

Leicester
City Council

MEETING OF THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION

DATE: MONDAY, 6 SEPTEMBER 2021

TIME: 5:30 pm

**PLACE: Meeting Room G.01, Ground Floor, City Hall,
115 Charles Street, Leicester, LE1 1FZ**

Members of the Scrutiny Commission

Councillor Westley (Chair)
Councillor Chamund (Vice-Chair)

Councillors Ali, Aqbandy, Byrne, Gee, and Rahman

1 unallocated non-group place.

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

For Monitoring Officer

Officer contact:

Jason Tyler (Democratic Support Officer):

Tel: 0116 454 6359

e-mail: Jason.Tyler@leicester.gov.uk

Leicester City Council, City Hall, 115 Charles Street, Leicester, LE1 1FZ

Information for members of the public

Attending meetings and access to information

You have the right to attend formal meetings such as full Council, committee meetings, and Scrutiny Commissions and see copies of agendas and minutes. However, on occasion, meetings may, for reasons set out in law, need to consider some items in private.

Due to COVID restrictions, public access in person is limited to ensure social distancing. We would encourage you to view the meeting online but if you wish to attend in person, you are required to contact the Democratic Support Officer in advance of the meeting regarding arrangements for public attendance. A guide to attending public meetings can be found on the Council's Website at: [Decisions, meetings and minutes](#)

Members of the public can follow a live stream of the meeting on the Council's website at: <http://www.leicester.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>

Dates of meetings, copies of public agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website at: www.cabinet.leicester.gov.uk

or by contacting us using the details below.

To hold this meeting in as Covid-safe a way as possible, all attendees are asked to follow current Government guidance and:

- maintain distancing while entering and leaving the room/building;
- remain seated and maintain distancing between seats during the meeting;
- wear face coverings throughout the meeting unless speaking or exempt;
- make use of the hand sanitiser available;
- when moving about the building to follow signs about traffic flows, lift capacities etc;
- comply with Test and Trace requirements by scanning the QR code at the entrance to the building and/or giving their name and contact details at reception prior to the meeting;
- if you are displaying Coronavirus symptoms: a high temperature; a new, continuous cough; or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste, you should NOT attend the meeting, please stay at home and get a PCR test.

Making meetings accessible to all

Wheelchair access

Public meeting rooms at the City Hall are accessible to wheelchair users.

Wheelchair access to City Hall is from the middle entrance door on Charles Street - press the plate on the right-hand side of the door to open the door automatically.

Braille/audio tape/translation

If you require this, please contact the Democratic Support Officer (production times will depend upon equipment/facility availability).

Induction loops

There are induction loop facilities in City Hall meeting rooms. Please speak to the Democratic Support Officer using the details below.

Filming and Recording the Meeting

The Council is committed to transparency and supports efforts to record and share reports of proceedings of public meetings through a variety of means, including social media.

In accordance with government regulations and the Council's policy, persons and press attending any meeting of the Council open to the public (except Licensing Sub Committees and where the public have been formally excluded) are allowed to record and/or report all or part of that meeting. Details of the Council's policy are available at www.leicester.gov.uk or from Democratic Support.

If you intend to film or make an audio recording of a meeting you are asked to notify the relevant Democratic Support Officer in advance of the meeting to ensure that participants can be notified in advance and consideration given to practicalities such as allocating appropriate space in the public gallery etc.

The aim of the Regulations and of the Council's policy is to encourage public interest and engagement so in recording or reporting on proceedings members of the public are asked:

- ✓ to respect the right of others to view and hear debates without interruption;
- ✓ to ensure that the sound on any device is fully muted and intrusive lighting avoided;
- ✓ where filming, to only focus on those people actively participating in the meeting;
- ✓ where filming, to (via the Chair of the meeting) ensure that those present are aware that they may be filmed and respect any requests to not be filmed.

Further information

If you have any queries about any of the above or the business to be discussed, please contact:

Jason Tyler (Democratic Support Officer) on 0116 454 6359.
Alternatively, email Jason.Tyler@leicester.gov.uk

or call in at City Hall.

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

HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION

USEFUL ACRONYMS

Acronym	Meaning
ACM	Asbestos Containing Materials
AGSC	Annual Gas Safety Check
AHP	Affordable Homes Programme
ALMO	Arms' Length Management Organisation
APA	Alternative Payment Arrangements
ASC	Adult Social Care
AST	Assured Short Hold Tenancy
BAU	Business as Usual
B&B	Bed & Breakfast
BCP	Business Continuity Plan
BRE	Building Research Establishment
CBL	Choice Based Lettings
CIH	Chartered Institute of Housing
CIN	Children in Need
ciTAL	Citizens Advice LeicesterShire
CO	Carbon Monoxide
Co2	Carbon Dioxide
CORE	Continuous Recording of Lettings - independently compiled statistics of all Housing Association letting activity
CPO	Compulsory Purchase Order
CSC	Customer Service Centre
CT	Council Tax
CT	Community Transport
CTCE	Construction Training Centre of Excellence
DAR	Dial A Ride
DCPC	Driver Certificate of Professional Competence
DFG	Disabled Facilities Grant
DHF	Discretionary Housing Funds
DHP	Discretionary Housing Payments
DHS	Decent Homes Standard
DMA	District Management Area
DT	Digital Transformation
DTR	Duty to Refer
DVSA	Driver & Vehicle Standards Agency
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EBS	Estate and Building Services
EHP	Empty Homes Premium
EHS	Empty Homes Strategy
EMH	East Midlands Homes
EOL	End of Life
EPC	Energy Performance Certificate

Acronym	Meaning
ERS	Emergency Repairs Service
Euro 6	The Latest Directive Set by The EU to Help Reduce the Level of Harmful Pollutants Produced By New Vehicles.
EV	Electric Vehicle
EVCS	Electric Vehicle Charging Station
FHS	Future Homes Standard
FRA	Fire Risk Assessment
FS	Floating Support
FTA	Freight Transport Association
G&HS	Gas and Heating Services
GFT	Gas Fill and Test
GSIUR	Gas Safety Installation and Use Regulations
GVM	Gross Vehicle Mass
GVW	Gross Vehicle Weight (Same As GVM)
H&WB	Health and Wellbeing
HA	Housing Application
HAF	Housing Application Form
HB	Housing Benefit
HCA	Homes and Communities Agency
HEDNA	Housing Economic and Development Needs Assessment
HHSRS	Home Health and Safety Rating System
HMO	House in Multiple Occupation
Hol	Housing Online
HPO	Homelessness Prevention Officer
HR	Human Resources
HRA	Housing Revenue Account
HSE	Health and Safety Environment
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
IMT	Income Management Team
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LA	Local Authority
LAC	Looked After Children
LAHS	Local Authority Housing Statistics
LHA	Local Housing Allowance
LSOA	Lower Super Output Area
MAM	Maximum Authorised Mass (Same As GVM)
MCHLG	Ministry of Housing and Local Government
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities, And Local Government
MS	Method Statement
MSO	Multi Skilled Operative
MSOA	Middle Layer Super Output Area
NOSP	Notices of Seeking Possession
NOX	Nitrogen Oxides
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
ONS	Office of National Statistics
OOH	Out of Hours

Acronym	Meaning
OR	Outreach
OT	Occupational Therapist
PATS	Passenger and Transport Services
PI	Performance Indicator
PIE	Psychologically Informed Environments
PLT	Property Lettings Team
PRS	Private Rented Sector
PSL	Private Sector Leasing scheme whereby private sector properties are leased by the council for use as temporary accommodation for homeless households.
QC	Quality Check
R&M	Repairs and Maintenance
RA	Residents Association
RA	Risk Assessment
RD	Revolving Door
RMA	Rent Management Advisor
RSI	Rough Sleeping Initiative
RSL / HA / RP	Registered Social Landlord / Housing Association / Registered Provider
RTB	Right to Buy
RTL	Repairs Team Leader
RTL	Ready to Let
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SH	Sheltered Housing
SLS	Selective Licencing Scheme
STAR	Supporting Tenants and Residents Team
T&L	Tenants and Leaseholders
TA	Tenants Association
TA	Temporary Accommodation
TARA	Tenants and Residents Association
TARS	Tenants Advice and Repairs Service line
TBC	To be confirmed
TC	Traffic Commissioner
UC	Universal Credit
ULEV	Ultra-Low Emission Vehicle
VED	Vehicle Excise Duty
VPLS	Voids and Property Lettings Service
VT	Voids Technician
WIP	Work in Progress
YTD	Year to Date

PUBLIC SESSION

AGENDA

FIRE/EMERGENCY EVACUATION

If the emergency alarm sounds, you must evacuate the building immediately by the nearest available fire exit and proceed to area outside the Ramada Encore Hotel on Charles Street as Directed by Democratic Services staff. Further instructions will then be given.

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
Pages 1-8**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 15 June 2021 are attached and Members are asked to confirm them as a correct record.

4. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

5. PETITIONS

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

6. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS OR STATEMENTS OF CASE

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

7. COVID 19 UPDATE

The Director of Housing will give a verbal report to provide the latest information of the impact of Covid-19 on Housing Services.

8. 'WHO GETS SOCIAL HOUSING' AND OVERCROWDING REDUCTION STRATEGY **Appendix B
Pages 9-20**

The Director of Housing submits a report, which provides an update concerning the 'headline' Housing Register and Lettings data.

9. ANNUAL RENT PERFORMANCE **Appendix C
Pages 21-36**

The Director of Housing submits a report, which provides information on the rent arrears progress over the financial year, from April 2020 to March 2021.

10. RENT ARREARS POLICY **Appendix D
Pages 37-88**

The Director of Housing submits a report, which presents the newly revised rent arrears policy that is used to collect rent and service charges from Council tenants.

The report also provides an opportunity to review the documents and provide comments for consideration as part of the development of the policy.

11. COUNCIL HOUSE BUILDING AND ACQUISITIONS PROGRAMME **Appendix E
Pages 89-116**

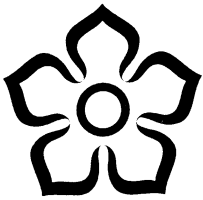
The Director of Housing will give a presentation to provide an update on the Council House Building and Acquisition Programme.

The presentation slides are attached.

12. WORK PROGRAMME **Appendix F
Pages 117-119**

Members of the Commission will be asked to consider the work programme and make suggestions for additional items as it considers necessary.

13. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: TUESDAY, 15 JUNE 2021 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Westley (Chair)
Councillor Chamund (Vice Chair)

Councillor Ali
Councillor Aqbany

Councillor Gee
Councillor Rahman

In Attendance:

Councillor Cutkelvin – Assistant City Mayor (Housing and Education)

* * * * *

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Byrne.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair declared an interest as members of his family lived in Council accommodation.

The Vice-Chair declared an interest as a member of her family lived in Council accommodation.

Councillor Aqbany declared an interest as members of his family lived in Council accommodation.

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 interest. The Members were not, therefore, required to withdraw from the meeting.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meetings of the Housing Scrutiny Commission held on:

- i) 22 February 2021; and
- ii) 12 April 2021

be confirmed as a correct record.

4. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed members and key officers to the meeting, being the first to be held at City Hall since the lockdown arrangements arising from Covid-19.

The following announcements were made:

- a) Jerry Connolly – Scrutiny Support

Members joined the Chair in sending best wishes to Jerry Connolly for a speedy recovery from his recent illness.

- b) Training Sessions

Members were advised that Scrutiny Support would be arranging a series of training sessions on aspects of the housing portfolio, mainly for the benefit of new Commission members. Details and confirmation of dates would be circulated separately. The Chair confirmed that the relevant slides from each session would be made available to commission members.

5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION - 2021/22

AGREED:

- 1. To note the Membership of the Housing Scrutiny Commission for the 2021/22 Municipal Year as follows:

Cllr Westley (Chair)
Cllr Chamund (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Ali
Cllr Aqbany
Cllr Byrne
Cllr Gee
Cllr Rahman

- 2. That the Chair contact the Chief Whip regarding a suggested revision of the membership for future meetings.

6. DATES OF MEETINGS OF THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR THE 2021/22 MUNICIPAL YEAR

AGREED:

To note the dates of the Housing Scrutiny Commission meetings for the 2021/22 Municipal Year as follows:

15 June 2021
16 August 2021 (*Post-meeting note – moved to 6 September*)
4 October 2021
29 November 2021
10 January 2022
28 February 2022

7. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that no Petitions had been received, in accordance with Council procedures.

8. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS OR STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that no Questions, Representations or Statements of Case had been received, in accordance with Council procedures.

9. COVID 19 - UPDATE

The Director of Housing gave a verbal update in order to provide the most up to date information to members on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

He commented on the significant progress with services and engagement with tenants, with the ambition to return to the position pre-pandemic. Caution was advised and the need to ensure continued safety against the national ambition and the Government's announcements were emphasised, with further clarity being necessary particularly in respect of housing services.

In terms of the work to support the homeless it was reported that there had been a large number of people supported into temporary accommodation during the pandemic, and that as a result there were pressures involved in securing those people secure and more permanent accommodation. It was recognised that this involved complex cases and individual circumstances and the priorities for dealing with such cases were acknowledged.

A number of support projects were noted and the impact on the capital and revenue budgetary situation was accepted.

In respect of the position with void properties, as reported to the previous meeting, it was reported that significant progress had been made, although further work was required. It was reported that the momentum in dealing with voids was continuing in a positive direction and that although there were challenges to reach the position pre-pandemic the encouraging results were noted and welcomed.

In terms of the repairs issue, it was noted that there would be a subsequent report at a later agenda item. In summary there had been a backlog due to the need to ensure the safety of tenants and staff.

There had been considerable efforts undertaken by the rent teams to ensure a minimal level of rent arrears, with a reduction in debt and no evictions being enforced. It was commented that although this demonstrated excellent work by the teams, the situation on a small number of cases may eventually lead to Court action in the most severe cases. In summary it was reported and noted that the numbers of tenants in arrears and the sums owed were both lower than previous levels. Officers were congratulated on their efforts to achieve this situation in view of the pandemic.

In response to a question it was also confirmed that restrictions on evictions also affected commercial properties as actions through the Courts were not allowed during the pandemic. It was therefore recognised that to reduce levels of debt during this period was a considerable achievement.

It was acknowledged that there would be some cases where action to evict would be necessary. In regard to the formal Notice period given clarity was provided on timescales for such action and Members were advised to contact the Director if they had been advised of discrepancies.

Councillor Cutkelvin (Assistant City Mayor – Housing and Education) reassured Commission members that all evictions were considered too regrettable and were dealt with on a case by case basis. The full and detailed oversight on each situation and the additional vulnerabilities were always undertaken.

AGREED:

That the update be noted.

10. RESPONSIVE HOUSING REPAIRS 2020/21 - YEAR-END PERFORMANCE REPORT & UPDATE

The Director of Housing submitted a report, which provided an end of year update on the performance of the Division's Repairs and Maintenance service. The report included a summary of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the performance of the service during the year. The report also provided a progress update on improvements being made aimed at improving the performance of the service.

It was noted that due to the timing of the report, most performance figures quoted were based on year to date figures at Q3 of 2020-21. A verbal update on Q4 was provided showing a reduction in repairs and the performance of the out-of-hours service. It was considered that this was also due to a reduction in calls and requests for works, as tenants were not attempting to engage with maintenance services in view of the lockdown and the restrictions of allowing contractors into their properties.

In respect of the Key Performance Indicators it was reported that the repairs outstanding in each category had shown positive results and an improved situation, with a significant percentage of tenants being satisfied with the service. It was also reported that the service had benefitted from a recent procurement exercise.

The Chair referred to liaison with external agencies and asked whether this could be extended to other areas of the city.

It was noted in response that alongside a number of external agencies involved, there were also links to internal colleagues, where responsibilities and remits meant that efficiencies could be achieved. There were various multi-agency and internal communication groups to ensure that this was achieved.

AGREED:

1. To note the report and the progress made.
2. That a further report that focuses on the key performance indicators of the Improvement Plan be submitted to provide an update at the appropriate time when more data and information was available.

11. GOSCOTE HOUSE DEMOLITION - INSTALLATION OF SPRINKLERS IN TOWER BLOCKS

The Director of Housing submitted a report, which provided an update on the demolition of Goscote House and the installation of sprinkler systems in tower blocks. It was noted that these were both significant projects and would deliver significant and positive outcomes.

An update was provided on the procurement process where tender documents had been sent to potential contractors.

The Chair commented on the importance of the projects and referred to the ongoing situation with regard to tower blocks and the recent media attention concerning the Government's position on Grenfell.

AGREED:

To note the report and update.

12. RETRO-FIT AND THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The Director of Housing submitted a report, which commented on the declared climate emergency and the role of the Housing Division to reach the target of zero carbon by 2030.

The report confirmed the work being undertaken alongside what had been done in the past to improve the thermal efficiency of homes, buildings and vehicles.

In response to questions concerning energy efficient light bulbs it was clarified that the fitting of bulbs in individual homes was the responsibility of tenants. The communal areas were fitted by the service and it was confirmed that LED bulbs and tubes were used to generate efficiencies in new builds.

In terms of retro-fitting it was accepted that this was a complex issue with many buildings needing an upgrade on the fittings required.

In respect of comments relating to the suitability and levels of lighting in communal areas, it was noted that this would be made a part of individual area patchwalks that had been proposed, arrangements for which were being progressed and confirmed.

Councillor Cutkelvin (Assistant City Mayor – Education and Housing) advised of the position in respect of new builds and retro fitting. She reminded Members that the climate emergency agenda was a constant but necessary challenge and was considered through all portfolios.

AGREED:

That the report and update be noted.

13. ENVIRONMENTAL BUDGET 2021-22

The Director of Housing submitted a report, which outlined how the Environmental Budget could be utilised to fund improvements on estates.

It was reported that schemes had previously been agreed with schemes across the city and that ideas for improvements had been sought from key stakeholders, including tenants, residents and Ward Councillors. Examples and images of those recent enhancement works were submitted and the significant improvements that could be achieved were noted.

It was confirmed that patchwalks with Councillors could be arranged to assess priority. This was welcomed by Councillor Cutkelvin (Assistant City Mayor – Education and Housing) as it had been suggested in the past that the distribution of funds and the involvement of stakeholders had been inconsistent.

Members of the Commission were asked to consider the use of the budget across the city and to engage with external partners and stakeholders to help to decide on those projects where funds would be most appropriately and properly allocated.

In concluding the item the Chair welcomed the proposed suggested timeframe to ensure a more consistent approach.

AGREED:

That the report be noted, and Members be encouraged to contact the division with a view to promoting appropriate projects for the future use of the Environmental Budget.

14. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (ASB) SERVICE - REVISED PROPOSAL

The Director of Housing submitted a report, which set out a revised proposal on the delivery of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Services.

It was reported that currently services were delivered by Neighbourhood Housing Officers within the Housing Division and the Crime and ASB (CrASBU) Team based in the Neighbourhood and Environmental Division. The revised proposal was to create a central housing Anti-Social Behaviour Team that would work closely with CrASBU. Council tenants would still be able to report ASB to their housing officers however all investigations would be carried out by a central housing ASB team.

It was proposed that the key benefits of the suggested revised service would be to provide a consistent specialist ASB service to all complainants regardless of tenure and would enable Neighbourhood Housing Officers to focus on supporting tenants.

It was confirmed that the proposal to change the service has been consulted on previously with the Commission and with the Tenant's and Leaseholders Forum in 2020 and had been amended, in line with the consultation feedback received.

The Chair commented on the timing of the report, suggesting that it had been requested at previous meetings, and expressed concern at its lateness.

In response to a question from Councillor Cutkelvin (Assistant City Mayor - Education and Housing) it was confirmed that the report submitted was unchanged since being published for the previous meeting that had been cancelled.

The Chair also expressed concern at the impact on the team structure of Neighbourhood Services officers, and the management of the relationship with external partners. Concern was expressed that without those enhanced close working relationships and understanding, together with the reduction of control of the Council's own officers, the support to tenants would be diminished.

It was suggested by the Chair that a Task Group be established to assess the implications of the proposals and reference was made to the impact of local level meetings and more formal local action groups previously convened by the Police.

It was suggested that these meetings could be reconvened on the heightened multi-agency approach. To highlight this view the Director of Housing underlined the importance of the agreement that Council officers be based at the Mansfield House Police Station, which would ensure close working arrangements and information sharing, including use of the 'Sentinel' database.

It was emphasised that a consistent approach across the city in respect of ASB issues was required and would be the principal concern of the Task Group.

AGREED:

That a Task Group be established to examine the newly proposed arrangements concerning the management of anti-social behaviour cases, with all Members of the Commission to be invited to join meetings.

15. WORK PROGRAMME

The Commission's Work Programme for the 2021/22 Municipal Year was submitted for information and was noted.

16. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7.50pm.

Appendix B



‘Who Gets Social Housing’ and Overcrowding Reduction Strategy

For consideration by: Housing Scrutiny Commission

Date: 6 September 2021

Lead Director: Chris Burgin

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report authors: Justin Haywood, Service Manager – Housing Solutions & Partnerships
- Author contact details: justin.haywood@leicester.gov.uk
- Report version number: 1

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This report provides an update to Members of the 'headline' Housing Register and Lettings data, relating to Leicester City Council's Housing Register.
- 1.2. The report deals with the period starting 1st April 2020 and ending 31st March 2021.

