



Leicester
City Council

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION

DATE: TUESDAY, 7 JULY 2020
TIME: 4:00 pm
PLACE: Virtual Teams Meeting

Members of the Scrutiny Commission

Councillor Westley (Chair)
Councillor Nangreave (Vice Chair)

Councillors Aqbany, Gee, O'Donnell, Pickering and Willmott

Members of the Scrutiny Commission are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business listed overleaf.

A. Thomas .

For Monitoring Officer

Officer contacts:

Ayleena Thomas (Democratic Support Officer):

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Further information

If you have any queries about any of the above or the business to be discussed, please contact Angie Smith, Democratic Support on **(0116) 454 6369** or email ayleena.thomas@leicester.gov.uk.

For Press Enquiries - please phone the **Communications Unit on 0116 454 4151**

PUBLIC SESSION

AGENDA

LIVE STREAM OF MEETING

A live stream of the meeting can be viewed on the following link:

<https://tinyurl.com/ybm6tt7o>

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are asked to declare any interests they may have in the business to be discussed.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Appendix A

The minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Commission held on 25 February 2020 have been circulated, and Members are asked to confirm them as a correct record.

4. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer to report on the receipt of any petitions received in accordance with Council procedures.

5. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS OR STATEMENTS OF CASE

Kim Burley Jones asks the following seven questions on behalf of the Climate Action Leicester and Leicestershire Group:

1. Since in order to both reduce greenhouse emissions, and to ensure the housing continues to be fit to live in as climate change takes hold you – and every other council - needs to deep-retrofit all the council housing stock, please would you tell us what you are doing as a council to find funding to deep-retrofit and/or externally insulate all your council housing in the next 5 years?

Specifically,

2. Would Leicester City Council consider using Section 106 to raise funds from housing developers as Milton Keynes does with a charge for each tonne of carbon emissions in new building first year of life to fund energy efficiency?
3. Have you considered using municipal or social impact bonds such as the Brummie Bond in Birmingham?

4. Would you consider working with the Leicestershire County Council Pension Fund (which includes Leicester Pensions) to get them to invest a small proportion – maybe 3 to 5% of the fund – in deep retrofitting locally (at the same time as getting them to divest the £200million they have currently invested in fossil fuel companies), as with the Greater Manchester Pension fund?
5. Are you using, or do you have plans to use money from the Public Works Loan Board for climate activities?
6. Would you consider raising council tax on higher band properties to raise money for a climate action fund as Warwick District council is considering?
7. Finally, if you are seeking funding for external insulation and/or deep retrofit, please would you tell us from where and in what timescale?

The Monitoring Officer to report on any further questions, representations or statements of case received in accordance with Council procedures.

6. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

7. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (ASB) SERVICE PROPOSAL [Appendix B](#)

The Director of Housing submits a report to seek feedback from the Housing Scrutiny Commission and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Members on the transfer of the ASB function from the Housing Division to the CrASBU Team. This will lead to one central team within the Council having responsibility for dealing with all ASB cases across the City from the first report to conclusion regardless of tenure.

8. HOUSING DIVISION COVID RESPONSE AND UPDATE MEMBERS BRIEFING [Appendix C](#)

The Director of Housing submits a report to update Members of the Housing Scrutiny Commission on the Housing Division's Covid response.

9. MANIFESTO DELIVERY - HOUSING [Appendix D](#)

The Director of Housing submits a report to provide a progress update to the Housing Scrutiny Commission setting out progress on delivery of the Labour manifesto commitments made in 2019, and is an update on progress since November 2019 when the last update was provided on the matter to the Housing Scrutiny Commission.

10. RENT ARREARS PROGRESS REPORT APRIL 2019 TO MARCH 2020 [Appendix E](#)

The Director of Housing submits a report to inform Members of the Housing Scrutiny Commission of progress in the above area of work over the full financial year, from April 2019 to March 2020.

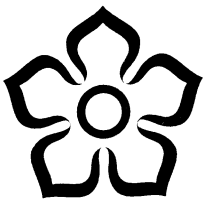
11. WHO GETS SOCIAL HOUSING? [Appendix F](#)

The Director of Housing submits a report for information to the Housing Scrutiny Commission in regard to the Housing register, band proportions, lettings and tenant overcrowding and under-occupation.

12. TENANTS' AND LEASEHOLDERS' FORUM ACTION AND DECISION LOG [Appendix G](#)

The Scrutiny Policy Officer submits for noting the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum Action and Decision Log from 2 June 2020.

13. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS



Leicester
City Council

Appendix A

Minutes of the Meeting of the HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: TUESDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 2020 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Westley (Chair)
Councillor Nangreave (Vice Chair)

Councillor Aqbany
Councillor Gee

Councillor O'Donnell
Councillor Pickering

In attendance:

Assistant City Mayor, Councillor Cutkelvin

* * * * *

53. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

54. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Aqbany declared an Other Disclosable Interest in the general business of the meeting that he had family members who were council tenants.

Councillor Westley declared an Other Disclosable Interest in the general business of the meeting that he had family members who were council tenants.

Councillor Pickering declared an Other Disclosable Interest in the general business of the meeting that she had a close personal associate who lived in a Council property.

Councillor Nangreave declared an Other Disclosable Interest in the general business of the meeting that she had a close personal associate who lived in a Council property.

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, these interests were not considered so significant that they were likely to prejudice the Councillors' judgement of the public interests. The Councillors were not therefore required to withdraw from the meeting during consideration and discussion of the

agenda items.

55. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

that the minutes of the Housing Scrutiny Commission meeting held on 13th January 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

56. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been received.

57. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS OR STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that no questions, representations or statements of case had been received.

58. RESPONSIVE HOUSING REPAIRS PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Director of Housing submitted a report to provide an update on the Division's performance on the completion of responsive repairs to Council properties. The report also provided an update about the implementation of service changes. The following was noted;

- Between 1st April 2019 and 31st December 2019, the repairs service completed a total in excess of 66,000 repairs.
- The service continued to receive a very low number of complaints compared to the overall number of repairs. However, performance in completing jobs first time and in category was not as good as it had been and was below target.
- The service had experienced difficulties in recruiting carpenters and craft workers to fill available posts, it was been looked into how this could be resolved. Currently recruiting trade operatives and apprentices to fill available posts.

Some of the next steps would be;

- Rolling out a programme across the city to cut back overgrown shrubbery, cleaning stacks and metal fence painting. This programme had already commenced in the St Matthews and St Peters areas.
- Channel shift - the introduction of booking of appointments online, which would reduce the call centre load.
- Staffing business needs would be looked into and the types of work that would need to be maintained in addition to technology changes gets factored in to determine the type of apprentices recruited.
- Introduction of a pilot to encourage high performance and accountability with better planning of time allocated to work jobs and much more to help towards a more efficient customer service.
- Officers were clear that Housing Officers needed to be customer focused, of which a meeting would be soon held with managers to discuss this requirement.
- Communal areas garden maintenance was based on need of residents

for instance ensuring tidiness, safety for children and ensuring the area doesn't encourage Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). However, if residents requested a 'wilder' looking garden which may encourage biodiversity/creating meadows – then this could be considered. This could be looked into more with the public realm funds whereby district managers could potentially consider this for certain areas.

- Through the capital investment fund, investments in housing stock and ongoing review of property components. A drive to continue proactive planned maintenance.
- The Chair thanked all the Housing Officer staff and requested that the thanks be passed on.

AGREED:

1. To note comments of the commission.

59. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY UPDATE

The Director of Housing submitted a report and presentation to provide a further update to Members of the Housing Scrutiny Commission on progress in implementing Leicester's Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023, since the last update to Scrutiny in August 2019.

During the presentation, the following was noted;

- Positive prevention and support solutions remained high.
- Aiming first for sustainment of current accommodation and, failing that, a new accommodation solution before homelessness occurred.
- Members were referred to a table which detailed an overview of outcomes for those people that the Council owed a homelessness duty towards.
- MyHOME mobile app and website had been established.
- It was noted that there was an 80% prevention rate and only 20% went on to needing temporary accommodation.
- A range of accommodation was in place including accommodation and support for singles, offenders, young people, rough sleepers and repeat homeless.
- Accommodation & support for offenders - New contracts were in place which increased provision from 30 to 40 units and offered a better range.
- Working closely with MHCLG – it had recently been confirmed that LCC had been successful in a new bid for funding in 2020/2021.
- A tender of Floating Support commissioned services was currently under evaluation.

Following Members queries:

- For the 10% of applicants that became homeless, it was noted that these people were generally less engaged with support services and represented more complex cases.
- For those applicants where contact was lost, there was always a follow up procedure including a call given and two letters sent out. There was always a number of attempts to contact them before concluding that the

customer was completely out of contact.

- The Officer explained the situation with private sector evictions. More work was now taking place with landlords which had now resulted in increased property lets to homeless people. A more detailed report would be brought back to a future Housing Scrutiny.

AGREED:

1. Good progress on the Homelessness strategy noted. Commission to receive regular update reports on this work.
2. MyHOME Mobile App - A detailed report to housing scrutiny in future on this.
3. Homelessness Strategy - Overview of outcomes slide – the numbers of private and public sector to be provided to members.

60. IMPROVED SERVICE OFFER FOR FAMILIES: HOMES NOT HOSTELS

The Director of Housing submitted a report and presentation to advise Members of the Housing Scrutiny Commission on plans to implement the changes agreed as part of the homelessness strategy; a new service offer for homeless families.

- It was noted as a driver to provide homeless families with temporary self-contained homes.
- The project aim was to replace Border House Hostel with homes across the city, to minimise the impact on lives and enable people to remain in their current communities.
- This was noted as a cost-neutral decision and made to improve the Councils service offer.
- Border house was reported to be an outdated model and very institutionalised and even with major refurbishment Border House would not be conducive for those going through homelessness and to one's mental wellbeing. As well as taking into account a fire risk assessment expedition, the decision was made to propose to decommission Border House.
- The new offer had many benefits including to keep children in their existing schools.
- A new visiting support service for families was being proposed.
- Before the closure of Border House, Officers would ensure that the new model was robust and sustainable.
- Following the closing of Border House which would only be closed when all families had moved into their accommodation, the family support service would also close, those staying in temporary homes across the City would be able to continue to access Childcare arrangements they and their children were familiar with. Services would also be working closely with Children's Services. Less than 30% of families were cases with complex needs, most generally required only a home.
- A consultation would take place with staff/ trade unions.
- Customers had received this new service project in a positive way.

The Officers response to Members queries and also gave explanations;

- The impact of the Homeless Reduction Act had seen the service receive funds which allowed for the new recruiting of staff. However, the fund was short term and not guaranteed, and the level of staff would not be able to be maintained if the service did not receive it again.
- A full report would be bought back for the subsequent strategy. The purpose of the new strategy was to look at new resolutions and other initiatives to deal with overcrowding and under occupying.
- The Chair agreed that a report on overcrowding and what was being done to bring it down should be bought back to the commission.
- A Member of the Commission expressed agreement with the strapline 'Homes Not Hostels' which aimed to give families a home to live in not a hostel.
- There were currently 30 – 50 furnished temporary accommodation homes dispersed across the city.
- Once the Border House site was completely cleared and the service moved to the new model then the site/ building would be demolished, and the new purpose of the site considered.
- It was hoped that permanent full-time employees' posts would be absorbed into the new model or the Dawn Centre.
- It was proposed to ensure that every family was offered access to support services and an individual family worker.
- It was noted that there were 73 families, of which 33 lived in Border House and the remainder in self-contained houses. The team had already been reducing the number of families in Border House.
- Further discussions included ways of incentivising people to downsize homes,

Private landlords and Licensing private rented sector

- Private landlords charging high rental rates was discussed, of which the Assistant Mayor for Housing noted that a Landlords forum took place 6 months ago. The service would be looking to use the forum to strengthen relationships with the private rented sector.
- Potential landlords existed that could also assist with the homeless cohort.
- The Assistant City Mayor for Housing and Education - Councillor Cutkelvin had received a piece of work carried out to identify which areas would benefit from the selective private rented sector licensing scheme.
- Soft launches would continue to take place to inform people of the project's progress.
- At that point it would need to be clear what was hoped to be achieved from the licensing scheme, why certain areas were chosen and be clear on the narrative. Following this a consultation process would take place.

AGREED:

1. Support report for Homes not hostels, particular attention needs to be given to support families to transition. Commission to receive regular update reports on this work.

2. This Committee to receive further details on how overcrowding is being tackled including initiatives, targets and timescales.
3. Staff at risk should be supported and offered new roles where possible.
4. As explained by Asst Mayor – future report on private rented sector work to this commission.

Council Pickering departed the meeting during consideration of this item.

61. VOID PERFORMANCE REPORT: JUNE 2019 - DECEMBER 2019

The Director of Housing submitted a report to update Members of the Housing Scrutiny Commission on Void performance for the second and third quarters 2019/20.

- The team had worked to improve performance and reduce down void times with some success.
- Issues facing a general lack of qualified/ appropriately trained staff.
- In response to a query regarding carbon neutral housing, the opportunity was taken with property void to carry out capital works and also try and ensure the highest energy efficiency while it was empty.
- Part of the service would be looking into building regulations and the other parts of the service would be looking at decarbonising housing stock. However, it was noted that lots of stock was older. Works were taking place to reach there.

