



AGENDA ITEM:

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	16th June 2021
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	2020/21 Quarter 4 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 4 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 Oliver Jackson – 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:	HMO – Houses in Multiple Occupation PRS – Private Rented Sector

1.0 Introduction

- 1.0.1 This report details the performance of the Housing Service during the final 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 final quarter of the financial year was still subject to various restrictions as a result of the Pandemic. Government produced a roadmap to provide some clarity about the gradual removal of restrictions and the teams continued to deliver most services remotely, with the exception of services requiring face to face contact such as homelessness.
- 1.0.4 Homeless presentations remained high and the number of households requiring support from the tenancy sustainment or welfare support officers also saw ongoing high levels of demand.
- 1.0.5 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 – Q4 2020/21

- 2.0.1 Appendix A shows performance against the 'Service Critical' performance indicators for the final Quarter of 2020/21.
- 2.0.2 **Performance Highlights:** The Private Rented Sector (PRS) team continue to work closely with the homeless prevention team and in quarter 4 managed to prevent four illegal evictions from taking place, which was a positive result, especially with restrictions still in place.
- 2.0.3 The PRS team have continued to licence HMO's and there has been an increase in the number licenced from 89 in March last year to 103 at the end of quarter 4 this year. Visits to properties were reinstated, but were taking longer due to the need to have completed pre-visit Covid questionnaires for all individuals in the HMO. Works schedules have been issues to a number of landlords or responsible persons to undertake repairs to properties but some have raised concerns about the availability of materials to complete these works. This can delay the enforcement process and result in additional inspections being required.
- 2.0.4 There has been a steady reduction in the key to key times for the re-letting of adapted properties from 125 days in March last year, to 98 days at the end of quarter 4 this year. There has also been a reduction in the key to key times for general needs properties down from 51 days in December 2020 to 28 days in quarter 4. The teams involved in overseeing the process have introduced a number of improvements, including the use of a dedicated Occupational therapist to assess the suitability of properties at an earlier stage in the process, which have had a positive impact on this quarter's performance.
- 2.0.5 The tenancy sustainment team have been under increasing pressure throughout the pandemic with a number of households and individuals requiring additional support to be able to sustain their tenancies. In quarter 4 the team managed to reduce the rent arrears for 8 households, which is really positive in a challenging environment.
- 2.0.6 All emergency repairs were attended to within the 4 hour target and the quality of planned works remained high, albeit that there has been a reduction in the volume of planned works as the replacement of kitchens and bathrooms remained suspended in quarter 4 .

- 2.0.7 The gas servicing compliance, although amber, remained high at 99.99% 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 three, which is a very positive result, as many of our tenants have had some negative impact on their household income during the Pandemic. The outturn position for the year end was positive with only 3.9% arrears on the total rent due, which is considerably better than the forecast of 5% that was anticipated at the end of the first quarter.
- 2.0.9 The number rough sleepers relieved has increased again, with most being accommodated at the Elms, with some moving into Council owned stock and some into the private rented sector. Additionally there have been 46 main duty applications and additional agency staff have been employed to ensure that all cases are robustly assessed and supported with the development of a personalised housing plan.
- 2.1.0 The number of cases where the team have been able to prevent homelessness has remained at a similar level to last quarter and at 33 and the team continue to consider all options to ensure that, where possible, people are supported to remain in accommodation. 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" and protect are starting to be relaxed. It is anticipated that with the moratorium on evictions coming to an end on 30th May, there will be ongoing pressures on the service as there have been approaches from over 100 households in the private rented sector that are at risk of eviction.
- 2.1.0 The housing development, Corn Mill Court, at Swing Gate Lane in Berkhamsted received an award from the Hertfordshire Association of Architects for the conservation work carried out on the properties fronting the high street. This is the second award the scheme has received, as it was also recognised by the local Berkhamsted Citizens association in 2020.
- 3.0.1 **Performance challenges:** The percentage of non-urgent repairs completed in target has improved since December, but is still below target. There have been a number of factors that have contributed to this including some relating to Covid, but also some issues with the planning and completion of repairs by Osborne. While there has been a reduction in the overall number of complaints compared to March last year, with 44 in 2020 and 23 in 2021, the majority of these relate to the repairs service, so a number of interventions have been put in place, as detailed in section 4 of this report.
- 3.0.2 There are still challenges with the re-letting of sheltered accommodation, with only 32.79%, being let in target and work is underway to provide additional support for those wishing to downsize or consider a move into sheltered accommodation as a number of older residents do not have access to the internet. The average time to re-let these properties has come down from 72 days in December to 67 days in quarter 4.
- 3.0.3 There continue to be issues with performance of the lifeline call service, with the number of calls being answered within 60 seconds below target at 93.67%. The third month in the quarter, March did show an upward trajectory in improved performance, which is positive and there is close monitoring of this importance service.

3.0.4 The time taken to respond to some of the stage 1 complaints was above target and this has been due to delays in receiving details of the investigations carried out by Osborne. Further work is underway to address this as outlined in section 4 of this report.

4.0 Interventions to address performance below target and other initiatives

4.0.1 The performance issues, which have been identified with the Osborne contract have been escalated in line with the contract. A new contracts manager has been appointed by Osborne, following a joint interview process with officers from the Council and a 12 week improvement plan is being agreed. A Partnership Charter has been developed to address the areas of performance and reinforce the behaviours that are expected, to ensure there is a stronger focus on customer experience. The improvement plan will be closely monitored by the senior management team at the Council and is expected to result in improved performance across all areas of the contract.

4.0.2 The review of supported housing schemes has identified a few schemes which have a high number of vacant units and are less desirable than others in the stock. Tenants who expressed a desire to move to sheltered accommodation during the lockdown are being contacted to establish if they would wish to consider any of the vacant sheltered units. There will be a series of social events organised at schemes throughout the summer, which will be managed in line with Covid restrictions and will provide an opportunity to promote the schemes to older residents living in general needs housing.

4.0.3 The lifeline service provided by Tunstall is a key service for tenants who rely on having the reassurance of assistance should they fall or become unwell. A meeting has been held, with the Director of Response at Tunstall, to review the performance and establish what measures are being put in place to address the response times. A number of their staff who were required to shield have now been able to return to work and with the continued roll out of the vaccination programme they anticipate to be operating at full capacity in June. The performance is being closely monitored and is showing an improvement of just over 2% in April to 96.11%.

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.