2. COVID-19

- 2.1. From the end of March 2020 to the end of July 2020, 4 months in total, the Housing Register and Leicester HomeChoice was closed.
- 2.2. During this period, and especially at the beginning of the period, the availability of properties for allocation was minimal, as businesses worked on COVID-safe ways to continue with tenancy terminations, voids work, and other aspects of the property process.
- 2.3. The Government advised local authorities to progress limited allocations through a direct match & let process in order to ensure, insofar as possible, that those in critical housing need retain some access to social housing. Leicester adopted this approach, and it included a focus on;
 - Homeless applicants
 - Applicants at imminent risk of homelessness
 - Applicants at risk or harassment or domestic abuse
 - Priority referrals from Adult Social Care and Children's Services
 - Any other critical exceptional circumstance
- 2.4. The result of this was an increase in the proportion of lettings done via Direct Let during the period – 40% of all lettings.
- 2.5. Over the same period, and until very recently, Leicester City Council were operating an 'Everyone In' approach to homelessness assistance and temporary accommodation, to protect those who are rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping. This resulted in almost 1000 people being assisted across the year in a fantastic partnership effort which no doubt saved lives during the pandemic. Around 150 of these individuals remain within the pathway and require continued help into settled accommodation.
- 2.6. As an ongoing response to this crisis, and to aid service recovery, Leicester City Council are completing an increased number of direct allocations to persons within the Single Homeless Pathway, alongside other means of assistance.
- 2.7. Please note that a secondary effect of the Council's pandemic response and recovery, means that the statistics drawn from the Housing Register now have to be

viewed with caution as they do not represent a continuation of 'normal' i.e. are difficult to compare retrospectively. Statistics are expected to recover over 2021/2022.

- 2.8. With caution in place, Part 3 of this report now sets out the headline data for 2020/2021.

3. Headline data from the Housing Register

3.1. Overall number of households on the Housing Register

- The number of households on the Housing Register has decreased by 2% from 6486 at end-2019/2020 to 6366 at end-2020/2021.

3.2. Banding proportions

- Band 1 applicants account for 14% (869). The figure at end-2019/2020 was 14%.
- Band 2 applicants account for 38% (2404) of all households on the Housing Register. The figure at end-2019/2020 was 39%.
- Band 3 applicants account for 49% (3093) of all households on the Housing Register. The figure at end-2019/2020 was 47%.

3.3. Primary reasons for joining the Register

- Overcrowding remains the biggest reason for joining the Housing Register and currently accounts for 63% (4003) of the register.

Following a Summer 2019 Policy change, there are now three Overcrowding priorities, rather than the original two. This allows for overcrowding needs on the Housing Register to be better separated dependent on level of need, which in turn allows for those in the most critical housing need to be elevated and prioritised appropriately.

The following information summarises the differences between priorities:

- Band 1 Overcrowding priority is awarded to those whose overcrowding meets the most critical need – either meeting the statutory overcrowding definition within the Housing Act 198, or otherwise exceeding the property's maximum occupancy levels.
- Band 2 Overcrowding priority is awarded to those whose overcrowding falls short of Band 1 criteria, but is acknowledged within LCC's Allocations Policy as severe – generally those lacking 2 bedrooms or more.
- Band 3 Overcrowding priority is awarded to those whose overcrowding is not severe, but is acknowledged within LCC's Allocations Policy as causing potential houses difficulties – generally those lacking just one bedroom.

It's important to note that the number of critically/statutorily overcrowded households has decreased from 170 to 158 (7% decrease) in the last 12 months. This is primarily due to the higher banding priority (Band 1) awarded to those households with the severest overcrowding which has enabled them to secure more suitable housing.

This is evidence that the Policy change is working as intended.

Further to this, the Housing Division hold an Overcrowding Reduction Strategy to look at other ways to tackle the housing register, and are in the progress of extending homes where viable, and will shortly re-launch the Easy Move scheme to incentivise and assist with moves where people are under-occupying homes, to allow those homes to be better utilised.

- People who are homeless or threatened with homelessness accounts for 18% (1157) of all households on the Housing Register. The figure at end-2019/2020 was 17% so this remains relatively steady despite the unique challenges of 2020/2021.

3.4. Primary demand

- Demand across all types of accommodation is high, and outstrips supply.
- The highest General Needs demand is for 2-bedroom accommodation which accounts for 34% (2174) of total demand. The figure at end-2019/2020 was 33% so this remains relatively steady.
- Another primarily area of demand is for adapted accommodation. Work is ongoing to analyse this and determine how we can increase supply and make demand more equitable.

3.5. Other observations

- Social Housing tenants (Leicester) account for 24% (LCC tenants 1009, 16% & RSL tenants 488, 8%) of all households on the Housing Register. This is unchanged from 2019/2020.
- Applications from some wards are significantly higher than others, especially in wards where it is known that overcrowding is a major factor in housing need. Applications by Ward can be seen at Appendix 1.

4. Lettings Headline data

4.1. Overall number of lettings

- There were 980 lettings during 2020/2021. Lettings during 2019/2020 were 1271. The equates to a net reduction of 291 lets.
- As such, the number of lettings within 2020/2021 decreased by 23% compared to 2019/2020.
- This is primarily due changes in behaviour from Registered Providers during the pandemic (responses and recovery varied). 226 of the 291 lets (78%) can be accounted for by the net reduction in Housing Association offers to those on the Housing Register.
- Government statistics¹ show nationally there was a 39% decrease in the number of social lettings in the first 6 months of 2020/21.

4.2. Which applicants are getting the lettings?

- Of all lettings in 2020/2021;
 - Band 1 accounted for 67% (660) of offers;
 - Band 2 accounted for 28% (278) of offers;
 - Band 3 accounted for 4% (42) of offers.
- 517 (53%) of all lettings were for households who became homeless or were at threat of homelessness. This was a 7% proportionate increase from the corresponding period last year and is primarily due to the priority given for allocations to homeless households during the pandemic and whilst Leicester HomeChoice was closed.

4.3. Waiting times

4.3.1. General Needs

- For general needs properties that were not directly allocated, the current average waiting times for Band 1 households within 2020/2021 were (shown in months):

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed+
BAND 1				
House / Maisonette	N/A	9	9	14
Bungalow	6	N/A	N/A	N/A
Flat	6	7	N/A	N/A
Bedsit	4	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sheltered	2	N/A	N/A	N/A

* N/A indicates there were no lets of that type in the period.

¹ [Social housing lettings in England, April to September 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/social-housing-lettings-in-england-april-to-september-2020)

This has increased significantly from 2019/2020 where offers within Band 1 could be received within an average of 4 months. This is attributed to:

- Closure of Leicester HomeChoice for 4 months within Quarter 1
 - Direct allocation processes to those in critical need will have left some in less critical need waiting for a longer-than-normal period
 - Reduction in number of lettings available this period
 - 47% of lets were 1-bed accommodation
- For general needs properties that were not directly allocated, the current average waiting times for Band 2 households within 2020/2021 were (shown in months):

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed+
BAND 2				
House / Maisonette	N/A	29	45	38
Bungalow	9	N/A	N/A	N/A
Flat	14	15	N/A	N/A
Bedsit	6	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sheltered	6	N/A	N/A	N/A

* N/A indicates there were no lets of that type in the period.

This has remained relatively steady for those requiring 1-bedroom accommodation, but has increased for those waiting for 2-bedroom accommodation or larger, compared to 2019/2020 where offers within Band 2 could be received within an average of 18 months for 2-beds, and 24 months for 3 beds. This is attributed to:

- Closure of Leicester HomeChoice for 4 months within Quarter 1
- Direct allocation processes to those in critical need will have left some in less critical need waiting for a longer-than-normal period
- Reduction in number of lettings available this period
- 47% of lets were 1-bed accommodation

4.3.2. Wheelchair Accessible Accommodation

- For wheelchair accessible properties that were not directly allocated, the current average waiting times for households within 2020/2021 were (shown in months):

1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
-------	-------	-------	-------

BAND 1				
House / Maisonette	N/A	N/A	32	34
Bungalow	25	19	N/A	N/A
Flat	N/A	20	N/A	N/A
Bedsit	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sheltered	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
BAND 2				
House / Maisonette	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Bungalow	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Flat	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Bedsit	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sheltered	19	N/A	N/A	N/A

* N/A indicates there were no lets of that type in the period.

4.3.3. Other Adapted Accommodation

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
BAND 1				
House / Maisonette	N/A	15	19	34
Bungalow	7	13	N/A	N/A
Flat	5	7	N/A	N/A
Bedsit	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sheltered	5	N/A	N/A	N/A
BAND 2				
House / Maisonette	N/A	N/A	34	N/A
Bungalow	12	89	N/A	N/A
Flat	5	24	N/A	N/A
Bedsit	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sheltered	5	N/A	N/A	N/A

4.3.4. Ground Floor Accommodation

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
BAND 1				
House / Maisonette	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Bungalow	7	N/A	N/A	N/A
Flat	10	9	N/A	N/A
Bedsit	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sheltered	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
BAND 2				
House / Maisonette	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Bungalow	12	N/A	N/A	N/A
Flat	5	9	N/A	N/A
Bedsit	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sheltered	5	N/A	N/A	N/A

4.4. Housing Association & HomeCome Lettings

- Lettings to Housing Associations and HomeCome accounted for 146 (15%) of all lettings in 2020/2021. This compared to 372 (29%) of all lettings in 2019/2020. This is primarily due to the close of Leicester HomeChoice and the continuing effects of the pandemic, and more specifically the varying responses and recovery of Registered Providers.
- Midland Heart was the largest provider with 36 (25%) of these 146 lets with PA Housing the next highest provider with 35 lettings (24%).
- There were 185 lettings via the Housing Options Private Rented Sector Team, creating tenancies in the private rented sector via our incentive schemes. This was a 16% increase from 2019/2020, but fell short of the new target of 200. This was as a result of targets not being met within Quarter 1 following the market shutdown during the first COVID-19 lockdown.

4.5. Direct Lettings

- The number of direct lettings accounted for 38% (375) of all lettings in 2020/2021. This was a 100% increase from 2019/2020 which came in at 19%. This is attributed to;
 - the closure of Leicester HomeChoice for a 4-month period during the pandemic with all new voids being allocated on a direct let basis
 - an increased number of direct lets to those who are homeless, or threatened with homelessness, to aid homelessness services to recover from the government's pandemic 'Everyone In' initiative.

4.6. Other observations

- There was a total of 464 lettings of 1-bedroom accommodation in 2020/2021. This accounts for 47% of all lettings.
- The areas with the most available properties within 2020/2021 were New Parks (117), followed by Eyres Monsell (101).

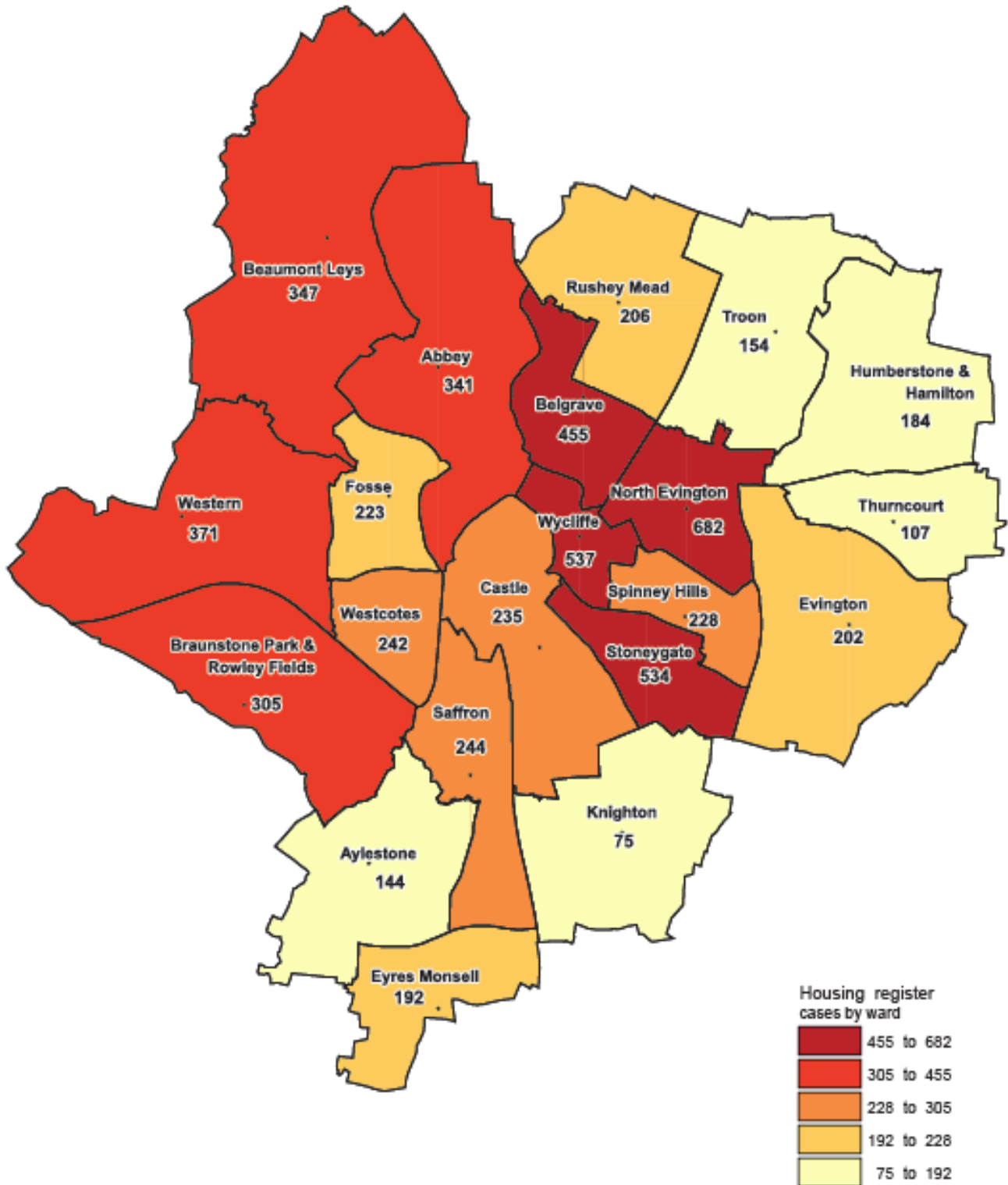
5. **Summary of appendices:**

- Appendix 1 – Map - Number of Applicants on the Housing Register by Ward (01/10/2020)
- Appendix 2 – Dashboard – Customer Dashboard
- Appendix 3 – Dashboard – Management/Staff Dashboard

6. **Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?** No

7. **Is this a “key decision”?** If so, why? No – update only.

Number of Applicants on the Housing Register by Ward (01/04/2021)



Who Gets Social Housing? (Council and Housing Association Homes) **Updated every 6 months**
Last Update: 1st April 2021

Total applicants on register on 1st Apr 2021
6,366

Total Lettings from 1st Apr 2020 to 1st Apr 2021
980

Average waiting times for property sizes:



4 months waiting in Band 1
9 months waiting in Band 2
More than 24 months in Band 3



8 months waiting in Band 1
24 months waiting in Band 2
More than 48 months in Band 3

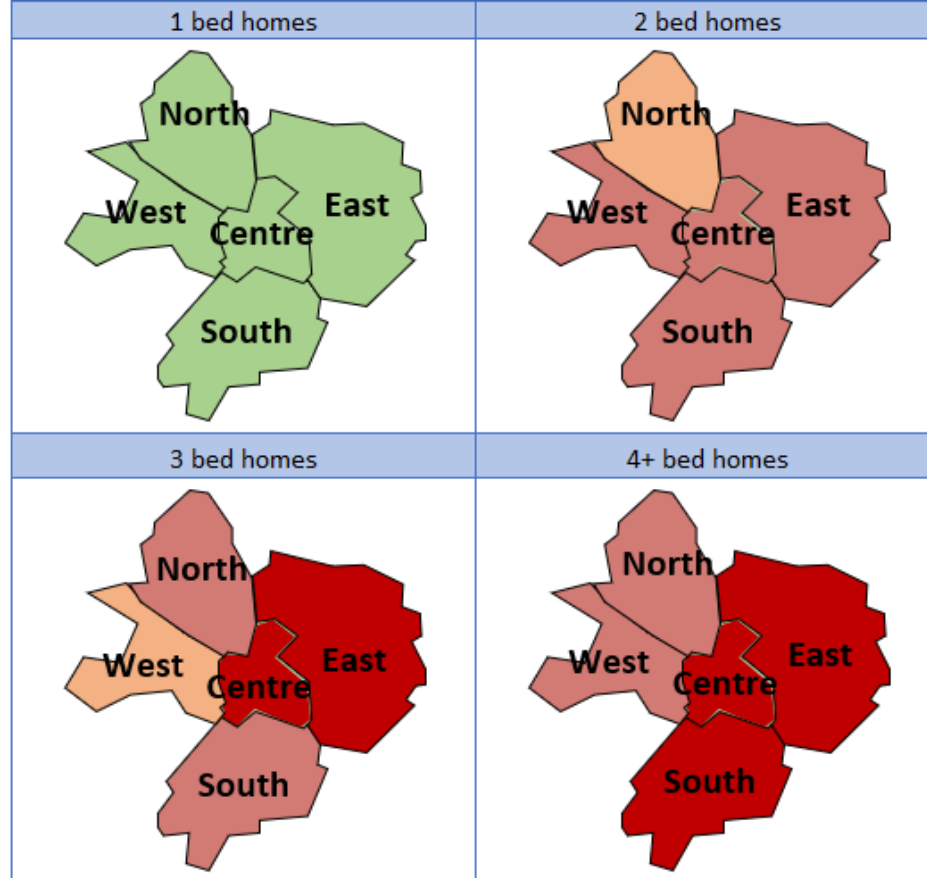


9 months waiting in Band 1
48 months waiting in Band 2
More than 72 months in Band 3



14 months waiting in Band 1
48 months waiting in Band 2
More than 72 months in Band 3

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




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


Who Gets Social Housing? (Council and Housing Association Homes) 2020 - 2021
Housing Register Build Data

Total Applicants	
Period last year	As at 1st April 2021
6,486	6,366
% Increase / Decrease	
-2%	

Band Breakdown		
Band 1	Band 2	Band 3
869	2,404	3,093



Need (size of home) breakdown				
1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed +
2,021	2,174	1,374	601	196




Top 10 reasons for appearing on Register		
Priority Reason	Number of Applicants	As a % of all Applicants
Overcrowding (B3)	2927	46%
Homeless or threatened with (B1&2)	867	14%
Medium Medical (B2)	444	7%
Severe Overcrowding (B2)	302	5%
Temporary Accommodation (B2)	290	5%
High Medical (B1)	283	4%
Critical Overcrowding (B1)	158	2%
Sheltered Housing Only (B3)	116	2%
Priority Under-occupation (B1)	92	1%
Harassment (B1)	54	1%

Lettings Data

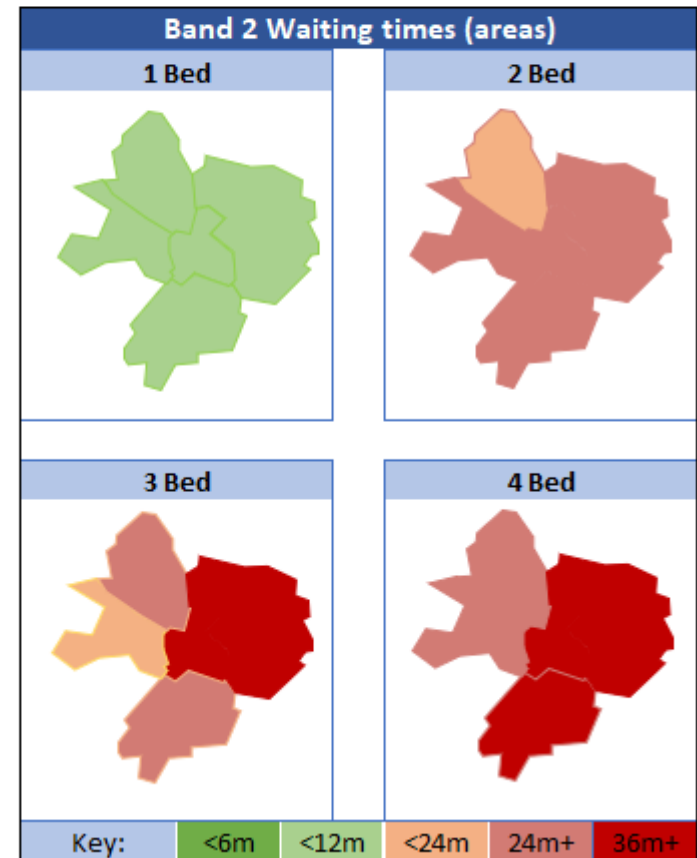
Total Lettings	
2019/2020	2020/2021
1,271	980
% Increase / Decrease	
-23%	





Band Breakdown		
Band 1	Band 2	Band 3
660	278	42



Lettings breakdown by size of home				
1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed +
464	248	245	17	6

Waiting times (months)					
	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5 Bed
BAND 1	4	8	9	14	14
BAND 2	9	24	48	48	-
BAND 3	-	-	-	-	-



Which priorities are getting the housing?			
	1 Temp Accom 2 Homeless 3 Medical		1 Homeless 2 Overcrowding 3 Medical
	1 Homeless 2 Overcrowding =3 Management Case =3 Medical		1 Overcrowding 2 Medical 3 Homeless

Appendix C



Annual Rent Performance

April 2020 – March 2021

For consideration by: Housing Scrutiny Commission

Date: 6 September 2021

Lead Director: Chris Burgin

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: ALL
- Report author: Zenab Valli
- Author contact details: Zenab.valli@leicester.gov.uk Tel: 0116 4543573
- Report version number: V1.2

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the Scrutiny Commission on the rent arrears progress over the full financial year, from April 2020 to March 2021.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The report is for information and members are asked to note the contents of the Rent Arrears Report.

