



www.dacorum.gov.uk

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

| | |
|--|--|
| Report for: | Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee |
| Title of report: | Q1 2024/25 Housing Performance & Tenants' Voice Report |
| Date: | 11 th September 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 & Community Overview and Scrutiny Performance Summary Report Q1 2024/2025 Appendix B – Compliance Report, June 2024 Appendix C – Responsive Repairs Improvement Plan June 2024 Appendix D – Q1 24/25 DBC Performance Comparison |
| Background papers: | |
| Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report: | DBC – Dacorum Borough Council SQA Service – Strategy, Quality & Assurance TSMs – Tenant Satisfaction Measures HTIP – Housing Transformation Implementation Project ASB - Anti-Social Behaviour ALMO – Arms-Length Management Organisation LGA – Local Government Association |

Report Author / Responsible Officer

Hannah Peacock, Head of Strategy, Quality & Assurance



Hannah.Peacock@dacorum.gov.uk / 01442 228037

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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 Quarter 1 2024. 2. To present the interventions and actions undertaken to address any performance concerns |
| Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s): | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That H&COSC consider the report and scrutinise the actions to address any performance concerns highlighted. • The H&COSC approves the recommended change to the Empty Homes performance measure, from a targeted performance measure to an operational tracker measure. |
| Period for post policy/project review: | This report relates to Q1 2024. This report is produced every Quarter. |

1. Introduction / Background

- 1.1. This report details the performance of Housing & Property Services during the first quarter of 2024/25, measured against the new suite of performance indicators, including those which represent our tenants' views and feedback.
- 1.2. The new performance indicators were developed by the Housing & Property Service, and associated targets were approved by Cabinet in June 2024. Performance against the new indicators will be continuing to be internally monitored and reviewed via In-Phase, our performance management system.
- 1.3. 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 we must use to inform service improvement and deliver tailored services.
- 1.4. 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 Measures (TSMs) and the Consumer Standards.

1.5. Operational Risk Registers are reviewed by relevant service teams quarterly to reflect any changes internally or externally that have impacted upon the identified risks and to include new risks. Mitigating actions are expected to be put in place to reduce the risk's likelihood and severity.

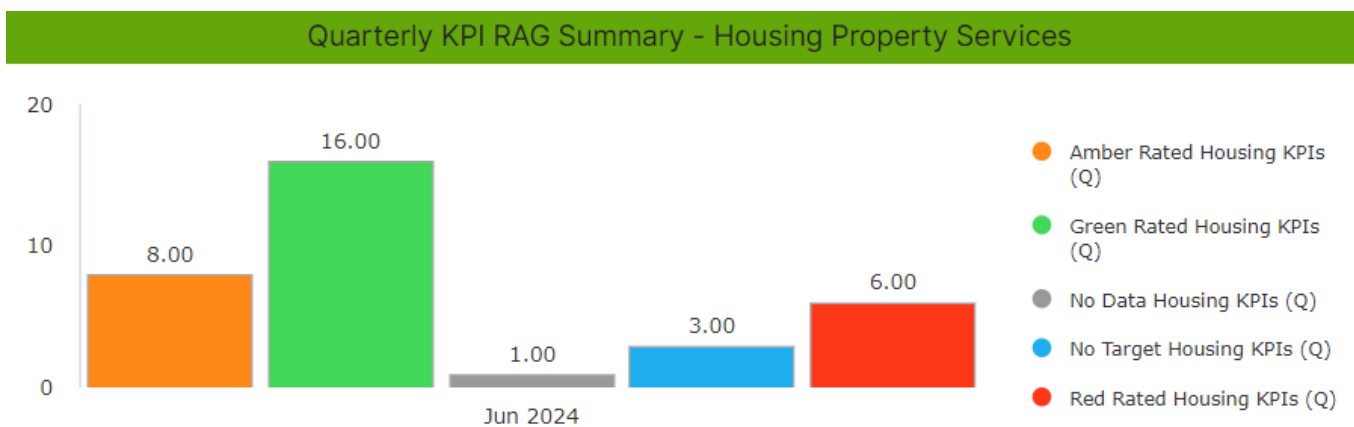
2. Aims of Paper

- 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. Current Position on Performance

3.1. The full Housing & Property Services Overview and Scrutiny Performance Summary Report is included in **Appendix A**.

