



AGENDA ITEM:

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	9th September 2020
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	2020/21 Quarter 1 Performance Report, Service Plan Update & Operational Risk Register – Housing
Contact:	Councillor Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing Author/Responsible Officer – Fiona Williamson – Assistant Director - Housing
Purpose of report:	1. To update the Committee on the Performance of the Housing Service - Quarter 1 2020/21 2. To inform the Committee on the progress of the 2020/21 Housing Service Plan, Operational Risk Register and COVID Risk register
Recommendations	That the Committee note the Performance Report, Service Plan and Operational Risk Register
Corporate objectives:	Affordable Housing – the provision of good quality affordable homes, by investing in existing stock and developing new.
Implications:	<u>Financial</u> All areas of the service are subject to Monthly Budget Monitoring Meetings with the HRA Financial Accountant. Budget Reporting is quarterly to Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
‘Value For Money Implications’	<u>Value for Money</u> The Housing Service & its costs are reviewed annually through a national benchmarking organisation (Housemark)
Risk Implications	Housing Operational Risk Register details the risks associated with the management of the housing service. The Coronavirus

	Pandemic has been added to the operational risk register as the implications of Government restrictions on movement during lockdown and the ongoing guidance, has resulted in a number of risks to the management and delivery of services.
Equalities Implications	Community Impact Assessments are developed whenever there is a requirement to change or create a new policy or procedure or significant change to service delivery.
Health And Safety Implications	Health & Safety is an identified key risk for the Housing Service.
Consultees:	Mark Gaynor – Corporate Director, Housing and Regeneration Jason Grace – Group Manager Property and Place Natasha Beresford – Group Manager Strategic Housing Layna Warden – Group Manager Tenants and Leaseholders David Barrett – Group Manager, Housing Development
Background papers:	n/a
Historical background (<i>please give a brief background to this report to enable it to be considered in the right context</i>).	In consultation with staff and members of the Tenants & Leaseholder Committee, a set of performance indicators are agreed, approved by the Portfolio Holder for Housing. These indicators are monitored monthly and reported to the HCOSC quarterly. In addition, there are suites of contractual performance indicators used to monitor the performance of the contractors delivering the services and these are linked to their profit.
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report and appendices:	TLC – Tenants & Leaseholder Committee SIE – Strategy, Improvement and Engagement Team CMT – Corporate Management Team TAM – Total Asset Management IT – Introductory tenancy UC – Universal Credit CA – Citizens Advice DWP – Department for Work and Pensions CPN – Community Protection Notice HRA – Housing Revenue Account TAM – Total Asset Management

	ASB – Anti-Social Behaviour HMO – Houses in Multiple Occupation
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1.0 Introduction

- 1.0.1 This report details the performance of the Housing Service during the first quarter of 2020/21, against the suite of performance indicators. Performance indicators are extracted from Rocket, the performance-reporting tool, and contained in Appendix A
- 1.0.2 The report also details the Housing Service Plan and Operational Risk Register. The Service Plan and Risk Register are reviewed quarterly and updated to reflect the progress against the various milestones and establish if there have been any changes to the risk rating or likelihood of occurrence of any of the risks. In order to reduce the potential of the risk occurring, various mitigations are in place to reduce the likelihood or severity of occurrence. The Service Plan and Risk Register are contained at Appendix B.
- 1.0.3 The impact of the Coronavirus pandemic and restrictions on movement during lockdown, has impacted performance in a few areas and also seen an increase in demand in a number of areas, so the service has responded to these changes and challenges, in collaboration with our service providers and external agencies. A specific risk register was developed at the beginning of the outbreak and is contained in Appendix C.

2.0 Housing Performance Report – Q1 2020/21

- 2.0.1 Appendix A shows performance against the ‘Service Critical’ performance indicators for the 1st Quarter of 2020/21.
- 2.0.2 **Performance Highlights:** The teams all responded well and transitioned to home working with relatively few problems. Many of the services had to be changed to enable ongoing contact, especially with vulnerable and older residents that could be more severely effected if they contracted COVID - 19.
- 2.0.3 In order to comply with the lockdown restrictions, repairs were limited to urgent and essential works and the volume of repairs requests reduced substantially during April and May. The satisfaction with those repairs which were completed remained high and over 99% of the urgent repairs were attended to within the 4 hour target.
- 2.0.4 The planned works, which were suspended during lockdown, recommenced in June and despite a number of residents who had waited for up to 8 weeks for works to be completed, most understood the rationale to suspend works and provided good responses to the satisfaction surveys.
- 2.0.5 The performance of the lifeline call service declined slightly, but remained above target 97.93% of calls being answered within 60 seconds, which was positive and reassuring for tenants and the private customers, a number of whom have been in lockdown on their own.

