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Housing & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report for:	Housing & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Title of report:	Q4 Housing Performance Report
Date:	26 May 2022
Report on behalf of:	Councillor Mrs Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	Appendix A Strategic Housing Performance Report Appendix B Property & Place Performance Report Appendix C Tenants & Leaseholders Performance Report Appendix D Housing Risk Register Appendix E Complaints Data Overview
Background papers:	None
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	Housing Transformation Improvement Plan (HTIP) Senior Leadership Team (SLT) Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) Department for Levelling Up Communities and Housing (DLUHC)

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Corporate Priorities	A clean, safe and enjoyable environment Building strong and vibrant communities Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for
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	those most in need Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery Climate and ecological emergency
Wards affected	All wards
Purpose of the report:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To provide members with an overview of the performance of the Housing Service for Q4 2021-22 2. To present the various interventions and actions undertaken to address any performance concerns
Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That members consider the report and note the actions to address any performance concerns highlighted
Period for post policy/project review:	Quarterly performance reporting

1 Introduction/Background:

- 1.1 This report details the performance of the Housing Service during the final quarter of 2021/22, measured against the suite of performance indicators. The performance indicators are extracted from In-Phase and contained in Appendix A – C for the Housing Service remit.
- 1.2 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 has commenced activity in relation to the Housing Transformation Improvement Plan (HTIP), which will build on the previous housing action plan to develop a new operating model for the service, which reflects the organisational change and ambition for service delivery to residents. The HTIP programme will be governed by the newly established HTIP Board through periodical meetings and reporting to Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
- 1.3 The Operational Risk Register is to be revised and aligned with refreshed service plans and will be 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 current operational risk register is contained at Appendix D.
- 1.4 This report also outlines any newly arising service pressures such as the national response to Ukraine Resettlement schemes.

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

- 2.1 Appendix A - C shows performance against the 'Service Critical' performance indicators for the final Quarter of 2021/22. Future InPhase reporting structure will be subject to change as a result of the key performance indicator reviews undertaken to reflect new priorities and the organisational structure change.

3 Performance highlights

- 3.1 **Appendix B** shows strong performance in the following areas. PP01, Gas Safety with 100% compliance, PP04; Quality Assurance checks on completed repairs and void properties consistent with previous months and PP13b; Percentage of repairs complete first visit reports strong performance with a slight

increase on the previous quarter, and PP10; Emergency Repairs completed within 4 hours is again consistent with the previous quarter positive outturn.

- 3.3 The percentage of the rent roll collected was 101.69% at the end of April and the goal is to recover more than 100% as an indication of effective recovery methods for current and former tenant arrears. This performance is good when compared to other local authorities and registered providers. Two new members of staff were recruited to support the work in this area and to help continue the proactive work in this area.
- 3.4 There currently 39 live ASB cases, with 8 new cases and 12 closed cases in the last month. The cases continue to be monitored proactively with tenancy audits used to tackle any issues with access for safety works.
- 3.5 The Tenancy Sustainment Team continue to experience high demands, with increasing households placed into temporary accommodation requiring support, continued support and resettlement activity to increase independence of the resettled Syrian Refugee resettled households, plus the successful resettlement of a fourth household via the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme. Progress is well underway to finalise preparations for the fifth household to be resettled via the ACRS. Additionally the Welfare & Sustainment Lead Officer has been seconded to a new role of Asylum/Resettlement Lead, this is to provide support to the Assistant Director – Strategic Housing to ensure effective co-ordination and management of the Initial Asylum and Afghan Resettlement hotels, in addition to new activity relating to the Ukraine resettlement response.
- 3.6 The Homeless Prevention & Temporary Accommodation Team successfully utilised Protect and Vaccinate and Homeless Prevention Grant funding, to deliver a package of initiatives to vulnerable households, which included reduction of council tax and rent arrears enabling effective move on to resolve housing difficulty, starter home packs and vouchers to support set up of the new home. Additionally grant funding was allocated to DENS to fund a Life Skills Co-ordinator, which will prepare residents for independent living in the community and sustainment of tenancy, preventing repeat cycle of homelessness.
- 3.7 Despite significant resource pressures, the Private Sector Housing Team have quickly mobilised activity, developed inspection forms and collaborated with other Hertfordshire authorities to ensure a consistent response to the completion of Ukraine Accommodation Checks is in place, this is so as to ensure that households coming to the UK to reside with sponsors, are occupying safe accommodation. The service has undertaken a detailed investigation and case file compilation to evidence enforcement activity required for a suspected bed in shed. Collaborative activity has also commenced in relation to private sector properties that fall under the remit of the Building Safety fund, service is proactively engaging with the Fire Service and Department for Levelling up Communities and Housing (DLUHC).
- 3.8 Extensive preparations were undertaken in relation to the Allocations Policy implementation, this has included data cleansing of the housing register, development of revised procedures and resident information documents, in addition to staff training roll out across the Housing Service.

