

Cabinet

Report Title	Housing and Asset Management Policies
Date of Meeting	Wednesday, 15 October 2025
Report Author	Louis Bebb - Housing Policy and Strategy Lead Officer
Lead Officer	Executive Director - Place
Lead Cabinet Member(s)	Cabinet Member for Housing
Why is this a key decision?	To be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards of the Borough.
Wards Affected	(All Wards);
Identify exempt information and exemption category	Open
Is the report urgent?	No
Reasons for urgency (only where applicable)	N/A
Appendices (if any)	Appendix 1 - Damp and Mould Policy Appendix 2 - Tree Works for Council Housing Properties Policy Appendix 3 - EQIA – Damp and Mould Policy Appendix 4 - EQIA – Tree Works for Council Housing Properties Policy Appendix 5 - Consultation Report – Damp and Mould Policy Appendix 6 - Consultation Report – Tree Works for Council Housing

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for two new Housing Management policies: the Damp and Mould Policy, and the Tree Works for Council Housing Properties Policy. The Damp and Mould Policy has been developed in line with the requirements of Awaab's Law, ensuring that damp and mould hazards are identified, reported, and resolved within strict timescales to protect residents' health. The Tree Works for Council Housing Properties Policy sets out a clear

framework for the safe and responsible management of trees on council housing land, balancing resident safety with environmental sustainability.

2. Recommendations

The Cabinet is recommended to:-

- 2.1 Approve the adoption of the following housing management policy documents:

- Damp and Mould Policy
- Tree Works for Council Housing Properties Policy

3. Proposals – Reasons for the recommendations

- 3.1 A Self-Assessment against the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Consumer Standards in 2024 identified improvements that could be made to our Governance and Strategic Oversight through the publication of new housing management policies.
- 3.2 This report seeks approval for two new Housing Management policies: the Damp and Mould Policy, and the Tree Works for Council Housing Properties Policy.
- 3.3 The Housing Improvement and Transformation Programme has been established to ensure compliance with the RSH Consumer Standards and to drive service excellence in the future. A comprehensive and regularly reviewed library of policies will underpin wider transformation work across Housing Services.

Damp and Mould Policy

- 3.4 Sandwell Council is committed to ensuring that all residents live in warm, dry, and safe homes, free from damp, mould, and condensation. The Damp and Mould Policy sets out how we will prevent, investigate, and resolve problems quickly, protecting residents' health and wellbeing. This policy will allow us to:
- Act swiftly on reports of damp and mould, with clear timescales for inspections and repairs.
 - Maintain homes in line with Awaab's Law, the HHSRS, and the Decent Homes Standard.
 - Support residents by taking responsibility for resolving issues without placing blame.
 - Reduce long-term risks through proactive maintenance and investment.
 - Build trust by being transparent, keeping residents informed, and prioritising safety.

Tree Works for Council Housing Properties Policy

- 3.5 Sandwell Council recognises the importance of trees in creating safe, attractive, and sustainable housing environments. The Tree Works Policy outlines how we will manage and maintain trees on council housing land, balancing safety, environmental benefits, and residents' needs. This policy will allow us to:
- Protect tenants and their homes by prioritising works on dangerous, dead, dying, or diseased trees.

- Safeguard and enhance the environment by caring for healthy trees and encouraging biodiversity.
- Provide clear guidance on tenant and council responsibilities for tree maintenance.
- Ensure fair, consistent decisions on when and how tree works will be carried out.
- Promote sustainable neighbourhoods by managing trees responsibly in both private gardens and communal areas.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 **Alternative option - to not seek adoption for the two policies subject to this report.** If this were to be the process followed, it would not be possible to deliver the objectives of the Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028, Asset Management Strategy 2024-2029, Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy and the Regulatory Housing Standards that came into effect in April 2024. Therefore, this would result in the sub-optimal management of our Housing Services. This option was therefore dismissed.