3.2. The graph below shows the breakdown of the RAG ratings of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for this quarter. 47% (16) of 34 KPIs were rated Green, and so met or exceeded their target, 23% (8) were rated Amber, and 18% (6) were rated Red, having not achieved their target.



3.3. 'Satisfaction with we keep the communal areas clean and tidy during the period' is the one measure which does not currently have any data provided. The Strategy, Quality and Assurance Team are working with the Housing Cleaning service to build the survey within CX Feedback to capture this data, and performance data for this measure is expected to be delivered in Q2.

3.4. There are six 'RED' indicators at the end of Q1:

RKK17 – Percentage of open damp and mould cases exceeding 100 days

(Please see commentary below in 4. High Risk Areas)

TL02 – Rent collected as a percentage of rent owed

In Q1, this was 97.90%, 1.1% below target. This slight dip is common at the beginning of the financial year. Q4 Performance & Tenants Voice Report 23/24 drew this area to H&SOSC's attention, and it continues to be closely monitored by the service as the new financial year starts.

TM04 – Percentage of estate inspections completed that were due to be completed during the period

This has decreased from the previous quarter, with recruitment and absence playing a significant part in the performance of this measure, which will continue into the next quarter. There have been a number of attempts to fill existing vacancies, with only two of four permanent roles currently offered as of writing this report. The team is also working with HR to consider alternatives including potential internal recruitment and agency use.

During this time, given the pressure on resource, the team has been working diligently to cover as much of the borough as possible and prioritise high-priority areas, which include blocks of flats (including high-rises), garages, and specific streets or roads with known concerns.

PSH07 – Number of Empty Homes brought back into use

As the new measures come into operational practice, it provides the opportunity to reflect on whether measures are operationally viable.

Upon review, it is recommended by SLT that this performance measure becomes an operational tracker, due to the nature of the service e.g. it is unpredictable to know when a property may become empty, and when it does, the scale of the works to be done will vary from property to property. This recommendation is highlighted in the **Recommendations** section below.

ASB01 – Satisfaction with Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) case handling

A handling error within the CX Feedback system resulted in a survey being inadvertently sent to all residents, including those who had already responded. This has unfortunately skewed the data for this quarter and the results are therefore not a true reflection on satisfaction with the case-handling by the service. Work is being done to address this issue with CX Feedback by the SQA team.

SQA02 – Percentage of respondents satisfied with complaint handling

(Please see commentary below in **4. Areas of Focus**)

4. Areas of Focus

Compliance

- 4.1. The new heating contract with Aaron Services was mobilised in Q1 and performance has improved throughout the period with 100% gas servicing compliance achieved in June 2024.
- 4.2. All other areas of compliance continue to perform well, with the robust access process providing positive results with our harder-to-reach tenants. Attention is focused on ensuring this robust performance continues, our latest Compliance position can be seen in the June 2024 Compliance Report in **Appendix B**.

Damp / Mould

- 4.3. 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 of our approach to managing issues of damp and mould was completed in Q4 2023. A resulting change in approach was agreed by HSLT and has been led by the Heads of Asset Management over this quarter.
- 4.4. This quarter's results for the Percentage of open damp and mould cases exceeding 100 days (35% vs. a target of 10%) days reflects this change in approach. Previously we were mould washing to resolve the issue, now the underlying cause of the mould is being treated and the service is keeping the cases open until they are completely resolved. This can take up to 8 weeks to ensure the mould issue has been

resolved. This is a new measure and this quarter's result will be one that the service will now use to compare their performance against for the rest of the year.