AGREED:

1. Welcome this report on progress being made – still work to be done.
2. In relation to voids – the Council's journey towards climate change issues to be addressed.

62. EMPTY HOMES UPDATE

The Director of Housing submitted a report to update Members of the Commission on the work that the Empty Homes Team were doing to bring long term private sector homes back into use.

- Housing wanted to make accommodation possible for anyone living in the city i.e. giving incentives to landlords to put their property back in use.
- Information was provided on the timelines and processes for tracking property which was empty for either 18months, 5years or 10 years. This was noted as reasonable.

AGREED:

1. To continue to support the work of the unit.

63. WORK PROGRAMME

The Director of Housing proposed some changes to the items for the April

Housing Commission meeting – members agreed on the following;

- It was proposed that 3 items be put back to later meeting; rent arrears report, Goscote House Developments and Sheltered Housing project.
- And proposed 3 new items for the April meeting; Housing building, Anti-social Behaviour service changes and Central Housing) - to be discussed further at the agenda mtg.

64. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

Meeting closed 19:51.



Housing Scrutiny Commission

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Service Proposal

Lead members:

**Cllr Cutkelvin Assistant Mayor for Housing &
Education**

Cllr Singh-Clair Assistant Mayor for Neighbourhoods

Lead directors: Chris Burgin, Director of Housing
John Leach, Director of Neighbourhood & Environmental
Services

Report Authors:

Gurjit Minhas/Daxa Pancholi – Head of Service Housing/Community Safety and Protection

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out a proposal for the reconfiguration of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Services within the Council.
- 1.2 Existing services are provided within two Divisions, Neighbourhood and Environmental Services and Housing split by tenure type and also severity of Anti-Social Behaviour. Private sector cases and all serious cases are managed by the Crime and Anti- Social Behaviour Unit (CRASBU). Lower level ASB cases are managed by Housing relating to Council properties.
- 1.3 This report advises members of the proposal to transfer the ASB function from the Housing Division to the CrASBU Team. This will lead to one central team within the Council having responsibility for dealing with all ASB cases across the City from the first report to conclusion regardless of tenure.

2. Background

- 2.1 Currently ASB services are delivered by two areas from within the Council, the Tenancy Management Service within the Housing Division and the Crime and ASB (CrASBU) Team based in the Neighbourhood and Environmental Division.
- 2.2 The Housing Division have a responsibility to ensure that Leicester City Council tenants adhere to responsibilities and obligations outlined within the Conditions of Tenancy. Housing Services deal with low to medium reported ASB incidents which will primarily involve Leicester City Council housing stock (however this can also involve dealing with owner occupiers or leaseholders if they are implicated or are affected by the ASB). As the case progresses and if it may lead to litigation or becomes complex, /serious or high-risk then a referral is made to the CrASBU.
- 2.3 CrASBU deal with ASB across all tenures, they deal with referrals from the Housing Division, partner agencies, residents, landlords and businesses to deal with all levels of ASB from low to complex/ high-risk cases. CrASBU deal with all reports of ASB from residents and tenants in private sector housing from initial report to high level investigations and legal action. Due to the nature of this work CrASBU have accumulated specialist knowledge of dealing with ASB.

3. Purpose

- 3.1 The purpose of this report is to seek feedback from the Housing Scrutiny Commission and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Members on the transfer of the ASB function from the Housing Division to the CrASBU Team. This will lead to one central team within the

Council having responsibility for dealing with all ASB cases across the City from the first report to conclusion regardless of tenure.

- 3.2 With the function transferring, funding from the HRA would transfer to support the entire service to council tenants being delivered by the CrASBU team.
- 3.3 This proposal will lead to a more streamlined, seamless and efficient service for all reported ASB incidents regardless of tenure to meet both public and partner expectation in terms of dealing with crime and ASB encountered by the citizens of Leicester.
- 3.4 While it is anticipated this proposal will generate operational efficiency by creating a more effective specialist service that will reduce any duplication of functions, the primary reason for the change is to improve the services.
- 3.5 For all stakeholders, service users, ward councillors and partner agencies there will be one single point of contact for referrals and support.

4. Scope and Impact of Proposed Change

- 4.1 A Business Case for Organisational Change in accordance with the Organisational Review Policy is proposed to be prepared by the Head of Service for Community Safety and Protection with support from the Head of Housing Services. This would need to be consulted on as this potential change will impact on the job roles of Neighbourhood Housing Officers within the Tenancy Management Service and job roles within the CrASBU team.
- 4.2 This will also impact on Council Tenants, as currently tenants most often report ASB to housing staff and contact housing officers for updates on individual cases. The future model will mean that housing staff will signpost to appropriate services, however, they will not deal with or manage cases, therefore tenants will also need to be consulted and made aware of this change.

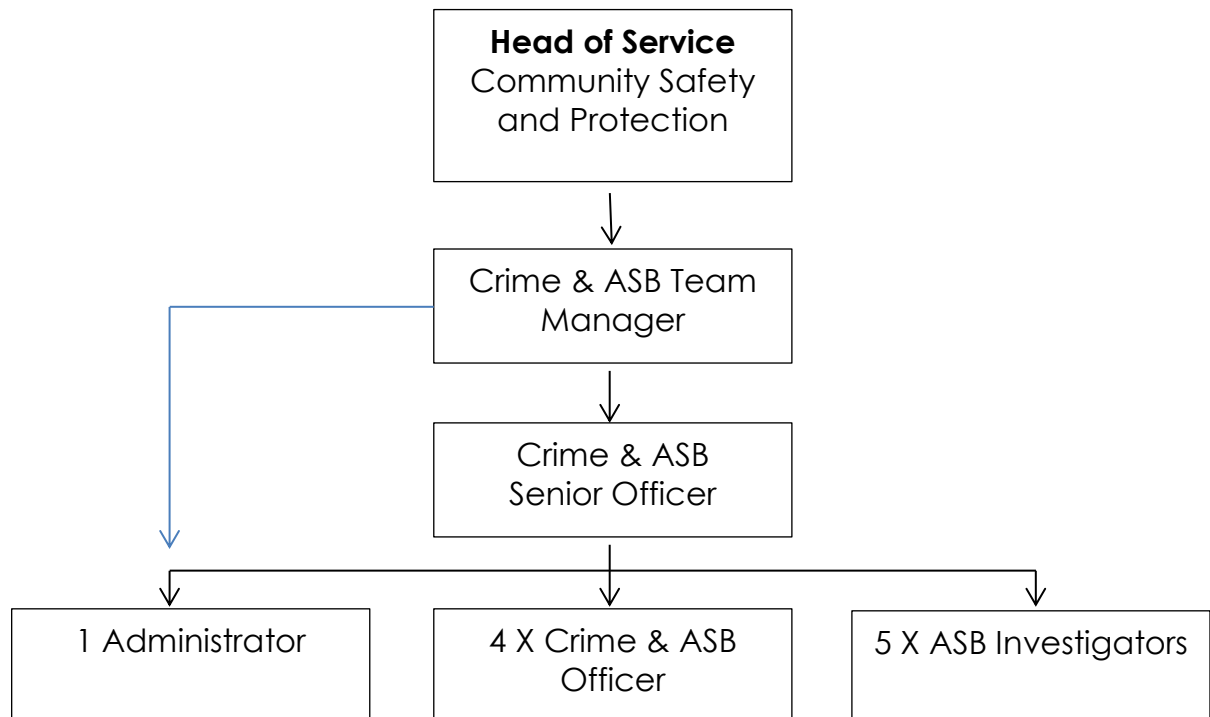
5. Current Working Model

- 5.1 There are 37.6 Neighbourhood Housing Officers who spend 20% of their time working directly on ASB, dealing with approximately 1220 cases per year. Within CrASBU there are currently 6 Crime and ASB officers who work directly on ASB.
- 5.2 A memorandum of understanding currently exists between the Housing Division and CrASBU, which requires the Housing Division to undertake significant work to manage the ASB case before a referral is made to CrASBU.
- 5.3 If housing intervention has not reduced ASB then the case is referred to CrASBU who will then manage the case to its conclusion, which can include litigation to repossess the dwelling. Often duplication of work occurs as the two services can be working on a case and overlap of work and responsibilities does occur.

6. Proposed Future Working Model

- 6.1 ASB cases from all tenures will be dealt with by CrASBU from the point of reporting to closure. The CrASBU team will need to be re-configured to reflect the increase in work and referrals.
- 6.2 For council tenants, Neighbourhood Housing Officers would provide advice via the standard letters and information that is readily available and would advise reports of ASB to be made directly to CrASBU.
- 6.3 We are working to try to deliver the service change utilising current vacant posts within the Neighbourhood Housing Officer establishment and there are not anticipated to be any compulsory or voluntary redundancies. Sufficient staffing resources will be retained within housing to enable signposting and to provide initial information.

Proposed New Structure for the Community Safety Team



- 6.4 The new roles proposed for the Community Safety Team include the Investigator Officer who will carry out initial investigations and interventions. The Crime & ASB

Officer who will carry out more complex case management and legal work. The Senior Officer will support the Team Manager and manage the ASB team. The Team Manager who will lead on partnership management issues, budgets and policy and strategy development.

- 6.5 The Housing Division currently deals with approximately 1220 reports of ASB, in future with earlier intervention work, the expectation is that many cases will be resolved before becoming more serious in nature. The resources proposed will meet the demand for this service currently and further benefits will be realised with the introduction of channel shift measures to enable complainants to self-help.

7. Benefits of Future Working Model

- 7.1 There will be one single point of contact for all stakeholders, avoiding any uncertainty about who is dealing with a case irrespective of tenure.
- 7.2 The new service will eliminate any duplication of work.
- 7.3 The current role of a Neighbourhood Housing Officer covering several landlord functions does not lend itself to providing a dedicated service to deal with ASB.
- 7.4 Removing the ASB function from the Neighbourhood Housing Officer role will enable officers to focus on supporting tenants to sustain their tenancies and their building responsibility duties.
- 7.5 All complainants regardless of tenure will receive a consistent and specialist ASB service.
- 7.6 A further benefit would be that CrASBU would be the sole liaison with the Police for the Council, which will improve the process of communicating intelligence and improve the specialist knowledge of officers working within the team.
- 7.7 This model will benefit from the Channel Shift programme, with an expectation that complainants reporting ASB are able to access help and support by way of information that can assist them in “self-help”.

8. Financial, legal and other implications

8.1 Financial implications

- 8.1.1 The total current cost of managing ASB across Council services is £727k (£432k within the CrASBU service and approximately £295k in the HRA, based on 7 FTE Neighbourhood Housing Officers). The proposed model set out in this report has an annual cost of £627k; the reduction of £100k reflecting efficiencies which arise through a centralised approach to managing ASB. Should the proposed model be implemented, the HRA would make an increased contribution towards funding the CrASBU service from £179k to £374k. A review will be built in after no more than 12 months to see if any additional HRA funding is required to deal any increased/unmet demand.

Stuart McAvoy – Principal Accountant

8.2. Legal implications

8.2.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report
Jeremy Rainbow – Principal Lawyer

8.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Implications

8.3.1. There are no significant climate change implications associated with this report.
Aidan Davis - Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284

8.4 Equalities Implications

8.4.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

8.4.2 Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

If the recommendations are agreed and as part of the ongoing work to reshape the service, it is recommended that an Equalities Impact Assessment is undertaken.

However, the Equality Impact Assessment is an iterative document which should be revisited throughout the decision-making process and should, ultimately, also take into account any consultation findings including housing tenants. Consultation needs to be meaningful and accessible and this needs to be reflected in the Communications Strategy. Any strategies/policies developed as part of this proposal need to ensure they outline how they meet the Equality Duty as prescribed by the Equality Act, such as the development of an Anti-Social Behaviour Policy for the new central team.

An organisational review EIA will need to be completed once the staffing establishment has been fully determined looking at any positive and negative impacts on staff in scope of the review. A service change EIA is attached.

Advice and guidance can be sought from the Corporate Equalities Team.
Sukhi Biring -Equalities Officer, 454 4175

9.0 Summary of Appendices

n/a

10.0 Is this a private report?

No

11.0 Is this a key decision?

Yes

Housing Scrutiny Commission

Housing Division COVID Response & Update Members Briefing

Housing Scrutiny Commission : 7th July 2020

Lead Member : Cllr Elly Cutkelvin
Director of Housing : Chris Burgin

1. Background.

1.1 In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK Government announced a range of lockdown measures which have had a significant impact on the delivery and performance of the Housing Division.

1.2 As reported as Overview & Scrutiny Commission on the 21st May 2020, the Council's housing service has worked exceptionally hard in very challenging circumstances to support some of the most vulnerable in the city.

