



Housing & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report for:	Housing & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Title of report:	Q3 Housing Performance Report
Date:	23 February 2023
Report on behalf of:	Councillor Mrs Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing Councillor Julie Banks, Portfolio Holder for Communities
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	Appendix A – Resident Services Housing Report Appendix B – Resident Services Community Safety report
Background papers:	None
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	

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Corporate Priorities	A clean, safe and enjoyable environment Building strong and vibrant communities
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	Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for 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 Q1 2022-23 2. To present the 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 third quarter of 2022/23, measured against the suite of performance indicators. The performance indicators are extracted from InPhase and contained in Appendix A for the Housing Service portfolio.
- 1.2 Following completion of the Tier 3 restructure, roles and responsibilities for Assistant Directors across the Housing Service portfolio have been defined, this has seen redefined roles and job titles – alongside the move of Community Safety, CCTV and Safeguarding responsibilities moving into the service remit under the leadership of Assistant Director - Housing Operations and Safe Communities. As a result Appendix B provides overview of performance indicators extracted from InPhase for the aforementioned portfolio. The corporate Performance team are in the process of revising the Resident Services structure on the InPhase system. As performance is reported quarterly in arrears, Members will note that reference is still made in reports to the previous service relationships e.g. Strategic Housing.
- 1.3 Additionally across Appendix A and B Members will note a reduced suite of indicators following a review across all service areas, this has resulted in new or amended KPI's – this is of particular relevance to note where there is a lack of trend data.
- 1.4 The performance is reviewed on a monthly basis through the InPhase reports, provide an overview of the housing service. The Operational Risk Register is to be revised following completion of the Tier 3 restructure and is 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.
- 1.5 This report also outlines any newly arising service pressures and feedback to Members on action taken to address matters arising.
- 1.6 Strategic Housing & Delivery report quarterly on the number of affordable housing starts on site in period and the number of affordable housing completion in period. These will be captured in the next quarterly update report.

2 Performance highlights

Housing Operations

- 2.1 Estate inspection programme is now embedded into the Tenancy Management teams ways of working, individual targets have been set for staff across the service and positive outputs have been identified in respect of addressing areas relating compliance, fly tipping, graffiti and addressing general estate management concerns.
- 2.2 Targeted interventions are ongoing as identified by outcome star support planning for tenants being supported by the Tenancy Sustainment Team, this has successfully enabled a reduction in arrears – through income maximisation and other key cost of living interventions.
- 2.3 The service has as a result of increased placement, lack of availability of suitable accommodation had to place several households into Bed & Breakfast accommodation - this is due to a lack of suitable alternative placement. Such placements are made where it is necessary to ensure that households are suitably placed and safeguarded either from individual risk or risk to others within the locality.

Safe Communities

- 2.6 The Private Sector Housing Team have been successfully undertaken targeted action to increase licensed Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) in the borough. Where landlords have failed to appropriately licence accommodation and intervention is required, a licence will be established through enforcement in conjunction with identification of improvement works.

Property

- 2.7 Osborne Property Services Ltd (OPSL) have struggled to engage with a robust and consistent supply chain to deliver Empty Homes. Following a complete review of the associated costs and a renegotiation of rates the supply chain is now in place to improve performance. Historic and long standing Empty Homes are working through the system and the overall number of Empty Homes has significantly reduced. Reported performance will evidence these improvements when the long standing cases have been relet and are out of the Empty Homes system.
- 2.8 Committee will note a new suite of Safer Homes related performance indicators HPS04 – HPS10 inclusive. These indicators are all areas of statutory compliance and performance across all areas is strong. HPS05 is more a figure for noting as this will fluctuate relative to the frequency of fire risk assessments, i.e. the more Fire risk assessments completed in a quarter could increase the number of associated actions. The team are committed to ensure all remedial actions relative to any area of Safer Homes service delivery are completed as soon as possible.
- 2.9 The need to gather property related data has never been so important and the Council are committed to a rolling programme of 20% stock condition surveys per annum, resulting in 100% completed every 5 years. Current performance is 30% for 2022/23 exceeding target for year one of the programme.

3 Performance challenges

Housing Operations

- 3.1 The service is continuing to see the impact of Covid in respect of the progression of cases via the County Court process, this is due to a large number of cases backlogged in the system and currently there are several examples of cases where the service has been waiting in excess of 6 months to obtain Court

hearing dates. The Income Team continue to work collaboratively with Legal and County Court services to progress cases as efficiently as possible, however where non-payment continues, this has seen an increase in arrears where there is delayed enforcement action.

