



# Housing & Communities

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

<b>Report for:</b>	Housing & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<b>Title of report:</b>	Q1 Housing Performance Report
<b>Date:</b>	19 October 2022
<b>Report on behalf of:</b>	Councillor Mrs Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing
<b>Part:</b>	I
<b>If Part II, reason:</b>	N/A
<b>Appendices:</b>	Appendix A Housing Portfolio performance Report
<b>Background papers:</b>	None
<b>Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:</b>	Housing Transformation Improvement Plan (HTIP) Senior Leadership Team (SLT) Department for Levelling Up Communities and Housing (DLUHC) House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Osbornes Property Service Ltd (OPSL) Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

### Report Author / Responsible Officer

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<b>Corporate Priorities</b>	A clean, safe and enjoyable environment Building strong and vibrant communities Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need
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	Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery Climate and ecological emergency
<b>Wards affected</b>	All wards
<b>Purpose of the report:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To provide members with an overview of the performance of the Housing Service for Q1 2022-23</li> <li>2. To present the interventions and actions undertaken to address any performance concerns</li> </ol>
<b>Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That members consider the report and note the actions to address any performance concerns highlighted</li> </ol>
<b>Period for post policy/project review:</b>	Quarterly performance reporting

## **1 Introduction/Background:**

- 1.1 This report details the performance of the Housing Service during the first quarter of 2022/23, measured against the suite of performance indicators. The performance indicators are extracted from In-Phase and contained in Appendix A for the Housing Service portfolio.
- 1.2 The performance is reviewed on a monthly basis through the InPhase reports, which combined with any complaints and compliments received, provide an overview of the housing service. The service is progressing activity linked to the Housing Transformation Improvement Plan (HTIP), containing 8 work streams delivering activity that supports the HTIP vision: “To provide outcomes for residents in the Borough of Dacorum that enable them to live in the best possible homes that they are able to and to take part in a vibrant community, supported by the improvements and transformation the Housing Service will make over the next one to two years”. The HTIP programme is governed by the 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 the performance indicators and service plans. The register will be reviewed quarterly, to reflect any changes internally or externally that have impacted upon the identified risks. To reduce the potential of the risk occurring and the impact, mitigations are in place to reduce the risk’s likelihood and severity. The current operational risk register is under review with the Chief Housing Finance Officer in collaboration with the wider organisation to define strategic and operational risks.
- 1.4 This report also outlines any newly arising service pressures and feedback to Members on action taken to address matters arising.

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

- 2.1 Appendix A shows performance against the ‘Service Critical’ performance indicators for the Q2 of 2022/23 across the Housing Service. InPhase structures have been reviewed to align with Service Plan development and SLT key performance indicator reviews, to ensure focussed reporting. Further development will be undertaken to refine management information reporting and other relevant local performance indicators.

### **3 Performance highlights**

- 3.1 Whilst the challenge of escalating costs and supply chain issues remain problematic as we strive to improve services for our customers, we have managed to maintain strong performance in some areas and positive improvements in others.
- 3.2 Whilst the challenge of escalating costs and supply chain issues remain problematic as we strive to improve services for our customers, we have managed to maintain strong performance in some areas and positive improvements in others. Whilst PP01 Gas Safety has dropped slightly compared to target and outturn for Q1 it is important to note that this reporting period includes the main summer holiday months, July and August. These months are always difficult to manage due to staff availability and no access into customers' homes, however despite this at the end of Q2 only 2 properties were out of compliance. In addition to the holiday period there has also been a number of Royal Mail strikes that could have impacted the delivery of time sensitive letters. To reduce the impact the team hand delivered the letters on the days of the strikes.
- 3.3 PP10 percentage of emergency repairs completed within 4 hours has improved significantly by 5.71% against Q1 and relates to the ability to respond to the most urgent repairs. PP12, Percentage of non-urgent repairs completed within timescales, although remaining as a 'Red' indicator has improved by 9.66% from 76.67% reported Q1 to 86.33% for Q2. This positive trend for repairs continues with PP13a, Percentage of responsive repairs completed within target, that has improved by 9.72% from 79.35% reported Q1 to 89.07% for Q2. There has also been a slight increase on the percentage of repairs completed right first time.
- 3.4 A query has been raised in relation to PP13b as this indicator is showing amber @ 85%, however the target has increased to 85.67% from 80.67%, it is therefore presumed that this is an error and indicator should be green. Similar for PP15 performance has increased but so has the target.
- 3.5 The percentage of the rent roll collected continues to be on track to be above 100% at the end of the financial year based on the information on previous year's trends. This performance is good when compared to other local authorities and registered providers. To continue the progress being made, an analysis of the arrears by geographical area and customer segment has been implemented and will continue to be evolved as the number and types of arrears cases changes. Where the tenancy sustainment team have involvement with those households in arrears the impact continues to be positive in reducing the arrears.
- 3.6 The Humanitarian Response Lead Officer continues to engage with colleagues from Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire district and boroughs in addition to the East of England, Strategic Migration partnership. This is to ensure a collaborative and consistent response to resettlement activity and re-matching, ensuring that full consideration is given to district and borough expenditure supporting funding discussions.
- 3.7 The Housing Service is proactively engaging with key stakeholders to co-ordinate activity linked to rising cost of living, ensuring a collaborative approach to service delivery and the development of a borough wide plan to support residents. A second stakeholder event will take place on 31 October bringing together partners to pledge their ongoing commitment to this extremely important cause.
- 3.8 The Homeless Prevention team have successfully mobilised new Rough Sleeper Initiatives during Q2 with the successful handover and opening of the Hampton Close modular units, new residents moved into the accommodation during August. A visit by Department for Levelling up Communities and Housing (DLUHC) was undertaken during the period, where positive feedback was shared with the service by the DLUHC Rough Sleeper Advisor who has recommended the service for a ministerial visit.