- The service sourced an additional 221 units of additional temporary accommodation, ensuring we have had availability throughout the pandemic.
- Helped in excess of an additional 150 individuals with advice and assistance, including accommodation in most cases and when needed

- In addition to the above the service has also provided in excess of 1,000 meals have been delivered to people housed in bed and breakfast accommodation, Dawn Centre & Food Support packages to those in self-contained properties
- The Homelessness Outreach Team, alongside Inclusion healthcare and Turning Point have provided help and advice as required.
- The Homeless Emergency Duty line has been available seven days a week to ensure anyone facing homelessness can get help.
- The Repairs, Gas and Voids service have continued to provide Emergency & urgent services throughout the pandemic. Our Gas team have also undertaken Gas Servicing to ensure LCC is legally compliant and tenants safe.
- District Housing staff have continued to work behind the scenes to ensure that we successfully maintain important Fire Safety checks and work with a focus on larger tenanted buildings safety
- The Housing Income Management team have worked hard to support and help people that are facing changing personal circumstances and are having difficulty paying their rent.
- Housing's wider work and focus has been to support those that are vulnerable in our Council tenancies and facing homelessness , making over 6000 calls to check on tenants welfare and providing assistance where necessary.
- The STAR (Supporting Tenants & Residents team) have continued to support over 600 of our more vulnerable tenants. The Income management team has been working to help those with changing financial circumstances to apply for relevant benefits.
- A number of staff that are unable to undertake work in their own areas have moved over to work on the Corporate Shielding Work. 25 staff including Administration staff and Housing Transformation Team have been making thousands of calls to people in these groups to check on them and help.

1.3 The priority throughout the pandemic has been to ensure staff and tenants are safe while maintaining important Housing services. Positively, many of our services have stayed open in some form during the pandemic, our priority now is to safely get these back up to fully operational

2.0 Recovery Planning

2.1 Many of our services have stayed open in some form during the pandemic, our priority now is to safely get these back up to fully operational.

2.2 For all our services the Senior Management team is working together to coordinate, plan and take forward recovery. Our priority is to get services back up and running as quickly as possible. We are working on a Divisional Plan and Each Head of Service is working on service specific plans for recovery. Full Recovery will need to be

phased over a number of weeks and months, prioritising the most important areas first and will be dependent on further Pandemic COVID spikes and lockdowns.

2.3 To ensure it is done safely for our tenants and also for staff we need to undertake risk assessments and method statements to make sure we have safe working practices for all work we do, making sure we mitigate the risks of COVID 19 and ensure we utilise the correct PPE.

2.4 We also need to get our buildings ready for staff to use to do their job. Because of social distancing this is likely to mean that we are only going to be able to fit in about a third the number we did before COVID19. All safety items (as you see in shops) need to be installed and we need to make sure offices can be used safely.

2.5 Because of the office situation we need to plan and implement people continuing to work from home, or to start to work from home for the longer term. This means ensuring they have the right equipment and laptops to do this. This will take time to put in place.

2.6 We will be making sure we clearly communicate on the website what services are open and when services will be coming back online.

3.0 Challenges

- Due to the pandemic we have seen a rise in the rent arrears and this continues to rise even with the hard work and effort of our IMT. - (Going up by about £78k a week).- Overall our rent arrears have gone up from £1.5m to £2.1m
- Addressing unreported and reported non-priority repairs that have built up and are outstanding.
- We have work to do to catch up and be compliant with our Gas Servicing
- We have over 200 in temporary accommodation and need to find these clients positive move on solutions
- Much of our capital work on properties including our new builds stopped during the pandemic

4.0 Addressing the Challenges

4.1 Income Collection (Rent Arrears)

4.1.1 There was a sharp increase in rent arrears since lockdown, they have increased by an average £87k per week due to Covid-19. It's anticipated that the arrears performance will remain unstable and likely to increase due to current national economic challenges the pandemic has brought about.

4.1.2 LCC suspended all rental possession and eviction proceedings on the 18th March until further notice and the government suspended all housing possession cases in the courts for a 90-day period from 27th March. A further extension was announced by the Housing Secretary on 5 June 2020, which now takes the moratorium on evictions to a total of 5 months up to the 23rd August 2020. This is making it

challenging for the team to maximise rent collection alongside not being able to take punitive actions if non-payment of rent continues.

4.1.3 The Income Management team are working hard to have early conversations with tenants and agree payment plans if tenants are struggling to pay their rent. This includes reaching a temporary agreement for a period and accepting a lower level of rent or agree a plan to pay off arrears at later dates. All tenants have received a letter offering support. The team are supporting tenants facing hardship and increased expenditure due to Covid by maximising the use of DHP. Staff are prioritising contact with those tenants that have been identified as 'no rent paid'

4.1.4 Rent Management Advisors are supporting tenants claiming Universal Credit, regularly conducting research and sharing information within the team so we can respond to tenants needs and provide the most appropriate advice. The team are working closely with the Department for Works & Pension (DWP) partnership managers on a regular basis, to raise any issues / concerns and obtain updates on welfare benefits enabling us to best support our tenants and maximise their incomes.

4.1.5 Tenants who have been furloughed may get benefit top-up's and will have means to pay rent. For those tenants who have lost their jobs they will be able to claim Universal Credit or Housing Benefit. If a tenant is worried about being unable to pay their rent, or if we become aware of tenants who may be in financial difficulty, referrals are considered to agencies like Cittal and Community Advice and Law Centre for more specialist support.

4.1.6 For tenants that are sick or facing hardship due to Covid, they are supported by the Income Management Team to claim Discretionary Housing Funds (DHP) for help with Housing / Council Tax costs and additionally, being referred for food parcels. Some tenants who are shielding or in self-isolation and that ordinarily pay rent by cash are encouraged to start considering other payment methods. Elderly, vulnerable residents or those in self-isolation with access to cash / Post Office accounts only, may need to consider if friends /relatives can make payments on their behalf either online, or by using alternative methods. Those without families / friends will be requested to set money aside to pay rent when it's safe to and until such time we anticipate the increased rent arrears. We will however pause any rent recovery action on these accounts.

4.1.7 Our STAR team (Supporting Tenants & Residents) continues to provide direct support to over 600 of our most vulnerable tenants and Housing staff have maintained contact with other vulnerable or shielding tenants to provide help and support on this and other matters making many thousands of calls to stay in contact with people.

4.2 Homelessness & Housing Advice

4.2.1 As of 10th June, there are 156 homeless single people in Covid 19 temporary accommodation. We have used hotels and some self- contained flats to achieve this. Through the lockdown period we have been able to engage and support some of the most entrenched rough sleepers and bring them into temporary accommodation. This has been an opportunity and in the main most of those accommodated have remained safe and well. We have developed a Next Steps Strategy to continue with this important work with the principle objective that no one will return to the streets. It is not

anticipated at this stage that there will be any need for long-term changes to policies and procedures.

4.2.2 A draft Rough Sleepers Strategy Next Steps has been developed and in conjunction with partners is being set in place. This aims to;

- Ensure No-one who has been placed in emergency accommodation in response to the Covid-19 public health crisis is asked to leave that emergency accommodation without an offer of support into alternative accommodation options based upon individual needs.
- Resources are developed, including additional move-on accommodation to ensure as far as possible there is capacity and capability to deliver and implement offers of support
- Continued protection from Covid-19 is provided for those who need it including supporting and assisting Asylum seekers
- There is an integrated housing approach with health and care to secure access to services and continuity of care
- The roll out is gradual, to avoid a 'cliff edge' and overload of services as lockdown is lifted.

4.2.3 To date the service has managed to achieve over 40 positive move on's out of B&B's and Hotels into more appropriate housing. A further 20 are in progress and each will have individual move on plans to give the best chance of success.

4.2.4 As an authority we are already working to amass 170 additional units to meet this challenge, mainly through LCC stock, Additional private furnished accommodation and newly purchased & leased properties. To achieve this we do need to utilise 60 of our existing Void properties and prioritise getting these ready first and this has been the main reason for the delay in reopening Leicester Homechoice.

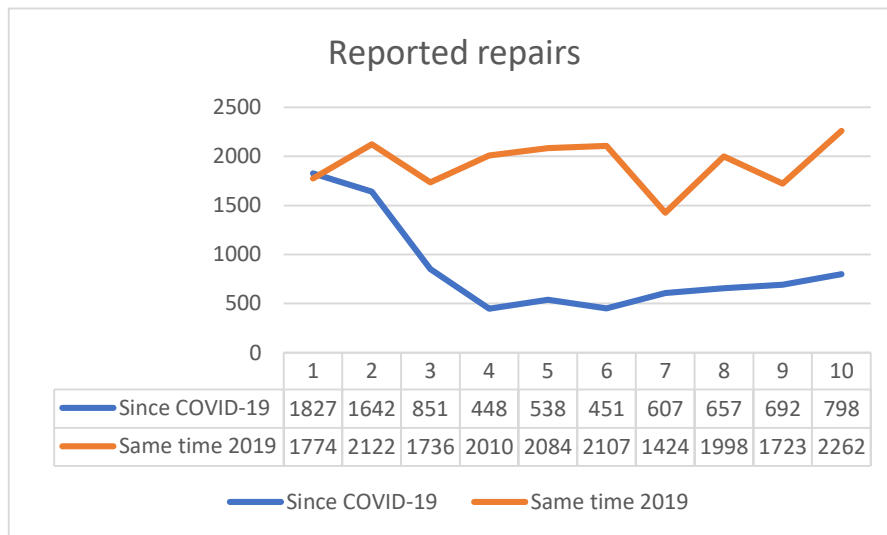
4.2.5 The Housing Register and the Choice based Letting (CBL) system have remained closed during the pandemic and available Housing stock has been utilised for emergency moves linked to those already in temporary accommodation and those facing domestic violence, harassment or serious anti social behaviour. We responded to the pandemic by suspending housing register activity, in line with national advice, with just under 6,000 on the register and it is a priority to now re-open this important service.

4.2.6 A robust plan for the gradual re-opening of the register and bidding system by week commencing 22nd June 2020 is in place, with a view to have the register and Leicester HomeChoice bidding almost back to normal by the end of July 2020.

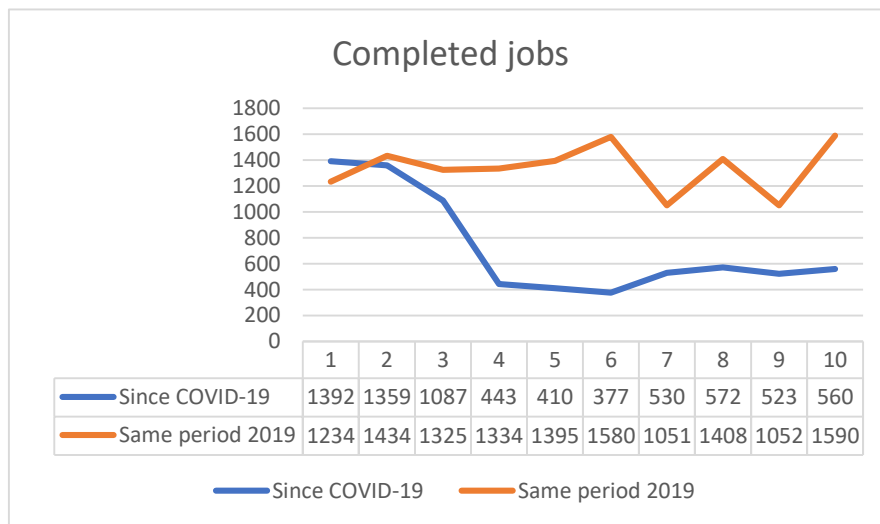
4.3 Housing Repairs/Gas/Voids

4.3.1 The following graphs show the effect the COVID-19 lockdown measures have had on both the volumes of work being reported and the number of jobs completed. The reported periods, 1-10, start w/c 11/03/2020 to w/c 13/05/2020.

Graph 1 - Reported repairs.



Graph 2 - Completed repairs.



4.3.2 Repairs Managers have been busy working on developing a recovery. Including the development of COVID-19 risk assessments and method statements for all types of work activities, in collaboration with our staff, Corporate Health & Safety, and Trade Union colleagues, to ensure all our work is carried out safely. We plan to take a phased approach to returning to business as usual.

4.3.3 During the initial phasing of recovery we will continue to provide an emergency service but will also start to carry out high priority work categories from the outstanding (suspended) workloads. Work will be prioritised to ensure that our most vulnerable tenants are looked after, but we will also prioritise other categories of work where jobs have a direct impact on the health, safety and wellbeing of our tenants.

4.3.4 Extending beyond this phase, we will start the process of building increased capacity within the wider workforce to start increasing the amount of work we can complete from the backlog of outstanding work. Whilst maintaining the emergency repairs service, and working on the outstanding workloads, we will then start to open additional capacity on the appointment system to enable Customer Services staff to raise new non-urgent jobs.

4.4 Tenancy Management

4.4.1 This team has focussed through the pandemic on supporting those most vulnerable tenants through telephone support. It has also prioritised Health & Safety and Fire Safety ensuring our buildings are safe. Work has also been ongoing to manage our estates, working closely with cleansing services to address any localised issues.

4.4.2 The District teams are only just starting to see cases involving domestic violence & harassment and are working to support and help the individuals with what is necessary, including priority moves where required.

4.4.3 This team have throughout the pandemic worked with the CRASBU team and Local Policing to ensure a joined up response and actions to reported serious Anti Social Behaviour.

4.5 Housing Building

4.5.1 While LCC's House Building programme was paused for 8 weeks, builders are now back on site for Phase 1 builds, and work has progressed throughout the pandemic on wider development and new build works including the Saffron Velodrome site, procurement of builders and the submission of planning for the Lanesborough Road site.

