



## Report to Policy Committee

**Author of Report:** Claire Lane, Neighbourhood Manager, North East, Housing and Neighbourhoods Service.

**Tel: 0114 2930000**

**Report of:** Janet Sharpe, Director of Housing, Housing and Neighbourhoods Services.

**Report to:** Housing Policy Committee

**Date of Decision:** 26 January 2024

**Subject:** Response to Verdon Street Petition (closed on 12.12.23)

Type of Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) undertaken	Initial <input type="checkbox"/>	Full <input type="checkbox"/>
Insert EIA reference number and attach EIA	N/A	
Has appropriate consultation/engagement taken place?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-		
<p><i>"The (<b>report/appendix</b>) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (<b>insert relevant paragraph number</b>) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)."</i></p>		

### Purpose of Report:

The purpose of the report is to provide the Committee with a position statement on action taken in response to a petition submitted on 27 October 2023 regarding pest infestation and reports of damp and mould from residents on Verdon Street. The petition was open until 12 December 2023 and was signed by 6 residents.

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that the Housing Policy Committee:

- Note the progress on addressing concerns raised by residents at Verdon Street.

**Background Papers: N/A**

Lead Officer to complete:-		
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed.	Finance: Helen Damon
		Legal: Nadine Wynter
		Equalities & Consultation: Louise Nunn
		Climate: Nathan Robinson
	<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>	
2	<b>SLB member who approved submission:</b>	Ajman Ali, Executive Director Neighbourhoods
3	<b>Committee Chair consulted:</b>	Cllr Douglas Johnson
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	
	<b>Lead Officer Name:</b> Dean Fearon	<b>Job Title:</b> Head of Service, Neighbourhood Services, Housing and Neighbourhoods Services
	<b>Date:</b> 16 January 2024	

## 1. PROPOSAL

- 1.1 Housing Policy Committee received a petition at their December 2023 meeting submitted on 27 October 2023 regarding pest infestation and reports of damp and mould from residents on Verdon Street. The petition was open for additional signatures until 12 December 2023 and was signed by 6 residents. The petition was discussed at the December meeting of the Housing and Policy Committee and, Members of that committee asked for an update on progress to be brought back to this Committee meeting.
- 1.2 In response to this petition the North-East Housing Team visited the block the petition relates to and, also the neighbouring 4 blocks. These visits took place in November 2023. Each of the 5 blocks contains 20 flats per block. Officers successfully spoke with most tenants and residents, leaving contact cards for those who had not been at home encouraging them to contact their local Housing office to discuss any concerns they may have. The Housing team recorded full details where tenants/residents have mice within their flat and where there were reports of damp and mould.
- 1.3 Following these visits, the Housing team met on site with officers from our Environmental Services team to establish the best treatment for the infestations. Orders had been placed to bait each block at a cost of £1,866 per block. Environmental Services were also commissioned by Housing to carry out a full external technical survey of each block and feedback any actions and recommendations to prevent any further infestations in the future. Housing are working closely with the Housing Repairs Service to ensure that any entry points identified are sealed. This work will be carried out following the completion of the infestation treatments.
- 1.4 A treatment schedule was agreed with Environmental Services, comprising of 3 visits per block over a 5-week period. The first visits were due to start from 15 January 2024, with the last taking place on 15 February 2024. In December 2023 all tenants and residents received correspondence detailing the schedule of treatment work and educational information to support with this work. These letters were all hand delivered, offering further support to residents who may have had additional questions.
- 1.5 On 15 January 2024 Housing were contacted by Environmental Services. They advised that due to operational difficulties the infestation treatment work could not start as planned. Officers from the North East team have responded quickly to this change of plan and prioritised calling residents to apologise and explain the current situation. Housing proceeded to work with Environmental Services to prioritise the rescheduling of this work. The work has been rescheduled to start 27 January 2024 and to be completed by 8 March 2024. Updated letters will be sent out to

customers.

- 1.6 The Housing Repairs Service are prioritising all reports of damp and mould. To date the service has carried out work in response to 398 reports relating to damp and mould from properties at Verdon Street. Repair work is currently ongoing at 48 properties. The service aims to attend to all damp and mould reports made within 5 working days to assess and mitigate any risk to residents, whilst also looking for more robust solutions to resolve the issues. In addition, a longer-term solution to improve ventilation, improve heat retention and explore technologies to improve the blocks on Verdon Street is being explored.

## **2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE?**

- 2.1 Officers have worked to resolve cases identified by tenants on Verdon Street to ensure that customers see work completed and are kept updated throughout the process. This contributes to one of the new outcomes in the Council's Plan to facilitate "Great neighbourhoods that people are happy to call home" and allows for a better customer experience. Managing improvements in repair services is one of the key priorities for the Housing and Neighbourhood Service in our service plan for 2023-2025.

## **3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?**

- 3.1 Officers from the North East Housing Team visited all 5 blocks on Verdon Street. They attempted to speak with every resident and for those who were not available a contact card was left explaining the visit and how the team could be contacted. Information was gathered regarding infestation and damp/mould issues from all those who were visited. The captured information was used to plan our approach for remedial work to the blocks in partnership with our Environmental Service and Housing Repairs Service.

## **4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION**

### **4.1 Equality Implications**

- 4.1.1 There are no specific equality impacts arising from this report. The needs of our residents are considered in the delivery of our services.

### **4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications**

- 4.2.1 There are no specific financial or commercial impacts arising from this report. The work being undertaken is funded from our existing budgets.

### **4.3 Legal Implications**

- 4.3.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

4.4 Climate Implications

4.4.1 There are no specific climate implications arising from this report.

4.5 Other Implications

4.5.1 There are no other implications arising from this report.

**5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

5.1 No alternative options have been considered. We have a statutory duty to ensure the health and safety of our residents.

**6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 Members are asked to note the remedial work taking place to address the concerns raised by residents on Verdon Street from the petition considered at Housing Policy Committee in December 2023 and, the ongoing work to respond to these and any further issues at Verdon Street.

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