- 2.0.6 The compliance work streams, required close liaison with the contractors to make sure all had developed risk assessed method statements for undertaking the cyclical servicing and maintenance. The Health and Safety Executive had no relaxation of the requirements in respect of gas safety and regular communication was required with any households that were self-isolating or had occupants who were shielding. The performance throughout the first quarter remained above 99%, which was significantly better than a number of other social housing providers, however the reduction was of concern, due to the potential risks associated with gas appliances. It is worth noting that this has returned to a much higher level of compliance, with only 1 property overdue a gas service, as at the 1st September 2020.
- 2.0.7 The number of cases that approached the service requiring housing advice increased dramatically, with 667 in the first quarter, which is considerably higher than the 391 case in the same period last year. Many of these cases were in response to the impact of Coronavirus, either concerns over being asked to leave transient accommodation, or as a result of rent arrears through furlough or redundancy.
- 2.0.8 The team were able to prevent 2 illegal evictions from taking place and have continued to liaise with private sector landlords to ensure they are aware of the developing Coronavirus legislation and suspension of court action to evict tenants during lockdown.
- 2.0.9 The income team have managed to increase the number of tenants paying rent by Direct Debit, from 50% last year, to 54% which is positive and the tenancy sustainment team were able to provide support remotely to a number of households so that they did not get into rent arrears during the lockdown period.
- 2.1.0 The number of rough sleepers who have approached the Council was at a very high level, at 26 in Q1, with many citing the pandemic as the cause of their homelessness. The Council have worked closely with DENS to provide temporary accommodation and have limited the use of bed and breakfast to accommodate households during the initial pressures after lockdown.
- 2.1.1 **Performance challenges:** The refurbishment work to most empty properties was suspended at the beginning of lockdown, which has had a dramatic impact on the key to key times for empty homes. This is particularly disappointing as the empty homes project had identified a number of quick wins, some of which had been implemented just prior to lockdown and any positive gains have been overshadowed by the delays in undertaking work.
- 2.1.2 The suspension of non-essential repairs during the first quarter of 2020, resulted in a backlog of 1400 day to day repairs being logged. This is not reflected in the performance report for this period, as the prioritising and programming of these repairs will be delivered in the second quarter of the year. The number of complaints relating to the backlog started to increase towards the end of the first quarter as lockdown restrictions were eased.
- 2.1.3 Rent collection has declined to 97.91% compared to 99.2% over the same period last year. The pandemic has resulted in a number of tenants being furloughed or made redundant and a number of these were claiming benefits for the first time. The income team have provided advice and support to reduce the potential for these tenants to fall into arrears.

2.1.4 There was an increase in the number of ASB cases per 1000 properties, to 8.38, up from 7.94 during the same period last year. The increased tensions that have arisen from the lockdown have resulted in the rise in cases and the team have worked to offer support and mediation, to try and prevent any ongoing escalation.

3.0 Interventions to address performance below target and other initiatives

3.0.1 The contractors have returned staff from furlough, so that the backlog of works to empty homes and repairs can be addressed and enable properties to be re-let. In addition a task and finish group has been established to work through the responsive repairs backlog and to contact all tenants awaiting a repair.

3.0.2 The income team have been using a software tool, Income Analytics, to help target tenants who may be experiencing difficulties paying their rent as a result of changes in their circumstances during the pandemic. The targeted support is of maximum benefit in cases where low levels of arrears have accrued and payment plans can be arranged before the debt becomes less manageable.

3.0.3 The service continues to monitor the updated legislative changes that have arisen to reduce the number of tenants who may be facing eviction from the private sector, as lifting of restrictions on notice periods and the reinstatement of applications to court to seek possession is likely to result in a further increase in homeless presentations later in the year.

3.0.4 Additional cleaning has been undertaken in the communal areas of sheltered schemes and the communal lounges remain closed to reduce the potential risks of larger gatherings of residents or visitors.

4.0 Housing Service Plan & Operational Risk Register

4.0.1 The 2020/21 Housing Service Plan and Operational Risk Register are contained in Appendix B. The service plan was developed in February 2020, prior to the impact of the pandemic and has been subject to minor revisions to reflect some of the changing priorities. The operational risks have been reviewed throughout the pandemic to ensure that appropriate mitigations are in place to address the impact of further local or national restrictions. A separate Risk Register, contained in Appendix C, was developed to identify any risks to service delivery as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic and this is subject to regular review.