4 Performance challenges

- 4.1 The percentage of non-urgent repairs completed in target has seen yet a further decline in performance, whilst it is noted that the volume of non-urgent repairs has increased. Tenants have been waiting for extended periods for repairs to be undertaken, which has led to dissatisfaction and a rise in complaints. Osborne continue to take steps to source additional labour to undertake these repairs.
- 4.2 It should be noted that the current reporting of performance in relation to allocation of our homes is referred to as average time to allocate – this indicator will be renamed in future reporting to be more reflective of the actual data being collated, currently this indicator is reflective of the key to key time (keys in, allocation period and empty homes works element) not just the allocation.

- 4.3 Aside from the current contractor challenges, the HTIP will review will identify opportunity to improve internal performance in relation to the overall empty homes process. Currently when keys are returned for a new empty home, there is a delay in compiling property information, which can be up to 72 hours – a property information sheet must be completed and submitted to the Housing Needs Team (allocations) to enable commencement of advertising. From receipt of the property information sheet a general needs home is then advertised for 3 working days and allocation is made within 5 working days of advert closure. Supported housing property allocations are allocated weekly on a Wednesday closing the following Monday, there is then a 7 day period to allow for the allocation – this is to ensure our most vulnerable residents are supported to provide verification information.
- 4.4 The performance for the key to key times for re-letting both general needs and sheltered properties was very poor, further extending the outturn delivered in quarter 3. A significant factor in the outturn performance for re-letting of our homes, is as a result of ongoing contractor delays, performance concerns – which include delays to obtaining quotes, labour to undertake activity, material shortages and significant price increases. Additionally 86% of current voids are Category 4 with an expected turnaround time of 18/25 days.
- 4.3 The current performance of Tunstall on the lifeline service to residents for the month of April against a target of 97.5% within 60 seconds is:
- Average response under 60 seconds – 94.94%.
 - Average response under 180 seconds – 99.13%.
- 4.4 This is below the contract KPIs and Tunstall have been impacted by local challenges in recruitment where they are based. They have recently engaged a specialist recruitment company and this will address the shortfall in their staffing complement. The other key indicators in the contract are being met, for example 97% of repairs are being completed in 48 hours against an industry standard of 90%. Discussions continue with Tunstall about the approach in place to address the shortfall and their working arrangements to achieve this.
- 4.5 The contract with Tunstall has been extended by 12 months to enable the Council to review the service and identify through discussions what the future service model should be. The annual cost of the contract is £75k.
- 4.4 The level and type feedback on the anti-social behaviour (ASB) service continues to be low and the format of the feedback requested will be reviewed as part of the target operating model (TOM). The intention is to move from seeking satisfaction responses and a focus on the achievement by the team against a defined service standard and timescales. This help focus on the service provided and the level of communication, rather than satisfaction with the outcome of the process which is more difficult to achieve in cases of ASB. This is in line with the good practice of other social housing providers.
- 5.5 There has been a reduction in the number of cases where homelessness has been successfully prevented or relieved, this is as a result of a number of factors including an identified performance issue within the staff team and sickness, which has resulted in an increase workload across the service. Team Leader for the service has also been absent due to sickness for an extended period, which has led to additional in service pressure and increased caseloads. These factors have been exacerbated by vacancy within the service and an unsuccessful attempt to recruit a Private Sector Liaison Officer and an Ex-Offender Housing Navigator, to lead on preventing homelessness via successful placement into the private sector.
- 4.6 The performance challenges highlighted in relation to Property & Place activity has seen a significant increase in service requests and complaints to the service, this added workload has placed further pressure on the Housing Service resource and resulted in a significant proportion of Officer capacity being utilised to manage customer expectation and respond to concerns raised. Key trends arising from complaints monitoring include time taken for repairs to be undertaken, lack of communication and empathy.

