



www.dacorum.gov.uk

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report for:	Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Title of report:	Q4 2023-2024 Housing Performance & Tenants' Voice Report
Date:	5th June 2024
Report on behalf of:	Councillor Simy Dhyani, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Property Services
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	Appendix A – Housing & Property Services Performance Report 2023/24 Appendix B – Dacorum Tenant Satisfaction Measures Results 2023/24 Appendix C – HouseMark mid-point review (latest benchmarking data available) Appendix D – Compliance Report, March 2024 Appendix E – Complaints Overview 2023/24 Appendix F – Repairs Service Improvement Plan (as at 22 nd April)
Background papers:	None
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	DBC – Dacorum Borough Council SQA Team – Strategy, Quality & Assurance TSM's – Tenant Satisfaction Measures HTIP – Housing Transformation Implementation Project RAAC - Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete is a lightweight material that was used mostly in flat roofing, but also in floors and walls, between the 1950s and 1990s. It is a cheaper alternative to standard concrete, is quicker to produce and easier to install. It is aerated, or "bubbly", like an Aero chocolate bar, but less durable with a lifespan of around 30 years. LGA – Local Government Association

Report Author / Responsible Officer

Simon Walton, Head of Strategy, Quality & Assurance



simon.walton@dacorum.gov.uk / 01442 228000

on behalf of:

Natasha Beresford, Assistant Director, Housing Operations & Safe Communities

Mark Pinnell, (Interim) Assistant Director, Property

David Barrett, Assistant Director, Strategic Housing & Delivery

Corporate Priorities	A clean, safe and enjoyable environment Building strong and vibrant communities Ensuring economic growth and prosperity 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
Purpose of the report:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To provide H&COSC with an overview of the performance and the tenants' voice for the Housing & Property Services for the financial year 2023/242. To present the interventions and actions undertaken to address any performance concerns
Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	That H&COSC consider the report and scrutinise the actions to address any performance concerns highlighted
Period for post policy/project review:	This relates to Q4 and a review of the whole 2023/24 financial year. This report is produced every Quarter.

1. Introduction/Background

1.1 This report details the performance of Housing & Property Services during the fourth (and final) quarter of 2023/24, measured against the suite of performance indicators.

1.2 Performance is reviewed monthly via In-Phase reports, which provide an overview of the services.

1.3 The Operational Risk Registers are 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.

1.4 The Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 legislates the importance of listening and acting on the Tenants' Voice. The feedback we receive from our Tenants is invaluable data which can be used to inform service improvement and deliver tailored services.

1.5 The effective use of the Tenant voice data and insight will not only improve services, but also demonstrate compliance with the new regulatory framework relating to the Tenant Satisfaction Measure's (TSM's) and the Consumer Standards.

1.6 This report also details the improvement actions to address any areas of concern.

2. The aims of this paper

- To improve service performance within the directorate
- To ensure that services delivered are resident focussed
- To drive service delivery improvements
- To increase efficiency and focus
- Improve the customer experience
- Ensure appropriate scrutiny of the services delivered

3. The Current Position on Performance

Appendix A is the InPhase report on performance, **Appendix B** is our TSM results, **Appendix C** is our latest HouseMark report, **Appendix D** is our Compliance Report, and **Appendix E** is our Annual Review of Complaints.

Repairs and Complaint management continue to be two of the most challenging areas across the sector. There is improvement work underway in both areas at DBC, which is kept under strict supervision.

4. InPhase Departmental Report (Appendix A)

4.1 During Q3 the entire suite of performance measures were reviewed, and new reports created. This was to improve accountability and introduce more measures to allow service to be viewed more holistically on performance, quality and satisfaction.

There are 7 'red' indicators at the end of Q4:

The number of estate inspections with a 'red' grading:

We have a zero tolerance for 'red' gradings, therefore there will always be targeted action in these areas between scheduled activities. This instance related to fly-tipping around London Road, which resulted in CCTV being installed as a preventative measure. A few weeks on and there haven't been any further incidents - but will be monitored closely in the coming weeks.

Average re-let time in days (standard re-lets) & Average time to re-let general needs properties:

Both measures are correlated, and both suffered from several empty homes requiring high value works, some requiring major clearances and asbestos removal.