Repairs

- 4.5. We have reduced the number of overdue jobs from 1,576 to 691 (a 44% reduction). The CARDO contract has been closely monitored by the service, and significant pressure placed to ensure swifter resolution of jobs. CARDO has in-turn brought in additional resource and reviewed current performance of their sub-contractors. Additional work has been done by CARDO to effectively target outstanding jobs, ensuring the oldest outstanding jobs are progressed first. The Repairs Service Improvement Plan as of June 2024 can be found in **Appendix C**.
- 4.6. As a number of these jobs are related to roofing issues, which have a higher-than-average order value, this is adding pressure on the revenue budget.

Regulator of Social Housing Inspection

- 4.7. Dacorum Borough Council were among the first group of Local Authorities inspected by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) during May 24, as part of the new regulatory framework introduced by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2024.
- 4.8. The Inspection was made up of a desk-top review of the organisation based on the website, and two document submissions asking for evidence of compliance with the consumer standards and the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs). Following the desk top review, the regulators visited onsite for two days where they conducted interviews with senior Housing staff as well as the Portfolio Holder, Leader and Chief Executive. They will review all the evidence and provide a regulatory judgement, rating Dacorum's compliance between C1-C4.

RSH's description of the gradings is below.

| Grading | Description |
|---------|--|
| C1 | Our judgement is that overall the landlord is delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards. The landlord has demonstrated that it identifies when issues occur and puts plans in place to remedy and minimise recurrence. |
| C2 | Our judgement is that there are some weaknesses in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and improvement is needed. |
| C3 | Our judgement is that there are serious failings in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and significant improvement is needed. |
| C4 | Our judgement is that there are very serious failings in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards. The landlord must make fundamental changes so that improved outcomes are delivered. |

- 4.9. Regulatory judgements are their published view of how well a landlord is delivering the outcomes of their standards. Our Regulatory Judgement was published in August 2024, and we are pleased to have received a C2 grading. This is an excellent result for the service, in light of the rigorous new inspection regime and new measures. The RSH post-inspection team will now be working with us to build the areas for improvement into a concrete action plan for us to take forward and deliver.

Housing & Property Services Complaints

4.10. During Q1, Housing and Property Services received 186 Stage One Complaints. The following teams accounted for 74% of total Stage One Complaints received by Housing and Property Services in Q1.

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| Responsive Repairs | 110 |
| Planned and Adaptations | 25 |
| Compliance | 10 |

4.11. 20 Stage One Complaints were escalated to Stage Two - this works out to a 10.75% escalation rate for this Quarter. The following teams had Stage One Complaints escalated to Stage Two.