4.5.2 Preconstruction work on future phases has continued and whilst there have been minor delays we do not expect them to have a negative impact on the overall manifesto commitment period.

4.5.3 We have continued to negotiate on some larger acquisitions which we still hope will complete this financial year that have, so far, not been affected.

4.5.4 Our council house Acquisition programme has been impacted, we will have completed on 17 properties in the first quarter of the current financial year, this is half the normal number. Fortunately, we are now able to, and have started, viewing potential acquisitions and will look to increase the numbers in the remaining 3 quarters to hopefully mitigate the impact of the reduced numbers in quarter 1.



Manifesto Delivery – Housing

Housing Scrutiny Commission: 7th July 2020

Assistant Mayor for Housing: Cllr Cutkelvin

Lead director: Chris Burgin

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Chris Burgin
- Author contact details: Chris.Burgin@leicester.gov.uk
- Report version number: V.1

1. Summary

1.1 This report provides a progress update to the Housing Scrutiny Commission setting out progress on delivery of the Labour manifesto commitments made in 2019, and is an update on progress since November 2019 when the last update was provided on the matter to the Housing Scrutiny commission

1.2 Since that last update there have been significant national and global event with the Pandemic outbreak of COVID 19 in March 2020. This report provides an update on the impact of the pandemic on the Housing manifest commitments

1.3 Good progress continues to be made by Housing towards the commitments, with 13 of the key metrics being completed this year and a further 18 set in progress or ongoing.

1.4 Some challenges exist in 20/21 to the speed at which delivery on these manifesto commitments can be delivered.

2 Supporting information:

2.1 Labour's Manifesto commitments 'For the Many not the few' has eight specific sections covered within the document and the Housing Division will continue to contribute towards many of the broader themes and elements within them.

2.2 The document contains 11 main Manifesto commitments that the Housing Division has primary responsibility for delivering. Most of these commitments sit under the Manifesto section 'Homes for All'.

2.3 Maintain our Adaptations service for all home owners & Council tenants

2.3.1 Strong progress and work has been delivered in 2019 on this manifesto commitment with 529 people assisted to stay in their homes through adaptations completed in private homes and council tenant homes with a total of over £3m invested in achieving this.

2.3.2 In 2020/21 in order to enhance and deliver this commitment, the City Mayor and Council have agreed to increase the total budget for this work to £4.3m across the General Fund and Housing Revenue account budget.

2.3.3 The Current COVID pandemic does pose problems of access to often vulnerable

people properties to undertake these adaptations.

2.4 Undertake an ongoing £80m council home improvement programme

2.4.1 In 2019/20 the HRA has spent over £40m towards new council housing and investing in our existing Council property stock which has included over £15m of investment and improvements to our existing housing stock.

2.4.2 In 20/21 it was planned to spend a further £49m towards new Council housing and investment in our existing stock including £18m in improvements to our stock. Due to COVID the programme in 20/21 is very likely to be underspent because of the difficulty of delivering certain types of work. Officers are working to do what they can to mitigate this and to increase capital work in more deliverable areas and this is currently being reviewed linked to the changing dynamics of the pandemic.

2.5 Provide 1,500 more council, social and extra care / tackle housing shortages

2.5.1 Much of our capital work on properties including our new builds stopped during the pandemic. The contractor building phase 1 of the Council house new builds stopped work on the 30th. March, at the same time as the rest of the construction industry, but 3 weeks ago they restarted working at all 6 sites. They were originally due to be completed this financial year and they are still on track to do this.

2.5.2 Preconstruction work on future phases has continued and whilst there have been minor delays we do not expect them to have a negative impact on the overall manifesto commitment period.

2.5.3 We have continued to negotiate on some larger acquisitions which we still hope will complete this financial year that have, so far, not been affected.

2.5.4 Our council house Acquisition programme has been impacted, we will have completed on 17 properties in the first quarter of the current financial year, this is half the normal number. Fortunately, we are now able to, and have started, viewing potential acquisitions and will look to increase the numbers in the remaining 3 quarters to hopefully mitigate the impact of the reduced numbers in quarter 1.

2.5.5 In this last financial year and first year of the Manifesto commitments we have delivered a total of 295 new Affordable Homes towards the objective of 1500.

2.6 Reduce the number of families and individuals placed in temporary accommodation / Ensure that no one has to sleep rough

2.6.1 Due to the COVID pandemic as of the 10th June, we have 156 homeless single people in Covid 19 temporary accommodation to meet the Government commitment to get everyone off the street. To achieve this we have used hotels and some self-contained flats. Through the lockdown period we have been able to engage and support some of the most entrenched rough sleepers and bring them into temporary accommodation. This has been an opportunity and in the main most of those accommodated have remained safe and well.

2.6.2 We have developed a Next Steps Strategy to continue with this important work with the principle objective that no one will return to the streets. We are now working

hard on their transition into more settled accommodation and have so far successfully moved 45 into accommodation-based support with a further 20 in progress. A full action plan has been developed and we are prioritising the move on of those in hotels and B&Bs.

2.6.3 As an authority we are already working to amass 170 additional units to meet this challenge, mainly through LCC stock, Additional private furnished accommodation and newly purchased & leased properties.

2.6.4 From a families perspective we currently have no one in B&B's and have also now completed the exercise to empty the existing temporary accommodation Border House. This is a step towards achieving the commitment and drive towards homes not hostels

2.7 Establish a home extension fund for council tenants

2.7.1 This commitment has been met and a home extension fund for Leicester City Council tenants has been set up and funding of £500k has been set with the HRA budget for 2020/21. The focus of the scheme is those in overcrowded homes that can be extended.

2.7.2 A number of properties have been identified and are in preparation. COVID 19 may impact the scheme if lockdown and social distancing measures remain in place over the medium term.

2.8 Continue our environmental investment programme on council land and estates

2.8.1 The Council spent a further £750k on Environmental works on Housing estates in 2019/20 and a further £750k is budgeted for 2020/21. Again work is ongoing to review the impact of COVID and revise the programme to achieve maximum spend however COVID 19 does place this at risk.

2.8.2 In the 2020/21 HRA budget a total of £5m has been approved from 2020 through to 2023 to enhance the area in the St Peters & St Matthews neighbourhoods. Work has commenced to set this project up and will work to reconfigure the programme to deliver schemes within the current climate and events through 20/21 before hopefully returning to other important work in later years.

Summary of appendices:

Appendix 1 – Table of Manifesto Commitments

Commitment	Key Actions Required	Delivery Timeframe	Key Metrics	Progress update
Use our housing company to tackle housing shortages	1. Provide Social Housing through LCC HRA to achieve affordability and accessibility (especially for those with barriers to Housing for such reasons as on Benefits 2. Deliver new Affordable Housing for the same reason as above 3. Target hard to use/small/less profitable spaces that the open market would not develop 4. Provide housing types not delivered by the market including bungalows / adapted properties	on going	Delivery of new build, extra care and acquired properties. Percentage of adapted properties and bungalows.	<p>IN PROGRESS - Delivery of Housing Leicester Phase 1 of new Social Housing delivering 29 units across 6 small sites including bungalows which are wheelchair accessible – Delayed for 8 wks due to COVID The builder is now on site and in the build phase. Completion was due Summer 2020 now anticipated to be Winter 2020. Two extra care units are now on site (Tilling and Hamelin) which will deliver up to 170 units later this year and in to 2021</p> <p>IN PROGRESS - Planning ongoing for Phase 2 A - Saffron Veolodrome is in for full planning for 38 properties and procurement is ongoing to secure a builder for this site. Aliming to start build as planned in January 2021. Additional Phase 2 sites are also being worked on to deliver a further 30 new units. IN PROGRESS - Phase 3 Laneborough Road - Planning permission submitted w/c 4/5 to build an additional 61 units.</p> <p>IN PROGRESS - A pipeline of sites to be identified and agreed for the 4 year term.</p> <p>IN PROGRESS - The Council has now acquired in excess of 258 open market homes to improve their condition and deliver new affordable Council housing spending over £38.5m. Discussions are ongoing with UHL and valuation being determined on the purchase of 175 more homes, acquisition of market homes continuing and other opportunities also being explored.</p>
Provide 1,500 more council, social and extra care homes	Delivery of new residential acquisitions, new house building and Extra care schemes	as per agreed projection	As in AFC8. A clear four year delivery plan covering acquisitions & LCC new property build is agreed with LM in August 2019 and delivered as per the agreed projection - reported annually.	See AFC8. In progress, a clear 4 year delivery plan covering acquisitions and LCC new p
Provide free wifi on council estates	Delivery of new wifi networks on Council Housing estates to increase choice, drive down cost and in communal settings facilitate free roaming wifi		Delivery of key actions.	In progress, Delivery of key actions progress is being made in the development of tender :

Commitment	Key Actions Required	Delivery Timeframe	Key Metrics	Progress update
Support further work to meet complex needs experienced by women and BAME	A broad Service review is undertaken to establish existing provision in Leicester and to identify any weaknesses or gaps that can then be developed	2020/21	Service review is completed and recommendations considered by Assistant Mayor	This work is not yet programmed to commence and is planned to start in 21/22
Maintain our existing adaptation services for all homeowners and undertake a programme of council housing adaptations to allow people with disabilities to remain or move into our properties	Ongoing development and challenge to ensure effective delivery for service users in a timely way	ongoing	Engaging staff in a review of business processes to maximise joint work and the effective use of DFG resources Continue to deliver a timely service to those requiring adaptations and achieve full use of the funding. Ongoing development and challenge to ensure effective delivery for service users in a timely way Review and individual plan for all those on the Housing register requiring adaptations	External Audit requested as part of Annual Audit programme, to support with service development and ensure risks are understood / mitigated COMPLETED - A total of 527 adaptation/DFGs have been completed in 2019/20 COMPLETED Increased capital bid for the scheme approved for £3m for 20/21 to tackle any waiting list and ensure that all requests are then dealt with from point of request. Delivery of the 20/21 programme is at risk due to the current COVID virus and the vulnerable client group we work with. Work has started to establish the viability of safe delivery of schemes (including assessments of clients) ONGOING - Engaging staff in a review of business processes to maximise joint work and the effective use of DFG resources
Undertake an ongoing £80m council home improvement programme	Capital investment to maintain and improve the standard of Council housing continues in line with approved HRA Budget	as per spend per year	A council housing improvement programme in 19/20 £59m, 20/21 £17m, 21/22 £17m and 22/23 £17m totalling £110m is delivered.	COMPLETED - council housing improvement programme in 19/20 of £59m delivered, in excess of anticipated level of investment. ONGOING - The HRA budget for 20/21 has been approved and will continue to invest £17m each year making a total spend of £110m over 4 years. Existing challenges with COVID will create additional challenges in the delivery of some aspects of the current investment programme in 20/21. Work is ongoing to mitigate the impact of this

Commitment	Key Actions Required	Delivery Timeframe	Key Metrics	Progress update
<p>Ensure that no-one has to sleep rough on our streets</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Delivery of the Homelessness strategy actions 2. Development and embedding of the Homelessness Charter (including delivery of diverted giving scheme, enhanced communications for the public, service users and stakeholders and alternative forms of housing provision not currently available to meet the needs of those with NRPF) 3. Continue to bid for additional pots of funding to invest in to Homelessness services across Leicester 		<p>Number of rough sleepers on the annual and quarterly count</p>	<p>Ongoing delivery of the homeless strategy actions including</p> <p>COMPLETED - procurement of Temporary accommodation for those leaving prison completed securing 30 units increased from 20.</p> <p>COMPLETED - Temporary accommodation for singles - exercise complete and part procured</p> <p>IN PROGRESS - Procurement of Floating support services</p> <p>IN PROGRESS Wider work to develop the offer at the Dawn Centre is ongoing. Alongside the development of increased numbers and types of stepped accommodation for singles. The service offer and internal configuration of this service area to deliver this has also started.</p> <p>IN PROGRESS - Launch of the St Mungos Hub to facilitate work placement and work opportunities for those whom are Homeless was due to be 7th May but is on hold due to COVID</p> <p>ONGOING - The Homelessness Charter has been launched and has to date delivered a Full City Wide offer for Diverted Giving achieving over £22k in its first objective. It has also expanded information through the use of an online Directory. It has also enhanced relationships between LCC and key stakeholders in the Homeless sector and brought on board business to work together.</p> <p>COMPLETED - LCC has successfully bid and spent MHCLG funding for 19/20 totalling £544k to deliver a coordinator and personal allowances. It has also successfully bid for £700k of funding for 20/21 to continue this work.</p> <p>IN PROGRESS - The COVID pandemic has led to a massive increase in demand and people accessing temporary accommodation services with at its peak over 175 people in single TA. This is in part a result of the need to temporarily close Dorm beds, Safe Space and Winter night shelter. The immediate priority when feasible will be to provide permanent move on accommodation for these individuals.</p>

