



Council Briefing Note 28th February 2024

**HOUSING & PROPERTY PORTFOLIO – COUNCILLOR SIMY
DHYANI**

Property Services

- Aaron Services successfully won the Heating and Ventilation contract. Contract mobilisation has commenced and will go live from 1st April 2024
- Over 5,000 domestic electrical tests were completed in 2023 – we are in the process of phasing these inspections to reduce the impact on available resources.
- We have achieved 100% compliance on gas safety for two months running, December and January.
- Major fire safety works were completed at Gade Tower and lift replacement works are currently on site
- A fire remedial repairs project has started targeting multiple repairs across several blocks of flats, these are mostly medium / low risk repairs.
- Launch of Customers weekly drop in at the forum for customer to discuss any on-going repairs issues has started. This is an opportunity for residents to call into The Forum to discuss any repairs issues face to face with DBC and Osborne representatives.
- Complaints process amended to ensure that actions from responses are monitored to reduce the likelihood of stage 2 complaints
- New planned programmes now set out for 24/25, Stakeholder communications are currently being prepared in preparation for works starting
- Improvements reported in keys KPIs – First time fix, appointments made & kept, average time to complete repairs
- 23 contracts awarded under the Interim Contract Strategy with 8 contracts still to be signed. Terms and Conditions have been agreed with 7 of the 8 companies, with 1 company reviewing the Council's comments on suggested amendments.

Housing Operations

- Engagement with supported housing residents to inform tenants of the introduction of the Enhanced Housing Management charge.
- Mapping activity of all Housing green space and trees to support review of grounds maintenance planning. Bio-diversity pilot – completion of 'Planet Garden' in partnership with Sunnyside and tenant improvement panel to be celebrated with formal opening in February 2024.
- Refreshed rent policy developed in support of HRA business plan review.

- Successful pilot activity in relation to bin store cleansing and fly tipping, undertaken in collaboration with CSG – activity will inform revised approach to delivery.
- Delivery of one new temporary accommodation unit in accordance with Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF), 4 additional HRA units via LAHF on track for completion in Q4.
- Task & finish group activity led to ensure implementation of 24/25 rent charges and incorporation of 53rd week due to leap year.
- Several well attended and successful celebration events at supported housing schemes over festive period, with fantastic feedback and compliments to the service from residents.
- The estate inspection regime is well bedded in with some great work to improve common areas of our housing stock and standing up of task/finish activity for longer term interventions
- Continuing to evolve the new way of working within Tenancy Management, specifically to our approach towards tasks/cases. In turn, we are now able to produce quantitative data on aspects of work undertaken in set period.
- Successfully managed the community alarm upgrade at Douglas Gardens – new community alarm upgrade starting at Gilbert Burnet House next week.
- Several teams across housing participated in person at the South Hill Centre, this was a successful event with residents being supported with a range of housing related queries; rent payments/ income maximisation, ASB, housing allocations or Housing register application and advice on sustaining tenancies.

Safe Communities

- Afghan Bridging Hotel closure and successfully ensuring all Afghan households into settled accommodation. Partnership presentation at HCC asylum workshop to showcase DBC activity.
- Identified accommodation in the private sector for 16 refugee households alleviating requirement for statutory homeless or temporary accommodation assistance.
- Facilitated access to education classes in the home of 2 refugee woman who were unable to access mainstream programmes due to disability or childcare (newborn) to prevent isolation.
- Delivery of Prevent training to DBC, VCS and Home Office accommodation provider staff in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council.
- Severe cold weather plan implementation, providing targeted support to individuals at risk of rough sleeping – up to 15 individuals have accessed services each night during Q3.
- Successful closure order of property in Grovehill due to ongoing ASB and impact to local community.
- Launch of Community Safety Partnership survey – to gain valuable insight from residents and inform partnership activity.
- Proactive monitoring and engagement with Fire Protection Team in relation to high rise building in private sector.
- Targeted activity to raise standards of private sector accommodation in borough, resulted in execution of warrants with Police support due to an unlicensed HMO in Cornerhall and improvement notice served in relation to two homes in Apsley.

- Refreshed ASB Policy scrutinised by SLT and TLC – further review, engagement and scrutiny with PH/SLT February ahead of HC&OSC in March 2024.

Strategic Housing & Delivery

- 6 new social rented homes handed over at Douglas Terrace, Sempill on the 12th December and all occupied prior to Christmas.
- Cabinet approved the award of Principal Contractor for the resumption of construction works to Eastwick Row in Adeyfield on the 30th January. This project will provide 34 x 1 and 2 bed flats let at social rented values and forecast to be handed over in summer 2025.
- The Team have been working on a Local Connection policy for First Homes and all other affordable home ownership tenures – the policy proposal will be reported to Cabinet in a few months' time.
- The Council received its report on the Homes England Compliance Audit of its new build scheme at Beechfield (Sandy Close) and are pleased to report a finding of "Green – meets Requirements" judgement.
- The Housing Strategy has been approved by Cabinet on the 30th January. We are now preparing a launch and wider stakeholder involvement to track our progress against the targets set.
- We held our first TLC scrutiny sub-meeting on the 16th January, where residents scrutinised our Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM's) and started to prioritise what service areas they wanted to explore next.
- We have agreed to purchase CX-Feedback. From April this system will help us capture our TSM's going forward but is a much broader resident engagement platform which will allow us to capture much more customer insight in real time.
- We held a breakfast club on the 24th January for staff to hear presentations from the Chartered Institute of Housing on the new legislative changes and explain the benefits of professional membership to individuals.
- We have reviewed the departmental targets and measures used to manage and monitor performance. This work is nearing completion and new reports are being produced for a range of audiences.