3. SUMMARY

- 3.1 At the end of the financial year (4th April 2021) the cash amount outstanding for current tenant arrears were **£1.799m**, this is **11% lower** than at the same point in the previous financial year – see 3.2, Table 2.
- 3.2 The proportion of rent collected between April to March 2021 was **101.01%** which is above target.
- 3.3 The team supported tenants to apply for Discretionary Housing Payments. A total of **£590,497** was paid in DHP for all qualifying Council tenants. This is a **51% increase** in awards compared to the previous financial year. From this figure a total of £81,182 was awarded to support tenants affected by the Bedroom Tax and a total of £468,261 was awarded to tenants in receipt of Universal Credit.
- 3.4 A total of **2,864** tenants have now registered to use the Housing Online Service which has doubled compared to the same point last year.
- 3.5 A total of **3,659** tenants pay housing or garage rent by direct debit, an **increase of 269** compared to previous financial year end.
- 3.6 By the end of the financial year 2020/21, a total number of **5,376** council tenants were claiming UC equating to **27%** of all current council tenants. A total of **57%** of tenants were in rent arrears which is a **20% reduction** than at the same point last year - see 3.17, Table 8
- 3.7 The Rent Management Advisors have been supporting vulnerable tenants, or those with complex needs who are claiming Universal Credit. By the end of the year, the Rent Management Advisors supported **273** tenants. A total of 56% of the tenants required short-term support whilst making their initial UC claim and, the remaining 44% are being provided with longer-term support.

3.8 No evictions were carried out over the past year and very limited legal activity took place to pursue non-payment of rent. The team have performed outstandingly against a difficult backdrop over the last 12 months.

4. REPORT

Current Tenant Rent Arrears

4.1 Current Rent Arrears at the end of each quarter for the financial year 2020/21:

Table 1. Quarterly Arrears

Period	Arrears at Quarter End
Quarter 1	£2,612,023
Quarter 2	£2,347,659
Quarter 3	£1,707,835
Quarter 4	£1,799,863

4.2 Comparison of year-end figures over the last four years:

Table 2. Financial Year End Figures

Period	Arrears at Financial Year End
2017/18	£1,442,250
2018/19	£1,627,034
2019/20	£2,036,496
2020/21	£1,799,863

4.3 Table 1 shows the cash amount owing at the end of each quarter in the last financial year. There was a noticeable and significant increase in arrears during the first half of the year due to impact and challenges arising from the pandemic. Like all areas of the Council, the team were significantly impacted operationally and required a period of adjustments to the new ways of working. This was combined with the restrictions imposed like the eviction ban and, the announcement of suspensions to housing possession cases in courts affecting new and existing possession claims.

4.4 Table 2 shows the cash amount owing at week ending 4th April 2021 was **£1.799m**, this is **11% lower** than at the same point in the previous financial year. Despite the challenges faced by the team over the past 12 months they have worked tremendously hard and achieved a remarkable year end performance. There have been many positive reasons which have attributed to the decrease in arrears by the end of the year.

Some examples of good working practices and easing of restrictions which eventually led to high performance are shown below.

- Conducting essential home visits after a period of inability due to lockdown.
- A new payment feature was implemented to the DWP landlord Portal in September 2020 which meant, tenants started to gradually receive their Universal Credit housing Costs directly to their landlord at the same time they were receiving their Universal Credit payment.

- Time invested in supporting the team with the new ways of working and on their health and wellbeing. This resulted in a reasonably good moral across the team.
- A huge emphasis on performance management to ensure output and productivity was maximised.
- Team were supported with regular training and briefing sessions in relation to changes to work processes for example, changes to legal processes.
- Tenants were supported with Income maximisation and support to claim Discretionary Housing Funds (DHP), Winter Support Grants, food parcels. Referrals were made to specialist agencies if tenants are facing financial or debt worries i.e. referrals to CiTAL, Community Advice & Law Centre and STAR.
- Tenants were offered a more lenient and flexible payment plan depending on their circumstances and where incomes had been affected by the pandemic.
- Offering a more support led approach compared to enforcement has resulted in improvement to the tenant and landlord relationship. The team have received many compliments to this effect and subsequently, encourages tenants to pay and comply with payment agreements. *“Thank you ever so much for all your assistance you've given me, you don't only chase people for rent but do an amazing job assisting too, thank you so much, you've really helped me a lot without you I'll still be struggling very much. Thank you so much”*
- The lifting of the possession ban and courts re-opening to hear possession cases from September 2020.

4.5 The rent collection figures for Leicester remain good in comparison with other authorities with only **35%** of our current tenants in rent arrears. This is **3% lower** than the figure in financial year 2019/20.

Proportion of Rent Collected

4.6 The team had a key performance 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 2021 was **101.01%**. The figure reflects a rolling 52-week performance and demonstrates the hard work and tremendous efforts made by the team in maximising rent collection.

Number of Cases

4.7 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	2,824
Quarter 2	1,771
Quarter 3	1,316
Quarter 4	1,431

Where no net rent is payable (i.e. on full benefit), full rent 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
2017/18	1,264
2018/19	1,451
2019/20	2,319
2020/21	1,431

4.8 The number of cases in arrears owing 7 weeks or more net rent **decreased** by **38%** over the previous year end figure. The 7-week arrears include lower amounts of net rent, so this is not a true reflection on the severity of the debts.

Arrears Per Debtor

4.9 The total arrears divided by the total number of tenants in rent arrears at the specified intervals are shown in tables 5 & 6 below:

Table 5. Average Arrears per Debtor by Quarter End 2020/21

Period	Average Arrears
Quarter 1	£288.24
Quarter 2	£267.05
Quarter 3	£312.22
Quarter 4	£264.10

Table 6. Average Arrears per Debtor by Financial Year End

Period	Average Arrears
2017/18	£196.65
2018/19	£233.91
2019/20	£266.45
2020/21	£264.10

4.10 Tables 5 shows the average arrears increased in the early part of the last financial year 2020/21 and decreased by year-end. At Quarter 3 the average is higher due to the rent non-payment weeks in December which reduces the numbers of tenants in arrears.

Table 6 shows that the debt **decreased** in comparison to the previous year by less than **1%**. This figure is variable depending on the number of tenants in arrears at any given time.

Top 500 Arrears Cases (by value)

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

Table 7. Top 500 Arrears Cases

Quarter End 2020/21	Highest Case	Lowest Case	Average	Total Value
Quarter 1	£4,037	£974	£1,446	£722,932
Quarter 2	£5,152	£864	£1,459	£729,304
Quarter 3	£6,096	£760	£1,402	£701,125
Quarter 4	£7,211	£706	£1,296	£647,951

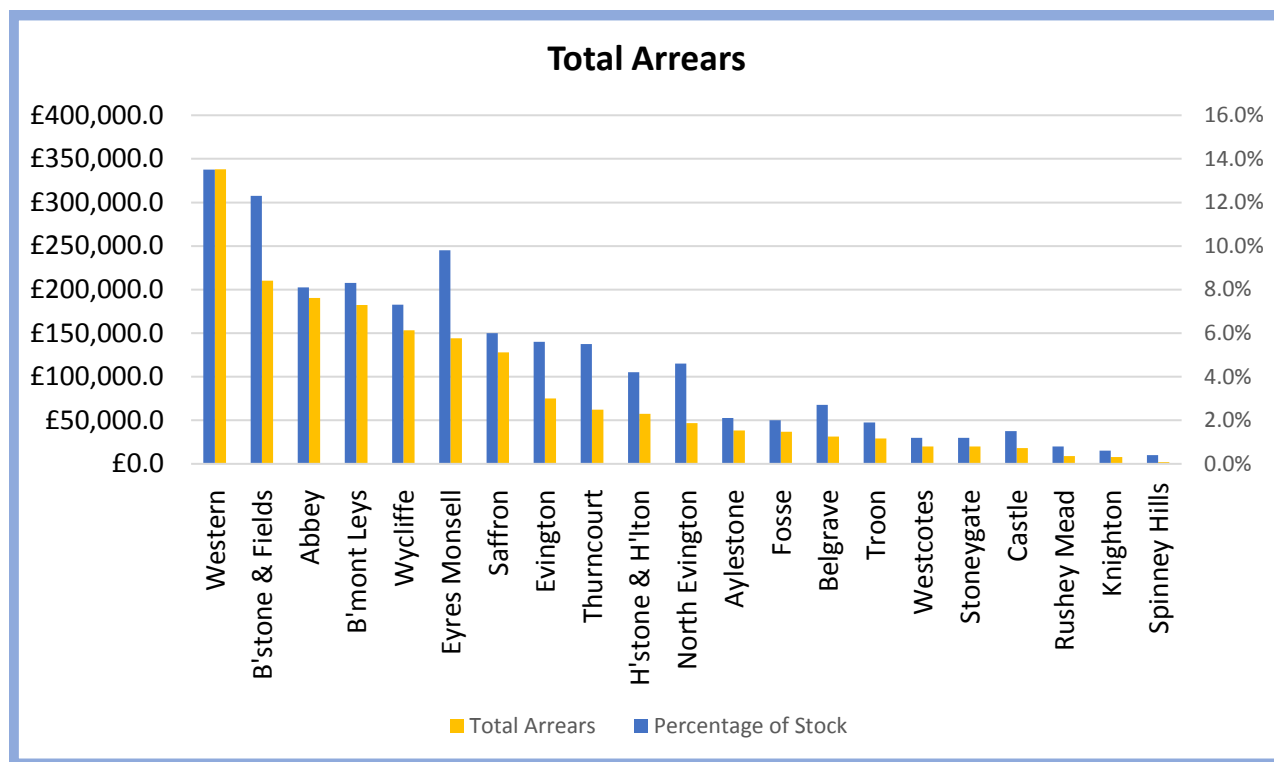
4.12 Table 7 shows that the total value of top arrears cases **decreased** by **10%** at year-end when compared to quarter 1. This is in line with the decreases seen in figures presented at the earlier tables. At year end the highest arrears cases in excess of £7k was the only highest case in that bracket with the next highest being in the region of £5,600.

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. Higher debt cases are influenced by courts preventing the team from taking possession actions until such time the court orders. The government restrictions and ban on evictions have resulted in the team being unable to take actions against those tenants that persistently fail to engage or pay their rent. Despite this, the team continue all efforts to engage with the tenants to help support tenancy sustainment.

Arrears by Ward

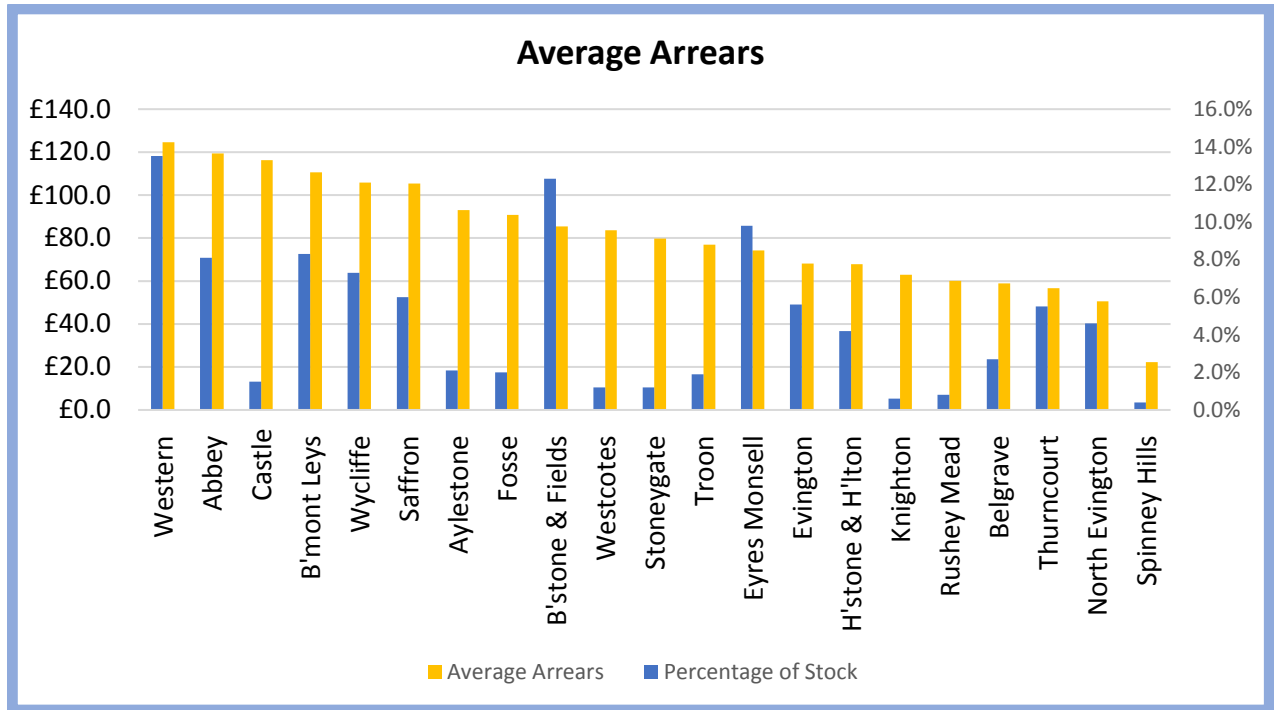
4.13 The graphs presented below show the total arrears and average arrears by ward at end of financial year 2020/21.

Graph 1. Total Arrears by Ward



4.14 The total arrears chart shows that the ward areas with the most stock have the highest arrears values and in the main the arrears are proportionate against the percentage of stock.

Graph 2. Total Average Arrears by Ward



4.15 The average arrears chart presents areas like Castle, Westcotes and Rushey Mead as lower in stock but with high average arrears value. Despite low stocks sizes even the smallest number of cases with very high arrears can cause the average arrears to spike up. Additionally, 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.

Arrears by measures of Deprivation

4.16 The following analysis shows the distribution of households in arrears across two area-based measures of deprivation – the Office of National Statistics household income data and the MCHLG’s Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Arrears and areas of low income

4.17 The ONS produce an estimate of average household income at middle layer super output area level (MSOA - areas with an average of 4,000 households). The last estimate was produced for 2018. A total of 61.1% of council households in arrears are located within the 10 lowest income MSOAs, compared to 56.6% of households not in arrears.

Arrears and deprivation

4.18 The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is the official measure of relative deprivation for Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs/neighbourhoods) in England. LSOAs contain an average of 650 households. A total of 66.3% of households in arrears live in the nationally most deprived ten percent of LSOAs, compared with 61.2% for households not in arrears

4.19 Based on the above findings, households in arrears appear to be disproportionately represented in deprived areas of the city, although, this will vary depending on the parameters used to define 'most deprived'. Although the findings indicate a connection between rent arrears and areas of deprivation, both measures use relatively broad reporting areas that may inevitably include both relatively deprived and relatively affluent households to produce an average finding. As a result, it's possible that the experience of some deprived households is not reflected in areas containing more affluent households.

Arrears by Ethnic Group

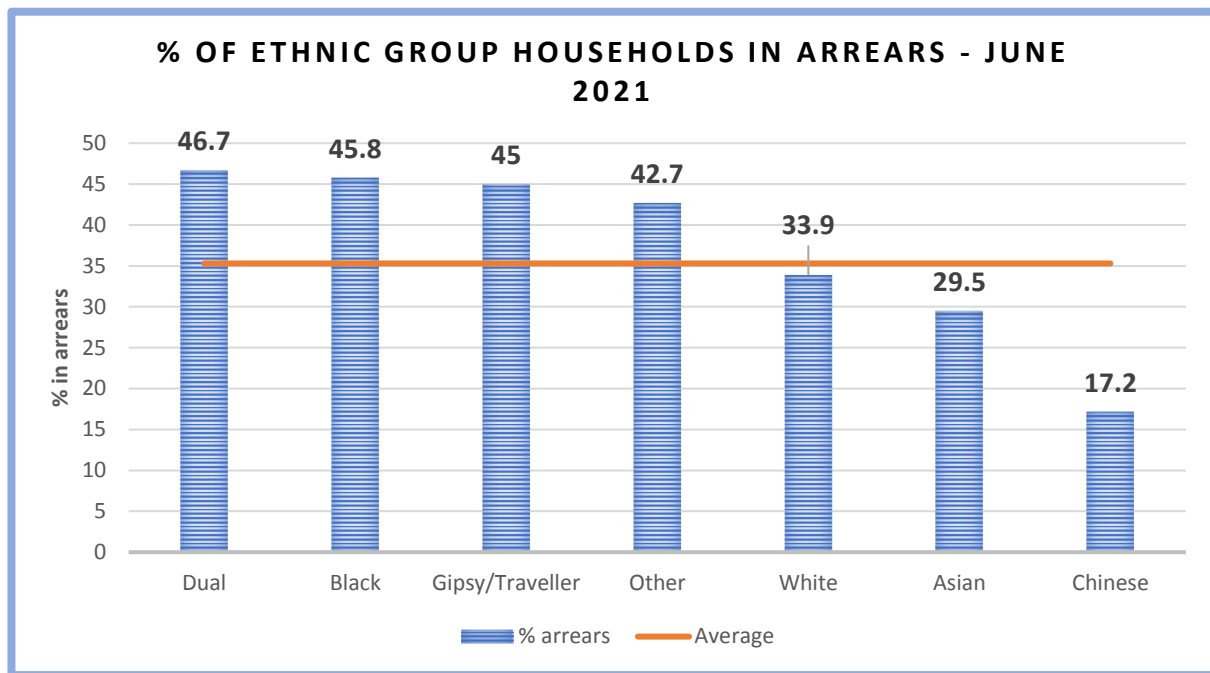
4.20 The following analysis shows the distribution of households in arrears across ethnic groups.

- a) British Black households experience a higher level of arrears than the city-wide average with 45.8% of all Black/Black British households are in arrears, compared with a city-wide level of 35.3%.

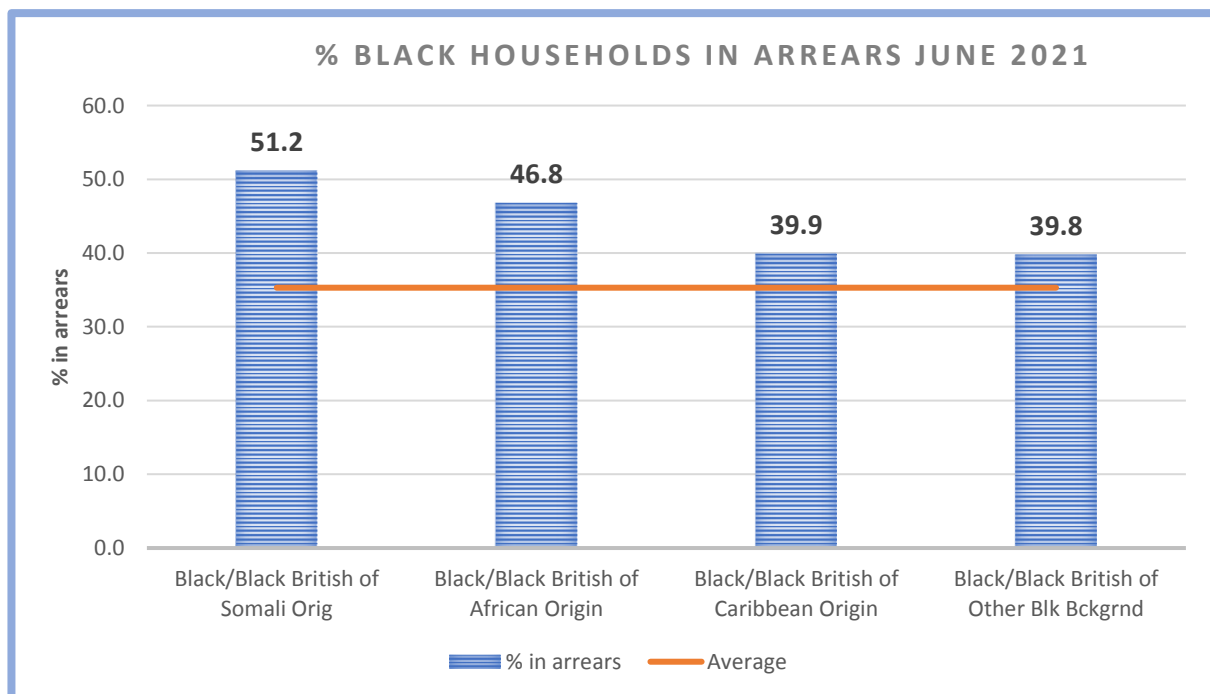
Within this ethnic group, 46.8% of Black / Black British African households are in arrears and 51.2% of Somali households are in arrears – that's the highest % of any ethnic group.

- b) Other ethnic groups which have disproportionately high levels of arrears are, Dual Heritage/Mixed households (46.7%), Gipsy and Traveller households and 'Other' ethnic group (42.7%).
- c) British White/White households are close to the city average (partly because they make up such a large proportion of all households) at 33.9%, although households that are white of European origin have 38.4% of households in arrears.
- d) British Asian/Asian households have relatively low levels of arrears (29.5%)
- e) 35% of households for whom we do not have ethnicity information are in arrears.

Graph 3. Comparison between broad ethnic groups' arrears levels and the city-wide arrears average.



Graph 4. comparison between the different Black / Black British households in arrears and the city-wide arrears average.



4.21 Further investigation is required to establish the reasons for the differences in the number of households experiencing rent arrears in each ethnic group. Further research is required to look at historical data to establish trends and to reveal the key causes of rent arrears and whether any ethnic groups are disproportionately affected by them and, if so, what can be done to mitigate these impacts. Some

possible areas for further investigation are shown below.

- a) Point of time fluctuations – rent arrears cases fluctuate and so proportions will vary according to the point of time that the assessment is made. This is particularly true of some ethnic groups with relatively small numbers.
- b) The pandemic – research has shown that some ethnic groups have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic in terms of the likelihood of contracting Covid-19, the degree to which they are affected by it; and the extent to which they are in employment sectors which are negatively impacted in terms of unemployment, furlough and work opportunities.
- c) Some communities may have been disproportionately affected by benefit changes, such as the benefit cap negatively impacting on their ability to pay their rent.
- d) Some households, such as those in newer communities, may be negatively impacted by the process of familiarisation with rents processes.

Universal Credit

4.22 It's almost 3 years since the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) in Leicester. Table 8 (below) provides information about Council tenants claiming this DWP benefit.