Commitment	Key Actions Required	Delivery Timeframe	Key Metrics	Progress update
<p>Establish a home extension fund for council tenants to reduce overcrowding in council properties</p>	<p>A fund is set up in the HRA to process and deliver house extensions for those housing register applicants that are Council tenants and are severely/statutorily overcrowded where it is possible to extend their existing property to meet their need.</p>	<p>Autumn 2019 then ongoing delivery</p>	<p>A fund of £500k for 2019/20 has been approved for a home extension fund in the HRA Budget report in February 2019 and a defined process of use is being determined and metric will be measure of spend and number of tenants assisted</p>	<p>COMPLETED - A review of existing statutory and severely overcrowded Housing applicants that are LCC tenants is completed and this has generated a potential 44 case that require further exploration. ONGOING - A small number of units have been identified and extension plans are being drawn up. Other identified cases are now being explored IN PROGRESS - A fund of £500k for 2020/22 has been approved as part of the HRA budget in Full Council Feb 20 for home extension fund. This fund is now being utilised to undertake the identified extensions. A number of initial properties have been identified and had been progressing prior to COVID. The ability to be able to deliver this scheme in the current climate will be challenging and therefore spend in 20/21 is anticipated to be low. The</p>
<p>Continue our environmental investment programme on council land and estates</p>	<p>1. Joint annual programme of parking layby and hardstanding areas has been developed. Programme is part HRA funded and part Highways LEW funded. Programme to be taken to NPT Board for review. Executive decision required to release Highways LEW policy provision to support this work. 2. To continue to provide an Environmental budget for investment and improve Council Housing estates. 3. Continue to fund a Neighbourhood Improvement service that's primary focus is estate based improvement work 4. Estate Warden service provided on Council Housing estates is maintained 5. Continue to fund capital investment to enhance LCC Council owned stock to enhance its look 6. Strategic selection of new build sites on estates to address environmental issues</p>	<p>on going</p>		<p>COMPLETED - Completion of annual programme for 2019/20 of parking/laybys COMPLETED - Full spend of £750k Environmental budget has been achieved and all schemes completed. Approved budget in 20/21 of £750k to continue to invest in estate improvements. A review of the existing schemes is taking place in light of COVID 19 restrictions in order to achieve maximum delivery of schemes that can progress. COMPLETED - The NIO service has been extended to provide a 12 month work placement opportunity with the continued focus upon estate based improvement projects and work COMPLETED - Budget approval to fund public realm works in St Peters & St Matthews totalling £5m over 3 years 20/21 to 22/23. IN PROGRESS - A project will be mobilised to deliver the agreed schemes (subject to LCC priorities and capacities). COMPLETED - The HRA continues to fund an Estate Warden Service that proactively targets estate based areas to maintain and enhance their appearance COMPLETED - Capital investment of £100k in neighbourhood pathways in 19/20 and approval to continue this in the HRA budget in 20/21 IN PROGRESS - A project is ongoing to deliver LCC owned Sheltered Housing scheme improvements across the City with high level proposals defined and more detailed proposals being developed for initially two schemes IN PROGRESS - Investment & improvement to the Saffron Velodrome car parking to be undertaken in conjunction with the new LCC house building on the adjacent site IN PROGRESS - IN conjunction with delivery of AFC8/HFC1 wider estate investment will be delivered</p>

Commitment	Key Actions Required	Key Metrics	Progress update
<p>Establish a residential facility for people experiencing multiple and complex needs, many of whom are rough sleeping</p>	<p>Business case setting out viability and pathway to delivery of the purchase of unit(s) for this purpose alongside the delivery of wrap around health and support services specific to these units</p>	<p>Approval of Business case, Purchase of units Design of service and delivery/launch of service</p>	<p>A number of suitable accommodation options have been sourced and currently being utilised for generic temporary housing purposes but the aim is to utilise these for a first PIE unit. PH have commenced discussions with health colleagues over securing appropriate input for such a unit and obtained verbal support. Formal paper beign presented to Health Board to obtain funding for support around the unit. Work is ongoing to deliver a proposal for consideration by LM for a single unit with 8 beds to pilot a unit with psychlogical and health support for 2 years. No further progress.</p>
<p>3 Reduce the number of families and individuals placed in temporary accommodation.</p>	<p>1. Delivery of new Social and Affordable Housing 2. Maximise the existing Homelessness service provision to achieve the best prevention rates 3. Deliver an increased offer of stepped accommodation 4. Continue to bid for addiitonal funding that can be utilised to strenghen the Homeless service</p>	<p>Number of people prevented from becoming homeless. No of people having to be placed in temporary accommodation</p>	<p>Social Housing delivery as per 1500 units commitment plan - see AFC8 and HFA1 COMPLETED - Hard roll out of the 'MyHome app' in August 2019 to increase the service offer to 24/7 for Housing advice and also channel shift low level enquiries enabling Homelessness prevention officers to focus on more complex cases COMPLETED - LCC has just successfully bid and spent MHCLG funding for additional Homelessness services enabling the funding for a homelessness Coordinator and personalised budgets to be delivered in 2019/20. A further bid has been successful to secure £700k for 2020/21 to continue this work COMPLETED - Navigator pathways set up with multiple front line voluntary groups - September 19. ONGOING - Work is ongoing towards delivering multiple types of stepped accommodation including the PIE environment ONGOING - Work has commenced on the Family Service offer with a move from hostels to homes in local communities. This will include the closure of Border House unit alongside the development of self contained individual units situated in Housing estates to enable people to remain local ONGOING - Work has commenced to procure replacement Floating support services for those facing homelessness</p>

Commitment	Key Actions Required	Key Metrics	Progress update
<p>Make Leicester a place of refuge for those fleeing conflict across the world, with a comprehensive offer of housing, support and learning</p>	<p>Ongoing delivery of the Vulnerable Person Resettlement scheme as per the original commitment and share lessons learned from this across services. Consideration of Govt's recent announcement re: extended Resettlement Scheme and agreement of a suitable response/target for Leicester going forward. Engagement directly with both the Govt and the Regional Migration Board to lobby for improvements to asylum seeker and refugee support and transition arrangements. Where possible (recognising the limitations placed on us by legislation) seek to avoid and relieve hardship for asylum seekers and refugees through our policies and provision for example access to foodbanks . Consider how we can improve internal co-ordination and improve information sharing eg possible option of a Co-ordinator role</p>	<p>Resettlement of 45 families through the existing resettlement scheme and delivery against KPIs set within that for families accessing support eg registering with a GP and dentist, developing English language skills and taking up employment. For 20/12 Delivery of the new commitment for 28 people through the Vulnerable person resettlement scheme</p>	<p>COMPETED - The original commitment has now been achieved with 45 families moving in to Leicester with teh support of the STAR AMAL team set up to support and coordinate the delivery. This team has been referenced as good practice by MHCLG for its delivery. ONGOING - A commitment by LCC to continue the scheme for a further year with 29 further people being settled in Leicester through the scheme is ongoing</p>

Rent Arrears Progress Report

April 2019 to March 2020

Assistant Mayor Briefing: 22nd June 2020

Housing Scrutiny Commission: 7th July 2020

Assistant Mayor for Housing: Cllr Elly Cutkelvin
Lead Director: Chris Burgin

Useful information

Ward(s) affected: ALL

Report author: Zenab Valli

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Report version number: V1b

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the Scrutiny Commission of progress in the above area of work over the full financial year, from April 2019 to March 2020.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 At the end of the financial year (5th April 2020) the cash amount outstanding for current tenant arrears was **£2.036m**, this is **25% higher** than at the same point in the previous financial year – see 3.2, Table 2.
- 2.2 The proportion of rent collected between April to March 2020 was **98.55%**.
- 2.3 A total **£389,327** was paid by Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP's) for all qualifying Council tenants during the financial year. From this figure a total of **£55,401** was awarded to support tenants affected by the Bedroom Tax and a total **£230,052** for tenants in receipt of Universal Credit.
- 2.4 A total of **1,222** tenants have registered to use the Housing Online Service.
- 2.5 A total of **3,390** tenants pay housing or garage rent by direct debit an **increase of 143** compared to previous financial year end.
- 2.6 Universal Credit Full Service was introduced on 13th June 2018. By the end of Quarter 4 a total of **3,771** tenants were claiming Universal Credit. A total of **76%** of those tenants were in rent arrears with a combined value of **£871,298** - see 3.17, Table 8
- 2.7 The Rent Management Advisors have been supporting vulnerable tenants, or those with complex needs who are claiming Universal Credit. By the end of quarter 4 a total of **447** council tenants were supported with their Universal Credit claim. Majority of the tenants only required short-term support and general advice.
- 2.8 Evictions are carried out as a last resort and during year 2019/20 there were a total of 37 evictions that took place due to non-payment of rent. This figure is comparable to the same point last year (2018/19) where the figure was 35. From the 19,869 current tenancies at the end of the year, this would amount to less than **0.2% percent** (0.186%) of all tenants being evicted in the year.

3. REPORT

Current Tenant Rent Arrears

3.1 Current rent arrears at the end of each quarter for the financial year 2019/20:

Table 1. Quarterly Arrears

Period	Arrears at Quarter End
Quarter 1	£2,101,776
Quarter 2	£2,175,527
Quarter 3	£1,754,084
Quarter 4	£2,036,496

3.2 Comparison of year-end figures for the last four years:

Table 2 Financial Year End Figures

Period	Arrears at Financial Year End
2016/17	£1,461,354
2017/18	£1,442,250
2018/19	£1,627,034
2019/20	£2,036,496

- 3.3 The cash amount owing at week ending 5th April 2020 was **£2.036m**, this is **25%** higher than at the same point in the previous financial year. There are various factors that have contributed to the increase in rent arrears with the most prominent being welfare reform changes affecting council tenants and the Covid-19 challenges in the lead up to year-end.
- 3.4 Universal Credit Full Service (UCFS) commenced in June 2018. The categories of people that can claim Universal Credit is broad and it is anticipated that UC migration will be completed by 2024. Following the introduction of UCFS, the number of current tenants transferring to UC is increasing week on week. The emerging trend is that tenants moving onto UC are already in arrears and as the claim takes 4-5 weeks this puts the tenant further behind. This increases to 8-9 weeks if we apply for an Alternative Payment Arrangement (APA) which involves the Housing costs being paid directly to the landlord.
- 3.5 Covid-19 challenges have attributed to the rent arrears increase; 4 weeks earlier (2nd March 2020), the rent arrears stood at **£1.715m**, which was a **£91k (5%) decrease** compared to the same point in 2018/19. IMT, like all areas of the Council, were significantly impacted operationally by the pandemic in March resulting in staff having to work from home where they had not previously been enabled to do so. This required a period of adjustment to new ways of working which when combined with the restrictions imposed to the rent arrears process impacted on levels of arrears and rent collection. The Lord Chancellor announced a suspension to housing possession cases in courts affecting new or existing

possession claims for a 90-day period. The above data shows the projected arrears finish would have been lower if not similarly to the previous year end if, the factors outlined above hadn't caused such a significant impact which resulted in an average arrears increase of £87k per week due to Covid-19.

- 3.6 Despite these challenges the rent collection figures for Leicester remain good in comparison with other authorities with only **38%** of our current tenants in rent arrears.

Proportion of Rent Collected

- 3.7 The team had a key performance management target to ensure the proportion of rent collected at the end of the financial year is 99%. The proportion of rent collected between April and March 2020 was **98.55%**. This is marginally less than the target figure and lower than 2018/19 when it was 99.46%. The figure reflects a rolling 52-week performance and considers the stock reduction throughout the year due to Right to Buy scheme which results in the lower amount compared to the previous financial year.

Number of Cases

- 3.8 The number of current tenants with rent arrears owing 7 weeks or more net rent is shown in tables 3 & 4 below:

Table 3. Breakdown of Arrears Cases by Quarter end 2019-20

Period	Owing 7 Weeks or more Net
Quarter 1	1,739
Quarter 2	1,765
Quarter 3	1,350
Quarter 4	2,319

N.B. Where no net rent is payable (i.e. on full benefit), full rent has been used as a default value to calculate number of weeks owing)

Table 4. Breakdown of Arrears Cases by Year End

Period	Owing 7 Weeks or more Net
2016/17	1,205
2017/18	1,264
2018/19	1,451
2019/20	2,319

- 3.9 The number of cases in arrears owing 7 weeks or more net rent increased by **59%** over the previous year end figure. The 7-week arrears include lower amounts of net rent, so this is not reflecting the severity of the debts. The increase in numbers is reflecting Universal Credit caseloads and the wait times associated with DWP administering UC payments and Alternative Payment Arrangements (APA's). In addition, the Covid -19 impact at year end has contributed to this sharp increase.

Arrears per Tenancy

3.10 The total arrears divided by the total number of currently occupied council tenancies are shown in tables 5 & 6 below:

Table 5. Average debt by quarter end 2019/20

Period	Average Debt
Quarter 1	£104.88
Quarter 2	£108.67
Quarter 3	£88.06
Quarter 4	£102.49

Table 6. Average Debt by Financial Year End

Date	Average Debt
2016/17	£70.59
2017/18	£71.14
2018/19	£80.72
2019/20	£102.49

3.11 Tables 5 shows that the average debt increased in the early part of the last financial year 2019/20 and decreased slightly by year-end. Table 6 shows that the debt increased in comparison to the previous year by **27%**. This figure is variable depending on the number of occupied properties at any given time and the figure will continue at an incline due to the diminishing stock numbers through the Right to Buy Scheme. Future reports will show arrears per debtor in place of arrears per tenancy.