Percentage of respondents satisfied with complaints handling:

Please refer to Appendix E for in-depth review.

Call handling average waiting time:

This is for the Council's telephone system. During March letters were sent for Council Tax, Rent Increases and Garden Waste. Despite advanced staff planning, call waiting times were over target, although improved considerably on the march 23 figures.

Cardo Customer Services:

Cardo delivers our responsive repairs. As such, it is important that we monitor their customer service levels. There were dips in March because of the contractor changing their IT servers. Given the circumstances this was kept to a minimum and they kept us informed.

5. High Risks Areas

Income Collection

We have collected 99.97% of the rent due as at the end of Q4 and current rent arrears were 3.8%. Both indicators were under-target and have improved against the March 23 results. This is particularly pleasing given the economic backdrop and cost of living crisis experienced by our tenants.

Rent collection processes have been reviewed during this period and a more streamlined approach has been implemented. This is supporting the Income team to take more timely action in cases, although some cases are being delayed due to ongoing court delays, which we have continued to experience post pandemic.

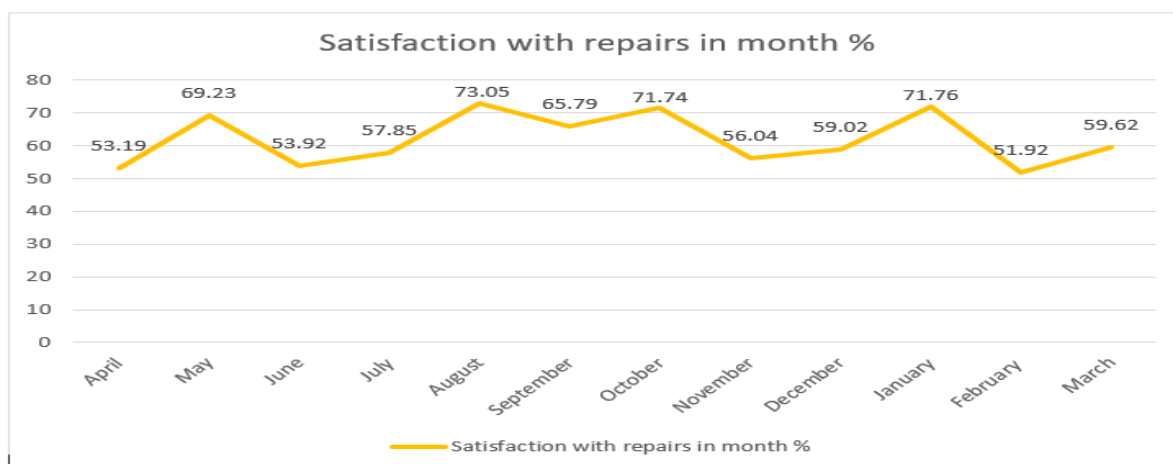
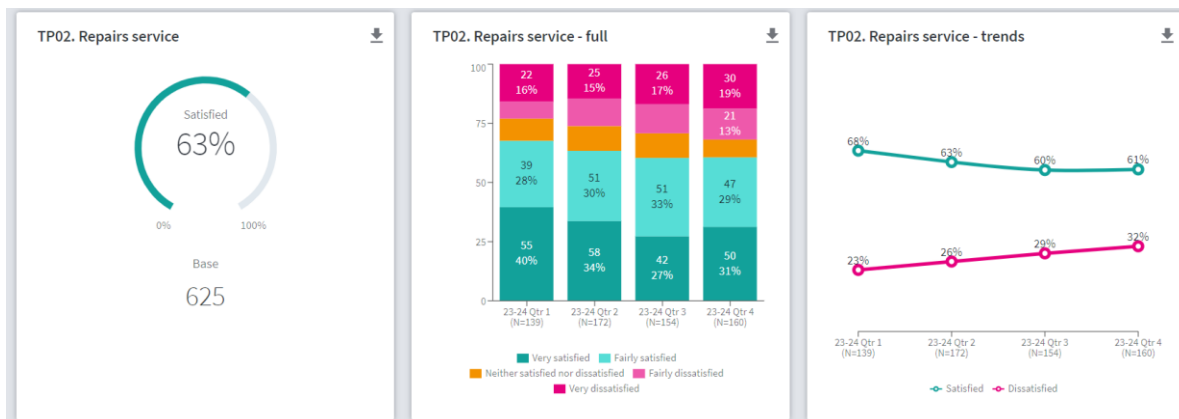
Compliance (including RAAC, Damp & Mould and Disrepair)

The latest compliance report (**Appendix D**) demonstrates particularly good performance on certification and inspection.

