

Committee	Dated:
Housing Management and Almshouses Sub-Committee	30/11/2020
Subject: Housing Update and Risk Register	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	4
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	£
What is the source of Funding?	
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	Y/N
Report of: Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
Report author: Liam Gillespie, Head of Housing Management	

Summary

This update on Housing Service performance and management information keeps Members up to date with progress in key areas of our work. The report is normally submitted to Committee twice yearly but, due to lockdown measures causing some Committees to be cancelled, one report cycle was missed.

This report therefore covers a whole year and has been split into two reporting periods (1st October 2019 to 31st March 2020 and 1st April 2020 to 30th September 2020).

Members may wish to note that:

- Rent collection stood at 98.4% at the end of the financial year, though arrears have increased during lockdown
- 839 households were on the housing register at the end of Q2
- Gas safety certification compliance remains high despite the challenges posed by lockdown

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report

Main Report

Background

1. This report is normally presented to the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee every six months, though as the March and May Sub-Committees were cancelled, it was thought best to submit a report covering a full year. The report provides Members with an overview of Housing Service performance and progress on key issues, plus some additional information of interest.
2. This report covers the period 1st October 2019 to 30th September 2020 and is split into two reporting periods:
 - 1/10/2019 to 31/3/2020
 - 1/4/2020 to 30/9/2020
3. It is intended to give Members information on these areas of work:
 - Repairs & Maintenance
 - Estate Management
 - Revenues
 - Allocations
 - Affordable Housing
 - Complaints
4. The report also gives an update on the risk register entries relating to Housing & Neighbourhoods (Appendix 2).
5. The report has two performance dashboards attached (Appendix 1), which give a visual summary of performance in various areas.

Repairs

6. Gas safety compliance (properties with a current valid CP12 gas safety certificate) stood at 100% at the end of March 2020. It decreased to 99.27% by the end of Q2. The non-compliant 0.73% represents nine properties. Gas safety work continued as normal during lockdown, though perhaps unsurprisingly some tenants were reluctant to allow our contractors access to their homes, which might explain the drop in performance. Several cases have been referred for injunction applications to enable us to gain access and complete these vital safety checks.
7. Many landlords experienced significant drops in CP12 gas safety compliance during lockdown, with average compliance being as low as 98.4% in July, recovering to 99.2% in September 2020 (this data was compiled by HouseMark and taken from 108 social landlords nationwide¹). A small number of landlords reported that their compliance in this area fell below 90%. Members may think that our performance has remained very good despite the challenges posed by lockdown.

¹ HouseMark, COVID-19 Impact Monitoring, Membership Report (October 2020)

8. At the end of the financial year 2019/20, 4,410 repairs had been completed, with 95.99% completed within time. This is slightly below the target of 97% and appears to be linked to Priority 4 repairs (the least urgent category) being below target.

Estate Management

9. The Home Ownership Team experienced an increase in enquiries on Right to Buy during Q1 and Q2 of this financial year, which may be due to the temporarily reduced rates of Stamp Duty Land Tax creating interest among tenants. Sales are still relatively low, with only four properties being sold in the year up to 30th September 2020.
10. Estate inspections were paused during lockdown, restarting on most sites in September, with a full set of inspections completed in October. Full results and analysis of the results for Q3 and Q4 will be submitted to Committee early in the next financial year.
11. In the year up to 30th September 2020, a total of 96 cases of anti-social behaviour were investigated, with noise nuisance reports making up almost a third of all cases (29).

Revenues

12. At the end of the financial year 2019/20, rent collection stood at 98.4%; arrears amounted to £221,189.
13. In Q1 and Q2 of this financial year, arrears increased significantly due to the impact of lockdown on our residents' incomes. At the end of Q2, arrears stood at £345,954, which represents an arrears rate of 2.6% on rent due in Q1 and Q2. Arrears peaked in week 15, reaching £405,366, before falling again. While concerning, it appears that arrears have now stabilised as Universal Credit claims have gone into payment.
14. Officers continue to monitor the situation closely and are maintaining contact with tenants in arrears, offering them advice and support, or referrals to City Advice and other agencies as appropriate. We have maintained a supportive approach throughout the pandemic and will carry on with this approach in order to sustain tenancies.

Allocations

15. At the end of September 2020, there were 839 households on the waiting list for accommodation. A significant number of applications were received during Q1 and Q2, with 100 new households being added to the register.
16. The annual census of housing applicants is being conducted and this may result in a reduction in the register once the returns are processed.

17. Lettings were suspended for all but the most urgent cases during lockdown, in line with government guidance. A total of seven lettings were completed in Q1 and Q2, which is significantly lower than normal. Lettings activity has now restarted, with COVID-safe viewings taking place and remote sign-ups being conducted with incoming tenants.

Complaints

18. A total of 49 complaints were received across housing management and repairs in the year up to 30th September 2020.

19. Five complaints were referred to the Local Government Ombudsman or Housing Ombudsman, none of which resulted in any finding of maladministration.

Affordable Housing

20. We plan to deliver 271 additional units of social housing by the end of 2023. Work is underway at the COLPAI development adjacent to Golden Lane Estate, where 66 units of social housing will be provided.

21. Planning permission has been granted for the redevelopment of the Mais House sheltered housing complex at Sydenham Hill, where 110 units of housing will be built. This will include 71 much-needed two, three and four-bedroom homes.

22. A further five new homes will be provided at Great Arthur House on Golden Lane (two accessible ground floor flats) and Isleden House in Islington (three new three-bed flats).

23. Around 90 new homes are proposed for York Way Estate in Islington. This project is at the design and feasibility stage. The proposal includes the potential for a new community centre on the estate.

Risk Register

24. The Departmental Risk Register contains several strategic risks which are either specific or relevant to the Housing & Neighbourhoods Division and/or the Barbican & Property Services Division. Having identified the key strategic risks, officers report actions already taken to mitigate against the likelihood and impact of these risks. The risk is then reassessed.

25. Each risk is then accompanied by an action plan which identifies future actions to be taken. This section of the report is intended to update Members on any action taken.

26. No red risk ratings were identified in the reporting period.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Housing Performance Dashboard

- Appendix 2 – Extract from Departmental Risk Register

Liam Gillespie

Head of Housing Management
Department of Community and Children's Services

E: liam.gillespie@cityoflondon.gov.uk

T: 020 7332 3785