Top 500 Arrears Cases (by value)

3.12 Table 7 (below) shows the top 500 accounts with highest arrears and total value of arrears at the end of each quarter regardless of tenant's payment methods.

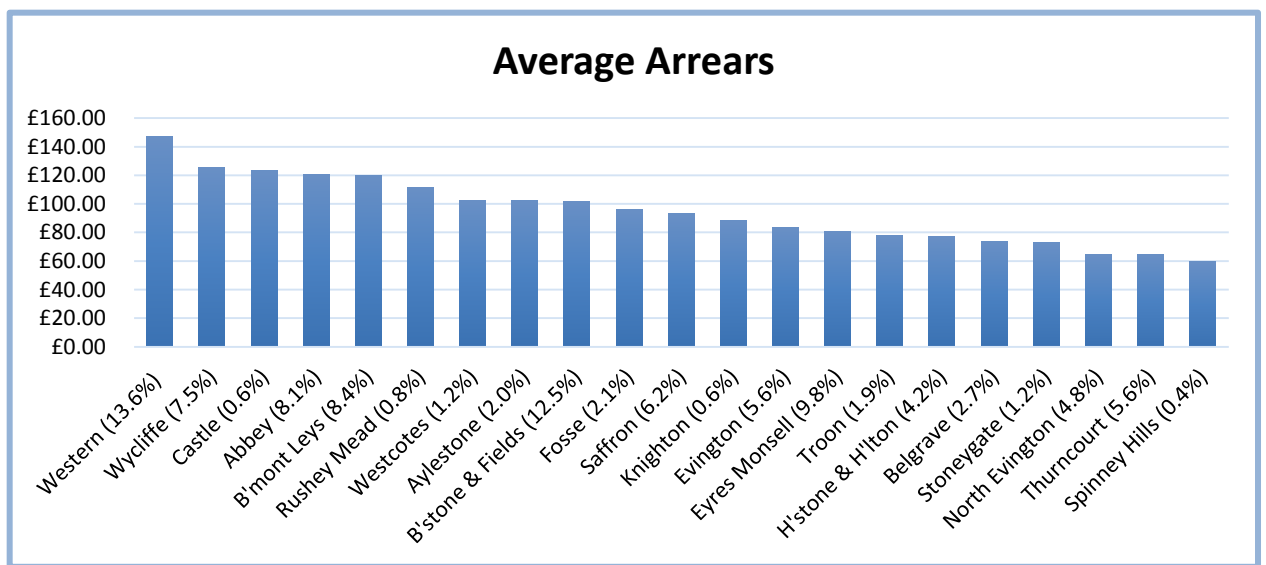
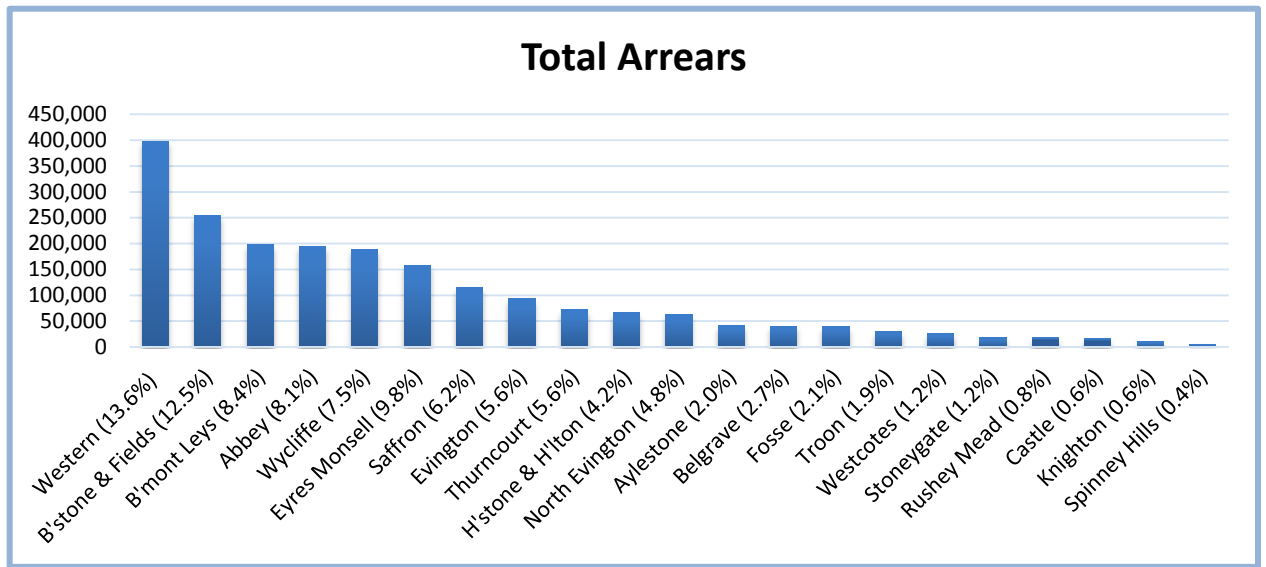
Table 7

Quarter End 2019/20	Highest case	Lowest case	Average	Total Value
Quarter 1	£3,962	£700	£1093	£546,653
Quarter 2	£3,393	£750	£1142	£571,079
Quarter 3	£3,567	£677	£1076	£537,977
Quarter 4	£3,535	£846	£1242	£620,823

3.13 Table 7 shows an incline of 14% of the total value of top arrears cases by year-end when compared to the start of the year 2019/20. This is in line with the increases seen in figures presented at the earlier tables. Higher debt cases are generally more complex to manage and require intensive support from the team. The team work collaboratively and in partnership with other advice agencies and internal departments to help achieve positive outcomes and resolutions for tenants. In addition, higher debt cases are influenced by courts preventing the team from taking possession actions until such time the court orders.

Arrears by Ward

3.14 The graphs presented below show the total arrears and average arrears by ward at end of financial year 2019/20. The percentage of council stock in each of the ward areas can be seen in the brackets next to the ward area label.



- 3.15 The total arrears chart shows that the ward areas with the most stock have the highest arrears values and the arrears are proportionate against the percentage of stock.
- 3.16 The average arrears chart presents areas like Castle, Westcotes and Rushey Mead as lower in stock but with high average arrears value. Within these areas there are flats and bedsits which are predominantly occupied by single people. We know from research that single people are known to have more changes in circumstances on multiple occasions within a year compared to families or tenants of pension age. Changes in circumstances when applying for welfare benefits can cause increase in rent arrears until such time benefit claims are resolved and in payment. Changes in employment status or zero-hour employment contracts can cause a spike in arrears whilst the tenant adapts to changes in their personal circumstances.

Comparing this with an area like Thurncourt where there are a higher number of houses and bungalows, the average in this ward is lower despite the higher percentage of stock. This shows the stability of Income expected from tenants in this type of accommodation such as, older tenants in receipt of Pensions with less changes in circumstances results in a more manageable arrears position within those areas.

Impact of Universal Credit Full Service (UCFS)

- 3.17 Universal Credit (UC) was introduced on 13th June 2018 and **Table 8** (below) provides information about Council tenants claiming this DWP benefit.

Quarter End 2019/20	Number of UC Cases	% UC Cases in Arrears before UC Started	% UC Cases in Arrears at Quarter End	Total Value of Arrears	Average Arrears per UC Case	No. of APA's*
Quarter 1	2,355	66%	79%	£738,053	£313	692
Quarter 2	2,821	65%	80%	£918,374	£326	760
Quarter 3	3,168	65%	67%	£768,612	£243	823
Quarter 4	3,771	64%	76%	£871,298	£231	905

*APA = Alternative Payment Arrangements are when the DWP pay the housing Costs directly to the

- 3.18 By the end of the financial year 2019/20, a total number of **3,771** council tenants were claiming UC equating to **19%** of all current council tenants. An average increase of **47** council tenants are moving onto UC every week since its introduction. This compares to **49%** of council tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit.
- 3.19 Table 8 shows when tenants moved onto Universal Credit between 60-66% of tenants had pre-existing rent arrears on their rent account. This is a common theme when existing benefit claimants transition from one benefit to another, resulting in periods of non-payment of rent whilst the benefit payments are being processed. A tenants non-compliance with the process can add to rent arrears increasing and backdating of UC can only be granted under very exceptional circumstances.
- 3.20 By year end a total of **905** tenants had successful APA's in place. The remaining tenants on UC are either waiting for UC award, paying the council directly using other payment methods, waiting for APA approval or for the APA to reach their rent account.
- 3.21 The current value of rent arrears on UC cases has steadily increased as more tenant's transition into Universal Credit. The value will vary depending on when the APA payment schedules are received from the DWP. Although APA's can be requested, they are not always guaranteed to arrive as changes in tenants' circumstances or benefit sanctions can impact upon the payment being received as expected. The first set of payment is delayed by up to 8 weeks as payments can only be made once tenants UC payment date has been reached, the council then receive this in their next APA payment schedule.
- 3.22 The team are working collaboratively with the Department of Works & Pensions and Work Coaches from the local Job Centre Plus to minimise any impact of Universal Credit on rent arrears and continue to make suggestions to improve the way APA's are paid to landlords. Any issues that surround the joint working arrangements are elevated to the DWP Partnership Manager's for resolution.
- 3.23 The DWP granted the council 'Trusted Partner' status which gives access to their Landlord Portal IT system. This has meant the Income Management Team can verify housing costs quickly to prevent delays in UC claims being assessed. The Trusted Partner status also allows the council to apply for Alternative Payment Arrangements (APA's) for vulnerable people who may struggle to pay their rent and any arrears themselves.
- 3.24 To help mitigate this risk of Universal Credit **4** new Officers were recruited in May 2018 called Rent Management Advisors. Their role is to support vulnerable tenants, or those with complex needs who are claiming Universal Credit. They have been helping tenants to set up e-mail accounts, supporting people to make and manage their UC claims, promoting and helping to set up Clockwise Rent Payment Accounts which ensures rent is paid on time and encouraging people to attend digital learning courses.

- 3.25 By year-end 2019/20, the Rent Management Advisors had received a total of **447** referrals and most of these tenants only required general advice or short-term support whilst they make their initial UC claim. Around a quarter of these (109) were identified as requiring more long-term support which the officers are providing.
- 3.26 In June 2018, we started a 3-month pilot of co-locating Income Management Team Officers in the 3 Job Centre Plus sites (JCP). This was to enable us to meet with our tenants at the same time they were having their first meeting with their Work Coaches. This opportunity was used to advise tenants about their rent obligations and identify any support needs particularly to manage their UC claim. There was positive feedback from staff during the initial start-up phase and the pilot was reviewed at the end of each quarter for its effectiveness. By the end of the year, the service offer continued but on an appointment basis only due to the decline in the number of tenants being referred by the Work Coaches.
- 3.27 The co-location is now suspended due to Covid-19 and its envisaged it will re-start again on an appointment basis once it's safe to do so.
- 3.28 Overall the key risks to the council with the introduction of Universal Credit Full Service is the potential increase in rent arrears, as majority of tenants will be responsible for paying the rent themselves. From the total number of people claiming UC a higher proportion of tenants are in arrears which relate to the initial assessment period of claims and delay in the payment of APA's. The team are supporting those tenants in arrears by making affordable repayment agreements for the outstanding debt and continually seeking to network with the DWP to mitigate the risks of increased arrears.

Evictions

- 3.29 Evictions remain at a relatively low level compared to earlier years and this is despite the economic difficulties experienced over the period and ongoing welfare reform challenges. Management scrutinise all potential eviction cases to ensure that all avenues of maximising tenant income and sustaining tenancy have been explored. This includes ensuring that any vulnerability has been identified and the necessary referrals to supporting agencies are considered well in advance of any eviction process being followed. The eviction route is pursued as an ultimate last resort and after all efforts to sustain tenancy has been demonstrated and exhausted.
- 3.30 There were **37** evictions carried out for non-payment of rent from April 2019 to March 2020. This compares to 35 evictions in the previous year (2018-19).
- 3.31 Of the 37 evictions, 6 were family cases and 31 were single people.
- 3.32 From the 37 evictions 34 tenants had no Housing Benefit (HB) in payment prior to the eviction and 10 had Universal Credit in payment including the Housing element. A total of 6 tenants had previously been awarded DHP's and in some cases they received multiple awards. A further 4 tenants had made applications

for DHP but got refused as they failed to meet the qualifying criteria. The remaining tenants were either not engaging or had no benefits in payment therefore could not be supported with a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP).

- 3.33 Prior to taking eviction action the team work closely with Social Care & Health (SCH) department to help sustain tenancies. From the 37 evictions, 21 tenants were *not* known to the Adult Social Care (ASC) team and were identified as having no community care needs. A total of 16 tenants had previous involvement with the Children and Young People Services (CYPS) and ASC teams and attempts to contact tenants failed due to non-engagement.

DHP's (Discretionary Housing Payment)

- 3.34 Between April 2019 and March 2020 a total **£389,327** was paid by Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP's) for all qualifying Council tenants. From this figure a total of **£55,401** was awarded to support tenants affected by the Bedroom Tax and a total **£230,052** for tenants in receipt of Universal Credit.