Attention is focused on ensuring this strong performance continues and ensuring all arising remedial actions are completed.

Repairs

The TSM results and monthly transactional surveys are disappointing, as seen below:



The transactional surveys are the best indicator of the likelihood of the TSM figures improving in the future. However, the monthly figure trends over the year have been close to the TSM perception scores. The area of responsive repairs is very challenging, Osborne Property Services Ltd (OPSL) now have new owners (Cardo) who appear genuinely keen to improve the customer experience. We are working through a jointly agreed service improvement plan. The plan is reviewed each week at operational meetings and progress reported monthly.

We are confident in the integrity of these results given the perception measures are captured by M.E.L. Research independently, and the transactional survey results are collated from the SQA team which sit outside of the Property team.

Current operational focus:

- Assessing failure demand into the Cardo call centre. This will categorise the incoming calls into value demand and failure demand, identifying the root causes of failure demand and seek to eliminate the largest causes first.
- Reviewing the reasons for follow on work and analyse the root causes. This will reduce the number of visits needed to complete work, creating a better customer experience and more capacity in the system.
- Analysing the repairs history of properties to identify repeat issues eg blocked drains. We are going to investigate each type and seek to remedy the issue rather than deal with it each time on a responsive repair.
- Undertake proactive works (for example with gutter clearance)

Homelessness Provision

The council is experiencing increased demand from households in the borough at risk of homelessness or rough sleeping. This has been caused by several factors, which includes the rising cost of living and an increase in households contacting the council, who previously would resolve their own difficulties. In addition, there is increased demand from households seeking advice and help, whom have previously been granted New Refugee status in the UK, many of which the council does not have a duty to house and as a result this is placing pressures on current resources for single homeless households.

As a result of the above we have seen a rise in households seeking help and being placed into temporary accommodation. The service has stood up additional resources to respond to these demands and is also proactively engaging with partners to explore additional preventative initiatives and early intervention options to ease pressure on the statutory service.

Ombudsman Cases / Petitions

Two petitions were received during 2023/24 and three Ombudsman cases which were found against us. These are detailed in Appendix E.

6. Our Performance compared to others

It is important to measure our performance against our peers, not just against our own targets. We are a member of HouseMark (a bench marking club for social housing nationally), to do this. There is naturally a lag in data as HouseMark collects it in from members and then goes through a process of quality assurance.

Performance is generally in the lower quartiles and the associated action plans are designed to address this. The mid-point HouseMark report (the latest one they have produced at time of writing) can be seen at **Appendix C**.

7. The Residents' Voice

At Appendix B, there is the MEL Research report on our Tenant Satisfaction Measure results for 2023/24, demonstrating that:

- The perception measures are consistently in the bottom quartile for satisfaction.
- Sheltered tenants are generally (although not always significantly) more satisfied with the service they receive from Dacorum Housing services than General Needs tenants.
- Older tenants are more satisfied than younger tenants, especially when comparing those 75+ to other age groups within the sample. It should be noted that this is likely in part because these tenants are more likely to be Sheltered tenants.
- Tenants who live in bungalows are also generally more likely to be satisfied, particularly regarding repairs and communication. This is likely due to the high proportion of older tenants residing in these property types.

8 Service Improvement Activity:

Communal areas – A pilot Estate Improvement Project at Grovehill is progressing well. An estate improvement plan has been co-created with over 30 residents and a Resident Committee is being formed to manage this through. Funding has already been identified for several key improvements and this pilot will be reviewed in the summer and is likely to be rolled out to other areas of the borough.