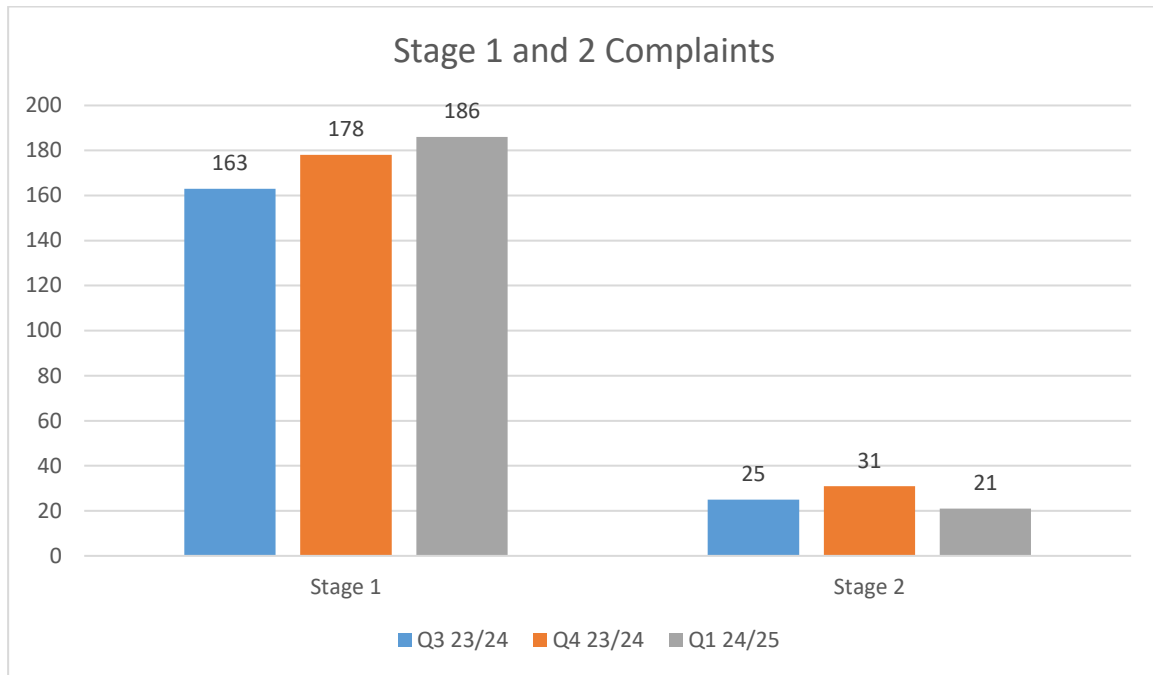
| | |
|--------------------------------|----|
| Responsive Repairs | 10 |
| Planned and Adaptations | 5 |
| Supported Housing | 1 |
| Compliance | 1 |
| Homeless Prevention | 1 |
| Rent and Income | 1 |
| Tenancy Management | 1 |

4.12. Of the 186 Stage One complaints received in Q1, 90 (48.5%) were upheld, 5 (2.7%) were partially upheld, and 19 (10.2%) were not upheld by the Stage One responder. This indicates that Housing colleagues are recognising where the service delivered has not met the customer expectations and are open and transparent about upholding the complaint in their responses. Fifteen cases were closed as following discussions with the customer, they withdrew their complaint, with a further two cases re-allocated as general service requests.

4.13. Of the 21 Stage Two Complaint responses, four were upheld, three were not upheld. Five had not been responded to at time of writing (all of these are now overdue).

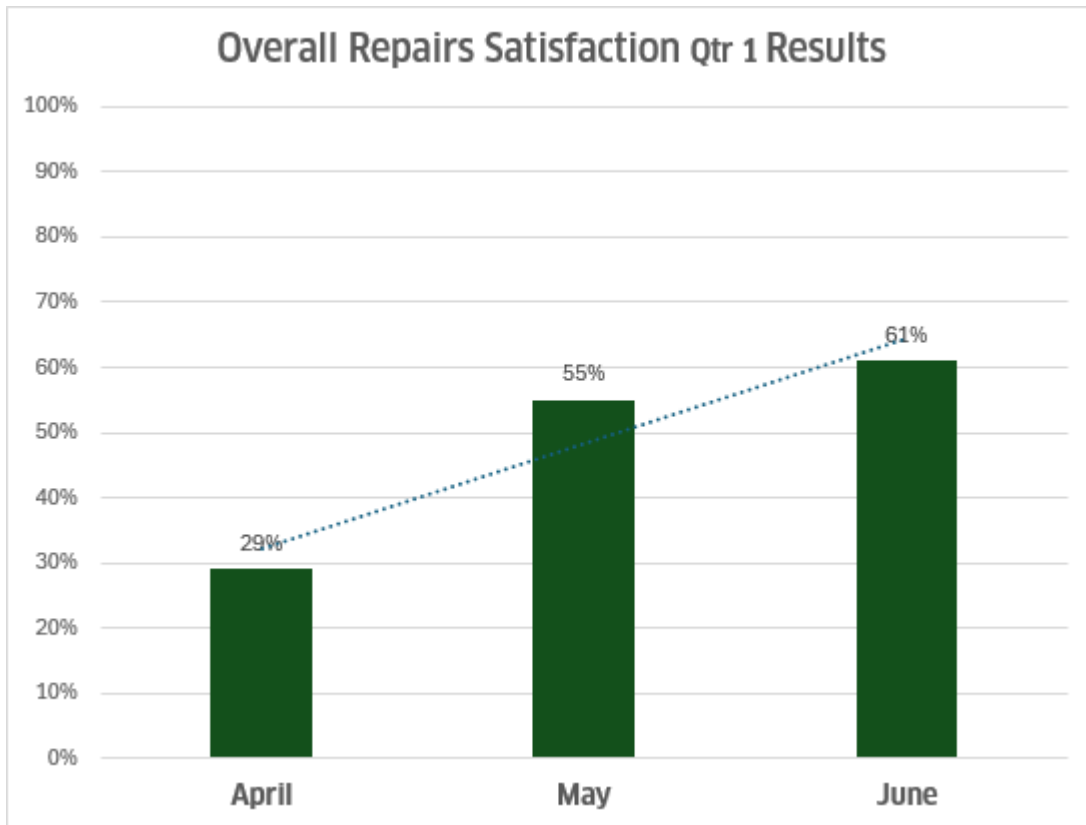
4.14. Further work is needed to support officers in recording a clear outcome as 55 Stage One complaints and 5 Stage Two complaints resolved in the quarter did not record a specific outcome.