Housing Online Account

- 3.35 The Housing Online (Rent Self-serve) portal went live in January 2019. This is where council tenants can view their rent balance, manage their rent account, print rent statements and update their contact details. The Housing Online will further expand allowing tenants to log new repairs and make housing related enquiries. Currently a total of **1,222** tenants have registered to use this service. The team are promoting this new service to encourage council tenants to become more independent in managing their Housing accounts online.

Direct Debits

- 3.36 Direct Debits have always been the most preferred method of payment for the council. There is now more flexibility and option for tenants to encourage the direct debit scheme there are 4 different dates tenants can choose to pay their rent – 1st / 7th / 15th and 22nd of each month. Currently a total of **3,390** tenants pay housing or garage rent by direct debit an increase of 143 compared to previous financial year end.

Clockwise

- 3.37 In the past year, the team focussed on Promoting Clockwise Rent Payment Accounts (RPA's) which can help tenants budget and manage their rent payments efficiently and prevent rent arrears due to delays caused by the administration of UC and APA's.
- 3.38 By year-end a total of **12** Clockwise Rent Payment Accounts were successfully set up and used to collect rent, this is 6 accounts more than at the same point last year. Throughout the year we found some tenants decided to cancel their accounts and opt for a different payment method despite agreeing to set them up initially. We also found a range of issues and some complications as RPA's were designed before UC introduction causing some issues around delivery of the

product in line with changes to UC. The response from Clockwise and the partnership working has been effective and they have kindly offered to disregard the one off £10 fee payable by the Council to encourage promotion however, the £0.75 per transaction fee remains payable with assurances from Clockwise that they are looking to review, develop and enhance this product to avoid any negative impact on partners and members.

- 3.39 In December 2019, the DWP announced they started a small-scale test with a small group of social landlords to align the way that APA's are paid to landlords. They are exploring the possibility of landlords receiving the housing cost element at the same time as tenants receive their UC payment. If this new process is implemented there is strong likelihood this will cause a negative impact on the number of new RPA's that are signed up in the coming years.

4.0 Key Challenges 2020/21

- 4.1 The team are facing significant challenges in the coming year due to Covid-19. The arrears performance will remain unstable and likely to increase due to the recent challenges. The Lord Chancellor announced the suspension of housing possession cases in the courts affecting new or existing possession claims for a 90-day period from 27th March 2020. Government advised to suspend warrants of possession and not to make any order that risks impacting on public health such as evictions resulting in homelessness. This will make it challenging for the team to maximise rent collection alongside not being able to take punitive actions if non-payment of rent continues. A further extension was announced by the Housing Secretary on 5 June 2020, which now takes the moratorium on evictions to a total of 5 months up to the 23rd August 2020.
- 4.2 The Government guidance is to not commence possession proceedings during this challenging time without a very good reason and Notices of Seeking Possession (NOSP) have needed to be modified as per the Coronavirus Act 2020. We must now allow tenants 3 months before issuing possession proceedings which means, NOSP expiry dates are extended to 3 months opposed to the previous 1-month rule and this applies to all NOSP's served up to and including 30 September 2020. Consequently, this will cause increase in rent arrears before possession proceedings can be started on cases where it's appropriate to take these measures.
- 4.3 All face to face contact is currently suspended so tenants can't be invited to discuss their rent arrears by face to face appointment and it's anticipated that some small number of tenants may be reluctant to engage by phone / email / text. Alternative creative ideas and ways to reach these tenants is being considered for example inserts offering support within food parcels.
- 4.4 The team are supporting tenants facing hardship and increased expenditure due to Covid by maximising the use of DHP however, there is no increase of funding in this area and the current value of funds remains at £1,139,971, effective from April 2020 to March 2021.
- 4.5 We are working with County Court to discuss the future of rental possession

hearings as it's reasonable to assume that social distancing will remain in place for the foreseeable future. County Court have already indicated it's not possible to return to block listed claims at the rate of 10 cases per hour. This will adversely affect the volume and frequency of cases causing delays in recovering possessions where appropriate and consequently causing accrual in rent arrears. It has been recognised, face to face hearings should continue where possible as tenants may face difficulties complying with remote hearings due to limited technology, engagement and/or limited access to legal advice. There is possibility a combination of face to face and remote hearings can be considered only where matters have been agreed.

- 4.6 Despite the challenges up ahead, the team remain focussed and prepared to work incredibly hard and continue achieving high performance, alongside maximising support for tenants during this extremely difficult time, ensuring their Income is fully maximised and any hardship is eased.

REPORT AUTHOR

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Appendix F

Who Gets Social Housing? (Council and Housing Association Homes)

1. Headline data from the Housing Register

- The number of households on the Housing Register has increased by 12% from 5809 on 01/04/2019 to 6486 on 01/04/2020.
- Overcrowding remains the biggest reason for joining the Housing Register and currently accounts for 58% (3751) of the register.
- The number of statutory overcrowded households has increased from 82 to 170 (107% increase) in the last 12 months. This is mainly due to better management information regarding Council tenants who have been identified as living in accommodation where they exceed the occupancy levels. The Private Sector Housing team have also seen a rise in the number of cases referred for statutory overcrowding assessments in the private sector since the change in policy to increase the banding priority.
- People who are homeless or threatened with homelessness accounts for 22% (1432) of all households on the Housing Register. The number of cases has risen by 29% in the last 12 months and is mainly due to continued implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act.
- The highest demand is for 2-bedroom accommodation which accounts for 34% (2187) of total demand.
- Social Housing tenants account for 24% (LCC tenants 1091 - 17% & RSL tenants 488 - 7%) of all households on the Housing Register.
- There is considerable disparity across wards with regard to the number of households on the Housing Register (Appendix 1), the highest being North Evington (681), and the lowest being Knighton (73).

1.1. Changes in Band Proportions

- There has been a 57% increase of applicants awarded a Band 1 Priority. Band 1 applicants accounted for 10% of the Housing Register (599) the previous year, and now account for 14% (938).

The 339-household-increase within Band 1 was a direct result of a policy change in August 2019 which gave enhanced priority to some households facing homelessness and those living in the severest overcrowding conditions. This allowed the authority to better priority those that we in the most critical housing need, and has translated to an increase in lettings to these critical groups.

- Number of households within Band 2 and 3 has remained largely consistent with the general increase in overall numbers on the Housing Register.

2. Lettings Headline data

- The number of lettings in the last 12 months has remained relatively the same (2% increase) from the corresponding period last year.
- Bands 1 and 2 accounts for 98% (1245) of all lettings in the last 12 months.
- 589 (46%) of all lettings were for households who became homeless or were at threat of homelessness (Insecure Accommodation, Statutory Homeless and Temporary Accommodation priorities). This has a slight increase of 4% from the previous year.
- There was a total of 647 lettings of 1 bedroom accommodation. This accounts for 51% of all lettings.
- The current average waiting times for Band 2 households seeking 1,2 & 3 bedroom accommodation has increased by 5 months, 2 months and 4 months compared to 12 months ago.
- Beaumont Leys had the most lettings (132) in the last 12 months followed by New Parks (105).

3. Housing Association & HomeCome Lettings

- Lettings to Housing Associations and HomeCome accounted for 372 (29%) of all lettings in the last 12 months (01/04/2019 – 31/03/2020). This compared to 343 (28%) of all lettings for the corresponding period last year.
- Midland Heart was the largest provider with 116 (31%) of the lets with PA Housing the next highest provider with 107 lettings (29%).
- HomeCome lets accounted for 25 (7%) of the lettings.
- There were 163 lettings to private landlords via the Housing Options Private Rented Sector Team. This was an increase of 58 (55%) from the previous 12 month period.

4. Direct Lettings

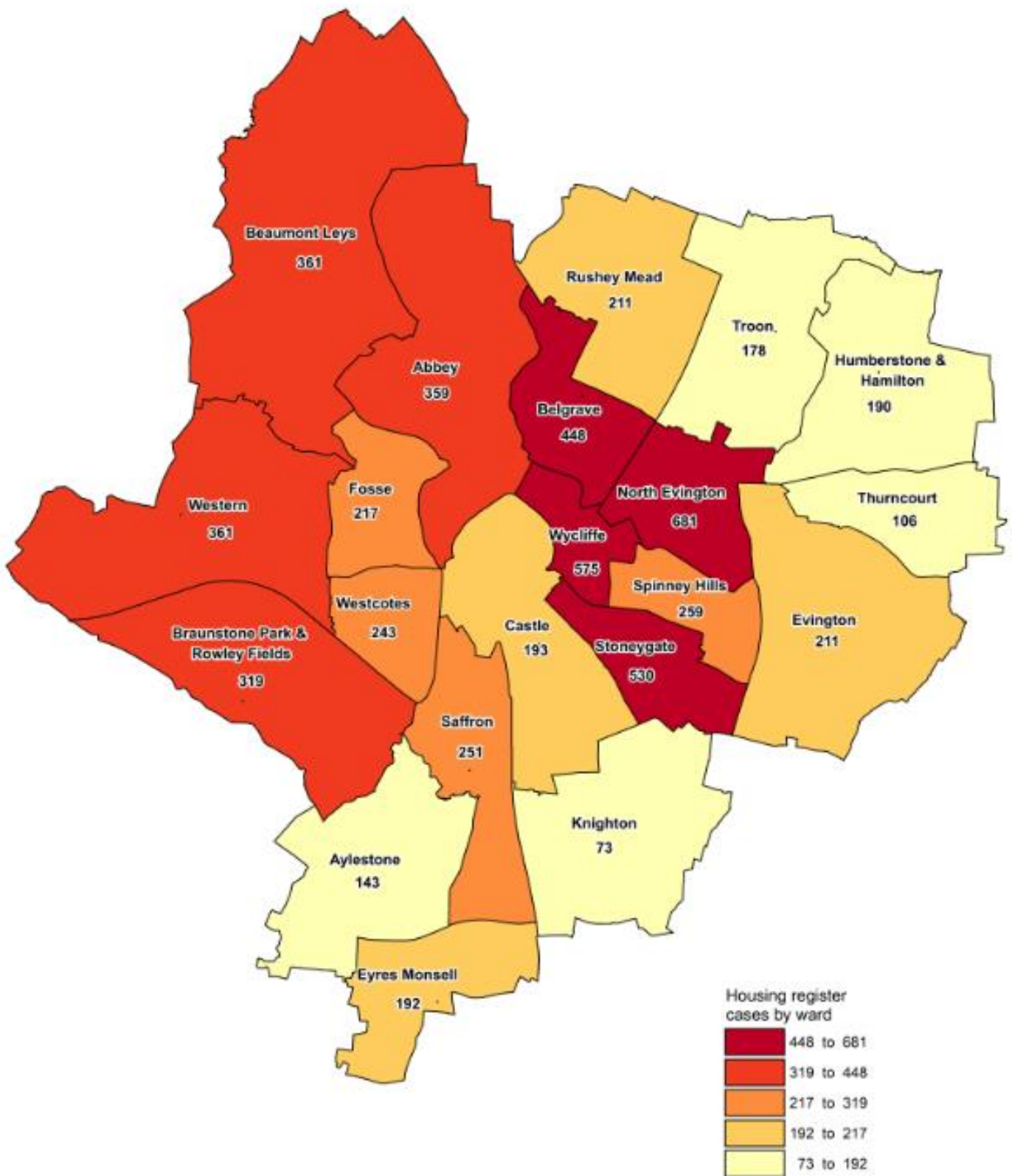
- The number of direct lettings accounts for 19% of all lettings for the 12 month period (01/04/2019 – 31/03/2020). This was an increase of 6% (76) from the previous 12 month period.

- Direct lettings to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness account for 164 (68%) of all direct lettings for the 12 month period (01/04/2019 – 31/03/2020).