3.9 The Private Sector Housing Team have continued to undertake Ukraine accommodation Checks to that households arriving are occupying safe accommodation – as at end of Q2 2022/23 a total of 143 checks had been undertaken since commencement in April 2022. The service led a joint enforcement operation at a several privately rented properties in the Dacorum area with the support of the Police, Modern Slavery and Community Safety Team, resulting in identification of a number of regulatory breaches of the Housing Act 2004 and identification of unlawful House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) activity. As a result the unlicensed HMO's have been brought up to standard, following an enforcement fee and improvement works have been undertaken, safeguarding the residents concerned. Witness statements have been collected from occupants and the Council is now in liaising with the Legal Department to progress enforcement action against the landlord.

#### **4 Performance challenges**

4.1 Despite changes to streamline the processes relating to the repair of Empty homes, the supply chain issues are felt the most in this area due to the fact that the predominant source of labour that work on these properties, sub-contract to Osbornes Property Service Ltd (OPSL). Due to sector demand the sub-contractor market is extremely buoyant driving prices significantly higher than pre-pandemic. This has resulted in OPSL not being able to engage a consistent level of labour due to the contractually agreed commercial model being significantly lower than current market trend. SLT have recently approved a range of measures including a re-negotiation of the current commercial model, Improvements to the front end processes completed before handover to OPSL, shared contractor use of those currently commission directly by DBC and a pilot scheme that will see completion of essential repairs only whilst the property is empty and any required follow on works completed on occupation. There are a number of properties that have been empty for an extended period of time, which will impact the reported statistics until they work through the system to re-let stage. With this in mind we expect to see an improvement in current performance levels towards the end of the financial year.

4.2 The impact of the cost of living is being seen in the number and type of arrears cases being experienced. Typically there is an impact during quarter because of the summer holiday season and the increased costs parents experience due to school uniforms. The recent mail strikes have delayed the arrears letters being received by tenants and may have led to a delay in payments being received. Anecdotally, the cases being presented to the County Court for possession orders have not been progressed because of the Judge's concerns about the impact of inflation and other factors on a household's ability to pay. Although this has had a negative impact on the level of performance, this is recovered later in the year when there are rent free periods.

4.3 The current performance of Tunstall on the lifeline service has continued to be below the target in the contract, with a reduction experienced in the last quarter. Regular contract meetings are in place and discussions are focussed on the full range of performance indicators in the contract, of which the majority have been met.

4.4 The level of feedback on the anti-social behaviour (ASB) service continues to be low and the format will be reviewed as part of HTIP. 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 will 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 and will help benchmarking to be completed.

4.5 Whilst prevention and relief activity is prioritised, this has become increasingly challenging due to the rising cost of living and growing concerns regarding affordability. As a result there has been an increase in homelessness applications to the service – as a result of prevention activity being unsuccessful. This has seen an increase of households occupying temporary accommodation, at the time of writing there are a

total of 173 households occupying temporary accommodation, including two households occupying Bed & Breakfast accommodation.

## **5 Interventions to address performance challenges**

- 5.1 Discussions continue with Tunstall about the approach in place to address the current shortfall and their arrangements to achieve this through staff recruitment. The contract for this service is being reviewed and if the service continues to be outsourced the performance indicators will be reviewed, and consideration given to the use of penalty clauses where the core indicators are not met.
- 5.2 Preparation for an annual rough sleeper count is underway with district and boroughs across Hertfordshire, in collaboration with the Community Safety Partnership and Dacorum Outreach Team. This will see physical street count undertaken by Council Officers during November to identify and provide support to any identified households, with a view to bringing them safely into accommodation.
- 5.3 As new presentations to the service have increased, this increases the demand on the service and caseload numbers – as a result proposals have been submitted to SLT for additional grant funded resource to enable continuation of effective case management and minimise impact to service delivery.
- 5.4 The HTIP work streams continue to provide regular highlight reports to the HTIP Board identifying focussed activities that are ongoing in line with the overarching project plan.
- 5.5 Focussed Strategic Core Group Meetings have resumed with OPSL to ensure effective management of the contract, maintain relations, identify ongoing actions and improvements service delivery – improving service to customers. A focussed approach to identifying the root cause of complaints has been prioritised by the Interim Head of Asset Management and providing focussed support to key staff members, to ensure that issues arising are addressed promptly.

## **6 Operational Risk Register**

The Operational Risk Register has been revised and the updated risks for Housing Operations will be amended from the reporting for the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter. The updated risk register has been revised and aligned with the performance information, management information and service plans.

## **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 rephased over a longer 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 management of Compliance activity, 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 and equality 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:**

This report provides an overview of Housing Service performance, key highlights, challenges and interventions implemented to address any areas of performance below target. Any key performance challenges will be subject to ongoing monitoring via the Resident Services Board, ensuring a collaborative approach to service delivery and ongoing performance.