Table 8. Universal Credit Key Performance Indicators

Quarter End 2020/21	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	4,390	65%	79%	£1,352,795	£308.15	1,051
Quarter 2	4,766	65%	73%	£1,161,199	£243.64	1,135
Quarter 3	5,076	64%	51%	£866,101	£170.63	1,211
Quarter 4	5,376	63%	57%	£906,269	£168.58	1,277

*APA = Alternative Payment Arrangements are when the DWP pay the housing Costs directly to the Council from the tenants Universal Credit Housing costs entitlement

4.23 By the end of the financial year 2020/21, a total number of 5,376 council tenants were claiming UC equating to 27% of all current council tenants. This compares to 43% of council tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit. From the 5,376, a total of 55% of those tenants were previously in receipt of Housing Benefit / Legacy Benefits prior to moving on to Universal Credit. By the end of the year a total of 57% of tenants claiming UC were in rent arrears which is a 20% reduction than at the same point last year.

4.24 Table 8 shows when tenants moved onto Universal Credit between 63-65% 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.

- 4.25 By year end a total of 1,277 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 first payment to reach their rent account.
- 4.26 There has been a substantial reduction in the current value of rent arrears on UC cases. This is primarily due a new payment feature that was implemented to the DWP landlord Portal in September 2020, which meant tenants started to gradually receive their managed payments directly to their landlord at the same time they were receiving their rent payments. This has resulted in a positive improvement and reduction in virtual rent arrears compared to the previous delays by up to 8 weeks and the manual import of the paper schedules.
- 4.27 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. Any issues with complex cases or with the joint working arrangements are escalated to the DWP Partnership Manager's for resolution. The DWP co-location arrangement is suspended due to Covid-19 however, management will authorise visits at the local Job Centre Plus sites if tenants require urgent appointments to support benefit claims. These visits are pre-planned and pre-assessed for any risks.
- 4.28 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.
- 4.29 The teams 4 Rent Management Advisors (RMAs) have been supporting vulnerable tenants, or those with complex needs with claiming and maintaining Universal Credit claims. 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 consider digital learning courses. Additionally, they are regularly conducting research and sharing information within the team so we can respond to tenants needs and provide the most appropriate advice.
- 4.30 By year-end 2020/21, the Rent Management Advisors supported 273 tenants. A total of 56% of the tenants required short-term support whilst making their initial UC claim and the remaining 44% required longer-term support to help manage their claim and also, to apply for any additional elements within their claim for example, Limited Capability for Work Related Activity which can take several months to resolve.
- 4.31 Due to the pandemic and challenges faced by the team a recommendation was made to increase the RMAs from 4 to 7 to help cope with the potential surge of new UC claims, end of furloughing and support for all our tenants during this incredibly challenging and difficult time. Additional support was required to support

tenants that have previously been in paid employment and not familiar with the welfare benefit system, its processes or to navigate around this fairly new system.

In addition to this, the RMAs are also trialling a new approach to support tenants. The Income and Rent Support Pilot which runs for a six-month period initially commenced early April 2021. They are providing Welfare Benefit and financial support to both new and existing tenants which is in addition to the Universal Credit support. The pilot will enable the team to provide direct support to tenants experiencing financial or benefit related hardship, which may impact on their ability to pay rent and potential loss of their home. The RMAs have undergone a period of training to help them support tenants in the best possible way.

For the period of the pilot the team will no longer make new referrals to STAR for financial or benefit related support, however referrals for non-financial related support will continue in line with STAR criteria. Tenants who are already receiving support from STAR will continue to receive their support. The pilot will be reviewed initially after a 3 months period. Performance measures have been established and will be key to evidencing the success of the pilot and its potential longer-term future.

Court & Evictions

4.32 The government started with a ban on all rental possession cases from March 2020, this was extended before finally being lifted on 20th Sept 2020. The legal Notice of Seeking Possession continues to be served with a 6-month expiry opposed to the previous 4-week rule (until 31st May 2021) however, under exceptional criteria for example, unpaid rent for 6 months, a 4-week notice can be served.

The team have started focussing on any new cases that need to be listed for possession hearings due to non-payment of rent. The cases are being carefully considered and all avenues to avoid this action is being explored in the first instance. The cases will be reviewed by a management before any potential submission of court summons.

There are significant challenges the team are facing when dealing with County Court as they have a significant backlog of cases that need processing and are not operating at their full capacity. The assumption is that this will continue until such time the courts return back to some type of normality and catch up with pending actions on possession cases.

Throughout the year there have been no evictions taking place as Leicester's localised lockdown continued to suspend that action due to Government orders, for bailiffs not to enter properties in Tier 2 & 3 areas. This has been further extended until 31st May 2021. In the meantime, eviction resumes are being considered and warrant requests being submitted where it's absolutely necessary, with a view that ongoing efforts to sustain tenancies continue to be provided until such time an eviction takes place. Tenants are encouraged and provided with ample opportunities to reach reasonable payment solutions to avoid possession orders and evictions.

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.

DHP's (Discretionary Housing Payment)

4.33 Between April 2020 and March 2021 the team supported tenants to apply for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs). A total £590,497 was paid in awards for all qualifying Council tenants. This is a 51% increase in awards compared to the previous financial year. From this figure a total of £81,182 was awarded to support tenants affected by the Bedroom Tax and a total of £468,261 was awarded to tenants in receipt of Universal Credit.

Housing Online Account

4.34 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 has since further expanded expand allowing tenants to log new repairs and make housing related enquiries. Currently a total of 2,864 tenants have registered to use this service and this figure has doubled compared to the same point last year. The team are promoting this service to encourage council tenants to become more independent in managing their Housing accounts online.

Direct Debits

4.35 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 3,659 tenants pay housing or garage rent by direct debit an increase of 269 compared to previous financial year end.

5.0 Key Challenges 2021/22

5.1 The team are facing significant challenges in the coming year due to the ongoing Impact of the pandemic and economical challenges. The arrears performance may become unstable with expected increases when furloughing comes to an end. The moratorium on evictions is regularly reviewed and has already lasted over 12 months to avoid any risks impacting on public health due to homelessness. The latest ban is in place until 31st May 2021 with possibilities of further extensions. This will continue to present challenges to maximise rent collection alongside not being able to take punitive actions if non-payment of rent continues.

5.2 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 been modified as per the Coronavirus Act 2020. We are allowing tenants 6 months before issuing possession proceedings compared to the previous 1-month rule. Consequently, this causes increases in rent arrears before

possession proceedings can be started on cases where it's appropriate to take these measures.

5.3 County Court have changed working practices due to social distancing measures and it's no longer possible to return to block listed claims at the rate of 10 cases per hour. This has affected the volume and frequency of cases, causing delays in recovering possessions and consequently causing increased 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 where matters have been agreed and at the discretion of the presiding Judge.

5.4 On 4th May 2021 the Debt Respite Scheme (Breathing Space) legislation came into force and this will impact rent collection. In summary, this gives debtors the right to legal protections from creditor action. There are 2 types of breathing space: a standard breathing space and a mental health crisis breathing space. A standard breathing space gives legal protections from creditor action for up to 60 days. The protections include pausing most enforcement action and contact from creditors and freezing most interest and charges on debts.

The types of actions that must be suspended and will impact on rent collection due to the breathing space include:

- a) Enforcing a court order
- b) Pursuing a warrant for eviction
- c) Starting any action or legal proceedings
- d) Serving a notice to take possession for rent arrears or takes possession of their property for rent arrears if a notice has already been served. Creditors can still serve a notice or take possession on grounds not related to rent arrears during a breathing space
- e) Apply to DWP for a new third-party deduction to be taken from an individual's benefit payments

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

6. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

6.1 Financial implications

This report presents the rent arrears position for current tenants within the general housing stock. Not documented in this report are the arrears associated with non-dwelling properties (such as garages and parking spaces), hostel bedspaces and former tenants.

Stuart McAvoy – Principal Accountant

6.2 Legal implications

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

Jeremy Rainbow – Principal Lawyer (Litigation) – x371435

6.3 Equalities implications

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act; advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; this includes the need to: (i) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic; (ii) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.

Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, with due regard.

The report provides an update to inform Members of the Scrutiny Commission on the rent arrears progress over the full financial year, from April 2020 to March 2021.

There are no direct equality implications arising from this report, however it would be useful in relation to tenants in serious debt to have these monitored by protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act (sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability, race, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, age) in order to address any adverse impact and put in place mitigating actions.

The report mentions that further investigation is required to establish the reasons for the differences in the number of households experiencing rent arrears in each ethnic group. To qualify for the mental health crisis breathing space, a mental health professional must confirm a person is receiving crisis treatment.

It is important that officers continue to offer early appropriate professional support and guidance to tenants to reduce rent arrears.

Surinder Singh, Equalities Officer, Ext 37 4148

6.4 Climate Emergency implications

There are no significant climate emergency implications directly associated with this report.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284

Appendix D



Rent Arrears Policy

For consideration by: Housing Scrutiny Commission

Date: 6 September 2021

Lead Director: Chris Burgin

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: ALL
- Report author: Zenab Valli
- Author contact details: Zenab.valli@leicester.gov.uk Tel: 0116 4543573
- Report version number: v1.0

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the newly revised rent arrears policy that is used to collect rent and service charges from Council tenants.

2. Recommended actions/decision

- 2.1 The purpose of the report is to inform scrutiny of the revised policy and for members to review the documents and provide comments for consideration as part of the development of the rent arrears policy.

3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

- 3.1 The policy is considered necessary so that members of the public are aware of the Councils approach to prevention and collection of rent arrears.

4. Background and options with supporting evidence

- 4.1 Leicester City Council owns and manages a housing stock consisting of 20,368 properties as at April 2021. All Council tenants that occupy a Council home sign a legally binding tenancy agreement and are expected to comply with the conditions of tenancy, which includes their obligation to pay their rent and service charges in a timely manner. The effective prevention and management of rent arrears is an important matter for the Housing Division as the collection of rent and service charges, funds the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) which in turn enables investment in the maintenance of Council homes.

This report provides a summary of the key points from the revised version of the policy and explains the Councils approach to the collection of rent arrears. The policy covers tenants with Introductory or Secure tenancies and those that have a Garage or Parking Space with the Council.

In the process of developing this policy, consideration was given to rent arrears policies from other Social Landlords and Housing Associations. The findings from this benchmarking exercise was that there was a broad range and different types of arrears policies but in the main, the messages were consistent around the management of rent arrears.

Supporting evidence is contained in section 5.

5. Rent Arrears Policy

- 5.1 The Income Management Team is a specialist team that are responsible for collecting the rent and service charges. The team strive to keep the level of rent arrears to an absolute minimum and maximise rental income in the best interest of tenants and the Council. The team have a renewed focus on using a range of preventative measures to help sustain tenancies and minimising the use of possession which is incorporated within the revised rent arrears policy.
- 5.2 The policy has been designed to ensure all officers adopt the same fair and consistent approach considering equality and proportionality when taking any recovery actions for non-payment of rent. The policy seeks to emphasise the ethos of working effectively and efficiently to ultimately sustain tenancies. The team are already performing at high standards and have maintained excellent collection rates by following the best practice laid out within this policy. The high performance is evidenced and can be reviewed within the Annual Rent Report which is also being presented at HSC jointly alongside this report.
- 5.3 The policy has been reviewed to ensure there is a strategy for managing rent arrears that is reflective of ongoing changes to various types of legislation for example, the introduction of the Welfare Reform Act 2012. This introduced significant changes to the welfare benefit system and introduced new benefits which meant the team are responsible for acquiring the relevant knowledge and information required in order to best support Council tenants. New regulations came into force in May 2021, which introduced the Debt Respite Scheme, also known as the Breathing Space Moratorium. This scheme aims to help people in debt problems manage their finances and seek professional debt advice. The team work jointly and in partnership with local advice partners who can help provide tenants with support if they have other debts and the policy outlines, advice agencies that tenants can access to obtain their own independent legal advice.
- 5.4 The team endeavour to consider the needs of the tenants and takes into account any reasonable adjustments that may need to be made to support the most vulnerable and adapt communication styles as appropriate and where required. There is consideration for when tenants may be put at a significant disadvantage without a specific piece of information particularly, around legal processes and the policy recognises that this information may need to be provided in a suitable format for tenants. The policy recognises that some tenants will need a more sensitive service and those tenants will be treated in accordance with their needs
- 5.5 This policy sets out guidelines on the possession actions and involves a range of alternatives and exercises staff discretion in policy implementation. The policy emphasises the proactive approach to any rent arrears situation and the full support that can be offered by the team. It recognises and provides a process that evidences everything possible will be explored to avoid rent arrears from escalating and legal actions being taken against tenancies. The Council approach will remain focussed on preventative action and early intervention to prevent the initial accrual of rent arrears by engaging with tenants early on and identifying any changes to their benefit entitlements. The policy identifies that household's circumstances do change and, any recovery action will reflect this, including changes of circumstances and loss/change of income due to welfare reform

- 5.6 Arrears prevention is a top priority for the Division and managements communication with staff is robust ensuring the rent recovery process is clear, staff are highly trained in a range of areas including Welfare Benefit regulations, the legal framework for rent recovery and the sensitive approaches to debt collection. The policy promotes a payment culture by highlighting the connection between rent payments and the ability to deliver high quality service as well as publicising the serious consequences of non- payment. There is also reference to the wide range of options for payments that are flexible, accessible, and convenient to use and the policy promotes the Housing Online Service. The rent arrears policy refers to the Councils Corporate Debt Policy which is also a key document in the Councils approach to debt collection.
- 5.7 Occasionally, tenants fall into financial difficulties and may be unable to pay the rent due. In these cases, the policy outlines that tenants will be provided with basic money advice and offer of affordable repayment plans, taking into consideration how they receive their income. The policy emphasises the importance of taking prompt actions when arrears are small and encourages tenants to make personal contact with the team at the earliest possible opportunity. Tenants to consider building an effective relationship with the team so they can help identify any issues and offer help and support to avoid matters getting worse. The team will consider a multi-agency meeting where appropriate to help explore options to prevent homelessness and will devise action plans. The team will assess any risks and identify how these can be managed and find solutions to tenant issues. Tenants will be invited and encouraged to participate and work with nominated agencies to resolve issues that are causing a risk to their tenancy and potential loss of their home
- 5.8 The team aim to provide an income maximisation service to all tenants. This includes carrying out benefit calculations to establish entitlements, help making claims for benefit and carrying out effective liaison between tenant and benefit departments to resolve claim disputes. The policy highlights the effective relationships between the various Government agencies i.e. Housing Benefit and Department for Work & Pensions (DWP), to encourage timely resolutions to tenant benefit claim and queries. Where further specialist support is required the new revised version of the policy highlights that there are in-house Rent Management operating from within the team who are specially trained in supporting tenants with Universal Credit and other Welfare Benefit queries and claims. Possession and court action will *not* be considered if there is clear evidence there are delays in Welfare Benefit claims or awards. If any court action had already started this will be put on hold until the benefit issues are resolved
- 5.9 The policy identifies the support given to new and prospective tenants that have been offered accommodation with the Council. This group will be supported with a pre-tenancy interview to discuss the importance of paying rent in a timely manner and on Welfare Benefits and maximising income. At the same time an affordability assessment will be completed to identify any at risk of financial difficulties and ensure the most appropriate advice and referrals for specialist support is offered.
- 5.10 The policy is transparent on the rent arrears recovery processes in that it recognises that at times, the council may need to consider more serious action against tenants that persistently fail to pay their rent. This will be an ultimate last resort action when

all efforts to support have been exhausted. Throughout the procedure the team will continue efforts to contact and negotiate a payment agreement with tenants and offer support where needed. The communication will take place in various forms for example, telephone, text, other letters requesting payment and by email. The advice and efforts to engage with individual tenants will remain persistent to help sustain tenancies and the service will be tailored depending on tenants level of response and engagement. Despite proceeding with legal action, the team endeavour to continue all efforts to contact tenants and request that rent arrears are cleared to prevent loss of home. The team will ensure tenants are fully informed on their rights of appeal against any legal notice or eviction proceedings and the referrals that will be considered to the Social Care and Homelessness Teams.

- 5.11 Overall, the revised rent arrears policy is a positive reflection on the procedures and strategies already being implemented within the team that leads to high performance and supports tenants with tenancy sustainment. The policy outlines the importance of having an organised approach to rent collection to maximise the effectiveness of rent arrears management. The policy aims to improve service delivery for tenants and improve the relationship between landlord and tenant.

6. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

6.1 Financial implications

The report sets out revisions to the Rent Arrears Policy, which guides the approach to maximising collection of rent and service charges for the Council. Rent arrears are monitored and reported throughout the year.

Stuart McAvoy – Principal Accountant

6.2 Legal implications

The Rent Arrears Policy sets out how the Council will address rent arrears and the steps it will take to engage with tenants and other agencies prior to and during any legal action to recover those arrears and/or possession of a property.

It is important that the policy is applied consistently in order to avoid a potential challenge to any legal action the Council might institute.

Jeremy Rainbow – Principal Lawyer (Litigation) – x.371473

6.3 Equalities implications

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, 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.

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

If the report recommendation to approve the revised Rent Arrears Policy is agreed, this should lead to improved outcomes for people from a range of protected characteristics. The revised policy takes into account tenants circumstances including benefit claims and any reasonable adjustments that may be needed, which should provide support to help tenants to meet their rent payments.

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out and the Corporate Equalities Team have provided feedback to the lead officer. Age and disability are the key protected characteristics which may be impacted upon and an action plan has been produced for the EIA and will be monitored as the revised policy is implemented.

Sukhi Biring, Equalities Officer, 454 4175

6.4 Climate Emergency implications

There are no significant climate change implications directly associated with this report.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284

8. Summary of appendices:

Appendix 1 – Rent Arrears Policy

Appendix 2 – Equalities Impact Assessment



Leicester
City Council

Income Management Team
Rent Arrears Policy

Appendix 1

DRAFT

CONTENTS

SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION	10
1.1 Purpose	10
1.2 Reference of Terms	10
1.3 Scope.....	11
1.4 Legislation.....	11
1.5 Equalities Statement	11
1.6 Confidentiality Statement	12
SECTION 2 – OVERVIEW.....	13
2.1 Rent Setting.....	13
2.2 Conditions of Tenancy and Tenant Responsibility.....	13
2.3 Team Objectives	14
2.4 Paying Rent.....	16
SECTION 3 – PROSPECTIVE / NEW TENANTS	18
3.1 Prospective Tenants.....	18
3.2 New Tenants.....	18
SECTION 4 – WELFARE BENEFITS.....	19
4.1 Benefit Entitlement	19
SECTION 5 – INTRODUCTORY TENANCY	20
5.1 Introduction.....	20
5.2 Procedure.....	20
5.3 Extending an Introductory Tenancy.....	21
5.4 Ending an Introductory Tenancy.....	21
5.5 Court & Eviction.....	21
SECTION 6 – SECURE TENANCY.....	23
6.1 Introduction.....	23
6.2 Procedure.....	23
6.3 Rental Possession 1 st Stage – Legal Notice.....	24
6.4 Rental Possession 2 nd Stage – Stage Court.....	24
6.5 Rental Possession 3 rd Stage – Eviction.....	25
SECTION 7 – GARAGE & PARKING SPACE TENANCY.....	27
7.1 Introduction.....	27
7.2 Procedure.....	27
7.3 Determining the Next Stage.....	27
7.4 Ending a Garage or Parking Space Licence.....	27
7.5 Taking Possession of a Garage or Parking Space	27
SECTION 8 – APPENDICIES.....	28
8.1 Appendix 1 – Introductory Tenancy Process Map...Error! Bookmark not defined.	
8.2 Appendix 2 – Secure Tenancy Process Map	29
8.3 Appendix 3 – Garage & Parking Space Tenancy Process Map	31

SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

- a) The Rent Arrears Policy is designed to outline the responsibilities of the Income Management Team in the collection of rent and service charges from Leicester City Council tenants. The policy has considered best practice and Income maximisation service for both tenants and the Council. The policy seeks to emphasise the ethos of working effectively and efficiently to ultimately sustain tenancies.
- b) Whilst sustaining tenancies is always a top priority, at times tenancies may lead to failure and to prevent this, the policy recognises and provides a process that evidences everything possible will be explored to avoid rent arrears from escalating and legal actions being taken against tenancies. The Council approach will remain focussed on preventative action and early intervention to prevent the initial accrual of rent arrears. We will provide a wide range of payment options suitable to our tenants and, to maximise collection rates whilst ensuring that we can sustain tenancies and support the most vulnerable.
- c) We will strive to keep the level of rent arrears to an absolute minimum in order to maximise rental income in the best interest of tenants and Leicester City Council. The efficient collection of rent and service charges enables us to invest in the maintenance of Council homes.
- d) We will adopt a robust approach in recovering rent arrears; but we recognise that household's circumstances do change and, any recovery action will reflect this, including changes of circumstances and loss/change of income due to welfare reform. We will only use eviction as a last resort and will work with our Housing Options Team to manage the impact on any households evicted.
- e) The Policy provides guidance on the management of new and prospective tenants that have been offered accommodation by the Council.
- f) This document must be read in conjunction with Leicester City Councils Debt Policy which is available online <https://www.leicester.gov.uk/media/tlqpxq5a/debt-policy-2021.pdf>.

1.2 Reference of Terms

- a) For the purpose of this policy the term "Council" refers to Leicester City Council. The term "Tenant" refers to a Leicester City Council tenant which includes joint tenancy holders. Any references to "we" or "team" refer to the

Income Management Team. References to 'Policy' refers to the Rent Arrears Policy.

1.3 Scope

- a) The policy applies to all Leicester City Council tenants where they have signed a tenancy agreement with the Council, agreed to the conditions of tenancy and have an obligation to pay rent and service charges.
- b) All parts of the Income Management Team (IMT) based within the Housing Division and who specialise in the collection of rent and service charges from all Council tenants.
- c) All other areas of the Housing Division and any organisations and stakeholders that work in partnership with the team.
- d) The policy covers Rent Arrears for Introductory and Secure tenants, Garage and Parking Space holders.

