



AGENDA ITEM: 8

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	3rd March 2021
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	2020/21 Quarter 3 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 3 2020/21 2. To inform the Committee on the progress of the 2020/21 Housing Service Plan and Operational Risk Register, including the COVID pandemic risk register.
Recommendations	That the Committee note the Performance Report, Service Plan and Operational and COVID 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:	HRA – Housing Revenue Account HMO – Houses in Multiple Occupation GDPR – General Data Protection Regulations

1.0 Introduction

- 1.0.1 This report details the performance of the Housing Service during the third quarter of 2020/21, against the suite of performance indicators. The 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 third quarter was subject to various restrictions as a result of the Pandemic, as the County was placed into Tier 4. The restrictions continued to negatively impact performance in a number of areas. Homeless presentations remain high and the number of households requiring support from the tenancy sustainment or welfare support officers has also increased.
- 1.0.4 The service continued to respond well to the additional workload and changes to some of the methods of service delivery and in most areas performance remained within or above target.

2.0 Housing Performance Report – Q3 2020/21

- 2.0.1 Appendix A shows performance against the 'Service Critical' performance indicators for the third Quarter of 2020/21.
- 2.0.2 **Performance Highlights:** Despite an impact on staffing numbers, from Covid cases and self-isolations, the Private Rented Sector (PRS) team managed to prevent three illegal evictions from taking place, allowing those households to remain adequately housed during the Tier 4 restrictions. There have been an increase in the number of households in the PRS who have approached the Council with concerns that they may be subject to eviction proceedings when the stay on evictions is lifted, which could be at the end of March 2021. The team are working closely with the strategic housing team, so that wherever possible there is contact made with the landlords to try and agree some interventions that will prevent a move to eviction. There has been a 67% increase in the number of cases that have received housing advice compared to this time last year, which the team have managed to assist.
- 2.0.3 The PRS team have continued to licence HMO's and there has been an increase in the number licenced from 78 this time last year to 102 at the end of Q3. The team are continuing to complete new applications, with the majority of the work being completed remotely. Some visits were able to take place prior to the Tier 4 restrictions being imposed during the quarter and some visits will be required once the current restrictions are lifted to ensure the licences are being effectively managed.
- 2.0.4 All adapted properties were let within target, and enabled two households to be moved into accommodation that was more suitable to their long term medical needs. The teams involved in overseeing the process have introduced some improvements, which have had a positive impact on this quarter's performance.
- 2.0.5 The percentage of cases supported by the tenancy sustainment team where rent arrears were reduced exceeded the target, with six of the seven cases being supported, managing to reduce their arrears.
- 2.0.6 Satisfaction with planned works remains high at 99.1% in the quarter, with the majority of works being undertaken are external, which reduces the disruption for the household and the risk of infection spread, should either party have asymptomatic COVID.
- 2.0.7 The gas servicing compliance, although amber, remained high throughout the quarter and any overdue cases were managed through the tenancy team and with the support of the contractor, Sun Realm.

