



AGENDA ITEM:

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	10th November 2021
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	2021/22 Quarter 2 Performance Report & 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 2 2021/22 2. To inform the Committee on the progress of the 2021/22 Housing Service Plan and Operational 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 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 second quarter of 2021/22, against the suite of performance indicators. The performance indicators are extracted from In-Form, the new corporate performance reporting tool, and contained in Appendix A.
- 1.0.2 The Council commissioned an independent consultant, Paul Langford, to undertake a review of the service, during Quarter 1 and 2, to ensure that it is fit for purpose and is sufficiently prepared for the raft of changes within the social housing sector. There are a number of legislative and policy changes at a national level that are currently being implemented within the Housing sector. The Council want to ensure that the model for service delivery and culture continues to be focused on ensuring the best outcome for their residents and that the resident voice is always heard and responded to with empathy and respect.

- 1.0.3 Key legislative changes include a new Charter for Social Housing Residents, which sets out action Government will take to ensure social housing residents are safe, are listened to, live in good quality homes, and have access to redress when things go wrong. To support and compliment the White Paper, the Government have also introduced a new Building Safety Bill, which is currently progressing through the parliamentary process and is focused on the fabric and management of homes. Additionally Government has strengthened and extended the powers of the Social Housing Regulator and Housing Ombudsman.
- 1.0.4 The service review aligned with many of the elements contained within the existing service plan and therefore the service continues to deliver against these objectives. The Operational Risk Register is reviewed and updated quarterly, to reflect any changes internally or externally that have impacted upon the identified 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 operational risk register is contained at Appendix B.
- 1.0.5 The service review identified a number of additional areas for development within the service and these have been contained within an action plan, which will be delivered alongside the service plan and updates will be provided to Scrutiny members.
- 1.0.6 During the first quarter of this financial year, the country moved through the first three steps of the government's roadmap to lifting Coronavirus restrictions. The final restrictions were lifted in June 2021. The teams have adapted to the return to face to face appointments and visits and the removal of restrictions has resulted in an increased demand from tenants in a number of service areas.
- 1.0.7 The service continued to respond well to the additional workload and changes to some of the methods of delivery and working practices. The service review recognised that the Housing service had shown resilience throughout the period of the pandemic, demonstrating professionalism and technical expertise.

2.0 Housing Performance Report – Q2 2021/22

- 2.0.1 Appendix A shows performance against the 'Service Critical' performance indicators for the second Quarter of 2021/22. The format of the report differs from the Rocket reports previously used, however the core data is the same and can be used to provide trend analysis on a monthly and quarterly basis.
- 2.0.2 **Performance Highlights:**
- 2.0.3 The PRS team have continued to licence more HMO's in the Borough, currently 113 and visits to properties continue. Covid questionnaires are still being used to ensure compliance and there have been some cases of self-isolation that have resulted in some delays. Works schedules have been issues to a number of landlords or responsible persons to undertake repairs to properties. There continues to be a number of landlords who have raised concerns about the availability of materials and labour to complete these works. Additional inspections are being undertaken to progress any enforcement action, which is increasing the workload on the team.

- 2.0.4 The tenancy sustainment team have continued to see a rise in demand for the support that they provide. In Quarter 2 they managed to reduce the arrears on one case, which enabled the household to sustain their tenancy. The impact of changes to Universal credit and the increase in energy costs, it is anticipated that the income and tenancy sustainment team will have an increased caseload of households falling into arrears and this will be closely monitored over the forthcoming months.
- 2.0.5 All emergency repairs were attended to within the 4 hour target, which was very positive, as the volumes of emergency repairs had increased from 350 in Quarter 1 to 391 in Quarter 2.
- 2.0.6 The gas servicing compliance, although amber, remained high at 99.94% throughout the quarter and a number of the cases were as a result of tenants being on holiday, a number of appointments were rebooked. Any overdue cases were managed through the tenancy team and with the support of the contractor, Sun Realm.
- 2.0.7 The number of cases where the team have been able to prevent homelessness remained high at 36 which is positive 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, with the ending of the moratorium on evictions, in May and the ongoing potential for households in the private rented sector facing eviction. In addition the number of rough sleeper cases relieved in the quarter was 8, with the team working in close collaboration with the Community Safety Partnership.
- 2.0.8 The Group Manager for Strategic Housing, Natasha Beresford, was recognised with an award by the sectors publication, Inside Housing, as the Inspirational Colleague of the Year 2020, which was in recognition for the work that she had undertaken to support and motivate colleagues throughout the pandemic.
- 3.0.1 **Performance challenges:** The percentage of non-urgent repairs completed in target remains below target at 91.67%. The increased demand from tenants who have been waiting to log repairs has contributed to the pressure and Osborne have been working to source additional labour to undertake these repairs. The construction sector is experiencing a number of challenges with material and labour shortages and the recently published State of Trade survey, by the Federation of Master Builders, established 89% of builders have reported delays or cancelled jobs due to a lack of skills or materials. 97% of builders have reported increased material prices. Osborne are working closely with the Council to build capacity and resilience in the workforce, so that this does not negatively impact the completion of repairs.
- 3.0.2 The rent collected in quarter 2 was 2.66% lower than Quarter 1. The income team have analysed some of the factors that have been sited when contacting tenants and the impact of the school holidays and return to school have contributed to the financial pressures of some households.
- 3.0.3 Sheltered accommodation, continues to cause difficulties with letting properties, especially in the schemes which have communal facilities. Ongoing work is underway to provide additional support for those wishing to downsize or consider a move into sheltered accommodation and a series of Open Days. The average time to re-let these properties was 87 days in Quarter 2. The general needs housing also experienced a decline in performance with an increase in the average number of days by 7 to 33.

3.0.4 There continue to be issues with performance of the lifeline call service, with the number of calls being answered within 60 seconds below target and reduced further in Quarter 2 to 91.09%. Tunstall had experienced further issues with staffing being impacted by Covid, and this has fluctuated within the quarter as a number of staff returned from self-isolating.

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 monitored and additional staff have been co-located in the Osborne office and to concentrate on the repairs process, communication and complaints. The improvement plan will be closely monitored by the senior management team and a number of issues escalated to the Strategic Core Group meeting. The Council have appointed a new repairs Team Leader, who has worked for main contractors, so is experienced in delivering improvements in service. A benchmarking exercise is being undertaken to establish the current market conditions in the construction industry, to determine the labour and material rates in the repairs and voids sector.

4.0.2 The service review provided an external overview of the sheltered housing service, and identified a number of positive on the services and facilities, it is evident that a few schemes have a high number of vacant units and are less desirable than others in the stock. The need to postpone the opening of the communal lounges, due to shortages of cleaning staff to undertake the twice daily cleans, is being addressed and additional funding through public health, has resulted in 7 additional cleaning posts being created, and recruitment is underway. Once cleaners are in post and the lounges reopened fully, the open days will be recommenced, which should allow those in the higher risk groups for Covid, to have received their booster.

4.0.3 The lifeline service is a key service for our tenants and the response time is critical for appropriate emergency response to be mobilised in the event of a fall or other medical emergency. The performance has been escalated and measures have been put in place to serve an improvement notice on Tunstall under the terms of the contract.

4.0.4 Additional officers will be recruited to the income team to provide pro-active advice and early intervention to tenants who may start to fall into arrears over the winter period, with increased energy costs and the changes to Universal credit. If cases are addressed with early intervention, there is a greater chance of reducing the arrear and agreeing a manageable payment plan.

5.0 Operational Risk Register

5.0.1 The updated 2020/21 Operational Risk Register is contained in Appendix B.