1.4 Legislation

- a) The Housing Act 1985 as amended by the Housing Act 1996 (Part 5) requires all tenants, by law, to pay rent to their landlord and provides guidance to landlords on their rights to collect unpaid debt.
- b) The Welfare Reform Act 2012 made a significant change to the welfare benefit system. It introduced new benefits which meant the team are responsible for acquiring the relevant knowledge and information required in order to best support Council tenants.
- c) New regulations came into force in May 2021 which introduced the Debt Respite Scheme which is also known as the Breathing Space Moratorium. This scheme aims to help people in debt problems manage their finances and seek professional debt advice. The team work jointly with local debt advice partners who can help provide support with debts.
- d) This policy will assist the team to adhere to the relevant legislation and ensure they are acting in a fair and consistent way when collecting rent and any associated service charges.

1.5 Equalities Statement

- a) The Council has a statutory duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, as set out in Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010.
- b) Acting in accordance with this Policy will help to ensure that the collection of sums due is conducted in a consistent and objective manner that will reduce

the risk of inadvertent discrimination against persons with protected characteristics. It will also ensure that debt collection and recovery is delivered in an equally accessible manner to all members of the community.

- c) We will promote equality of opportunity by publishing information in other formats such as large print, audio, and Braille where the need has been identified. We encourage the use of English as Leicester City's main language but will make sure where tenants may be put at a significant disadvantage without a specific piece of information, it will be provided in a suitable format for them. We have an in-house service to provide language and translation service. We will work to manage rent arrears fairly and recognise that there are some tenants who will need a more sensitive service and those tenants will be treated in accordance with their needs.

1.6 Confidentiality Statement

- a) All information held by Council in regard to tenants, tenancy information and personal information will be dealt with in a secure and confidential manner. Any information held will not be disclosed to any third-party, except where:
- The team are satisfied that the tenant has given consent (verbal or written) for any information held by Council to be shared with a third party.
 - The team are required to disclose information under the following legislation General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), UK GDPR (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA18).
 - There is another lawful requirement by law to disclose this information.

For more information regarding how Council uses any tenants personal data please see the privacy notice on the Council website
<https://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council/how-we-work/our-website/privacy/>.

SECTION 2 – OVERVIEW

2.1 Rent Setting

- a) Rent and service charges are reviewed each year in line with Government policy, any change will take place from April and the Council will give a minimum of four weeks' notice for any changes.

2.2 Conditions of Tenancy and Tenant Responsibility

- a) We take rent arrears very seriously and we expect all our tenants to pay rent in a timely manner and a week in advance and this is an important part of tenants Conditions of Tenancy (CoT). Council tenant(s) sign a tenancy agreement and have an obligation to pay their rent on time as per CoT. However, we recognise that occasionally tenants may have financial difficulties and be unable to pay the rent due. In these cases, our service aim is to be 'firm but fair' and provide all tenants in rent arrears with basic money advice and offer affordable repayment plans, taking into consideration how they receive their income.
- b) We will provide tenants with detailed rent statements on a quarterly basis or, printed balances will be available on request or to view on the Housing Online Service.
- c) If tenants are unable to pay debts in full when they become due, they must contact the team at the earliest opportunity. The team can be contacted in a number of ways, these are listed below.
- **Telephone** – 0116 454 1007.
 - **Email** – incomemanagement@leicester.gov.uk.
 - **By letter to** – Saffron Housing Office, 499 Saffron Lane, Leicester, LE2 6UQ.
- d) Where further information is required (i.e. an income / expenditure assessment) tenants must provide accurate, up-to-date, and honest details.
- e) If tenants are unable to pay debts immediately and in full, they must arrange a repayment plan with the team at the earliest opportunity. Prompt action when arrears are small is essential. Personal contact with the team is important at the earliest possible opportunity. Tenants must consider building an effective relationship with the team so they can help identify any issues and offer help and support to avoid matters getting worse.
- f) If tenant has defaulted a payment, in full or in part, this must be discussed with the team urgently and options explored for alternative arrangements to clear arrears.

- g) Tenants will be required to actively work with the team to resolve their arrears situation, and whilst eviction will be considered as an absolute last resort, failure to take steps to deal with rent arrears may result in possession proceedings and subsequent actions leading into the loss of the home.
- h) In households with single tenancy agreements but who are married, cohabiting, or have joint care of dependent children that are resident at the tenancy address, we will always encourage the tenant to keep other interested parties within the household informed of any legal action in connection with rent arrears.

2.3 Team Objectives

- a) We are committed to providing excellent customer care and we will always aim to get things first time right. We will listen to tenants so we can better understand their needs, be polite, professional, and helpful. We aim to treat every tenant fairly and with respect. We intend to keep all tenants informed on their rent account situation and aim to deal with any enquiries fully providing rationale behind decisions. The team will welcome any feedback in the improvement of services and will regularly contact tenants to obtain feedback on the level of service received.
- b) Essential to the early identification of non-payment of rent is an effective rent accounting system. The team use a fully integrated Revenue Accounting system which maintains a payment history for each tenant and is simple to update each stage of any action. The team are able to provide timely, accurate and updated information to enable tenants to manage their rent accounts including providing a Housing Online Service.
- c) The team firmly believe tenants should have access to independent advice and tenants will be advised in letters and encouraged at interviews to seek independent advice. The team will consider making referrals and signposting tenants to specialist agencies where appropriate. If tenants need any debt or financial advice, please consider contacting agencies below.

The Money Advice Service

Telephone: 0116 454 1006

Website: www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk

Office Address: York House, Granby Street, Leicester LE1 6FB

Leicester Citizens Advice Bureau

Telephone: 0300 330 1025 / 0844 417 1025

Website: www.leicscab.org.uk

Office Address: 3rd Floor, 60 Charles Street LE1 1FB

Community Advice and Law Service

Telephone: 0116 242 1120

Website: www.cals.uk.net

Office Address: 3rd Floor, Epic House, Leicester LE1 3SH

- d) The team will ensure all legal statutory requirements are met and any possession action is pursued only when appropriate to do so after all avenues of help and support to help sustain tenancies have been exhausted. The team will consider a multi-agency meeting where appropriate to help explore options to prevent homelessness and to devise action plans. The team will assess any risks and identify how these can be managed and find solutions to tenant issues. Tenants will be invited and encouraged to participate and work with nominated agencies to resolve issues that are causing a risk to their tenancy and potential loss of their home.
- e) The team will at all times ensure that enforcement action undertaken in rent arrears cases will conform to the requirements of the Pre-Action Protocol for Possession Claims by Social Landlords as set by the Ministry of Justice. The Council recognises that it's in the interests of both the landlord and tenant, to ensure that rent is paid promptly and to ensure any difficulties are resolved wherever possible without the need for court proceedings. We will only start legal action as a last resort where all efforts to reach an agreement and to provide support and advice are exhausted and the tenants debt is not reducing
- f) The team aim to provide information to tenants in understandable formats and communicating appropriately in ways that tenant(s) can understand the actions being taken against them. The team endeavour to consider any reasonable adjustments, literacy issues and understanding of written information when provided to them. The team will adopt a sensitive approach

and support the most vulnerable adapting communication styles as appropriate for tenants where required.

- g)** We will consider and Identify tenants who are particularly vulnerable and any issues affecting tenant's mental capacity or, any issues arising under the Equality Act or any need for a Community Care Assessment. This will be equally crucial at the point of any legal proceedings and checking tenants understanding of the impending actions. Where necessary we will encourage applications for the appointment of a litigation friend or appointeeship.
- h)** The council are committed to sustaining tenancies and commit to exploring all options prior to taking any court action and when recovering monies owed to the Council. This includes transferring credits between a rent account and a sub-account to offset debts owed by a tenant. Any remaining credit can be refunded to the tenant upon request.
- i)** The team will offer tenants flexible payment methods and repayment options to clear rent arrears when there are circumstances that affect tenants ability to pay their rent.
- j)** The team will issue tenants with a quarterly rent statement and write to tenants if their rent account is in arrears.
- k)** All interviews at a tenant's home or in an office will be sensitive and non-threatening. They will take place in privacy and be confidential. For interviews in the home, the team will introduce and identify themselves with Council identity cards.
- l)** For joint tenancy holders, the team will address all letters to all tenants named on the tenancy agreement. The team will at times make agreements and hold interviews with any tenant who appears to be acting on behalf of all parties in the Tenancy Agreement. Joint tenants will be made aware that they have a joint responsibility for rent arrears repayment. The council will recover from either tenant due to the joint liability.
- m)** The team will make safeguarding referrals to Social Care for example, Adult Social Care and Children's & Young Peoples Services where there is pending eviction actions against a family or individual. The team will also make referrals to the Housing Options team regarding any potential homelessness.
- n)** We may use analytical and predictive techniques on the data we have on our tenants to implement a variety of collection strategies.

2.4 Paying Rent

- a)** The Council promote various methods that can be used to pay rent for example, standing order, direct debit, using a credit / debit card. The team encourage payments to be made in a timely manner and a full list of payment options is available on the Council website or upon request.

- b)** Tenants can now register for the Housing Online Service by visiting Leicester.gov.uk/housing. This will allow tenants to make a rent payment, report a repair, manage rent account, view and update contact details and view rent statements.

- c)** We will try to work with the tenant to resolve any arrears which are as a result of a problems in claiming benefits for example, Housing Benefit or Universal Credit. We may also pursue other options, including applying for Alternative Payment Arrangements and/or direct deductions from benefits where we believe the tenants will benefit from this due to vulnerabilities and to prevent rent arrears from accruing on the account.

SECTION 3 – PROSPECTIVE / NEW TENANTS

3.1 Prospective Tenants

- a)** All prospective tenants that have accepted an offer of accommodation with the Council will be required to have a Pre-Tenancy Interview (PTI) with a member of the team.
- b)** The interview verifies applicant's eligibility for Social Housing as per the Allocations Policy (available to view on the Council website).
- c)** At the interview advice will be provided around the importance of paying rent in a timely manner and on Welfare Benefits and maximising income. We will conduct an affordability assessment to ensure prospective tenants who may be at risk of financial difficulties are offered appropriate advice and are referred for specialist support.
- d)** We will provide Welfare Benefit advice to ensure the correct benefit entitlements are in place and refer for specialist support if necessary and tailoring our service to meet the needs of the prospective new tenant.

3.2 New Tenants

- a)** All new tenants that exchange contracts with the Council will be required to set up a mandatory Direct Debit for rent payments wherever applicable.
- b)** The tenant will be expected to pay the first week's rent when they attend the Exchange of Contracts. If the tenant is experiencing difficulties to meet the first weeks rent payment an alternative suitable arrangement can be considered and negotiated.
- c)** Tenants will be supported with referrals to specialist supporting agencies where appropriate. Referrals to the Rent Management Advisors based within the team also be considered for help with Welfare Benefits.
- d)** Details will be provided on the different payment options available and advice will be provided on the consequences of non-payment.
- e)** The team will encourage tenants to resolve any benefit related issues promptly and offer advice and support in reporting changes or in making new claims.

SECTION 4 – WELFARE BENEFITS

4.1 Benefit Entitlement

- a) The team aim to provide an income maximisation service to all tenants. This includes carrying out benefit calculations to establish entitlements, help making claims for benefit and carrying out effective liaison between tenant and benefit departments to resolve claim disputes.
- b) The team will foster and promote effective relationships between the various Government agencies i.e. Housing Benefit and Department for Work & Pensions (DWP), to encourage timely resolutions to tenant benefit claim and queries.
- c) The team will be ensuring a consistent approach is taken in supporting tenants with Welfare Reform related cases and that they are kept updated on changes to the benefit system so they can best advise tenants. The team will notify tenants if there is any cancellation or suspension of their welfare benefits and work with tenants to resolve any issues in relation to benefit claims.
- d) Where necessary the council will encourage tenants to provide all the evidence required to support a claim for benefit to prevent the accrual of rent arrears. We will ensure the tenant is fully informed that it is their responsibility to provide the necessary documentation in relation to their benefit claims and, to advise the relevant benefit agency on any changes to their financial or household Income status.
- e) Where further specialist support is required the team will make the appropriate referrals for the tenant to receive support. The Rent Management Advisors that operate within the team are specially trained in supporting tenants with Universal Credit and other Welfare Benefit queries and claims. For those tenants that need help a referral will be made for this type of specialist support.
- f) When requested by the Department for Works & Pensions, the team will confirm Housing Costs for Universal Credit and will always aim to do this in a timely manner to prevent any delays in tenants benefit claims.
- g) Possession and court action will not be considered if there is clear evidence there are delays in Welfare Benefit claims or awards. It's important for tenants to speak to the team if this is the case so this information can be updated on tenants rent account. If any court action had already started this will be put on hold until the benefit issues are resolved.

SECTION 5 – INTRODUCTORY TENANCY

5.1 Introduction

- a) Introductory tenancies were introduced under Part V of the Housing Act 1996 and applies to all Council tenant's during the first twelve months of their tenancy.
- b) A flowchart outlining the process is provided in the appendices (*please see sub-section 8.1 – Appendix 1 – Introductory Tenancy Process Map*).

5.2 Procedure

- a) The following procedure will be initiated to recover rent owed to the Council from an Introductory tenant
 - ⇒ First Warning (IFW) – Three Weeks or more Net Rent Due
 - ⇒ Second Warning (ISW) – Four Weeks or more Net Rent Due
 - ⇒ Office Appointment (IAP) – Five weeks or more Net Rent Due
- b) If at any point the tenant clears their rent arrears the process will restart again.
- c) If rent account remains in arrears then a decision will be made to proceed with the arrears stages and consideration to either serve an extension of the Introductory tenancy period or to end the Introductory tenancy.
- d) Throughout the procedure the team will continue efforts to contact and negotiate a payment agreement with tenants and offer support where needed. The communication will take place in various forms for example, telephone, text, other letters requesting payment and by email. Our advice and efforts to engage with individual tenants will remain persistent to help sustain tenancies and the service will be tailored depending on tenants level of response and engagement with us.
- e) The arrears stages will be put on hold if there is clear evidence of the following
 - Delays in processing benefit claims
 - Delays in receiving Managed payment from Universal Credit
 - Pending Discretionary Housing Payments
 - If the tenant is owed a breathing space as part of the Debt Respite Scheme, no arrears action will be considered for the agreed moratorium period.

5.3 Extending an Introductory Tenancy

- a) An Introductory Notice to Extend will be served under Part V Section 125A of the Housing Act 1996 to any tenant that is six weeks or more in net rent arrears and providing there is a minimum of eight weeks remaining before the anniversary date of the tenancy (i.e. the date in which the IT tenancy becomes a Secure tenancy). A Record of Decision will be completed and approved by a member of management.
- b) The tenant has a right (under Part V section 125B of the Housing Act 1996) to request a Review Panel Hearing on the decision to issue the extension. The tenant must do this in writing within fourteen days of the date of issue of the notice.
- c) A hearing will be arranged for an independent panel of managers to check that the arrears procedure was followed correctly and decide if the extension of tenancy should continue.

5.4 Ending an Introductory Tenancy

- a) An Introductory Notice to Terminate (INT) may get served under Part V Section 125 of the Housing Act 1996 for tenants that are six weeks or more in net rent arrears. The possession proceedings must start before the anniversary date of the tenancy. Decisions to serve this notice will be considered and approved by management.
- b) The tenant will have the right to appeal against an INT being served (under Part V section 125B of the Housing Act 1996), the tenant must do this in writing within 14 days from the date notice was issued.
- c) A hearing will be arranged for an independent panel of managers to check that the arrears procedure was followed correctly and decide if the termination of tenancy should continue. The tenant will have an opportunity to represent their circumstances by attending the hearing alone or with a representative.
- d) At this point the team have a duty to notify Housing Options Centre of the potential risk of homelessness and safeguarding referrals will be made to Social Care.

5.5 Court & Eviction

- a) Once the notice has expired a court hearing will be arranged for Mandatory Possession to be granted by court.
- b) Prior to the court hearing for Possession the team will continue efforts to contact tenant using various forms of communication notifying tenant the Councils intention of seeking a Mandatory Possession order and no further

right of appeal is possible. They will highlight the risk of losing their home and the next stage of requesting a Warrant for Possession.

- c)** Once the Mandatory Possession order is granted in court a warrant request would be made at the appropriate time for the final stages of recovering possession of the property.

SECTION 6 – SECURE TENANCY

6.1 Introduction

- a) This section of the policy is to be followed once a tenant has become a Secure tenant and there are rent arrears on account.
- b) A flowchart outlining the Secure process is provided in the appendices section of this policy (*please see sub-section 8.2 – Appendix 2 – Secure Tenancy Process Map*).

6.2 Procedure

- a) The following procedure will be initiated to recover rent owed to the Council from a secure tenant.
 - ⇒ First Warning (AFW) – Three Weeks or more Net Rent Due
 - ⇒ Second Warning (ASW) – Four Weeks or more Net Rent Due
 - ⇒ Office Appointment (AAP) – Five weeks or more Net Rent Due
- b) If the tenant clears their rent arrears at any of the above stages then the Secure procedure may be restarted from the First Warning stage alternatively, the team may use their discretion and decide not to restart the process but re-issue a more serious action where appropriate. For example, tenants that persistently make irregular rent payments that were already served the warning letters.
- c) Throughout the procedure the team will continue efforts to contact and negotiate a payment agreement with tenants and offer support where needed. The communication will take place in various forms for example, telephone, text, other letters requesting payment and by email. Our advice and efforts to engage with individual tenants will remain persistent to help sustain tenancies and the service will be tailored depending on tenants level of response and engagement with us.
- d) The arrears stages will be put on hold if there is clear evidence of the following
 - Delays in processing benefit claims
 - Delays in receiving Managed payment from Universal Credit
 - Pending Discretionary Housing Payments
 - If the tenant is owed a breathing space as part of the Debt Respite Scheme, no arrears action will be considered for the agreed moratorium period.

6.3 Rental Possession 1st Stage – Legal Notice

- a) A Notice of Seeking Possession (NOSP) will be served under Section 83 of the Housing Act 1985 (as substituted by Section 147 of the Housing Act 1996) on any tenant that is more than six weeks in net rent arrears. The legal notice has an expiry date of twenty-eight days.
- b) The tenant also has the option of contacting a member of the team before the NOSP expires and before court proceedings to agree an affordable arrangement and clear any arrears by instalments.
- c) Once the legal notice period has come to an end and there is failure to maintain regular rent payments, keep up with a repayment or reduce rent arrears, the team will consider pursuing rental possession proceedings.
- d) If the tenant has cleared the arrears, the legal notice will become invalid. If there is an ongoing agreement to clear the arrears, the NOSP will remain valid for up to a maximum of twelve months or until such time the rent arrears are cleared whichever comes sooner.

6.4 Rental Possession 2nd Stage – Stage Court

- a) Prior to the possession hearing the team will continue efforts to contact tenant using various forms of communication.
- b) They will arrange an Interview with the tenant by letter, the team will advise the tenant the seriousness of their situation and the consequences of non-payment of rent and the potential possession of home. They will gather income and expenditure and arrange a realistic and suitable repayment plan or arrangement to clear any outstanding debt where possible to prevent a possession order. Both parties may sign an agreement confirming the repayment arrangement.
- c) Both Council and tenant will receive a date of hearing set by the Court for the possession hearing. The council may refer to their Legal Team for advice and representation and the tenant will be encouraged to attend and seek their own independent financial advice and representation.
- d) We will request the appropriate order at court depending on the circumstances of the case. After hearing evidence presented by the Council and tenant, the Judge will have discretion to grant the following types of orders.
 - **Possession Forthwith** – Outright Possession on day of hearing.
 - **Possession in XX Days** – Outright Possession in a specific number of days (Usually 14 or 28 Days).
 - **Suspended Possession Order (SPO)** – This is a Possession Order, however, suspended on terms the tenant pays their Current Rent plus

an amount towards the arrears. If tenant defaults their court order and fails to make payments according to the court order, this may result in Council pursuing eviction action.

- **Adjourned on Terms (AOT)** – This hearing is pended to allow tenant to pay their current rent plus an amount towards the arrears. Failing to pay accordingly will allow the council to restore the hearing.
- **Adjourned Generally** – This is an order granted by the court that allows the Council to restore the hearing if the tenant fails to pay the rent arrears. This order may also contain a 'Strikeout Date' usually twelve months form the date of hearing.
- **Money Judgement Order (MJO)** – This is an order for a tenant to pay back any debt owed to the Council

6.5 Rental Possession 3rd Stage – Eviction

- a) At times the council may need to consider more serious action against tenants that persistently fail to pay their rent. This will be an ultimate last resort action when all efforts to support have been exhausted. Despite proceeding with eviction processes, we will continue all efforts to contact tenants and request that rent arrears are cleared to prevent loss of home. The team will ensure tenants are fully informed on their rights and advise tenants of their right to appeal an eviction (applies only to secure tenants).
- b) If rent arrears are cleared in full then the eviction process will stop. It's important the tenant notifies the courts and the Council when they have made the payment to clear the arrears in full. Proof of payment may be requested as appropriate.
- c) If an appeal against an eviction is submitted a court hearing will be scheduled to negotiate matters. The final outcome at the hearing will be determined by a Judge.
- d) The main outcomes of an appeal hearing are set out below (not an exhaustive list).
 - **Application Withdrawn** – If arrears are cleared in full and it has been agreed to cancel the warrant application with agreement from the Council.
 - **Application Suspended** – The warrant is suspended allowing further opportunity to clear arrears. In most cases these will come with terms for example, current rent plus an additional amount to clear the arrears.
 - **Application Adjourned for XX days** – This is usually granted when there are some unresolved issues that require a resolution before the judge can make an informed decision (i.e. benefit claim require a resolution).
 - **Application Dismissed** – This order may be granted if the Judge feels that the tenant had sufficient opportunity to clear their arrears and/or tenant or their representative did not attend the hearing. This could result in the eviction going ahead.