5. Consultation

Online consultation

- 5.1 The online consultation for the draft policies ran for five weeks, commencing late August, via Citizenspace. The surveys featured a mixture of qualitative and quantitative questions, providing respondents the opportunity to give feedback on the policy proposals, whether the document itself is resident-friendly and if there are any things missing in the policy document. Following respondents' comments on each of the policies, feedback has been considered, and amendments have been made to the policy documents where applicable, before being finalised and taken to Cabinet.

Policy Engagement Sessions with Stakeholders:

- 5.2 Throughout the drafting of these documents, we will conduct various engagement sessions with stakeholders to ensure we captured as many opinions as possible in order to share this policy. These include the following:
- **Collaboration Across Housing Teams and Partner Services:** These policies have been developed through collaboration across various housing teams and other relevant services, including Housing Management, Asset Management, Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion and Service Improvement.
 - **Policy Engagement Session:** In late September, we held engagement sessions with residents to discuss our new Damp and Mould Policy and Tree Works for Council Housing Properties Policy. The purpose of these sessions was to gather feedback on how these services are currently delivered and to ensure the policies reflect the needs and priorities of our communities. These sessions brought together Housing Management staff, tenants, and leaseholders to share experiences and shape a fair and practical approach to tackling issues such as damp and mould in homes and the management of trees on housing land.

During the session, we provided residents with copies of the draft policies, offering the chance to review them and give feedback either through a postal survey or online.

Policy Scrutiny Working Group

- 5.3 The policies were cascaded via email to the group consisting of Elected Members. Its purpose was to address any questions that arise and provide an opportunity for officers to seek specific guidance or direction from the scrutiny board. Feedback was provided by elected members and considered within the final versions of these policy documents, in addition to the individual consultation reports.

Consultation Report

- 5.4 A consultation report has been prepared for each of the two policy documents, summarising the overall satisfaction with the policies and addressing specific areas where proposals for amendments have been made. For a more detailed understanding of tenant and resident perspectives on each policy, the individual consultation reports are available. These reports provide an in-depth analysis of satisfaction levels, include qualitative feedback, and outline any revisions made in response to the recommendations. The full reports can be accessed in the appendix.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 Delivery of these policies will be through existing Housing Revenue Account (HRA) resources. The council's HRA is ring-fenced specifically for the provision of landlord related services or facilities, provided primary for the benefit of its tenants.

7. Legal and Governance Implications

Damp and Mould Policy

- 7.1 The draft Policy has been developed in accordance with and taking account of the requirements of several relevant legislative and regulatory requirements, including -
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
 - Housing Act 2004
 - Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
 - Environmental Protection Act 1990
 - Defective Premises Act 1972
 - Decent Homes Standard (part of the Regulatory Standards)
- 7.2 The draft Policy will ensure the Council is compliant with statutory new statutory obligations placed upon it as part of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (known as Awaab's Law) enacted to make social housing safer by introducing stricter requirements for landlords to investigate and fix damp and mould hazards within set timeframes. The draft Policy provides a clear framework within which the Council will operate to identify and address hazards associated with exposure to potential health risks.

Tree Works for Council Housing Properties Policy

- 7.3 The draft Policy has been developed in accordance with and taking account of the requirements of several relevant legislative and regulatory requirements, including -

- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- Environment Act 2021
- Management of Hedgerows (England) Regulations 2024
- Town and Country Planning Act 1990
- Highways Act 1980
- High Hedges Act (Part 8 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003)
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Occupiers Liability Act 1957 & 1984

8. Risks

- 8.1 Financial resources available to deliver the policies, including inflation.
- 8.2 Future changes to national policy and requirements that could impact on the content of the policies – for instance, new regulations and legislation.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications (including the public sector equality duty)

Damp and Mould Policy

- 9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been undertaken on the draft Policy was completed in advance of the consultation. The review concluded that the Policy will have an overall positive impact as it provides a framework to protect residents' health and wellbeing by ensuring prompt action on damp and mould, with particular focus on vulnerable groups such as children, older people, and those with pre-existing health conditions. The proposed Policy also recognises that residents' experiences of damp and mould may differ depending on cultural, social, and economic circumstances, and commits to delivering support that is inclusive and accessible. A copy is included in the appendices to this report.

