3.3 Both the EIC reports and fire detector compliance streams registered an 8% increase in performance but efforts are being concentrated on increasing the rate of improvement so that the target ,for 100% by the end of June, is met.
- 3.4 The Fire Risk Assessments is the compliance stream that causes the most concern. The contractors engaged to carry out the Fire Risk Assessments are experiencing capacity issues, partly through abortive visits where access is not gained, mainly due to Covid concerns of residents and partly due to staff self-isolating reducing the contractor's resource capacity.
- 3.5 The Fire Risk Assessment remedial works required to mitigate 'substantial' risks are being prioritised and have now reduced to just 7 however there is a growing number of remedial works that need to be attended to where the risk is 'moderate'. In normal times these minor repair actions would have been undertaken by the responsive repairs contractor however that contractor's Covid mitigation measures preclude carrying out any non-essential work and the moderate fire risks are not significant enough to warrant entry in to homes to attend to the remedial actions. Following the announcement of the route map out of lockdown officers have started formulating a set of measures that seek to expedite the remedial actions as soon as lock down rules ease sufficiently. The measures include bringing in additional contractors, if necessary, to ensure the backlog of actions inherited from East Kent Housing are cleared as soon as possible and definitely by the end of June 2021.
- 3.6 There is a sharp drop in the performance from 99% to 73.5% in respect of fire alarm testing. This is due to the contractor not providing the certificates by 5th March, the test have actually been completed and the contractor is obliged by the contract to carry out any necessary remedial actions prior to issuing the certificate. It is expected that the certificates will have been received prior to the report being presented.

4. Identification of Options

- 4.1 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

5. Resource Implications

- 5.1 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.

6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 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.
7. **Corporate Implications**
- 7.1 Comment from the Section 151 Officer: Accountancy have been consulted and have no further comments to add. (AC)
- 7.2 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”.
- 7.3 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)
- 7.4 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)
8. **Appendices**
- Appendix 1 - Compliance Performance Table
9. **Background Papers**

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