- e) On the date / time of eviction if the tenant fails to make any payment to clear the arrears debt then the warrant will be executed, and Council will be given vacant possession of the property.

SECTION 7 – GARAGE & PARKING SPACE TENANCY

7.1 Introduction

- a) Tenants will sign a licence agreement with the Council for renting the Garage or Parking Space thus agreeing to pay the rent every week to the Council.
- b) A flowchart outlining the Garage & Parking Space process is provided in the appendices section of this policy (*please see sub-section 8.3 – Appendix 3 – Garage & Parking Space Tenancy Process Map*).

7.2 Procedure

- a) The Garage & Parking Space process is split into several stages, please see below the initial stages and at what point in the process they are 'initiated'.
 - ⇒ First Warning (GFW) – Three Weeks or more Net Rent Due
 - ⇒ Second Warning (GSW) – Four Weeks or more Net Rent Due
- b) Should the tenant clear their arrears at any of the above stages then the GPT process should be restarted from the First Warning stage, however the team may use their discretion and decide not to restart the process and proceed to final stage

7.3 Determining the Next Stage

- a) Failure to clear arrears then a decision will be considered to recover possession of the garage or parking space.

7.4 Ending a Garage or Parking Space Licence

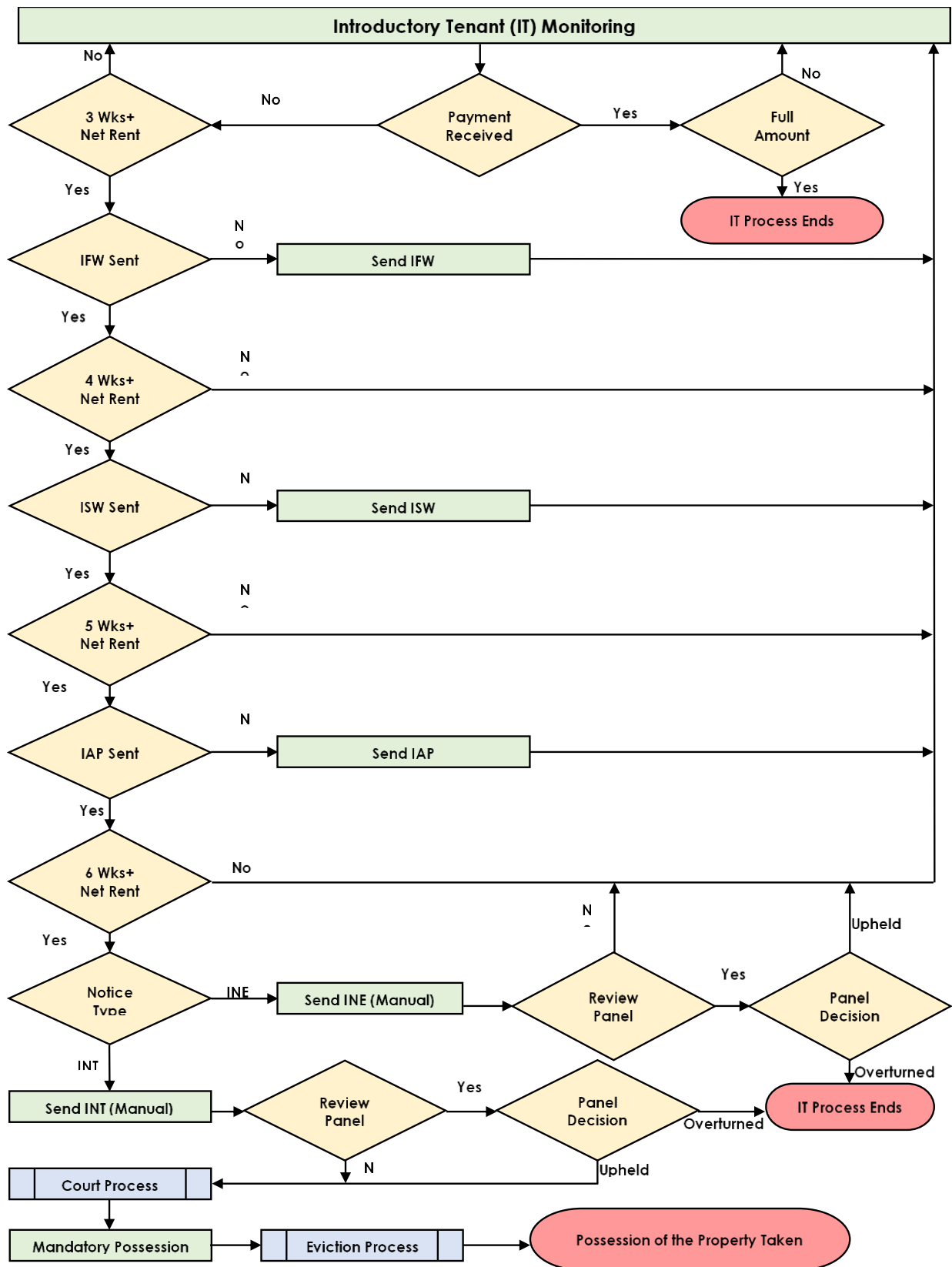
- a) To end a Garage or Parking Space Licence a Garage Notice to Quit (GNTQ) is served informing the tenant that their licence is being ended.
- b) The GNTQ provides a minimum of seven days' notice on the licence being ended, and possession being sought.

7.5 Taking Possession of a Garage or Parking Space

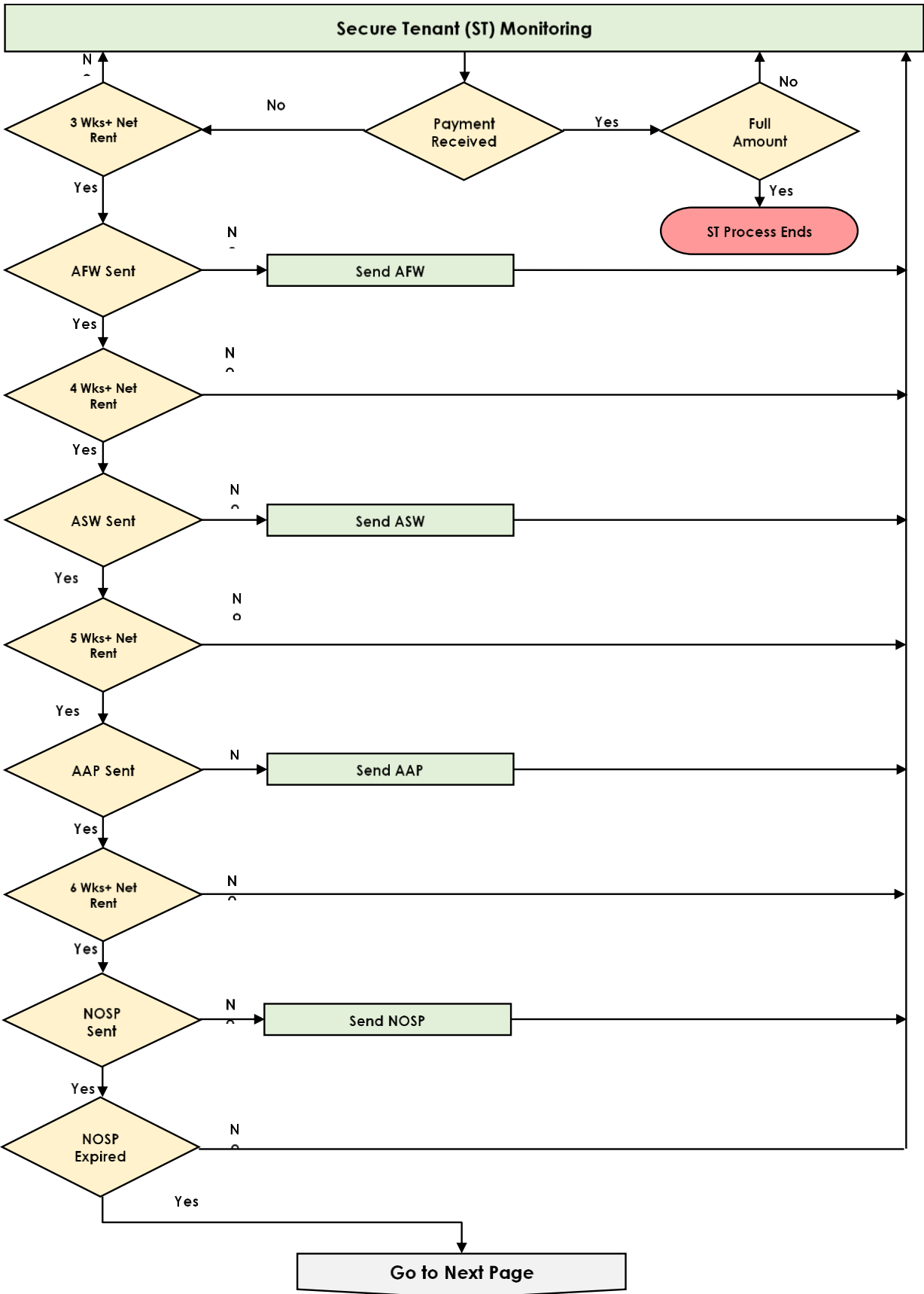
- a) Once a GNTQ has expired a lock change will be arranged (Garages Only) with the repairs service to change the locks on the garage and the keys will be returned to the Neighbourhood Housing Office (NHO).

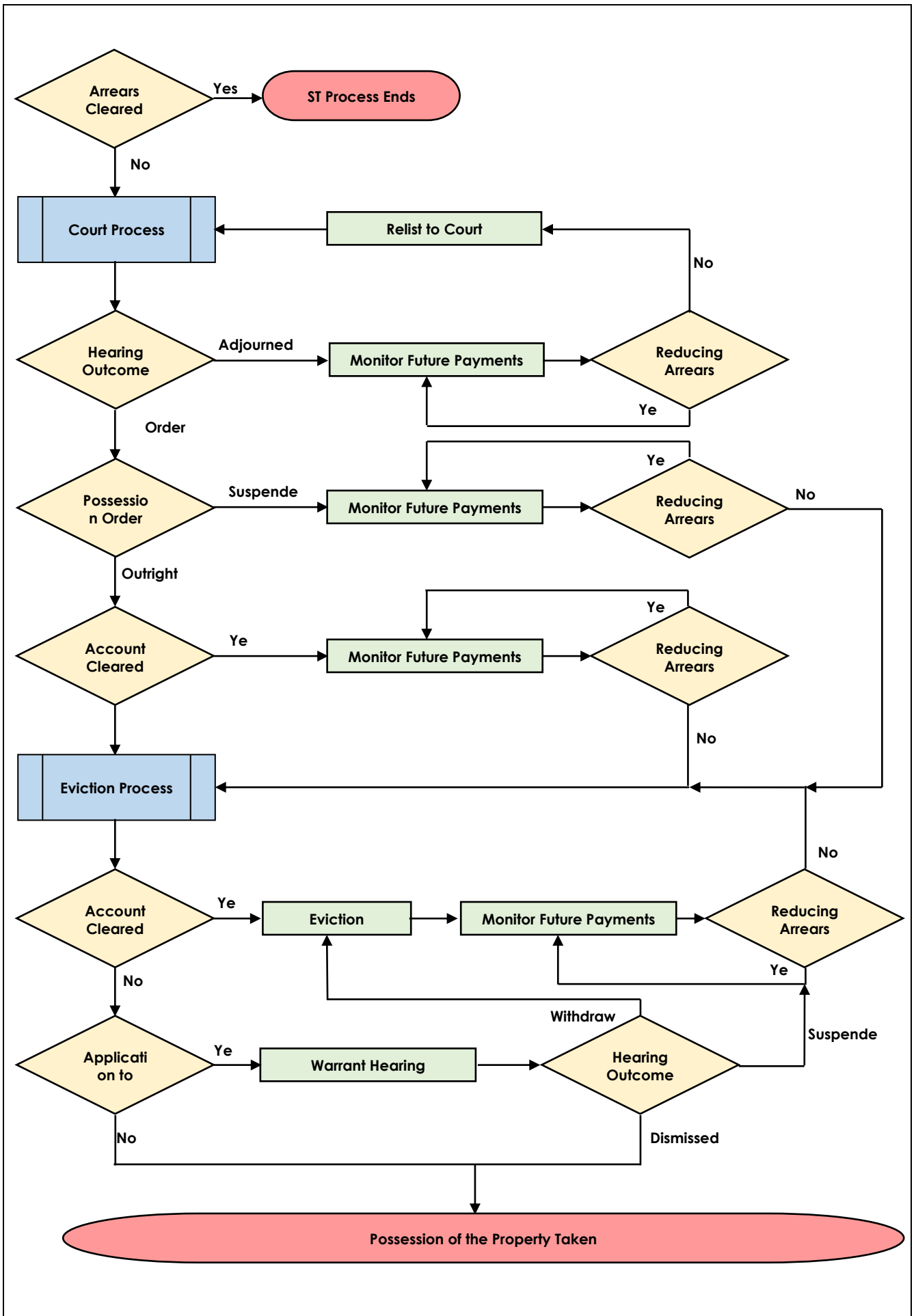
SECTION 8 – APPENDICIES

8.1 Appendix 1 – Introductory Tenancy Process Map

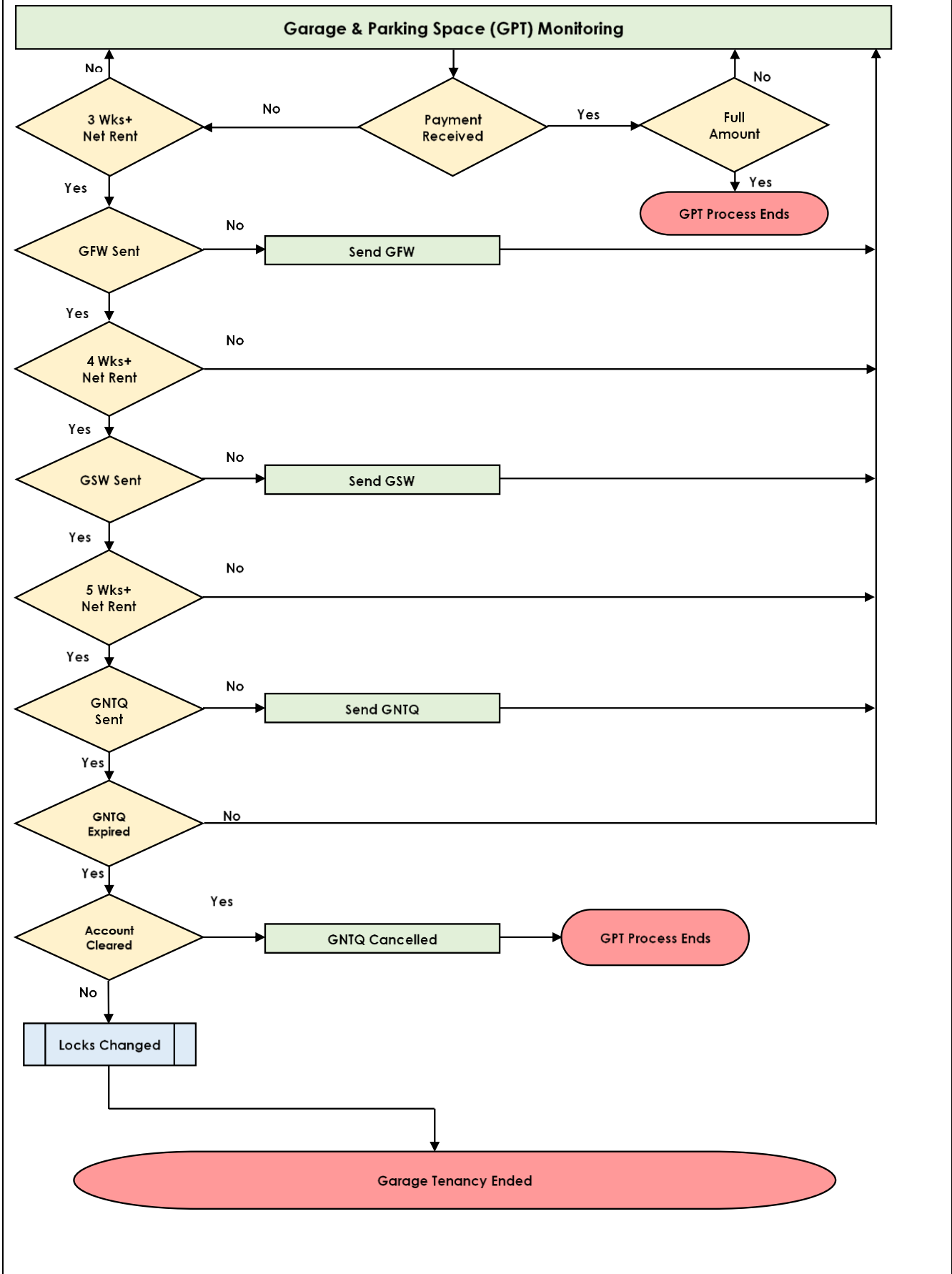


8.2 Appendix 2 – Secure Tenancy Process Map





8.3 Appendix 3 – Garage & Parking Space Tenancy Process Map



Appendix 2 - Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Tool:

Title of Proposal:	Rent Arrears Policy Update
Name of Division / Service:	Income Management Team (Housing Services)
Name of Lead Officer Completing Assessment:	Zenab Valli (Income Collection Manager)
Date EIA Assessment Completed:	March 2021
Decision Maker:	
Date Decision Taken:	

88

EIA Sign-Off Completion:	Signature:	Date:
Lead Officer:		
Equalities Officer:		
Divisional Director:		

Please Ensure the Following:

- a) That the document is **understandable to a reader who has not read any other documents** and explains (on its own) how the Public Sector Equality Duty is met. This does not need to be lengthy but must be complete and based in evidence.
- b) That available support information and data is identified and where it can be found. Also be clear about highlighting gaps in existing data or evidence that you hold, and how you have sought to address these knowledge gaps.

- c) That the equality impacts are capable of aggregation with those of other EIAs to identify the cumulative impact of all service changes made by the council on different groups of people.
- d) That the equality impact assessment is started at an early stage in the decision-making process, so that it can be used to inform the consultation, engagement and the decision. It should not be a tick-box exercise. Equality impact assessment is an iterative process that should be revisited throughout the decision-making process. It can be used to assess several different options.
- e) Decision makers must be aware of their duty to pay 'due regard' to the Public Sector Equality Duty (see below) and 'due regard' must be paid before and at the time a decision is taken. Please see the Brown Principles on the equality intranet pages, for information on how to undertake a lawful decision-making process, from an equality's perspective. Please append the draft EIA and the final EIA to papers for decision makers (including leadership team meetings, lead member briefings, scrutiny meetings and executive meetings) and draw out the key points for their consideration. The Equalities Team provide equalities comments on reports.

1. **Setting the Context** Describe the proposal, the reasons it is being made, and the intended change or outcome. Will the needs of those who are currently using the service continue to be met?

The Income Management Team is responsible for collecting rental income from tenants that are housed in Council owned properties. The income funds the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) which is used to maintain housing stock and invest in capital works programmes. A rent arrears policy has been devised to ensure that the IMT is acting in a fair, lawful, and consistent way in the collection of these charges. The overall objective of the Rent Arrears Policy is to minimise the level of rent arrears in a sensitive, but effective manner. It is anticipated the needs of the current service users will continue to be met:

Income Management Officer maintain the Council's computerised Rent Arrears system, which shows tenants who are in arrears and assist with arrears management by prompting the next appropriate action.

The specific objectives of the Rent Arrears Policy are:

- To offer early appropriate professional support and guidance to tenants to reduce rent arrears.
- To monitor levels of rent arrears and have early intervention mechanisms in place, which prevent rent arrears arising.
- To take appropriate action in accordance with the level of rent arrears.
- To prevent homelessness arising and assist in the Council's wider strategic objectives.

The current Rent Arrears policy has been revised and has undergone a complete overhaul mainly for the following reasons -

- Consolidating all current policy documents for the different tenancy types IMT manage into one document and therefore making it easier for tenants to understand not only their obligations to ensure rent is paid on time but also IMT's obligations towards supporting them should they experience difficulties paying their rent charges.
- To ensure that council tenants affected by welfare Reform are treated in a fair and consistent way to ensure that they are supported to sustain their tenancy and fulfil our obligation to the HSA and also the City Mayors (CM) pledge "Reducing Homelessness and Increasing Affordable Housing".
- To ensure IMT follow a robust procedure when considering eviction action and to ensure that everything possible has been exhausted to support a tenant and help sustain tenancies.

2. Equality Implications / Obligations

Which aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) are likely be relevant to the proposal? In this question, consider both the current service and the proposed changes.

a. Eliminate Unlawful Discrimination, Harassment and Victimisation

- How does the proposal/service ensure that there is no barrier or disproportionate impact for anyone with a particular protected characteristic?
- Is this a relevant consideration? What issues could arise?

The previous RAP would inadvertently discriminate against those tenants that are in receipt of Welfare Benefits – Universal Credit (UC). This is because UC is paid in arrears usually five weeks after a claim has been made. The previous policy fails to recognise this may be an issue for tenants and it fails to provide detail on the provisions of support offered and the legal proceeding that can be put on hold whilst benefit claims are being processed.

Changes to the RAP will recognise changes as a result of Welfare Reform, it will offer equal opportunity and mitigate against any adverse actions being taken against the tenant and eliminate unlawful discrimination. This also helps to prevent any further charges being applied to that tenant (i.e. Court / Warrant Fee's) thus, preventing any extra debt being added particularly where tenants may already be on a reduced or low income.

The amended RAP emphasises and promotes more effective working to help tenants sustain their tenancies. It encourages a more fair, consistent, and transparent approach to the management of rent arrears. It recognises that some groups of people may require information and support according to their needs considering the various protected characteristics. The policy recognises that there are some tenants who will need a more sensitive service and those tenants will be treated in accordance with their needs.