Eastwick Row improvements – a focus on improving this area was underway in Q4 following engagement with residents and consideration of survey responses. This has culminated in a co-produced resident engagement day, being held on the 25 April – this event led by the council’s Tenancy Management team in collaboration with internal colleagues and with support from several key strategic and voluntary sector partners. This saw an excellent opportunity to have open dialogue with residents - gaining insight on what life is like at Eastwick Row and improvements residents would like to see.

Fly-Tipping Pilot – This pilot has been extended, to build upon the early improvements that have been identified and to embed lessons learned. To date, GIS mapping, systems processes have been reviewed and refreshed establishing a joined-up approach to fly-tipping, maximising existing resources.

Complaints – the SQA Team has led a review of how the learning from complaints can drive service improvements. The review is at Appendix E.

Communication – A new customer engagement platform called CX-Feedback has been installed. This will capture the TSM’s in 24/25 but also allow much deeper work on resident insight by improving communication with all residents via push messages, and automated transactional surveys.

Damp and mould – Following on from the research project funded by the LGA for the Net Zero innovation programme including, St Albans City Council, University College London and London South Bank University, a review has taken place of our approach to managing issues of damp and mould.

This paper was presented to SLT on the 17 April 24 and highlighted the human and financial costs associated with the issues. A plan to further improve the service delivery has been agreed and is being led on by the Heads of Asset Management.

9. Housing & Property Services Complaints

There is a full review of complaints, including all Stage 1, Stage 2, Petitions and Ombudsman cases for 2023/24 at **Appendix E**.

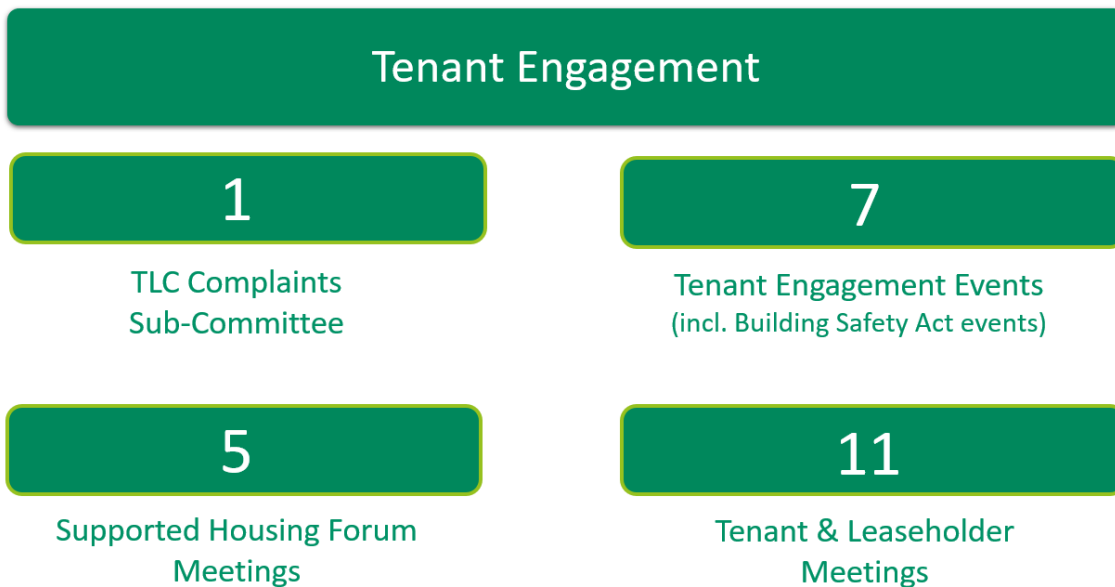
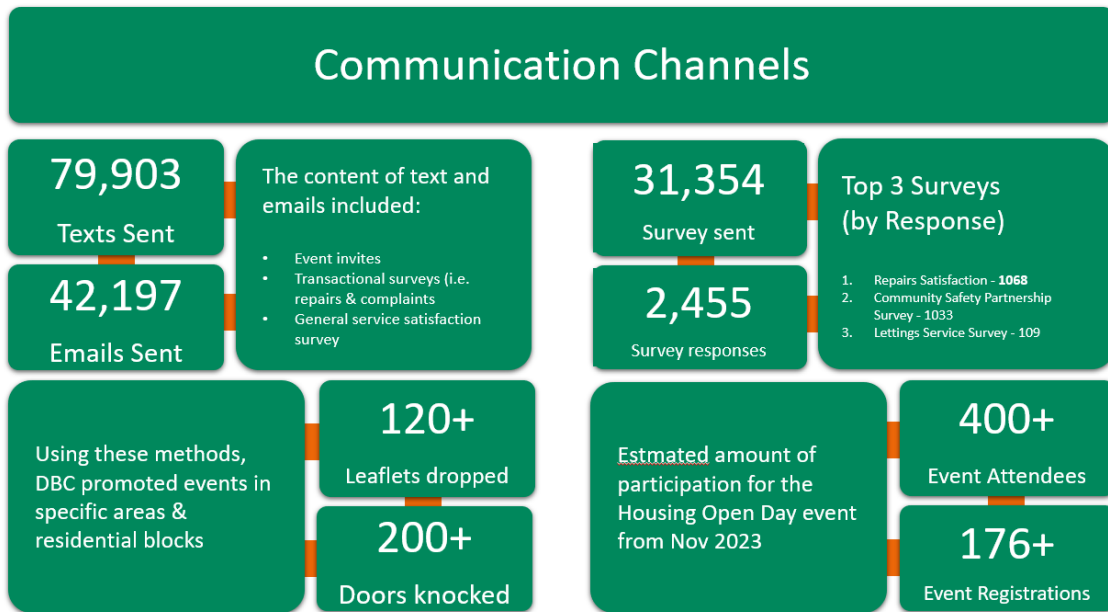
The highlights include:

