

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Housing Management and Almshouses Sub-Committee	26/05/2022
<b>Subject:</b> Housing Update and Risk Register	<b>Public</b>
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	4
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	<b>Y/N</b>
<b>Report of: Director of Community and Children's Services</b>	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author: Liam Gillespie, Head of Housing Management</b>	

### 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 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 (i.e., Quarters 3 and 4 of 2021-22).

Members may wish to note that:

- Rent collection stood at 97.7% at the end of Q4 compared to 97% at the same time last year
- Rent arrears were £286,949.56, down from £374,275 last year
- There were 899 households on the Housing Register at the end of Q4, however this is expected to decrease significantly due to the annual 'census' which is underway
- Estate standards remained high, consistently exceeding the target 80% average for both internal and external inspections across all sites. Estate teams completed 921 block and grounds inspections over the whole year

### 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 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 (Q3 and Q4).
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. Performance against repairs completion service standards is still below target overall, however P1 (24 hours) and P2 (3 working days) are now on target, with positive trends noted across several categories. Performance compares favourably to the previous financial year. We continue to monitor contractor performance carefully and work with providers to deal with challenges around workforce planning and availability of materials.
7. Gas safety compliance (properties with a current valid CP12 gas safety certificate) stood at 98.94% at the end of Q4. This represents 18 properties without a current certificate, though action is underway in accordance with our well-established procedures for enforcing gas safety checks.

### **Estate Management**

8. We conducted a total of 921 internal block inspections and external (grounds) inspections in the whole year.

9. In Q3 and Q4, there were 456 inspections completed out of 462 scheduled, a completion rate of 98.7%.
10. The average inspection scores for both types of inspection remained above 80%, 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.
12. Work is underway to amalgamate several different inspections into the regular monthly inspections, to increase efficiency. The fire door checks and Property Information Box inspections will form part of the monthly estate inspections.

### **Home Ownership**

12. A total of 9 Right to Buy applications were received during Q3 and Q4. This compares to 10 in Q1 and Q2. The annual total of 19 compares with 22 in the previous financial year.
13. Interest in Right to Buy increased during the 'stamp duty holiday' and has remained relatively high since, however this did not translate into an increase in successful completions.

### **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, with a year-end figure of £286,949.56. This represents a significant improvement on the previous financial year.
15. Members may wish to note that the application of the water charge rebate to tenants' rent accounts has resulted in a further significant reduction in rent arrears. At week three of the current financial year, the arrears figure stood at £181,505.74. This is the lowest rent arrears figure recorded since the 2015/16 financial year.
16. The number of households in significant arrears (8 weeks or more) has reduced significantly over the past year, from 116 (5.18% of all accounts) at the end of the last financial year to 77 (3.99% of accounts at the end of March 2022 (this was before the application of the water charge rebate). This is a sign that the impact of COVID-19 on our residents' financial wellbeing is easing.
17. Parking arrears amounted to £6,225 at the end of March 2022, with shed arrears at £2,099 at year end. Both figures reduced significantly from the previous year.

18. 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.

### **Allocations and Empty Properties**

19. The Housing Register was in a very similar position at the end of March 2022 as it was at the end of the previous financial year. There were 899 households on the waiting list for accommodation, compared to 903 last year. This was made up of 712 non-tenant applications and 187 internal transfer applications.

20. The annual 'census' of housing applicants was completed recently and, at the end of April 2022, there were 714 applicants on the Housing Register. The majority of those excluded during the census had lost their local connection and were no longer eligible for housing through the City of London. Many applicants failed to respond to repeated contact and were therefore removed from the register, however some have since been reinstated after making contact.

21. A total of 164 applications were received during Q3 and Q4, with 156 new households being accepted onto the register. Across the whole year, there were 336 new applications and 308 were accepted onto the Housing Register. The respective figures for 2020/21 were 289 applications and 264 registrations. This represents a 17% increase in applications on last year. The increase in applications we experienced during the pandemic appears not to be slowing down.

22. Analysis of our letting activity showed that 28 properties were let in Q3 and Q4 (a total of 54 across the whole year). Lettings activity is now back to pre-pandemic levels; by way of comparison, only 41 homes were let in 2020/21, as letting activity was suspended for a while during the early stages of the pandemic.

23. Members may wish to note that our homes remain very lettable, with the majority being let upon the first offer; 23 of 28 homes were let on the first offer and only one home was let on the third offer.

### **Complaints**

24. A total of 21 Stage One complaints were received across Housing Management and Asset Management/Repairs in Q3 and Q4, down from 33 in Q1 and Q2.

25. Asset Management and Repairs accounted for 20 of these complaints, with one received in relation to Housing and Estate Management.

26. There were no referrals to the Housing Ombudsman during the reporting period.

### **Affordable Housing**

27. 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 September 2022.

28. Three homes are under construction at Isleden House in Islington. These are much-needed three-bedroom flats and they are due to complete in September 2022.

29. Planning consent for the proposed redevelopment of the Mais House site at Sydenham Hill, which will provide 110 new homes, was quashed earlier in 2021, and re-granted on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2021 following a renewed application. A further application for judicial review has been made and a decision will be made on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2022 on whether this is allowed to proceed to a substantive hearing.

### **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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