



# Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

<b>Report for:</b>	Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<b>Title of report:</b>	Q3 Housing Performance report
<b>Date:</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> March 2022
<b>Report on behalf of:</b>	Councillor Griffiths , Portfolio Holder for Housing
<b>Part:</b>	I
<b>If Part II, reason:</b>	N/A
<b>Appendices:</b>	Appendix A Performance report from InPhase Appendix B Housing Risk Register
<b>Background papers:</b>	None
<b>Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:</b>	ASB - Anti-Social Behaviour SLT - Senior Leadership Team (Chief Executive and the four Corporate Directors)

<b>Report Author / Responsible Officer</b>	
Fiona Williamson, Assistant Director Housing	
 	
Fiona.williamson@dacorum.gov.uk / 01442 228855 (ext. 2855)	

<b>Corporate Priorities</b>	<p>Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need</p> <p>Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery</p> <p>Climate and ecological emergency</p>
<b>Wards affected</b>	All Wards
<b>Purpose of the report:</b>	1. To provide members with an overview of the performance of the Housing service in the third quarter of the financial year 2021-2022

	2. To present the various interventions and actions introduced to address any areas of performance that are below target.
<b>Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):</b>	1. That members consider the report and note the actions to address any areas of performance that are below target.
<b>Period for post policy/project review:</b>	Quarterly performance reporting

## **1 Introduction/Background:**

- 1.0.1 This report details the performance of the Housing Service during the third quarter of 2021/22, measured against the suite of performance indicators. The performance indicators are extracted from In-Phase, the new corporate performance reporting tool, and contained in Appendix A.
- 1.0.2 The performance is reviewed on a monthly basis through the In-phase reports, which combined with any complaints and compliments received, provide an overview of the housing service. In addition the Housing service commissioned an independent consultant, Paul Langford, to undertake a review of the service, during Quarter 1 and 2. The resulting Action Plan that was produced is monitored through quarterly meetings with members of SLT, to ensure that actions are being progressed and that the expected improvements are being realised.
- 1.0.3 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.
- 1.0.4 This report also outlines any awards of grant funding for which the service have been successful in securing and the various areas of the service which will be undertaking work to expend the grant in line with the criteria for which it is intended.
- 1.0.5 During the third quarter of this financial year, the Omicron variant resulted in some travel restrictions and an increase in infections rates and self-isolation reduced resource levels, which was managed but did have some impact on the performance.

## **2 Key Issues/proposals/main body of the report:**

- 2.0.1 Appendix A shows performance against the 'Service Critical' performance indicators for the third 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 At the end of quarter 3 the compliance with Gas servicing was at 100%. The services compliance team have worked closely with the contractor, Sun Realm to manage access and ensure all appliances had a service within the 12 month statutory period.
- 2.0.4 The number of emergency repairs had increased from 391 to 442 in quarter 3 and despite the increased volume, only 2 of these were not completed in the 4 hour target, and were completed within 6 hours.

- 2.0.5 The income team have provided intensive support to a number of tenants during quarter 3 and despite some challenging external economic conditions managed to increase the amount of rent collected, as a percentage of rent owed, by 3.49% in quarter 3.
- 2.0.6 The tenancy sustainment team had another busy quarter with high levels of demand for support continuing. Additionally the team have provided support to two families that have been resettled under the Afghan Locally Employed Person's scheme. Both families have settled in well.
- 2.0.7 The number of cases where the team have been able to prevent homelessness again increased in the quarter with 44 successful prevention cases, 8 more than in the prior quarter, which is positive. The team received additional grant prevention funding of £125K, which enabled additional financial support to be provided to those at risk of eviction. In addition the number of rough sleeper cases relieved in the quarter was 5, with the team working in close collaboration with the Community Safety Partnership.
- 3.0.1 **Performance challenges:** The percentage of non-urgent repairs completed in target has seen a further decline in performance, however it should be noted that the volume of non-urgent repairs have increased substantially, from quarter 2, to quarter 3, with 5116 in quarter 2, rising to 8697 in quarter 3, which has resulted in a number of repairs taking longer to complete. 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 proximity to London is creating issues with retaining labour, who are moving to contacts which provide higher daily rates of pay.
- 3.0.2 The return rate of return of surveys for satisfaction with the outcome of Tenancy enforcement cases was poor this quarter, with only a third of surveys being responded to. With ASB, cases it is appreciated that people will not always want to provide feedback and the team are currently looking at ways in which we can improve on this low return rate. Considerations are being given to offering small incentives, which could be offered for completing the surveys. The team are also be looking at the questions we ask and the ways in which they are worded, to ensure that they are fit for purpose, enabling us to draw out the exact information that we require for service improvement moving forward. It is recognised that there will unfortunately always be some negative feedback in relation to ASB, as the team cannot always deliver the exact result that a complainant may expect. This is in relation to requests such as, the immediate eviction of neighbours and remove alleged problems/issues straight away.
- 3.0.3 In respect of case handling and the feedback that was received for the last quarter, analysis of the comments and feedback were drilled down into. It was established that the particular respondents, had not achieved the outcome that they had wanted, due to legislative and evidential constraints, with a lack of evidence having been provided. All officers' cases are monitored on a weekly basis by the Tenancy Enforcement Lead Officer. This close monitoring is completed to ensure that customer contact is made within the agreed timescales, customers are kept updated with the progress of their case and enforcement actions are taken at the earliest opportunity. The team are considering how to publicise the service, to ensure that residents are aware of what the housing service and Council, can, and in turn cannot do in various ASB cases. It is aimed to use the publicity to manage complainant's expectations, from the start to the end of a case.
- 3.0.4 The performance for the key to key times for re-letting both general needs and sheltered properties was very poor in the quarter and despite an increase in demand for sheltered, the number of sheltered voids in the system remains high. When the demand reduced in the middle of the summer in 2021, the works to empty sheltered properties would only be undertaken once an offer had been made, so that resource could concentrate on the general needs properties.
- 3.0.5 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 3 to 90.1%. Tunstall had