4.15. When compared to the last quarters, this quarter has seen a small increase in number of complaints received. However, a smaller proportion of complaints were then escalated to Stage Two. This may indicate an improvement in complaint handling at Stage One.



What we are doing to address complaints performance

- 4.16. In this quarter, the Responsive Repair team have focused on the quality of the complaint response provided. The Head of Asset Management scrutinised complaints escalated from Stage One to Stage Two. Escalations have mainly been due to outstanding actions following on from the Stage One complaint response, rather than disagreeing with the outcome of the Stage One complaint response. Work is being undertaken to follow up and complete all outstanding complaint actions to reduce the number of complaints escalated.
- 4.17. During this quarter, Responsive Repairs have started to use CX Feedback to deliver their overall customer satisfaction surveys to customers who have had a job completed within the month. The data shown in the graph below shows an improvement in customer satisfaction, indicating while complaints remain an area of high focus for the team, their work to address the root cause of customer dissatisfaction may be yielding results.



4.18. As part of the RSH inspection carried out in Q1, the inspection team observed a tenants engagement event, and run their own independent meeting with Tenants to gain feedback on their customer experience and perception of DBC's overall landlord service. The tenant engagement event was a scrutiny focus group on complaints, which TLC and the TSM results identified as an area of focus for improvement activity. Attendees were customers who had recently been through the complaints process. The session allowed attendees to share their experiences and make recommendations for improvements to the process. Feedback and recommendations received at the session will be formed into an improvement plan. All attendees will be keep updated with progress, via Engagement HQ and social media, and be invited to a meeting in November to receive an update on progress against the improvement plan.

4.19. During Q1, we have also developed a pilot Mystery Customers programme, as a method of exploring tenants experiences with us. We have enlisted customers at various engagement events, as well as advertising the programme on our website to encourage sign-up. In Q1, we had 96 customers volunteer to take part.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

4.20. Having completed our contract with M.E.L. Research in 2024, CXFeedback have now been engaged to collect our 2024-2025 TSMs perception scores. CX Feedback is a platform which helps social landlords create and send surveys, messages and TSMs to residents. We had already engaged CX Feedback for survey purposes, so using this for the TSMs perception scores provides consistency of contact for our residents.

5. Comparing Our Performance

5.1. It is important to measure our performance against our peers, not just against our own targets. We are a member of HouseMark, a national social housing bench-marking organisation, to help us to do this. There is naturally a lag in data as HouseMark collects it in from their members and then goes through a process of quality assurance. This quarter's HouseMark data was therefore not available for this report.