- An improving trend over the course of the year.
- Transaction satisfaction being introduced.
- Quality audits demonstrating that the actual responses tend to be good, but more focus still required on doing exactly what we said.
- Examples of using this learning to drive service improvements.

- Progress, but much room for improvement.

10. Involved Tenants feedback

During 23/24 engagement with residents looked like this:



Tenant & Leaseholder Committee

This is our highest level of resident engagement and reviewed a number of strategic documents, provided scrutiny of key services and helped shape the role they play within the Council. The committee led on the creation of an ‘TLC Issues Log – for scrutiny’, which has added real value.

Building Safety Act – Resident Engagement Strategy Events

The **Compliance teams** coordinated events at all five high rise blocks. These were supported by teams across the directorate and well-attended by residents. Using resident feedback, we have developed tailored online portals on ‘Engagement HQ’.

The newly appointed Building Safety Manager, Toby Gilden, will take on responsibility for ensuring that residents know how to report safety concerns and are listened to.

Supported Housing Events

Supported Housing tenants enjoyed bespoke engagement activity designed to improve services at a local level, to gaze into the future through the lens of our Supported Accommodation Strategy and to reduce loneliness by engaging in more social activities.



Housing Open Day

Housing Open Day 2023

Key Stats from the Day

1	One person was able to access immediate domestic abuse support, thanks to a SAHWR Dacorum Outreach worker. Several others felt comfortable to discuss historic experiences.
11	Residents signed up for Transformation focus groups to improve the phone systems. The first session has been arranged.
18	Households registered with Housing Exchange within 4 days of the event. 5 households signed up on the day.
50	Over 50 residents signed up to the WorthSaving campaign, reusable nappies and sustainable period schemes.
88	People took part in our sticker surveys on multiple stalls to let us know what they think about a variety of topics

8

Tenants chased the repairs team for their roofing.

13

Tenant Participation Signups (TLC, SHF etc.)

25

Damp and mould inspections raised.

50

New repairs reported to Osbornes.

100

Hot drinks and snack bags given out by Sunnyside

176

Residents pre-registered their interest in the event

500

Attendees

“ We were looking for feedback from our customers on our telephone system and our website. Customers were even suggesting some improvements that they would like to see, which was great! ”

Transformation Team Member

“ We found the event had a great turn out as we had lots of visitors who were interested to learn more about House Exchange. We also observed lots of stalls busy giving advice to residents so I think Dacorum achieved their objectives well. ”

Clarion Team Member

30+ Faces Painted! (incl. the big kids!)