Tree Works for Council Housing Properties Policy

- 9.2 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been undertaken on the draft Policy was completed in advance of the consultation. The review concluded that the Policy will have an overall positive impact as it provides a framework to ensure all tenants and leaseholders receive fair treatment in how tree works are prioritised and conducted, preventing bias in decision-making. The Policy acknowledges that tree-related issues (for example loss of light, property damage, accessibility impacts) may affect residents differently, and seeks to provide solutions that reflect varied needs, balancing environmental benefits of tree retention with individual needs, particularly where health, disability, or cultural practices require more flexible responses. A copy is included in the appendices to this report.

10. Other Relevant Implications

Damp and Mould Policy

- 10.1 **Health/Wellbeing:** Improves residents' health by tackling hazards that can cause respiratory illness, stress, and wider health issues, especially among vulnerable groups. Challenges include ensuring timely interventions to prevent harm.
- 10.2 **Social Value:** Builds trust with residents by taking responsibility for safe and healthy homes, supporting stronger, more resilient communities.
- 10.3 **Crime & Disorder:** Reduces the risk of disputes, complaints, or frustration that may arise if issues are left unresolved, but poor communication or delays could undermine confidence in services.

Tree Works for Council Housing Properties Policy

- 10.4 **Health/Wellbeing:** Supports safe and attractive living environments by removing unsafe trees and maintaining green spaces, which contribute positively to mental and physical wellbeing. Risks may arise if tree-related hazards are not addressed quickly.
- 10.5 **Social Value:** Enhances biodiversity, air quality, and community pride by protecting and managing trees responsibly, while providing clarity on responsibilities for tenants and the Council.
- 10.6 **Crime & Disorder:** Well-maintained estates with healthy trees can deter anti-social behaviour and improve community safety, but unresolved tree issues (e.g., blocked light or damage) may contribute to neighbour disputes or tension.

11. Background Documents

- [Sandwell Council Housing Strategy 2023-2028](#)
- [Sandwell 2030 Vision: Corporate Plan 2021-2025](#)
- [Housing Revenue Account 30 Year Business Plan 2023-2053](#)
- [Regulatory Standards for Landlords](#)
- [Reasonable Adjustments Policy](#)
- [Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy](#)
- [Awaab's Law: Draft guidance for social landlords](#)
- [Tenant Handbook](#)
- [Tenancy Conditions](#)

12. How does this deliver the objectives of the Strategic Themes?

Damp and Mould Policy

- 12.1 **Growing Up:** Provides children with safe, warm, and healthy homes, supporting their development and reducing risks of illness linked to poor housing conditions.
- 12.2 **Living:** Promotes secure, dignified living by addressing problems quickly and ensuring residents have confidence in their housing.

- 12.3 **Healthy:** Protects physical and mental health by tackling hazards that can cause respiratory problems, stress, and anxiety.
- 12.4 **Economy:** Reduces long-term repair costs through preventative maintenance and helps residents remain in work or education by supporting healthy living conditions.
- 12.5 **One Council:** Demonstrates coordinated action across housing, compliance, and repairs teams, ensuring a consistent and resident-focused response.

Tree Works for Council Housing Properties Policy

- 12.6 **Growing Up:** Supports children and families by providing safe, green environments where they can play and thrive.
- 12.7 **Living:** Enhances neighbourhoods with well-managed trees that contribute to attractive, sustainable places to live.
- 12.8 **Healthy:** Improves wellbeing through access to green space, clean air, and reduced risks from unsafe trees.
- 12.9 **Economy:** Contributes to long-term sustainability and cost efficiency by prioritising preventative works and promoting biodiversity.
- 12.10 **One Council:** Relies on joined-up working between housing, grounds maintenance, and environmental teams to deliver consistent, safe, and effective services.