

Committee	Dated:
Housing Management and Almshouses Sub-Committee	14/01/2022
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 submitted to Committee twice yearly.

This report covers the period from 1st April to 30th September 2021.

Members may wish to note that:

- Rent collection stood at 94.3% at the end of Q2, compared to 94.5% at the same time last year
- Arrears were £357,115.00, down from £374,275 at year end but still higher than pre-pandemic levels
- There were 852 households on the Housing Register at the end of Q2, down from 903 at year end
- Estate standards remained high, consistently exceeding the target 80% average for both internal and external inspections across all sites. Estate teams are now consistently conducting 100% of scheduled inspections

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report

Main Report

Background

1. This report is presented to the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee every six months. 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 April to 30th September 2021.
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 a performance dashboard attached (Appendix 1), which gives a visual summary of performance in various areas.

Repairs

6. The repairs helpdesk 0800 number remained very busy, receiving 6,576 calls during the reporting period. Of these, 6,350 calls were handled, which is a success rate of 96.6%.
7. Performance against repairs completion service standards is still below target overall, however the most urgent categories of repair – P0 and P1 – are at, or close to, target. Some other areas which remain below target have nonetheless improved since the last reporting period. We continue to monitor contractor performance carefully and work with providers to deal with challenges around workforce planning and availability of materials.
8. Gas safety compliance (properties with a current valid CP12 gas safety certificate) stood at 99.35% at the end of September 2021. This represents 11 properties without a current certificate, though action is underway in accordance with our well-established procedures for enforcing gas safety checks.

Estate Management

9. We conduct 231 scheduled estate inspections every quarter, across all our sites (both internal block inspections and grounds inspections). In Q2, we consistently completed 100% of block and grounds inspections.
10. The average inspection scores for both types of inspection remained above 80% in Q2, with an average overall score of 86.82% for internal block inspections.
11. We are also now regularly completing 100% of Property Information Box ('fire box') checks and fire door checks each month. During a fire box check, officers ensure that the Property Information Box is secure, in good repair and contains the correct contents for use by the Fire Brigade in an emergency.

Home Ownership

12. A total of 10 Right to Buy applications were received during Q1 and Q2. This compares to 12 in the last two quarters of 2020/21.
13. Interest in Right to Buy increased during the 'stamp duty holiday' and has remained relatively high since, with a high number of enquiries received from residents about the scheme.

Revenues

13. At the end of the financial year 2020/21, rent collection stood at 97%; arrears amounted to £374,275. This was an increase of £153,086 on the previous financial year and is attributable to the financial hardship experienced by our tenants during the COVID-19 pandemic.
14. The picture has improved somewhat since then, however arrears are still higher than pre-pandemic levels, perhaps an indication of the enduring effect that furlough and unemployment had on our residents.
15. At the end of September 2021, overall rent arrears stood at £357k (94.3%).
16. The proportion of households in serious arrears (8 weeks or more) has reduced, from 116 at year end to 97 at the end of Q2 (6.2% down to 5.03%).
17. Officers continue to work closely with households in arrears, offering them appropriate advice and support, or referrals to City Advice and other agencies as required.
18. Community centre income has increased but remains below pre-pandemic levels. In the six months up to the end of September 2021, £46,749 had been generated. This compares favourably to the £39,410 generated in the whole of the previous financial year.

Allocations and Empty Properties

19. At the end of September 2021, there were 852 households on the waiting list for accommodation, down from 903 at year end. This was made up of 664 non-tenant applications and 188 internal transfer applications. The proportion of internal transfer applications fluctuates only slightly; the biggest changes are seen in the numbers of external applications. In the year up to September 2021, the number of internal transfer applicants remained between 180 - 190, whereas external applications ranged from 609 – 721 over the year.
20. A total of 148 applications, mostly from external applicants, were cancelled following the routine census, mainly due to a loss of connection with the City of London and failure to reply to correspondence.
21. A total of 172 applications were received during Q1 and Q2, with 152 new households being accepted onto the register.
22. Analysis of our letting activity showed that 26 properties were let in Q1/2, down from 41 in the last two quarters of the previous financial year. The Q1/2 figure is roughly normal; the total of 41 was higher than normal and was probably due to a backlog of properties building up during lockdown.

Complaints

23. A total of 33 Stage One complaints were received across Housing Management and Asset Management/Repairs in Q1 and Q2, an increase from 22 compared to the same time last year.
24. Asset Management and Repairs accounted for 23 of these complaints, with ten received in relation to Housing and Estate Management.
25. The Complaints Policy was reviewed in September 2021, and Members approved the removal of Stage Three from the complaints process. Any complaints received before that time would still proceed to Stage Three if necessary. The change has now been publicised to residents via the website and @home magazine.

Affordable Housing

26. 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. Completion is now expected by July 2022.
27. Two new fully accessible flats were delivered at Great Arthur House on Golden Lane Estate, which have now been handed over. At the time of writing, one of the flats had been let.
28. Planning consent for the proposed redevelopment of the Mais House site at Sydenham Hill, which was quashed earlier in 2021, was re-granted on 29th June 2021.

29. The three new 3-bed flats at Isleden House are due for completion in June 2022.

Risk Register

30. The Departmental Risk Register contains several strategic risks which are either specific or relevant to the Housing and Property Services. 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.

31. 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.

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

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Housing Performance Dashboard
- Appendix 2 – Extract from Departmental Risk Register

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