

TITLE OF REPORT: New policies**REPORT OF: Kevin Scarlett, Interim Strategic Director of Housing,
Environment and Healthy Communities**

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval for the introduction of six revised compliance policies and one new damp and mould policy.
2. To inform Cabinet of the outcome of two external compliance health checks.
3. To confirm the implementation of new compliance software.

Background

4. Construction Services manage the high-rise block property portfolio in relation to the Building Safety Act, and, across the full property portfolio, the six key areas of compliance: fire, water, electricity, gas, asbestos and lifting devices.
5. Construction Services are responsible for resolving reports of damp, mould and condensation across the domestic property stock.
6. In early summer of 2024, the Council commissioned Pennington Choices to support a review of the six key compliance policies, and to carry out a compliance health check. This is the same organisation that completed the audit for the Regulator of Social Housing in late 2021 that confirmed Gateshead were compliant with the consumer standards and enabled the removal of the regulatory notice.
7. Both the review of policies and the health check supported work to implement new compliance software. This enabled compliance data and certification to be stored in and reported from a single source.
8. The Council retained its 'Reasonable Assurance' level where there are some non-compliances of a medium or low priority. This is the second highest rating, the highest being 'Substantial Assurance' which is no or very low non-compliances
9. The revised compliance policies are at appendices 1 to 6. The compliance health check is at appendix 7.

10. Pennington Choices was commissioned in September 2024 to carry out a review of how the Council identify and manage cases of damp and mould in the domestic property stock. This included support to produce a new damp and mould policy.
11. The Pennington Choices review of damp and mould gave reasonable assurance for the controls in place to identify and manage damp and mould. A rating of limited assurance was given due to the current position of high levels of cases and high level of compensation payments, resources not yet in place to meet the requirements of Awaab's Law, and incomplete stock condition data
12. The damp and mould policy is at appendix 8. The damp and mould review is at appendix 9.

Proposal

13. To implement the new policies to ensure the Council are operating in line with current legislation and good practice.
14. For Cabinet to note the Pennington Choices reports and the ongoing work to complete the resulting action plans over the coming year.

Recommendations

15. It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - (i) approve the compliance and damp and mould policies and associated process change;
 - (ii) agree to receive a further report in six months' time to review policy implementation and the impact on both customer service and performance.

for the following reasons:

- (i) To ensure compliance with current legislation and good practice.
- (ii) To ensure customer and colleague safety.

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APPENDIX 1

Policy Context

1. This proposal supports the Council's policy, service planning and performance management framework which aims to ensure that all resources are directed towards delivery of the Council's strategic approach, making Gateshead a 'Place Where Everyone Thrives'.
2. Supports the new consumer standards promoting explicit policies regarding the Landlord and Tenant relationship.

Background

3. The service review of Construction Services set out to challenge convention and introduce customer focussed, transparent services that enable better performance and options for improvement.

Consultation

4. Customer feedback via customer portal, customer panel groups and social media, Service Directors HEHC, and Strategic Housing Services, CMT, Housing Portfolio, Strategic Housing Board.

The following officers have been consulted on the preparation of this report:

Martin Poulter
Sandra Watson
Thomas Sutton
Laura Atkinson
Darren Burton

Alternative Options

5. None that would enable simplification and transparency. None that could be comparatively benchmarked.

Implications of Recommended Option

6. **Resources:**
 - a) **Financial Implications** – There are no financial implications arising from this report.
 - b) **Human Resources Implications** – There are no human resources implications arising from this report.
 - c) **Property Implications** - There are no property implications arising from this report.

7. **Risk Management Implication** - There are no risk implications arising from this report.
8. **Equality and Diversity Implications** - There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.
9. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.
10. **Health Implications** - There are no health implications arising from this report.
11. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications** - There are no climate emergency and sustainability implications arising from this report.
12. **Human Rights Implications** - There are no human rights implications arising from this report.
13. **Area and Ward Implications** - There are no ward implications arising from this report.