“ Tenants would like to raise repairs face to face and have an Osbornes team member monthly at the forum. ”

Repairs Stall Team Member

Osborne Drop-In Sessions
Ian Kennedy worked with Osbornes to create a weekly event in The Forum to help people with on-going repairs.

✓ The first event was held on 31st January.

“ Our stall was busy with collecting feedback and helping Residents with their questions and further navigating them to the right team on the spot. ”

It was satisfying to see residents getting the help they needed under one roof. ”

Cllr Simy Dhyani

Improving Green Space

Sunnyside Rural Trust shared visual designs of potential future plans as part of the project led by Housing Op, CSG & Sunnyside

The Colouring Competition

The colouring competition received entries based on the 6 objectives in the Housing Strategy, with winners chosen by Cllr Simy Dyhani.

Additional Benefits

Cross Partner Working (Police & Fire Depts)

Raising awareness of Local Charities (DENS & Sunnyside)

Supporting local businesses

Raising awareness of Housing Services

During 2023 TPAS (tenant Participation Advisory Service) were engaged to conduct a SMART + Review of resident engagement at the Council. Their findings can be summarised by:

THEME	ASSESSMENT
Theme One: Governance and Transparency	Not Met
Theme Two: Scrutiny	Not Met
Theme Three: Business and Strategy	Partially Met
Theme Four: Complaints	Partially Met
Theme Five: Information and Communication	Partially Met
Theme Six: Resources for Engagement	Partially Met
Theme Seven: Community and Wider Engagement	Partially Met

This led to TPAS being assigned to work through a re-engineering exercise with residents to help ensure we could build upon the strong foundations we had to deliver engagement fit for the future. This work was ongoing at the end of Q4 and is scheduled to conclude in May 24.

11. Improving Services

The TSM's are outcome focussed and an improvement plan has been agreed to improve scores via service improvements. This will lead to improved perceptions over time.

TSM	23/24 Score	Responsible Person	Actions for Improvement	UPDATE
Overall Satisfaction	61%	HSLT	Main drivers are Repairs and complaint handling SQA Team to review all transactional surveys to support key front-line service delivery by Nov 23 – completed	The Housing Transformation Implementation Plan (HTIP) has completed Phase 1. This will provide a new Target Operating Model for service delivery. In addition the SQA team has introduced transactional satisfaction surveys for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints • Repairs • Lettings • ASB • New Homes These will be automated from the end of Q1 24/25 with CX-Feedback (resident engagement platform)
Repairs Service	59%	IK	Improvement plan in place – updated versions available from Dan Thurlow – see Appendix F Re-procurement of service underway (will last 12/14 months) Improved oversight via monthly composite reporting	New permanent Head of Service now in place. New ownership of contractor who are fully engaged in improving service delivery. Service improvement plan being worked through.
Time taken for repair	59%	IK	See actions above	
Home Well Maintained	58%	MP	See actions above and note Asset Management Strategy / business plan refresh 24/25	Business plan agreed for 24/25. Realistic responsible budget and capital funding for decent homes works.
Home Being Safe	65%	RL	Resident Engagement Strategy for High-Risk blocks being rolled out to	Completed and ongoing engagement via web portal.