71

b. Advance Equality of Opportunity Between Different Groups

- How does the proposal/service ensure that its intended outcomes promote equality of opportunity for people?
- Identify inequalities faced by those with specific protected characteristic(s).
- Is this a relevant consideration? What issues could arise?

The changes to the RAP will ensure that the HRA monies continue to be collected in a timely manner and enable the housing Division to continue the provision of providing decent homes to council tenants and equality of opportunity for people to have decent homes to live in. We will continue to examine ways in which we can promote equality and foster good relationships between our tenants. Equality training has and will continue for all staff that work within the team to ensure we continue to provide a service fit for purpose and that promotes equal opportunity and equal access to all our tenants. The policy recognises that some tenants may require a more sensitive approach and communication methods and our approach may need to be altered in response to tenant needs. The team endeavour to promote a fair and consistent way of working so any actions being taken against tenants for non-payment of rent are fair no debtor receives less favourable treatment because of their protected characteristics. This will be enforced during regular team briefings and training sessions alongside electronic and virtual learning sessions. The team collect data on the tenants receiving welfare benefits and the level of arrears for this group of people. Where available the team also collect equality and disability information from the tenants, and this is recorded electronically on the Housing system.

c. Foster Good Relations Between Different Groups

- Does the service contribute to good relations or to broader community cohesion objectives?
- How does it achieve this aim?
- Is this a relevant consideration? What issues could arise?

We offer advice, support, and assistance to every tenant equally in relation to rent or arrears. The team will always promote and encourage tenants to obtain independent advice. The team operate alongside stakeholders such as debt advice agencies to help maximise income and help sustain tenancies. The positive joint and collaborative working helps tenants with various issues they might be facing. The team also work very closely with other Government agencies such as Department for Works & Pensions and the Housing Benefit agencies to help tenants resolve any benefit issues. Failing to support tenants with these issues can lead to adverse impacts on tenants livelihoods which can lead to poverty, crime, or impact on tenants health. When issues are resolved following support, this can have a lasting and positive impact on the tenants income and welfare which in turn helps to foster good relations in the community and promote positive behaviours. By maximising collection of rent which fund the HRA this would enable the maintenance of properties and making improvements on estates creates an environment where people are satisfied with their homes and the area they live in, reducing the likelihood of anti-social behaviour and community tensions.

3. Who is Affected?

Outline who could be affected, and how they could be affected by the proposal/service change. Include people who currently use the service and those who could benefit from, but do not currently access the service.

The changes to RAP will affect all Council tenants including those tenants that receive assistance towards their rent charges via benefits. Currently there are approximately 49% of tenants in receipt of housing benefit and 30% of tenants on UC. Tenants with protected characteristics who may present themselves with low Income and not in employment are likely to be affected by rent arrears particularly whilst waiting for benefits to be processed. Providing this group of people engage with the service the team can support the tenants and prevent any actions being taken due to a rent arrears situation. All tenants have a legal obligation to pay rent, the proposed changes will not discriminate or disadvantage any tenants and allows ample opportunity and measures to safeguard tenancies. The proposed changes are outlined in support of tenants and highly vulnerable tenants that will require further support from the council and external agencies to ensure that their tenancies are sustained.

4. Information Used to Inform the EIA

- What **data, research, or trend analysis** have you used?
- Describe how you have got your information and what it tells you

- Are there any gaps or limitations in the information you currently hold, and how you have sought to address this? E.g. proxy data, national trends, equality monitoring etc.

Profiling information on council tenants has been collected from the housing Northgate IT system (*Please See Appendix 1*). This includes tenant information on age, ethnic origin, disability, gender, sexuality, and religion. It has been recognised by the housing division that there are some gaps in this data and to increase the collection IMT plus other front facing Housing Teams continue to collect and update tenant records with Equality data.

5. Consultation

What **consultation** have you undertaken about the proposal with people who use the service or people affected, people who may potentially use the service and other stakeholders? What did they say about?

- What is important to them regarding the current service?
- How does (or could) the service meet their needs? How will they be affected by the proposal? What potential impacts did they identify because of their protected characteristic(s)?
- Did they identify any potential barriers they may face in accessing services/other opportunities that meet their needs?

74

The policy will also be presented at a public meeting and presented to the Housing Scrutiny Commission for any comments and issues that may arise or have not been identified in the current version of the policy. We publish data annually on the collection of rent and present to the Housing Scrutiny Commission and this can help determine any further changes to the policy if required. Lead Member Briefing 21st June 2021. Housing Scrutiny Commission – 16th August 2021

6. Potential Equality Impact

Based on your understanding of the service area, any specific evidence you may have on people who use the service and those who could potentially use the service and the findings of any consultation you have undertaken, use the table below to explain which individuals or community groups are likely to be affected by the proposal because of their protected characteristic(s). Describe what the impact is likely to be, how significant that impact is for individual or

group well-being, and what mitigating actions can be taken to reduce or remove negative impacts. This could include indirect impacts, as well as direct impacts.

Looking at potential impacts from a different perspective, this section also asks you to consider whether any other particular groups, especially vulnerable groups, are likely to be affected by the proposal. List the relevant groups that may be affected, along with the likely impact, potential risks and mitigating actions that would reduce or remove any negative impacts. These groups do not have to be defined by their protected characteristic(s).

Protected Characteristics

Impact of Proposal:

Describe the likely impact of the proposal on people because of their protected characteristic and how they may be affected. Why is this protected characteristic relevant to the proposal? How does the protected characteristic determine/shape the potential impact of the proposal? This may also include **positive impacts** which support the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Risk of Disproportionate Negative Impact:

How likely is it that people with this protected characteristic will be disproportionately negatively affected? How great will that impact be on their well-being?

What will determine who will be negatively affected?

Mitigating Actions:

For disproportionate negative impacts on protected characteristic/s, what mitigating actions can be taken to reduce or remove the impact? You may also wish to include actions which support the positive aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations. All actions identified here should also be included in the action plan at the end of this EIA.

a. Age

Indicate which age group/s is/ are most affected, either specify general age group - children, young people working age people or older people or specific age bands

What is the Impact of the Proposal on Age?

Potential issues around communication styles and methods for elderly and younger tenants.

What is the Risk of Disproportionate Negative Impact on Age?

It is acknowledged that we are having a lot of new younger tenants being given LCC properties and rent may not be a priority bill for them and this could lead to legal action being taken especially if they are in receipt of benefits as the benefit amount (Living Allowance) is lower for claimants under twenty-five.

What are the Mitigating Actions?

To ensure that all our tenants are treated the fairly and consistent the IMT will aid tenants with sustaining their tenancies by helping with DHPs and referring on to specialist advice agencies such as Citizens Advice Bureau also known CiTAL to ensure they have every opportunity to resolve any outstanding debt they have. The IMT also works very closely with other council sections (Adult Social Care (ASC) & Children & Young People's Service (CYPS) to ensure young people and vulnerable tenants are supported with sustaining their tenancies. Every tenants need is considered individually, and communication styles can be adapted to meet the needs of the tenants. The team work closely with the 16+ team in support of our younger tenants from leaving care and have an awareness of the corporate responsibility to this group of tenants.

b. Disability

If specific impairments are affected by the proposal, specify which these are. Our standard categories are on our equality monitoring form – physical impairment, sensory impairment, mental health condition, learning disability, long standing illness or health condition.

What is the Impact of the Proposal on Disability?

The migration from Disability Living Allowance to Personal Independent payments could increase anxiety and insecurity for tenants. People who are getting the severe disability premium in their current benefits may lose out under Universal Credit if they fail to seek support and help with their benefits to ensure correct entitlements.

Tenants with disabilities may have difficulty accessing IMT services due to physical barriers and access to Council venues for meetings or due to communication barriers due to impairments, such as hard of hearing or visual impairment.

Mental health issues are often identified in tenants struggling to meet rent payments and those that have fallen in rent arrears. The engagement with services from this group of people can be poor and very intermittent.

Literacy issues, dyslexia, mental capacity, or comprehension of actions being taken against a tenant may cause issues.

What is the Risk of Disproportionate Negative Impact on Disability?

It is not anticipated that changes to the policy will have any negative impact on disabled tenants as IMT works closely with tenants to ensure that tenant needs are identified and dealt with individually.

What are the Mitigating Actions?

The policy will have a positive impact to the individual as it will work on an individual tailored approach, led by the tenant’s needs. The Housing system alerts users when there is a disability recorded and that a service adjustment may be required. This means reasonable adjustments can be offered when communicating with a tenant about rent arrears. Tenant experiencing mental health issues will be referred for more specialist support and afforded time, understanding and opportunity to resolve any issues. The team will work jointly and collaboratively with supporting agencies to help sustain tenancies. Community Care Need Assessments will be considered where appropriate. Where necessary we will encourage applications for the appointment of a litigation friend or appointeeship. We will promote equality of opportunity by publishing information in other formats such as large print, audio, and Braille where it is necessary and practical to do so. Where an individual may experience difficulties communicating and engaging with the council due to physical/sensory disabilities or learning disabilities the council will consider using an alternative and suitable format such as braille or British Sign Language (BSL). Each situation will be assessed on a case by case basis.

77

c. Gender Reassignment

Indicate whether the proposal has potential impact on trans men or trans women, and if so, which group is affected.

What is the Impact of the Proposal on Gender Reassignment?

This protected characteristic is not disproportionately impacted by rent arrears but will be monitored to ensure there are no equality implications of this policy.

What is the Risk of Disproportionate Negative Impact on Gender Reassignment?

It is not anticipated that these changes will have a negative impact on tenants who have undergone gender reassignment as IMT works closely with tenants to ensure that their needs are met on a case by case basis.

What are the Mitigating Actions?

In cases where tenants are struggling to meet rent payments or have fallen into rent arrears support will be offered regardless of Gender Reassignment.

d. Marriage & Civil Partnership**What is the Impact of the Proposal on Marriage and Civil Partnership?**

This protected characteristic is not disproportionately impacted by rent arrears but will be monitored to ensure there are no equality implications of this policy.

What is the Risk of Disproportionate Negative Impact on Marriage and Civil Partnership?

It is not anticipated that these changes will have a negative impact on married tenants or tenants living as a civil partnership as IMT works closely with tenants to ensure that their needs are met on a case by case basis.

What are the Mitigating Actions?

In cases where tenants are struggling to meet rent payments or have fallen into rent arrears support will be offered regardless of Marriage & Civil Partnership.

e. Pregnancy and Maternity**What is the Impact of the Proposal on Pregnancy and Maternity?**

This protected characteristic is not disproportionately impacted by rent arrears aside from a change in their circumstances or income could lead to entitlements to benefits and support required to claim these benefits.

What is the Risk of Disproportionate Negative Impact on Pregnancy and Maternity?

It is not anticipated that these changes will have a negative impact on tenants affected by Pregnancy or Maternity as IMT works closely with tenants to ensure that their needs are met on a case by case basis.

What are the Mitigating Actions?

To ensure that all our tenants are treated fairly and consistently the IMT will aid tenants with sustaining their tenancies by helping with DHPs and referring on to specialist advice agencies (i.e. CiTAL) to ensure they have every opportunity to resolve any outstanding debt they have. The IMT also have an inhouse specialist benefit team (Rent Management Advisors (RMAs)) that will be able to support these tenants with claiming for the correct benefits (i.e. UC) to ensure they have the funds available to sustain their tenancy. The policy will have a positive impact on this group. If they have difficulties making rent payments, they will be offered support and advice on claiming additional benefits such as housing benefit, maternity benefits, and child tax credits. In addition, they will be offered budgeting advice.

f. Race

Given the city's racial diversity it is useful that we collect information on which racial groups are affected by the proposal. Our equalities monitoring form follows ONS general census categories and uses broad categories in the first instance with the opportunity to identify more specific racial groups such as Gypsies/Travellers. Use the most relevant classification for the proposal.

What is the Impact of the Proposal on Race?

The policy will have a neutral impact for people of different ethnicities. Council tenants who face language barriers in accessing and getting information about services can request translation assistance by contacting the service.

What is the Risk of Disproportionate Negative Impact on Race?

It is not anticipated that these changes will have a negative impact on tenants due to race as IMT works closely with tenants to ensure that their needs are met on a case by case basis.

What are the Mitigating Actions?

We encourage the use of English as Leicester City's main language but will make sure where tenants may be put at a significant disadvantage without a specific piece of information, it will be provided in a suitable format for them. We have an in-house service to provide language and translation service.

g. Religion or Belief

If specific religious or faith groups are affected by the proposal, our equalities monitoring form sets out categories reflective of the city's population. Given the diversity of the city there is always scoped to include any group that is not listed.

What is the Impact of the Proposal on Religion or Belief?

People from different religious groups will not be disproportionately impacted by rent arrears.

What is the Risk of Disproportionate Negative Impact on Religion or Belief?

It is not anticipated that these changes will have a negative impact on tenants due to religion or belief as IMT works closely with tenants to ensure that their needs are met on a case by case basis.

What are the Mitigating Actions?

N/A – Currently no action proposed as no risk has been identified.

h. Sex

Indicate whether this has potential impact on either males or females

What is the Impact of the Proposal on Sex?

This group will not be disproportionately impacted by rent arrears but will be monitored to ensure there are no equality implications of this policy

What is the Risk of Disproportionate Negative Impact on Sex?

It is not anticipated that these changes will have a negative impact on tenants due to their sex and IMT works closely with tenants to ensure that their needs are met on a case by case basis.

What are the Mitigating Actions?

N/A – Currently no action proposed as no risk has been identified.

i. Sexual orientation

What is the impact of the proposal on sexual orientation?

What is the Impact of the Proposal on Sexual Orientation?

People with different sexual orientations are not disproportionately impacted by rent arrears but will be monitored to ensure there are no equality implications of this policy

What is the Risk of Disproportionate Negative Impact on Sexual Orientation?

It is not anticipated that these changes will have a negative impact on tenants due to their sexuality or belief as IMT works closely with tenants to ensure that their needs are met on a case by case basis.

What are the Mitigating Actions?

N/A – Currently no action proposed as no risk has been identified.

7. Summary of Protected Characteristics

a. Summarise why the protected characteristics you have commented on, are relevant to the proposal?

All protected characteristics have been commented on as the RAP will affect all council tenants and we have a diverse range of council tenants living in our property and to ensure all their needs are met.

b. Summarise why the protected characteristics you have commented on, are relevant to the proposal?

N/A

8. Other Groups

Other Groups

Impact of Proposal

Describe the likely impact of the proposal on children in poverty or any other people who we may consider to be vulnerable, for example people who misuse substances, ex armed forces, people living in poverty, care experienced young people, carers. List any vulnerable groups likely to be affected. Will their needs continue to be met? What issues will affect their take up of services/other opportunities that meet their needs/address inequalities they face?

Risk of Disproportionate Negative Impact

How likely is it that this group of people will be negatively affected? How great will that impact be on their well-being? What will determine who will be negatively affected?

Mitigating Actions

For negative impacts, what mitigating actions can be taken to reduce or remove this impact for this vulnerable group of people? These should be included in the action plan at the end of this EIA. You may also wish to use this section to identify opportunities for positive impacts.

82 a. Children in Poverty

What is the Impact of the proposal on Children in Poverty?

There is no impact on children in poverty recognised as part of the policy aside from families being made homeless if they fail to engage and resolve any rent arrears situations.

What is the Risk of Disproportionate Negative Impact on Children in Poverty?

It is acknowledged that there are a number of families within the city that are living on the 'breadline' due to the current climate of austerity and with the Coronavirus pandemic. There is a potential that these families could face a higher risk of possession action and face the prospect of being made homeless.

What are the Mitigating Actions?

To ensure that all our tenants are treated the fairly and consistent the IMT will aid tenants with sustaining their tenancies by helping with DHPs and referring on to specialist advice agencies (i.e. CiTAL) to ensure they have every opportunity to resolve any outstanding debt they have. The IMT also have an inhouse specialist benefit team (Rent Management Advisors (RMAs)) that will be able to support these tenants with claiming for the correct benefits (i.e. UC) to ensure they have the funds available to sustain their tenancy. Referrals will be considered to Housing Options Team and Social Care will be alerted early on in a legal process against a tenancy for intervention and to safeguard children’s wellbeing.

b. Other Vulnerable Groups

What is the Impact of the proposal on Other Vulnerable Groups?

There is no impact following change to the policy.

What is the Risk of Disproportionate Negative Impact on Other Vulnerable Groups?

N/A

What are the Mitigating Actions?

N/A



c. Other (Describe)

What is the Impact of the proposal on any Other Groups?

N/A

What is the Risk of Disproportionate Negative Impact on any Other Groups?

N/A

What are the Mitigating Actions?

N/A

9. Other Sources of Potential Negative Impacts

Are there any other potential negative impacts external to the service that could further disadvantage service users over the next three years that should be considered? For example, these could include:

- Other proposed changes to council services that would affect the same group of service users;
- Government policies or proposed changes to current provision by public agencies (such as new benefit arrangements) that would negatively affect residents;
- external economic impacts such as an economic downturn.

N/A

10. Human Rights Implications

84

Are there any human rights implications which need to be considered and addressed (please see the list at the end of the template), if so, please outline the implications and how they will be addressed below:

The RAP continues to support Part 1 (Article 7 - No Punishment Without Law) of the Human Rights Act and also Part 2 (Article 1 - Protection of Property / Peaceful Enjoyment)

11. Monitoring Impact

You will need to ensure that monitoring systems are established to check for impact on the protected characteristics and human rights after the decision has been implemented. Describe the systems which are set up to:

- Monitor impact (positive and negative, intended and unintended) for different groups
- Monitor barriers for different groups
- Enable open feedback and suggestions from different communities
- Ensure that the EIA action plan (below) is delivered.

If you want to undertake equality monitoring, please refer to our [equality monitoring guidance and templates](#).

- The monitoring systems in place are below:
- Monitoring & Analysing Complaints
 - Monitoring Expenditure on Court & Warrant Fees
 - Reports to Senior Management and / or Lead Member for Housing on Evictions & Court Hearings
 - Feedback from the Tenants & Leaseholder Forums
 - Regular briefings on rent collection services and arrears to the Housing Scrutiny Commission

12. EIA Action Plan

Please list all the equality objectives, actions and targets that result from this assessment (continue on separate sheets as necessary). These now need to be included in the relevant service plan for mainstreaming and performance management purposes.

85

Equality Outcome	Action	Officer Responsible	Completion Date
Actions being progressed to mitigate any potential impact on LCC tenants.	Effectively monitor all potential court / eviction cases to ensure all mitigation has been completed.	Zenab Valli	Ongoing
	IMT to continue to monitor rent arrears and provide the necessary support for any tenant who may face difficulties paying their rent.	Zenab Valli	Ongoing
	IMT plus other front facing Housing Teams continue to collect and update tenant records with Equality / profiling data.	IMT & Housing Teams	Ongoing

Human Rights Articles:

Part 1: The Convention Rights and Freedoms

- Article 2: Right to Life
- Article 3: Right not to be Tortured or Treated in an Inhuman or Degrading way
- Article 4: Right not to be Subjected to Slavery / Forced Labour
- Article 5: Right to Liberty and Security
- Article 6: Right to a Fair Trial
- Article 7: No Punishment Without Law
- Article 8: Right to Respect for Private and Family life
- Article 9: Right to Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion
- Article 10: Right to Freedom of Expression
- Article 11: Right to Freedom of Assembly and Association
- Article 12: Right to Marry
- Article 14: Right Not to be Discriminated Against

89

Part 2: First Protocol

- Article 1: Protection of Property / Peaceful Enjoyment
- Article 2: Right to Education
- Article 3: Right to Free Elections

Appendix 1 – Profiling Information for Council Tenants

Breakdown by Age Banding:

Age of Tenant	Total Number	Percentage of Council Tenants
16 – 19	116	0.58%
20 – 24	411	2.05%
25 – 34	2,465	12.32%
35 – 44	4,049	20.24%
45 – 54	4,168	20.83%
55 – 64	3,642	18.20%
65 – 74	2,685	13.42%
75+	2,173	10.86%
Unknown	300	1.50%

Breakdown by Disability:

Disabled	Total Number	Percentage of Council Tenants
Yes	167	0.83%
No / Not Recorded	19,842	99.17%

Breakdown by Ethnic Origin:

Ethnicity	Total Number	Percentage of Council Tenants
White British	9,436	47.16%
White Irish	147	0.73%
Other Ethnic Group – Gypsy / Romany / Irish Travellers	14	0.07%
White – Other Background	486	2.43%
White – European	361	1.80%
Dual Heritage	415	2.07%
Asian	2,332	11.65%
Chinese	25	0.12%
Black	2,130	10.65%
Any Other Ethnic Group	335	1.67%
Prefer Not to Say	501	2.50%
Not Recorded	3,827	19.13%

Breakdown by Religion:

Religion	Total Number	Percentage of Council Tenants
Atheist	250	1.25%
Buddhist	14	0.07%
Christian	2,054	10.27%
Hindu	326	1.63%
Muslim	1,555	7.77%
Sikh	75	0.37%
No Religion	2,027	10.13%
Other	290	1.45%
Prefer Not to Say	709	3.54%
Unknown	12,709	63.52%

Breakdown by Sexuality:

Sexuality	Total Number	Percentage of Council Tenants
Bisexual	139	0.69%
Gay Female / Lesbian	30	0.15%
Gay Male	34	0.17%
Heterosexual / Straight	5,951	29.74%
Other	173	0.86%
Prefer Not to Say	964	4.82%
Unknown	12,718	63.56%

Breakdown by Sexuality:

Gender	Total Number	Percentage of Council Tenants
Male	8,620	43.08%
Female	11,159	55.77%
Unknown	230	1.14%

Council House Building update

- Phase 1 completed and occupied
- Phase 2 contracts awarded –start on site dates being confirmed
- Phase 2b contracts awarded – start on site dates being agreed
- Phase 3, business case completed, mobilising the delivery team
- Phase 4 identifying sites