5 Interventions to address performance challenges

- 5.1 OPSL and DBC have introduced a comprehensive service improvement plan to address performance across in areas of the Total Asset Management (TAM) contract. Specific examples include the increase in voids operative numbers that stood at 18 in December 2021 to 65 in May 2022. Additionally with the support of a Business Analyst we will start to map out current processes to provide clarity and allow focus on key areas of activity for improvement. It is important to note that we are currently completing works to properties that have been empty for a long time which will impact the key to key times until the backlog has been cleared. The additional resource will also allow a greater volume of day to day repairs to be completed as the competing resource demands have been reduced. The supply chain issues for planned and cyclical remain a key area of focus however the impact of escalating costs and contractor availability are significant. Commercial support has been allocated to review cost increases and to work with OPSL to facilitate greater throughput in these areas.
- 5.2 The contract with Tunstall will continue to be monitored monthly and action will be taken where the contract's performance indicators are significantly below the required target.
- 5.3 Plans to provide additional case officer support have been implemented within the Homeless Prevention and Temporary Accommodation Teams. Further review of recruitment and re-advertisement of Private Sector Housing Liaison Officer and Ex-Offender Housing Navigator roles has been undertaken. Additional line management support has been provided to key Officers from Team Leaders within the Strategic Housing Service and this has also included additional case review sessions, to provide support to Officers. In addition within the period the review of Temporary Accommodation has commenced and will identify a programme of activity to identify efficiency, improvement in procedure, cross departmental working and inform future decisions regarding management and investment of temporary accommodation assets.
- 5.4 In relation to monitoring and management of complaints, the Housing Complaints Officer under the direction of the Assistant Director – Strategic Housing, will work closely across the service to identify opportunity to improve engagement and outcomes from monitoring of complaints. A further review has been undertaken of complaints reporting, forthcoming reporting will identify volume of service requests that escalate to stage 1 complaint and will also incorporate trends from MP or Member enquiries. This analysis enables the service to identify key areas of improvement that will be targeted within the HTIP. Ongoing engagement is underway with Osborne Property Services to identify opportunities to improve communication and customer liaison.

6 Operational Risk Register

The Operational Risk Register is contained in Appendix D, with the current risk rating following most recent review.

7 Financial and value for money implications

Post pandemic, the sector are experiencing unprecedented price increases and a reduction in contractors available. These two factors alone will create a significant cost pressure on available budgets. For example with specific regard to planned and cyclical works, the programme of works may need to be rephrased over a long period of time leading to potential re-procurement or amendment of existing contracts.

8 Legal Implications

The Housing Service are required to comply with all statutory and regulatory legislation relating to the delivery of the Housing Operations and Strategic Housing Service. This includes the statutory functions for Homelessness and interim (temporary) accommodation, Housing Allocations, Strategy and Private Sector Housing. This also includes the regulatory functions for the consumer standards and rent setting.

9 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, residents and leaseholders which involve entering their homes. The policies adopted by the Council are subject to 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.

10 Sustainability implications (including climate change, health and wellbeing, community safety)

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

11 Council infrastructure (including Health and Safety, HR/OD, assets and other resources)

The HRA and general fund stock management of the asset is undertaken across the housing service. In line with the HTIP further work is underway to develop a stock investment review process and programme, which will inform future investment decisions.

The management of health and safety related matters are reported into the Corporate Health and Safety Working Group.

12 Conclusions:

The various interventions outlined in this performance report have been developed to address any areas of performance below target, and include the HTIP, contract interventions to monitor the Osborne Improvement plan and regular monitoring of the Tunstall response times. The impact of these will be monitored through the monthly performance indicators, the Residents Services Board and the Performance Board.