			all high-rise blocks by end October 23 Information on website to be updated Be-spoke articles required for Dacorum Life	Compliance in a strong position – see monthly Compliance Report from Property Team. See above. Built into annual communications plan with Lou Fuller
Listening to views and acting on them	41%	HSLT	Be-spoke articles required for Dacorum Life on 'You Said, We Did' Piloting an Estate Improvement Plan in October 23	Built into annual communications plan with Lou Fuller Estate Improvement Plan agreed and being actioned. Issues log – items for scrutiny agreed with TLC and will accompany every meeting
Keeping tenants informed	54%	SW	Dacorum Life monthly TPAS Smart Review underway	Ongoing - Built into annual communications plan with Lou Fuller Completed and TPAS following through on the re-engineering of service.
Fair & Respectful treatment	61%	HSLT	No specific actions underway other than work on corporate values	Values work ongoing. Review of complaint letters by staff completed. Will be assessed by residents in May 24. EDI framework to be introduced by Q2 24/25: Data Cleansing Review of service outcomes based on protected characteristics
Complaint Handling	23%	SW	Current approach being reviewed by SQA for HSLT/SLT in Oct 23 Introduced tracking of promises made in complaint response to ensure completion - complete All DMC complaints now tracked separately	New working practices introduced and reviewed in April 24 in Appendix E . Agreed at HSLT that Stage 1 complaint responder retains responsibility to see through all actions promised. 23/24 review completed and approved by HSLT 18/4.
Neighbourhood Management	48%	OJ	Introduced 4 area inspectors Piloting an Estate Improvement Plan at Grovehill East in November 23 - complete SLA between Housing & Cleaner, Safe & Green	Residents meeting in mid-February 24 and improvement plan drafted Note Estate Improvement Plan agreed in Grove Hill during Q4 23/24.
Making a positive contribution to neighbourhood	48%	OJ	Piloting an Estate Improvement Plan at Grovehill East in October 23 Building Safety, High Risk visits will incorporate estate improvement elements (7 blocks by end Nov 23)	See above and new performance measures introduced for grading communal areas of our estates. Reported monthly to HSLT and Quarterly to Housing OSC
Approach to handling ASB	42%	JS	This improved from Q1, as number of potential points of failure have been removed	Introduced measures into In-Phase to monitor. Request for specialist officer made in Q4. Satisfaction surveys created on CX-Feedback to be operational by end of Q1 24/25.
Management Indicators - Complaints		AT	Agreed for SQA team to lead on improving quality, monitoring transactional	Ongoing.

			satisfaction, and improving performance monitoring during Q3	Overview of complaints for 23/24 agreed by HSLT on 18/4.
Management Indicators - Compliance		RL	Headline figures are strong A scorecard of underlying actions to be shared at HSLT for further assurance, with first one attached to this report	Ongoing. Quarterly reports shared with HSLT & OSC.
Management Indicators - ASB		JS	Statistical returns only	In force on In-Phase
Management Indicators - Repairs		IK	See actions above in Repairs (perception) section	
Management Indicators - Decent Homes		MP	Plans in place to be 100% as at 31/3/24.	

12. Risks

The Operational Risk Register has been revised and aligned with the performance information, management information and service plans.

Certain key functions are outsourced to Cardo and key metrics have been added to the monthly performance report for HSLT.

13. 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 in key areas 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.

This has been fed into the 24/25 business plan, along with other demands to assess the impact on current and future budgets and detailing what additional mitigating actions may need to be introduced.

14. Legal Implications

We are required to comply with all statutory and regulatory legislation relating to the delivery of Housing & Property Services. 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.

15. 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 several 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.

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

Investment programmes are contained within the HRA Business Plan, and an element of budget provision has been allocated to future stock 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.

17. 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.

18. Conclusions:

This report provides an overview of service performance, the tenants' voice and interventions implemented to address key areas of performance.

The perception satisfaction levels are a key area of focus. We understand that performance improvement will be the only sustainable way of improving these results.

There have been some major changes over the last 12 / 14 months which have started us on that journey; notably work around the creation of a new Housing Strategy, the start of a service-wide transformation project and a refreshed HRA business plan to support our ambitions.

More work is required but we know what we need to do – working with residents, Members, aligning staff and all key stakeholders behind our aims and delivering with a positive and optimistic outlook on behalf of those we serve.

19. Next steps

1. Utilise data better. We have improved the quality and quantity of what we input into HouseMark and In-Phase with bespoke reports being tailored to key audiences. This will be further developed based on feedback received through the scrutiny process.
2. Develop CX-Feedback to collect real time resident data and enable be-spoke communications in time for 2024/25, with real focus on EDI data.
3. To share this report with HTIP to help ensure their improvement plans are designed to meet the continuing and emerging needs of the business.
4. To share with staff and tenants being key partners to deliver our ambitions.
5. To assess if this report covers the main issues or if additional elements need adding in the future.