- 2.0.8 The rent collection levels have remained above target in the quarter and increased since quarter two, which is a very positive result, as many of our tenants have had some negative impact on their household income during the Pandemic. The team are using Income Analytics software, to identify targeted early intervention, so that support can be provided to reduce the potential for accumulating large arrears that are more difficult to clear.
- 2.0.9 The number homeless approaches that have been prevented from becoming homeless has increased to 34 and is considerably higher than the same quarter last year when 22 cases prevented. These figures are extremely positive in the current climate as the overall numbers presenting are high and the requirements throughout the pandemic to bring “Everyone In” has increased expectation by a number of applicants that they will be immediately housed.
- 2.1.0 The housing development team handed over the 300th new build property on the Martindale site and 29, one and two bed fats at Magenta Court, on London Road. The 21 houses that were developed for market sale were completed and by the end of the quarter the majority were sold or under offer.
- 3.0.1 **Performance challenges:** The refurbishment work to all empty properties was recommenced during Q3, but operating under the workplace Covid measures, which resulted in a reduced number of trade operatives allowed in each property, therefore increasing the time for work to be completed. This is one of a number of factors that has contributed to the increased poor performance in the empty homes figures. Also during Q3 there was the release of a number of new build properties, which also reduced demand for some of the general needs properties that were advertised and a number of households postponed transfer, awaiting the lifting of restrictions. The biggest impact has been in the sheltered schemes and movement of those in the over 60 age demographic. There is a reluctance for many within this age group to consider a move, especially with the impact of Covid being more severe in the older age groups. Some schemes have been advertised through 6 cycles, without any interest.
- 3.0.2 The only category of empty homes let in target was adapted properties and these represented a very small number of the overall properties becoming void or ready to re-let in quarter 3.
- 3.0.3 There were issues with the performance of the lifeline call service, with the number of calls being answered within 60 seconds below target at 94.21%. Tunstall’s staffing structure has been impacted significantly by Covid-19. Their offices are Covid safe however the area in which the offices are located, were impacted significantly in Q3 with high infection rates. When an operator has to self-isolate they are unable to carry out their role working from home due to connection GDPR issues. They have completed two recruitment drives for 15 different operator roles, the majority of which are additional posts, which is aimed to address resilience within their teams. Further data has been obtained from Tunstall for the period which indicated there had been 9652 calls made from Dacorum connections and of these, 77% are classed as non-urgent (access / general enquiries / SHO on or off site / fault reporting). The average wait times for DBC connections during Q3 was 29.53 seconds. This is the average time users wait from the call hitting Tunstall’s network, to the operator answering the call and for those answered outside of 60 seconds no one was waiting for more than 90 seconds. The team are constantly reviewing the performance and working closely with Tunstall to improve upon this indicator.

3.0.4 The percentage of responsive repairs completed in target remains below target, but there has been a steady increase in the performance as the previous backlog of Covid repairs have all been completed, so the teams are only working on new day to day demand. The non-urgent repairs completed in target was also below target, at 91%. Analysis of the data, showed that where multiple trades were required to complete a repair, these had to be undertaken sequentially rather than concurrently, due to social distancing measures, which had impacted the ability of some to be completed in target. In addition there were a few operatives that were required to self-isolate which reduced the available workforce for a number of weeks during Q3.

4.0 Interventions to address performance below target and other initiatives

4.0.1 A number of performance issues have been raised through the escalation route on the Osborne contract and an agreement to develop a revised approach and methodology for the initially assessment of works required to empty homes and associated pricing mechanism, to improve the works time in the process. Osborne are going to run a meet the buyer event to increase the number of suppliers engage through their supply chain, to ensure improved delivery and resilience through the remainder of the pandemic.

4.0.2 The teams involved in the empty homes review have been working through the action plan to improve some of the processes by implementing some technological solutions that provide alerts both to the team, Osborne and the tenants at various stages of the process. There are a number of further stages that would benefit from the use of SMS text alerts to provide reminders for tenants to return keys and advise of any changes to the timescales, which are in development.

4.0.3 The review of supported housing schemes continues and the demand data is being considered in line with the ongoing review of the allocations policy, so that, the type, size and location of schemes is assessed against the demand. A further piece of work is required to assess if the pandemic has changed the views of some of our older tenants who have been living alone in general needs housing throughout the lockdowns. During the reassurance telephone calls made during the first lockdown a number indicated a desire to move to sheltered schemes that have communal facilities to try and reduce the social isolation that they have experienced. The other three stock retained districts in Hertfordshire, Welwyn Hatfield, Stevenage, and St. Albans have all been contacted to obtain benchmarking information to assess if they have experienced any reduction in demand for sheltered accommodation and establish further detail on the approach they are taking during the pandemic.

5.0 Housing Service Plan & Operational Risk Register

5.0.1 The updated 2020/21 Housing Service Plan and Operational Risk Register are contained in Appendix B.