Report for:	Housing & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Title of report:	Q4 Housing Performance Report
Date:	19 May 2023
Report on behalf of:	Councillor Simy Dhyani, Portfolio Holder for Housing & Property Services
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	Appendix 1 - Housing & Communities Q4 2022-23
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
	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:	1. To provide members with an overview of the performance of the Housing Service for Q4 2022-23 2. To present the interventions and actions undertaken to address any performance concerns
Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	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 fourth 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 & Property Service portfolio.

1.2   Performance is reviewed on a monthly basis via InPhase reports, which provide an overview of the housing service. The Operational Risk Registers are also reviewed by the relevant teams at least quarterly, to reflect any changes internally or externally that have impacted upon the identified risks and to include new risks. Robust 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.

2   **Performance highlights**

Housing Operations

2.1   679 neighbourhood/estate inspections recorded by the TMOs and Supported Housing Officers combined, this is identified as planned tasks activity for the team, with set targets for completion. Officers take responsibility for reporting issues, which include matters relating to compliance, fly tipping, graffiti and addressing general estate management concerns to identified and seeing cases through to resolution.

2.2   The former tenant arrears procedure has been reviewed, to reference the referrals process to Jacob's recovery service. To date 70 payments have been received amounting to £6k former arrears recovery, in addition 15 repayment arrangements have been made, which if honoured will result in an additional £18k repayment of former arrears.

2.3   Revised interim management arrangements (acting up for existing Team Managers) are in place for the Housing Cleaning Service, to date this has resulted in commencement of an extensive process to map all blocks, cleaning areas and activity to support the Housing Transformation Improvement Plan (HTIP) activity to support a review of the operating model and service charge recovery processes.

2.4   Through our proactive engagement of older tenants via surveys and regular visits, we have gained insight that they were unable to socialise or meet on a regular basis with their families and friends, which impacted negatively on their health and wellbeing including loneliness and social isolation. As a result we have been working with tenants and local agencies to put together a number of events and activities in our scheme communal lounges.

2.5   Tunstall Community Alarm monitoring has retained a positive trajectory performance since January and exceeded the set KPIs for Dacorum specific calls received within 60 seconds and 180s as shown in the table below.

Set KPI	Dec 22	Jan 23	Feb	Mar	April
% SLA 60 Seconds	90.0%	97.3%	98.9%	98.4%	99.7%
% SLA 180 Seconds	99.1%	99.9%	99.9%	99.9%	99.9%

Safe Communities

2.6   The Private Sector Housing Team have been successfully led prosecution for failure to comply with a Prohibition Order in relation to an outbuilding/'bed in a shed' – Magistrates Court found landlord guilty and was ordered to pay a fine of £4,000, costs of £1,784 and a victim surcharge of £190.

2.7   Building Safety in High Rise Residential Buildings work is progressing, 14 premises meet the 7 storey or more requirement for investigations into fire safety. A multi-agency group has been formed to meet quarterly and ensure proactive implementation of actions in partnership with Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue and Hertfordshire Building Control.

2.8   In Quarter 4 - Jan to Mar 2023 the CCTV department recorded 294 incidents – the majority being Theft and Anti-social behaviour. The recording of such activity and incidents supports community safety interventions and actions to prevent crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour locally and enables action to be taken where necessary by our statutory partners.

2.9   The Community Safety Team have led a partnership review of the Community Safety Partnership priorities, to support the development of a refreshed partnership plan, which is intended for launch in the summer. Successful introduction of new Cautionary Database (CDB). New CDB available to all council staff and councillors, with a mobile app for officers that have a compatible council device.

2.10   Proactive partnership working via our Dacorum Outreach service has led to the reduction of rough sleepers from 7 to 3 during the period, every rough sleeper identified is referred to our Dacorum Outreach team in addition to being allocated a Homeless Prevention Officer and a Personalised Housing Plan is developed to support achievement of positive outcomes.