- 5.2. However, HouseMark have been able to provide a monthly summary Pulse Report, focused on key compliance, repairs and complaint measures. We have used this report to compare our performance with other larger Local Authorities and ALMOs (over 10k units), and this dashboard is provided in **Appendix D**.
- 5.3. Performance against these measures is generally in the lower quartiles, and the associated service action plan previously referred to in this report and available in **Appendix B** are designed to address this.

6. Service Performance - Improvement Activity

Responsive Repairs

- 6.1. The service has been working with CARDO on a number of workstreams designed to improve performance across the board. We are agreeing new processes that will reduce void loss and costs. This has focused on reducing hand-offs and being better prepared for each stage of the void, so voids can be turned around quicker. We have reviewed our damp and mould process, introducing a more comprehensive triage and a quicker response to mould cases. We have also worked with Cardo to improve satisfaction and understand what the drivers for customer satisfaction are. This is starting to show some improvement in results with improved satisfaction scoring (as highlighted in section 4. Areas of Focus above).

Heating and Ventilation

- 6.2. We have commenced a new Heating and Ventilation contract for our domestic properties with Aaron Services. This contract replaces the gas maintenance contract we had with Sun Realm, who performed well over the 10-year period. The new contract, which is the first stage of the re-procurement of our Repairs and Maintenance contracts, offers us more flexibility with implementing more sustainable and energy-efficient solutions which will not only have a positive impact on the environment but also support our customers with the cost of living.
- 6.3. Aaron Services are performing well and working well in partnership with the Council. Once the contract has settled in, we will start to work with Aaron Services to see how we can implement more innovative and sustainable solutions.

New Build Tenant Satisfaction

During Q1, we have reviewed the last set of tenant satisfaction responses submitted three months after handover was completed. The information on the responses have been used as part of a lessons learnt exercise, and as of Q2 we have reviewed the timing of when we do the surveys so that from now on tenant satisfaction surveys will be issued four weeks after tenants have moved in, and then again at twelve months after, when the defects management period ends. This will allow us to capture the initial views as well as the customer journey for the first year of occupancy and assess customer service delivery by the main contractor post-handover.

7. Our Tenants' Voice

- 7.1 This section of the Performance and Tenants' Voice Report will highlight how we have listened to and engaged with our tenants during this Quarter.

Tenant Participatory Advisory Service (TPAS) Re-engineering Engagement

- 7.1. Following the SMART+ review TPAS conducted in 2023, TPAS were engaged to complete a re-engineering exercise to ensure we could build upon our strong foundations to deliver engagement fit for the future.

- 7.2. During Q1 TPAS worked with groups made up of both staff and currently involved residents to follow a three-stage process:
- **Challenge:** The here and now, what works well, what areas could be better, what stops residents from being heard?
 - **Discovery:** Blue sky thinking, what does excellent look like, what factors enable successful resident influence?
 - **Design:** Areas of service where influence could be improved, quick wins and longer actions which would improve engagement in Dacorum
- 7.3. The delivery of the re-engineering outcome report was delayed due to local elections and the RSH inspection. TPAS has delivered their report to HSLT in Q2, this includes recommendations to fully embed meaningful engagement and influence across the organisation. Work is being completed in Q2 to develop the recommendations into an action plan.

Tenant & Leaseholder Committee

- 7.4. This is currently our highest level of resident engagement; they provide scrutiny of key services and help shape the role they play within the Council. In this Quarter, the committee heard a presentation from the Housing Cleaning Service on their current project to review the Housing Cleaning Standard, including an appraisal of communal areas, the time taken to clean the areas and the standard to which they are cleaned.
- 7.5. TLC's May Committee meeting was also observed by two members of the Regulators' Inspection Team, during their inspection visit.