Safe Communities

- 3.2 Unsuccessful homelessness prevention activity, has seen an increase in homelessness applications and subsequently placements into temporary accommodation. A key trend in the last quarter is homelessness relating to affordability concerns, as a result of the cost of living – this has also played a direct part in S21 notices being served by local landlords due to changes in their personal circumstances.
- 3.3 The challenges with the County and Magistrate Court process is also impacting other enforcement services such as the Private Sector Housing Team, which is causing delays in obtaining warrant applications to enable enforcement through powers of entry to address poor housing standards. Concerns have been directly raised via the Court feedback and complaints processes.

Property

- 3.4 The numbers of responsive repair requests remains high, which directly impacts the available resource to deliver the service. Responsive repairs are and always have been an intense area of focus for our residents, however we are seeing an increase of expectation of quicker resolution once repairs are reported. The team are working hard to understand emerging trends of demand to align resource to complete repairs quickly however current demand will very quickly outstrip available budget. The supply chain is challenging but we are currently renegotiating rates with OPSL to embed consistency and to ensure there are appropriate resources available.
- 3.5 The high repair numbers directly impacts the KPI PP10 which whilst close to target remains Amber for Q3. We are working with the OPSL contact centre to ensure repairs are being diagnosed as accurately as possible. This work will define an Emergency Repair in the true sense of 'Threat to Life or Property' which may have the effect of an overall reduction in the numbers of emergency repairs raised which are difficult to manage from a resource planning perspective.

4 Interventions to address performance challenges

Housing Operations

- 4.1 A review of the delivery of Anti-Social Behaviour activity is to be undertaken within the housing transformation programme, ensuring that targeted activity is aligned with Tenant Satisfaction Measures and Community Safety activity.
- 4.2 Officers of Housing Operations are working collaboratively with colleagues across the organisation and the Voluntary Sector to tackle the Cost of Living crisis, to mitigate impact for residents and the organisation. A refreshed dedicated Cost of Living page is regularly updated on the Council's website and a special Cost of Living edition of life was issued in January highlighting important help and information for residents. The action plan is regularly updated and calendar of community events are being finalised for publishing shortly.

Safe Communities

- 4.3 The Homeless Prevention Team will review its Rough Sleeping Delivery plan for submission to the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities, identifying targeted action to address rough sleeping. Additionally a review of the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy action plan, will see revised actions to address key trends in relation to homelessness – such as collaborative activity in relation to Cost of Living crisis.

- 4.4 A Safeguarding action plan is in development and will be brought into the monitoring framework of the housing transformation plan, this will see renewed focus on safeguarding across the organisation and focus on all aspects of the Council's business.

The Community Safety Action Group are working collaboratively with Community Safety Partnership to address suspect cuckooing in the borough, targeted monitoring action for identified addresses and serving of Community Protection Warning Notices has been undertaken to prevent escalation of anti-social behaviour.

- 4.5 The Private Sector Housing team are leading dedicated activity in partnership with Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Service in relation to tall buildings across the private sector portfolio – ensuring that guidance and interventions required are reported in a timely manner to the Building Safety Group. Targeted enforcement action is being taken against suspect 'Rogue Landlords' this has resulted in several warrants being executed to enable entry to premises – with the aim of addressing regulatory breaches and enforcing, improving standards for residents. The proactive enforcement action has resulted in charges being prepared for laying in quarter 4 with the support of Legal Services.

Property

- 4.6 The biggest intervention with OPSL has been, and continues to be the positive approval of the contract extension and the renegotiation of rates. OPSL now have longevity of contract and at the end of the renegotiation process will be working for rates reflective of market trend. This will include a robust service improvement that firmly places the customer at the centre of the services they provide.
- 4.7 There has also been a lot of work undertaken relating to complaints received. This includes Council officers visiting properties in the first instance to nurture a positive relationship with the resident and the promotion of a single point of contact through to resolution of the complaint. This approach facilitates ownership and accountability but also better informs service improvements overall.

5 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 3rd quarter. The updated risk register has been revised and aligned with the performance information, management information and service plans.

6 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 re-phased over a longer period of time leading to potential re-procurement or amendment of existing contracts.

7 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.

8 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.

9 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.

10 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.

11 Conclusions:

This report provides an overview of 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.