Property

2.11   The number of actual stock condition surveys completed exceeded the target for the first year by +19% with a Q4 figure of 39% equating to over 3000 surveys. The information that is being extracted from the surveys will provide a valuable foundation from which we can continue our journey to categorise the actual performance of the Housing stock to prioritise and inform investment decisions from 2024/25 onwards. This programme of works will continue on the basis of 2000 surveys per annum with a focus this year on the external attributes of block type accommodation.

2.12   The average time to re-let a property is reported for all property types including general needs, sheltered and adapted properties. The excellent work of both the DBC team and Osbornes on Empty homes is starkly demonstrated if we pull out the repair time only. We have reduced from a level of 45.4 days in Q1 to 12.9 in Q4. The reported average time to re-let is key to key and will be impacted by some of the longer term legacy empty homes working through the system but the 2023/24 year has started from a much improved position.

2.13   The percentage of emergency repairs completed within 4 hours continues to improve from the reported figure in Q3 of 98.25% to Q4 of 99.24% against the target of 99.47%. Emergency repairs can be impacted by a number of things however the most common reason is a repair being reported and then the resident not being home resulting in a non-attendance. We don't routinely close these repairs down until 24 hours

have elapsed to prevent a duplicate repair being raised however the system will report the closed time which cannot be retrospectively influenced. The contact centre are addressing this when a repair is requested and asking the resident to call back when they are at the property and to wait until the repair has been completed. This action has contributed to the current improvement trend.

2.14 All areas of compliance continue to perform well and we have achieved 100% across the six areas reportable under the consumer regulations. This is a clear demonstration of the Council placing customer safety absolutely at the centre of operational activities and oversight. The percentage of outstanding Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) actions is a reported metric to compliment this approach, however the number will fluctuate based on the number of FRA's completed within the reporting period and shouldn't be viewed as a measure of performance.

2.15 Following the legislative changes introduced in October 2022 with regards to smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors, the Council introduced an inspection process and now have a record of all smoke alarms and where within the property they are installed. In addition to this we also have the information for Carbon Monoxide sensors with a record of the installed position in relation to the combustible appliance. These will be reviewed once every 12 months and residents have been and will continue to be reminded to report any issues as they arise.

3   Performance challenges

Housing Operations

3.1 The Tenancy Management team manage a variety of planned tasks whilst balancing these with reactionary investigations (e.g. when a cause for concern leads to a safeguarding case or when dealing with estate issues, which also may lead to multi-agency/team meetings). Where there are increased numbers of reactionary investigations, or other service pressures this impacts available resource to delivery planned activity.

3.2 Universal Credit landlord verifications for the new rent year are completed during this period, this is a time consuming as every claimant needs their rent verifying and as such this results in approximately 3000 verifications for the Income service to complete.

3.3 The temporary accommodation service has been impacted as a result of shifts in demands and pressures for the Homeless Prevention Team. This has resulted in increased placements for clients homeless on the day and use of Bed & Breakfast or other shared facility. This has led to a 32% placement increase based on snapshot data (month end).

3.4 Hoarding within some council homes has become a significant problem, particularly following Covid. Work has been undertaken with the tenancy team to identify properties that were at significant risk, particularly properties that scored above 5 on the Clutter scale following property audits.

3.5 The Supported Housing Team has experienced an increase in the number of tenants moving into supported housing with challenging health and behaviour needs including mental health and substance misuse, which impacts on the delivery of the service and staff resource.

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 and ending of private rented accommodation, in addition to increased households being evicted by family or friends. These increased demands in turn create additional caseload pressures, which impacts on staffing resources.

3.3 Challenges with the County and Magistrate Court process is also impacting enforcement activity and resulting in large delays to progression of housing standard work, which in turn is causing backed up caseloads for staff and worry for residents.

3.4 Anti-social behaviours cases starting to increase due to time of the year, it is critical that the service is able to intervene earlier as this can result in quicker resolution.

3.5 The CCTV control room experienced power failure to a reporting post in Town Centre, leading to camera's being offline and inability to resolve the power concerns.

Property

3.6 The number of repairs completed right first time remains a challenge due to the complexity of some repairs, which in some cases is only established once a tradesperson attends.