Lease Variation Consultation

- 7.6. The service has carried out a major consultation with all leaseholders to propose a variation of the current lease, which has been in place for a number of years. Leaseholders were asked to comment and agree, or not, to the variation. This will change invoicing timescales and would benefit the leaseholders, due to revised payment dates throughout the year and costs being based on actuals rather than estimates.

Responsive Repairs

- 7.7. In this quarter, the Responsive Repairs team trialled a weekly drop-in over a period of approximately two months, which was resourced by a member of the Responsive Repairs team and a CARDO representative. This drop-in clinic was designed to pick and address tenants' concerns. All residents who had outstanding jobs were contacted to make them aware of the drop-in clinic, and to encourage them to attend. However, due to poor attendance figures, the service have re-focused the resource elsewhere.
- 7.8. As highlighted above, starting in this quarter all residents who have had a responsive repair job completed are now being sent a survey about their experience of the service via CX Feedback, and the team are now able to analyse and interrogate the data to a higher degree thanks to this system. It is being scrutinised with CARDO on weekly and monthly basis.

Eastwick Row

- 7.9. A co-produced resident engagement event was held on 25 April 2024, which gained valuable insight into what life is like at Eastwick Row and improvements residents would like to see. The event was an excellent example of partnership working with staff from across the directorate, Police, Fire Service, CARDO and our construction partners Bugler, taking part. All feedback has been collated, with an action plan built to demonstrate how we are listening to the residents and acting on what improvements they told us they would like to see.

Housing Income

7.10. The Housing Income Team have trialled evening calls to tenants, designed to better meet the needs of those who work throughout the day. There has been positive anecdotal feedback from tenants, impact of the trial is being assessed and further more detailed engagement to provide more quantifiable customer feedback will be considered when looking at the operating model for the team moving forward.

Supported Housing

7.11. Supported Housing delivered a number of engagement sessions starting in May, first with the Supported Housing tenants forum and then individual sessions at each scheme. The sessions focused on the following:

- Satisfaction with Property and Communal areas,
- Provision of social activities at the scheme,
- What important to you about living in Supported Housing,
- Why did you first move into supported housing

Approximately 150 people attended throughout the schedule of events, their feedback will be considered as part of the development of the Supported Housing Strategy.

7.12. Supported Housing Residents have also enjoyed a range of bespoke engagement activity designed to improve local service delivery and to reduce loneliness by encouraging residents to participate in more social activities.

7.12 Examples of this engagement activity delivered in this quarter included the 'Hadeyfield Hoedown' on 11 June 2024, an event designed for our older residents to enjoy cowboy-themed dance activity that was suitable for all abilities, and a Bingo event delivered for 55 residents at William Crook House on 15 June 2024.



7.13 Our Crawley Drive Hall provides a communal lounge and outdoor space for local supported housing tenants and provides essential space for social events and activities to promote inclusion and wellbeing.

A group of tenant volunteers working with our Clean, Safe & Green team, CARDO, local PCSOs and Councillor Dr Goverdhan Silwell worked hard to neaten up the spring growth and brighten up the paved area to create a colourful garden.



8. 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.

9. Financial and Value for Money implications

As members will be aware the impact of inflation and interest rates have significantly impacted the sector, and we are experiencing unprecedented price increases across all areas of Council activity. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. Conclusions

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

13. Recommendations

That the performance measure **PSH07 – Number of Empty Homes brought back into use** is amended to an operational measurement tracker. The results of this performance measure would still be monitored internally by the service, and escalated to H&OSC on an exceptional basis only.

19. Next steps

1. Utilise data better. We have improved the quality and quantity of what we input into HouseMark and InPhase with bespoke reports being tailored to key audiences.
2. Embed CX-Feedback across the Housing service to collect real time resident data and enable be-spoke communications to our residents
3. Share this report with HTIP to help ensure their improvement plans are designed to meet the continuing and emerging needs of the business.