5. Customer and Management Dashboard (Appendix 2, 3 & 4)

- Summary information for use by customers and management

Number of Applicants on the Housing Register by Ward (01/04/2020)



Who Gets Social Housing? (Council and Housing Association Homes) **Updated every 6 months**
Last Update: 1st April 2020

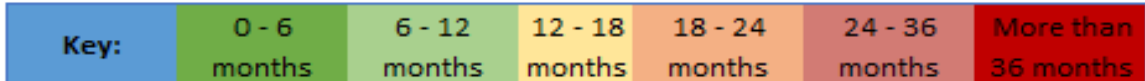
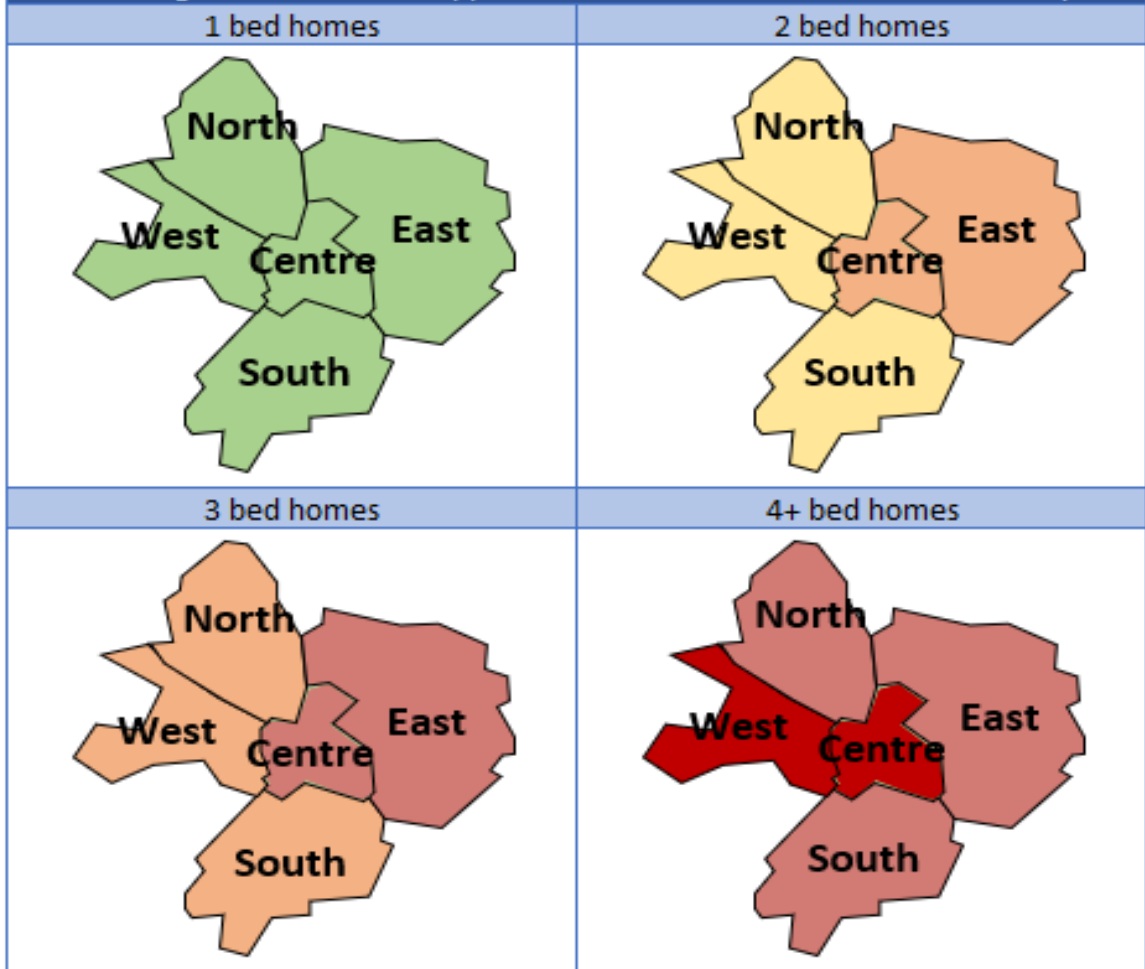
Total applicants on register on 1st April 2020

6,486

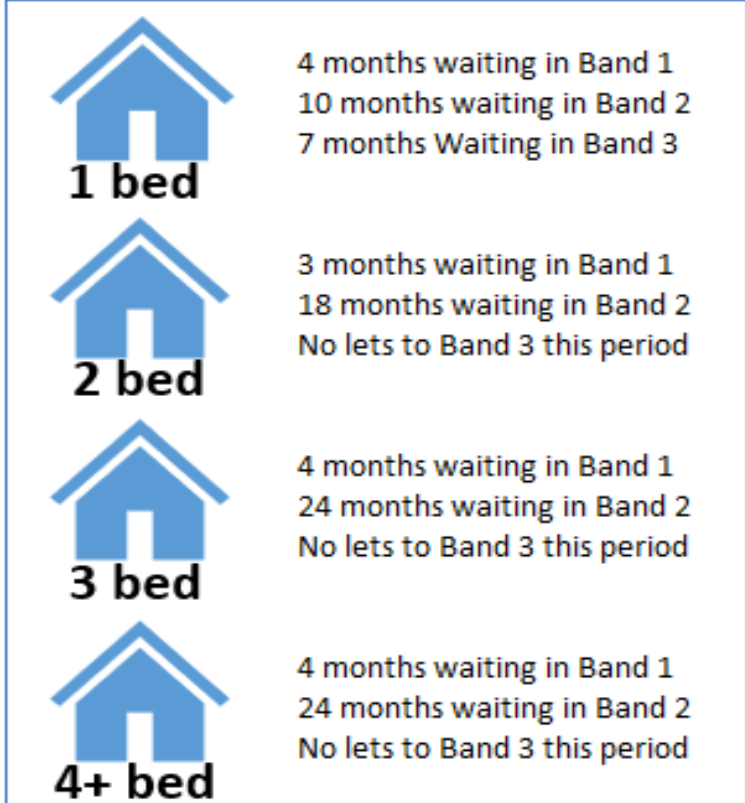
Total Lettings from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020

1,271

Waiting times for Band 2 applicants for different sized homes in the City



Average waiting times for property sizes:



51

For further information visit our website at www.leicester.gov.uk/housingapplications

Who Gets Social Housing? (Council and Housing Association Homes)

2019 - 2020

Housing Register Build Data

Total Applicants	
Period last year	As at 1st April 2020
5,809	6,486
% Increase	
12%	

Band Breakdown		
Band 1	Band 2	Band 3
938	2,515	3,033

Need (size of home) breakdown				
1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed +
2,013	2,187	1,546	571	169

Top 10 reasons for appearing on Register		
Priority Reason	Number of Applicants	As a % of all Applicants
Overcrowding - Band 3 (moderate)	2840	44%
Homeless	1223	19%
Overcrowding - Band 2 (severe)	741	11%
Medical - Medium	435	7%
Medical - High	319	5%
Temporary Accommodation	209	3%
Statutory Overcrowding	170	3%
Sheltered Accommodation Need	139	2%
Priority Under-occupation	130	2%
Medical - Care & Support	43	1%

Lettings Data

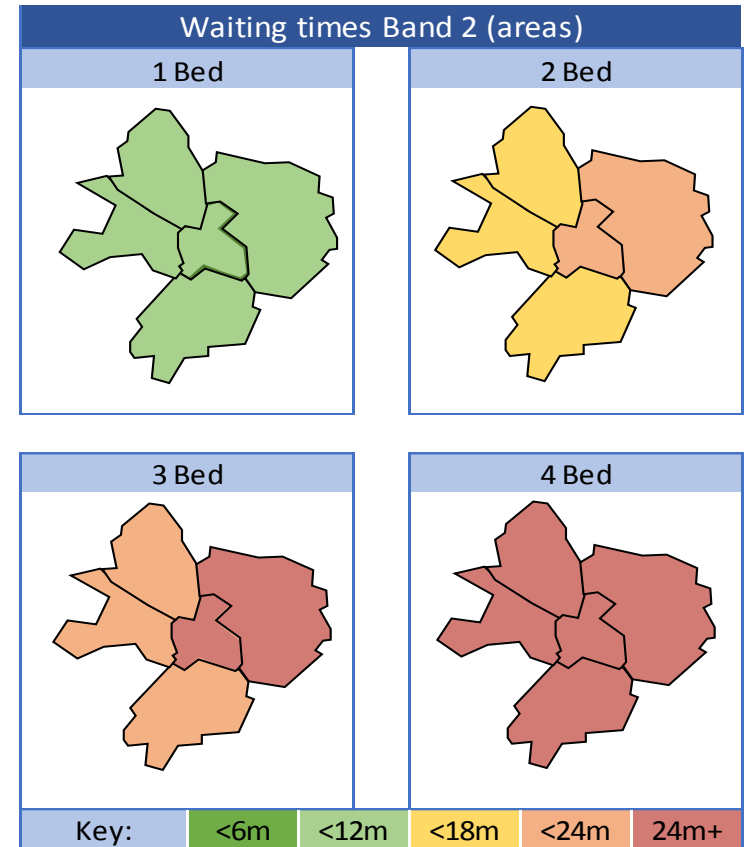
Total Lettings	
Period last year	2019-2020
1,241	1,271
% Increase	
2%	

Band Breakdown		
Band 1	Band 2	Band 3
647	598	26







Lettings breakdown by size of home				
1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed +
647	354	230	37	3

Waiting times (months)					
	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5 Bed
BAND 1	4	3	4	4	26
BAND 2	10	18	24	24	62
BAND 3	7	-	-	-	-



53

Which priorities are getting the housing?			
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Homeless Temp Accom Medical 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Homeless Overcrowding Medical
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Homeless Overcrowding Management 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Homeless Medical Overcrowding

Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum Action and Decision Log

2nd June 2020 – Telephone Conference

1) Welcome and apologies

Forum members present: Wendy Biddles, Gwen Clifford, May Jones, Peter Hookway, Phillip Allen

Apologies: Jean Williams, Joe Carroll. Ann Green

Leicester City Council Officers: Chris Burgin (Director of Housing), Helen McGarry (Programme Manager), Shain Mohammed (Business Change Manager)

2) Introduction

55 Chris Burgin introduced the meeting stating he would like the work of the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum to re-start again, following a break due to Covid19. Discussions took place with members as to how this could happen, when it was likely face to face meetings would not be feasible for the foreseeable future.

Decision: Meetings would continue via telephone conference calls and this is to be reviewed at the end of each future meeting. This is to be a standard agenda item at each meeting.

Action: Shain Mohammed to call each member and explain how to mute and unmute phones during telephone conference calls.

3) Tackling the challenges of Covid19

Chris Burgin provided an overview of the Housing Divisions response to Covid19.

Key points:

- The critical services in Housing that have continued to operate have been:
 - Responding to gas emergencies – We have been receiving approximately 30 calls a day in relation to this. The Gas Regulator has stated gas safety checks must also continue during this period and timescales for these have not been extended, so annual gas safety checks are still taking place.
 - Emergency repairs – It has been our priority to ensure tenants and staff are safe and therefore only essential repair work has been carried out. Demand for emergency repairs has been relatively low, with the completion of approximately 100 jobs per day.

- Homelessness support – Homelessness services have been working hard to get homeless people off the streets and into a safe environment. To do this we have increased our supply of temporary accommodation by 216 units. The Outreach Team has continued to go out to identify rough sleepers who require temporary accommodation. About 15 of these people have refused the support we have offered. Additional services have been put in place, particularly related to health and drug / alcohol support. Also, people placed in B + B are being provided with food parcels. We have temporarily closed the day centre at the Dawn Centre to protect residents who are living there and to reduce the spread of Covid19 to people who may have used the day centre.
- Tenancy Management – the focus of these services has been to ensure our tenants are safe with work ongoing with Fire Safety Checks. Approximately 6,000 telephone calls have been made to vulnerable tenants to offer support. This is on top of the calls that have been made corporately to potentially vulnerable people living in the city. STAR have also been supporting 600 of our most vulnerable tenants. The Income Management Team have been providing support to tenants, particularly in relation to claiming benefits, where their financial situation has changed as a result of Covid19

Challenges:

- Rent arrears have increased by approximately £78,000 per week and total arrears are up to £2.1 million. Courts are currently closed resulting in us being unable to take action against tenants who are not paying their rent and who are refusing to engage with our services.
- 5,000 non-priority repairs have been logged – This will result in a backlog of repairs and will be a challenge to catch up as we develop our recovery plans.
- Gas servicing – A number of tenants haven't wanted us to go into their homes due to Covid19 safety concerns, so non completion of servicing is increasing.
- We have over 200 people in temporary accommodation, that we will need to find homes for.
- Building companies that undertook our capital work have been closed. This has impacted on the installation of kitchens, bathrooms and development of new homes.
- Some services have not been operating at full speed, for example the Voids Team. Previously a team of operatives would undertake work in an empty property, but due to social distancing requirements, only one operative at a time can be in the property, which is slowing down the completion of work prior to re-letting. However, we have been prioritising repairs to void properties for those experiencing homelessness, domestic violence and harassment.

4) Plans for recovery]

Chris Burgin explained the plans for the recovery of Housing Services:

Key Points:

- Some services are currently operating, however, at a reduced level.
- Recovery plans are currently being developed with Heads of Service.
- The full recovery of services is not expected to be achieved overnight and will be phased over a number of weeks and months. This is dependent on the Covid19 situation and whether we experience a second spike in the number of cases.
- Risk Assessments are being undertaken for all the work that is carried out and any risks are to be mitigated. This includes the identification of personal protective equipment that our staff will need.
- Buildings are to be prepared for staff / customers to use and access safely, this is likely to be at a reduced level to ensure safety.
- There are a number of staff that are currently shielding. We must ensure these people are kept safe. As a result of this some people are unable to carry out their normal roles, which may impact on the delivery of services.
- The Housing Register and Choice Based Lettings will continue to be closed for a few weeks, so we can prioritise the re-housing of those people currently experiencing homelessness, domestic violence and harassment.
- Communication of services opening will be published on the Council's website.

5) Any other business

57 The Tenants Forum members asks for their thanks to be passed on to the frontline staff who have continued to deliver services during the Covid19 situation.

ACTIONS:

- Gwen Clifford to be contacted outside of the meeting to discuss a situation with a tenants' gas fire.
- May Jones to be contacted outside of the meeting to discuss an issue of anti-social behaviour.
- Wendy Biddles to be contacted outside of the meeting to discuss a situation with mould.
- Key performance indicators for Housing to be an agenda item at the next meeting
- Shain Mohammed to explore if it is feasible to hold future Forum meetings via Microsoft Teams

7) Date of next meeting

Wednesday 22nd July 2020 – 2.00 pm – 3.30 pm, via telephone conference call