3.7 The percentage of all repairs completed on time across all priorities also remains below target.

3.8 The level of customer complaints received for the service continues to be a concern.

4 Interventions to address performance challenges

Housing Operations

4.1 The Tenancy Management Team are trialling a new way of working, to tackle the challenges experienced and inform the Housing Transformation Improvement Programme (HTIP) and future operating models.

4.2 In order to mitigate and manage the risk associated with hoarding, cases are monitored regularly, safeguarding or referrals to Adult Care Services are made and the fire service carry out a Safe and Well check. A marker is also placed on the property in case of fire so that the fire service are aware of the increased risk and resource required to tackle a blaze.

4.3 Trauma informed training in practice and principles for managers has been provided to front facing staff including Supported Housing Officers to ensure that they are equipped to handle the changing demographic and multiple disadvantages of clients presenting. In addition the introduction of Safeguarding Champions across services, provides a robust support network for staff in addition to existing health and wellbeing services.

Safe Communities

4.3 The Homeless Prevention Team is working proactively with staff to identify new tools and approaches to vary preventative approaches, in addition skills analysis assessments of staff have been undertaken to identify areas of additional development that are needed to support casework activity – recent training has included the roll out of trauma informed training to all case handling staff to enable more effective management and debrief from complex casework activity.

4.4 Concerns have been directly raised via the Magistrates and County Court process, further feedback has been provided via the Complaints processes in relation to court delays and the impact. Information and guidance is provided to residents to ensure that they are reassured throughout the process. Refreshed training has been provided to staff to ensure that casework and witness statements are of the highest standard, ensuring swift progressing via the system as cases are allocated.

4.5 Investigations are underway to address concerns identified due to the faulty power to CCTV post in Town Centre, in addition service is exploring alternative resolutions to ensure coverage is restored.

4.6 Anti-social behaviour Policy and procedures have been reviewed to ensure consistency in our response to antisocial behaviour and takes into account current national best practice. These are currently undergoing internal consultation, in addition to mapping of the processed via the HTIP programme to support design of the future delivery model.

4.7 The Private Sector Housing Team utilise a risk rating system for assessing disrepair in the private sector – (Housing Health and Safety Rating System – HHSRS) which has been under review by Department Levelling Up Housing Communities for over 3 years. This review has evolved to substantial changes being made, which have not been made public to date, however, it is understood that due to changes the current qualification held by officers nationally will no longer be valid. Retraining will incur unplanned costs for the team and currently proactive engagement is underway with our partners to identify alternative arrangements.

Property

4.8 The property team and OPSL have worked hard to address the scripting of calls received by the contact centre. It is hoped that the improvements made will lead to an improved repair diagnosis resulting in the correct trade with the correct materials on the vehicle attending the property. Whilst still challenging due to the nature of a non-technical customer reporting a technical repair to a non-technical advisor, this should lead to improved performance relating to the first time fix metric.

4.9 Financial negotiations are ongoing to improve the ability for OPSL to secure more robust supply chains for both labour and materials. The number of repair requests we are experiencing remains challenging, this combined with insufficient resources is resulting in the overall metric of repairs completed on time continuing below target. A more robust supply chain will lead to more stability to deliver the service on time.

4.10 There are a significant number of complaints being made against the service for a number of reasons. Any complaint is an opportunity to learn and improve the services we offer however, there has been an approach to respond to the complaint but not to learn. This approach doesn't fundamentally address the issues resulting in repeat complaints for the same thing. The team have been tasked to demonstrate the learning from complaints to draw up a robust service improvement plan, against which both OPSL and the Council can be measured and accountability assigned.

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

As members will be aware the impact of the pandemic, inflation and interest rates have significantly impacted the sector and we are experiencing unprecedented price increases across all areas of Council activity. This fiscal impact is compounded by the lack of skilled people and materials driving continued escalation of costs. These two factors alone will create a significant cost pressure on available budgets. We are reviewing service levels and demand to assess the impact on current and future budgets and considering what additional mitigating actions may need to be introduced.

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 key areas of performance below target. Key performance challenges will be subject to ongoing monitoring via the Housing Services Leadership Team, ensuring a collaborative approach to service delivery and ongoing performance.