undertaken a wholesale return of their staff to the call centre and experienced further issues with staffing being impacted by Covid. Additional analysis of the connect times provided some further context with the majority of calls answered within 84 seconds.

#### **4.0 Interventions to address performance below target and other initiatives**

- 4.0.1 The performance issues, which have been experienced with the Osborne contract are being overseen by a Housing Working Group, which consists of members of the Senior Leadership Team, procurement, legal, finance and housing, to agree appropriate interventions and potential contractual remedies.
- 4.0.2 Ernst and Young have been commissioned to undertake an audit of the contract and will present their findings and recommendations, which will further inform the approach towards the ongoing management of the remainder of the contract term.
- 4.0.3 Additional staff have been co-located in the Osborne office and to concentrate on the repairs process, communication and complaints. Analysis of the main causes of complaints identified that delays in completing responsive repairs and poor communication, from Osbornes are the main areas of complaint. Osborne have sent out a letter to all tenants who have been experiencing delays with repairs which includes an apology and these letters are being followed up with telephone calls to provide appointment dates for completion of the works.
- 4.0.4 The ability to retain tradespeople and sub-contractors continues to be difficult due to high levels of competition and a shortage of the necessary skills. Osborne have developed a Target Operating model for voids to establish the impact of the additional sub-contractor teams that have been appointed. The performance against this model will be closely monitored on a weekly basis, to determine the reduction in works times and the overall number that Osborne are working on.
- 4.0.5 Demand for sheltered properties has increased since July 2021, which is very positive, but due to the high numbers of empty properties that have been vacant since July 2021, some of which had been through multiple advertising cycles, when these are now let, have a negative impact on the average time.
- 4.0.6 The Tunstall lifeline is very important to provide peace of mind for a number of older or vulnerable tenants. The response time is critical for appropriate emergency response to be mobilised in the event of a fall or other medical emergency. The performance remains below target, but the majority of the calls out of target are answered within 84 seconds. The contract is nearing the end of the term, in March 2022 and procurement of a new provider has commenced. The need to ensure a smooth transition to a new provider is being managed by the service, so as not to result in any interruption to this important service.
- 4.0.7 Additional officers have been recruited to the income team to provide support and advice to tenants who may start to fall into arrears over the winter period, with increased energy costs, higher inflation and the changes to Universal credit.

#### **5.0 Operational Risk Register**

- 5.0.1 The updated 2020/21 Operational Risk Register is contained in Appendix B, with the current risk rating following a review in February 2022.

## **6.0 Consultation**

Chris Stratford – Interim Corporate Director, Housing

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

## **7.0 Financial and value for money implications:**

### **7.0.1 Financial**

All areas of the service are subject to Monthly Budget Monitoring Meetings with the HRA Financial Accountant. Budget Reporting is provided quarterly to Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Material variances are considered and interventions identified where appropriate.

### **7.0.2 Value for Money**

The Housing Service & its costs are reviewed annually through a national benchmarking organisation (Housemark) and each of the contracts with service providers provide the opportunity for sector benchmarking to be undertaken as necessary.

## **8.0 Legal Implications**

The Housing service are required to comply with all statutory legislation relating to the delivery of a landlord and housing allocations and homeless service. The performance report contains a number of these areas of compliance.

## **9.0 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

## **10.0 Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:**

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

Human Rights – There are a number of services that are provided to tenants and leaseholders which involve entering their homes. The policies adopted by the Council are subject to tenant consultation or oversight to make sure that the right to respect for private and family life is considered and balanced against other landlord responsibilities for health and safety.

## **11.0 Sustainability implications**

Investment programmes are contained in the HRA Business Plan and include sustainability. The performance report include the responsibilities of the Housing Service in relation to community safety and the health and wellbeing of some of the most vulnerable tenants.

## **12.0 Council infrastructure**

The HRA stock and management of the asset, forms part of the wider estates resources and the management of health and safety related matters are reported into the Corporate Health and Safety Working Group

**13.0 Conclusions:** The various interventions outlined in this performance report have been developed to address any areas of performance below target, and include the Housing Action Plan, Covid recovery plan, contract interventions to monitor the Osborne Improvement plan and Tunstall performance. The impact of these will be monitored through the monthly performance indicators, the Corporate Housing Working Group and the Performance Board.