89

Phase 2

- Saffron Velodrome site – 38 units. Contract award imminent, start on site October 21
- Lanesborough Road – 37 units, very difficult site, in excess of 100 objections, planning application to be submitted in August and approval expected October. Contract awarded, expected start on site Jan 22

Velodrome site

91





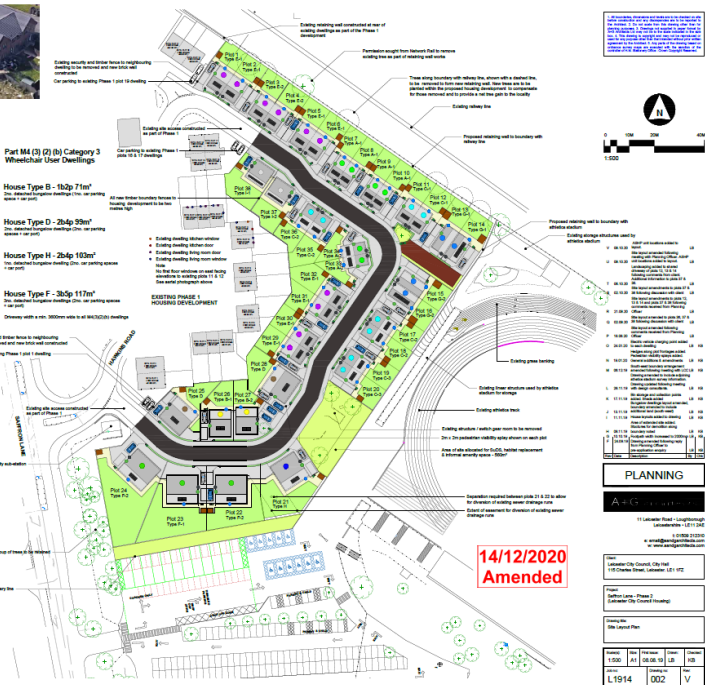
Part M2 (2) Category 2 Accessible & Adaptable Dwellings
(Detailed layout of accessible dwellings - category 2 described above)

- House Type A - 162p 52m²**
One bedroom (single) (one car parking space)
- House Type B - 182p 71m²**
One bedroom (single) (one car parking space)
- House Type C - 204p 93m²**
Two bedroom (one bathroom) (one car parking space)
- House Type D - 204p 93m²**
Two bedroom (one bathroom) (one car parking space)
- House Type E - 304p 137m²**
Two bedroom (one bathroom) (one car parking space)
- House Type F - 304p 117m²**
Two bedroom (one bathroom) (one car parking space)

Part M4 (3) (B) Category 3 Wheelchair User Dwellings

- House Type B - 182p 71m²**
One bedroom (single) (one car parking space)
- House Type D - 204p 93m²**
Two bedroom (one bathroom) (one car parking space)
- House Type E - 304p 137m²**
Two bedroom (one bathroom) (one car parking space)
- House Type F - 304p 117m²**
Two bedroom (one bathroom) (one car parking space)

- Number Area To Plot**
- Plot 1 102P (204)
 - Plot 2 102P (204)
 - Plot 3 102P (204)
 - Plot 4 102P (204)
 - Plot 5 102P (204)
 - Plot 6 102P (204)
 - Plot 7 80P (162)
 - Plot 8 80P (162)
 - Plot 9 80P (162)
 - Plot 10 102P (204)
 - Plot 11 102P (204)
 - Plot 12 102P (204)
 - Plot 13 102P (204)
 - Plot 14 102P (204)
 - Plot 15 102P (204)
 - Plot 16 102P (204)
 - Plot 17 102P (204)
 - Plot 18 102P (204)
 - Plot 19 102P (204)
 - Plot 20 102P (204)
 - Plot 21 102P (204)
 - Plot 22 102P (204)
 - Plot 23 102P (204)
 - Plot 24 102P (204)
 - Plot 25 102P (204)
 - Plot 26 102P (204)
 - Plot 27 102P (204)
 - Plot 28 102P (204)
 - Plot 29 102P (204)
 - Plot 30 102P (204)
 - Plot 31 102P (204)
 - Plot 32 102P (204)
 - Plot 33 102P (204)
 - Plot 34 102P (204)
 - Plot 35 102P (204)
 - Plot 36 102P (204)
 - Plot 37 102P (204)
 - Plot 38 102P (204)
 - Plot 39 102P (204)
 - Plot 40 102P (204)
 - Plot 41 102P (204)
 - Plot 42 102P (204)
 - Plot 43 102P (204)
 - Plot 44 102P (204)
 - Plot 45 102P (204)
 - Plot 46 102P (204)
 - Plot 47 102P (204)
 - Plot 48 102P (204)
 - Plot 49 102P (204)
 - Plot 50 102P (204)
 - Plot 51 102P (204)
 - Plot 52 102P (204)
 - Plot 53 102P (204)
 - Plot 54 102P (204)
 - Plot 55 102P (204)
 - Plot 56 102P (204)
 - Plot 57 102P (204)
 - Plot 58 102P (204)
 - Plot 59 102P (204)
 - Plot 60 102P (204)
 - Plot 61 102P (204)
 - Plot 62 102P (204)
 - Plot 63 102P (204)
 - Plot 64 102P (204)
 - Plot 65 102P (204)
 - Plot 66 102P (204)
 - Plot 67 102P (204)
 - Plot 68 102P (204)
 - Plot 69 102P (204)
 - Plot 70 102P (204)
 - Plot 71 102P (204)
 - Plot 72 102P (204)
 - Plot 73 102P (204)
 - Plot 74 102P (204)
 - Plot 75 102P (204)
 - Plot 76 102P (204)
 - Plot 77 102P (204)
 - Plot 78 102P (204)
 - Plot 79 102P (204)
 - Plot 80 102P (204)
 - Plot 81 102P (204)
 - Plot 82 102P (204)
 - Plot 83 102P (204)
 - Plot 84 102P (204)
 - Plot 85 102P (204)
 - Plot 86 102P (204)
 - Plot 87 102P (204)
 - Plot 88 102P (204)
 - Plot 89 102P (204)
 - Plot 90 102P (204)
 - Plot 91 102P (204)
 - Plot 92 102P (204)
 - Plot 93 102P (204)
 - Plot 94 102P (204)
 - Plot 95 102P (204)
 - Plot 96 102P (204)
 - Plot 97 102P (204)
 - Plot 98 102P (204)
 - Plot 99 102P (204)
 - Plot 100 102P (204)
 - Plot 101 102P (204)
 - Plot 102 102P (204)
 - Plot 103 102P (204)
 - Plot 104 102P (204)
 - Plot 105 102P (204)
 - Plot 106 102P (204)
 - Plot 107 102P (204)
 - Plot 108 102P (204)
 - Plot 109 102P (204)
 - Plot 110 102P (204)
 - Plot 111 102P (204)
 - Plot 112 102P (204)
 - Plot 113 102P (204)
 - Plot 114 102P (204)
 - Plot 115 102P (204)
 - Plot 116 102P (204)
 - Plot 117 102P (204)
 - Plot 118 102P (204)
 - Plot 119 102P (204)
 - Plot 120 102P (204)
 - Plot 121 102P (204)
 - Plot 122 102P (204)
 - Plot 123 102P (204)
 - Plot 124 102P (204)
 - Plot 125 102P (204)
 - Plot 126 102P (204)
 - Plot 127 102P (204)
 - Plot 128 102P (204)
 - Plot 129 102P (204)
 - Plot 130 102P (204)
 - Plot 131 102P (204)
 - Plot 132 102P (204)
 - Plot 133 102P (204)
 - Plot 134 102P (204)
 - Plot 135 102P (204)
 - Plot 136 102P (204)
 - Plot 137 102P (204)
 - Plot 138 102P (204)
 - Plot 139 102P (204)
 - Plot 140 102P (204)
 - Plot 141 102P (204)
 - Plot 142 102P (204)
 - Plot 143 102P (204)
 - Plot 144 102P (204)
 - Plot 145 102P (204)
 - Plot 146 102P (204)
 - Plot 147 102P (204)
 - Plot 148 102P (204)
 - Plot 149 102P (204)
 - Plot 150 102P (204)
 - Plot 151 102P (204)
 - Plot 152 102P (204)
 - Plot 153 102P (204)
 - Plot 154 102P (204)
 - Plot 155 102P (204)
 - Plot 156 102P (204)
 - Plot 157 102P (204)
 - Plot 158 102P (204)
 - Plot 159 102P (204)
 - Plot 160 102P (204)
 - Plot 161 102P (204)
 - Plot 162 102P (204)
 - Plot 163 102P (204)
 - Plot 164 102P (204)
 - Plot 165 102P (204)
 - Plot 166 102P (204)
 - Plot 167 102P (204)
 - Plot 168 102P (204)
 - Plot 169 102P (204)
 - Plot 170 102P (204)
 - Plot 171 102P (204)
 - Plot 172 102P (204)
 - Plot 173 102P (204)
 - Plot 174 102P (204)
 - Plot 175 102P (204)
 - Plot 176 102P (204)
 - Plot 177 102P (204)
 - Plot 178 102P (204)
 - Plot 179 102P (204)
 - Plot 180 102P (204)
 - Plot 181 102P (204)
 - Plot 182 102P (204)
 - Plot 183 102P (204)
 - Plot 184 102P (204)
 - Plot 185 102P (204)
 - Plot 186 102P (204)
 - Plot 187 102P (204)
 - Plot 188 102P (204)
 - Plot 189 102P (204)
 - Plot 190 102P (204)
 - Plot 191 102P (204)
 - Plot 192 102P (204)
 - Plot 193 102P (204)
 - Plot 194 102P (204)
 - Plot 195 102P (204)
 - Plot 196 102P (204)
 - Plot 197 102P (204)
 - Plot 198 102P (204)
 - Plot 199 102P (204)
 - Plot 200 102P (204)



14/12/2020 Amended

PLANNING

A&G

11 Leabour Road - Leighton Buzzard - Bedfordshire LU7 2JG

01525 212125

www.aandgplanning.com

www.aandgplanning.co.uk

Leicester City Council City Hall
100 Cross Street, Leicester LE1 1TC

Saffron Lane - Phase 1
11 Leabour Road - Leighton Buzzard

Site Layout Plan

Scale	1:500	As	10/08/19	1/3	1/3
Number	L1914	002	V		

Saffron Lane Dwelling Mix	
Dwelling Type	Number of Units
1 Bed/2 Person House	6
2 Bed/4 Person House	8
3 Bed/5 Person House	10
4 Bed/8 Person House	4
1 Bed/2 Person Bungalow	4
2 Bed/4 Person Bungalow	3
3 Bed/5 Person Bungalow	3
Total	38

Milestone	Date (Dates indicate completion of task)
Tender Evaluation	20/07/21
Tender Report	13/08/21
Tender Award	30/08/21
Preconstruction and RIBA 4 Design	16/11/21
Start on Site	22/11/21
Practical Completion	02/06/23



Lanesborough Road

93



Phase 2b sites

- Hydra Walk – 2 units.
- Rockingham Close – 3 units
- Austin Rise – 8 units
- Whitteney Drive – 5 units

95



Leicester
City Council

Rockingham Close

Planning permission granted.

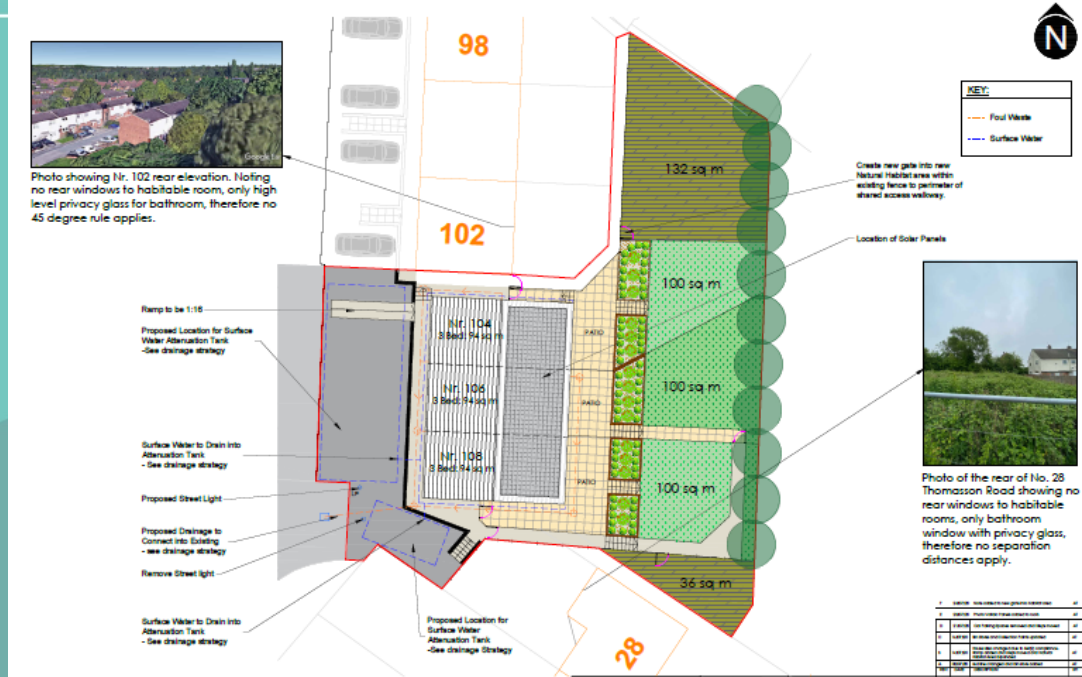
3 units

Contracted awarded

Start on site date: October 21

Completion date: June 22

96



Whitteney Drive

Planning permission expected october

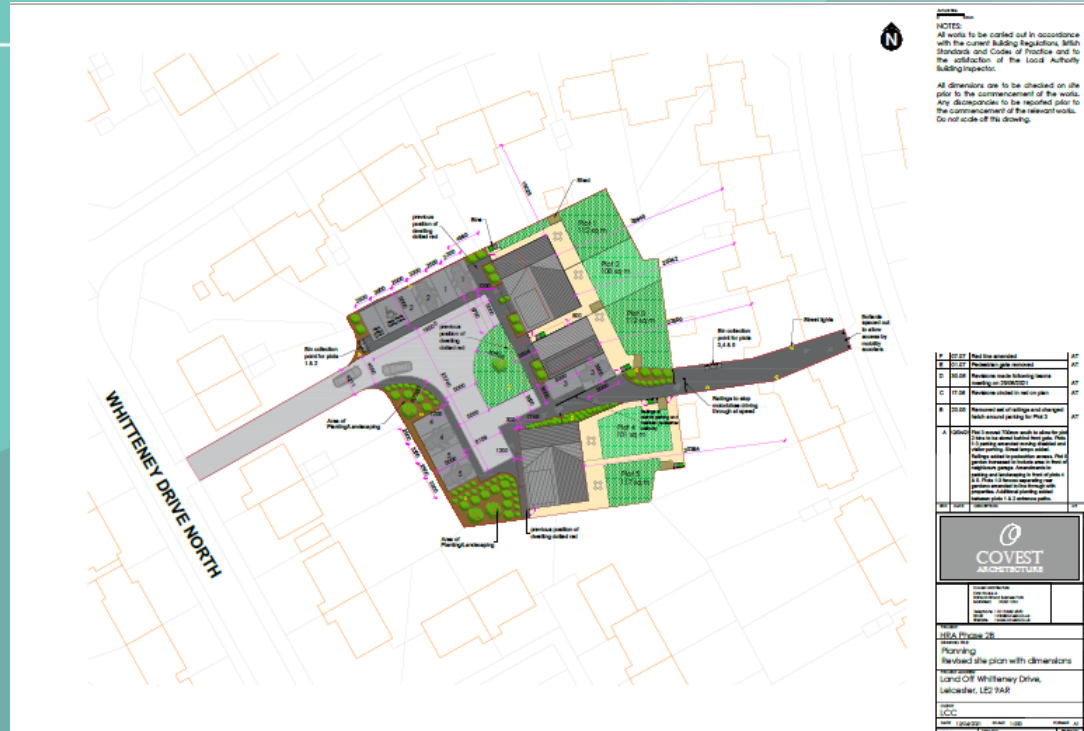
5 units

Contract award: October 21 (est)

Start on site: January 22

Completion: December 22

97



Austin Rise

Planning permission granted

8 units

Contract to be awarded – October 21

Start on site – April 22

Completion – March 23

86



Hydra Walk

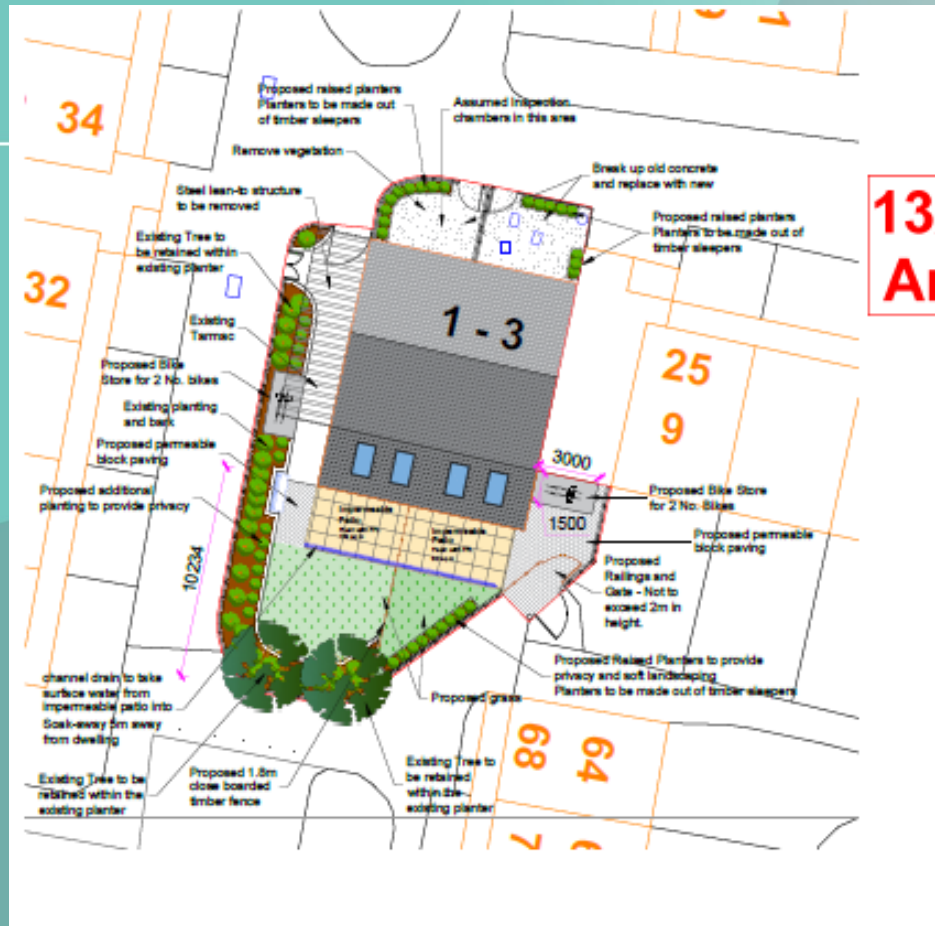
Planning permission granted

2 units – conversion of former housing office

Contract awarded

Start on site : October 21

66 Completion Feb 22



Phase 3 sites

Site locations

- 53 units of accommodation
- 7 sites across the city
- Smallest site has 2 units up to 18 units for largest site
- Ward councillors aware of sites
- Agreeing broader comms to local residents

Milestone dates

- Preplanning app- Dec 21
- Full planning –July22
- Tenders – Jan 23
- Contract award – March 23
- Start on site – April 23
- Completion date – Sept 24

Climate emergency

- Phase 1 was delivered to an enhanced building control standards
- Phase 2 and 2b, will be delivered to a standard that is 79% better than building control standard
- Phase 3, the environmental standards are currently being looked at with a view to achieving carbon zero.



Summary

scheme	Number of units
Phase 1	29
Phase 2	75
Phase 2b	18
Phase 3	53
total	175

102

Extra Care Scheme- update

- The two extra care schemes proposed for the city are currently on hold. (Tilling and Hamelin)
- This is an ASC lead piece of work in partnership with Housing
- These would have delivered 155 units towards the manifesto commitment to deliver 1500 new affordable homes by March 2023.
- We are currently looking at alternative procurement options to deliver both schemes
- We have started a soft market testing exercise to deliver a supported living scheme at The Exchange site, Eyres Monsell

103

General Acquisitions

- Former council houses
- Majority are 2 & 3 bedrooms
- 104 • Trying to buy larger family homes
- Targeting leasehold former council homes
- Buying for NHS transforming care cases
- Trying to buy adapted homes



What have we bought so far

- Number of properties brought in 2018/19: 33
-
- 1 x 1 bed flat
- 10 x 2 bed houses
- 21 x 3 bed houses
- 1 x 5 bed house
-
- **Spend (incl. Stamp Duty): £4.6m**

105

-
- Number of properties brought in 2019/20: 183
 -
 - 13 x 1 bed flats
 - 22 bedsits
 - 42 x 2 bed houses
 - 104 x 3 bed houses
 - 1 x 4 bed house
 - 1 x 5 bed house
 -
 - **Spend (incl. Stamp Duty): £25.9m**

-
- Number of properties brought in 2020/21: 109

-

- 1 x 1 bed flat

107

- 11 x 2 bed houses / bungalow / flat

- 88 x 3 bed houses

- 9 x 4 bed houses

-

- **Spend (incl. Stamp Duty): £20.5m**



Leicester
City Council

- Number of properties brought in 2021/22 (up to Wednesday 28th July 2021): *194
-
- 2 x 1 bed flats
- 3 x 2 bed house
- 15 x 3 bed houses
- *174 units at Hospital Close
- **Spend (incl. Stamp Duty): £14.7m**
- -----
- Total number of units acquired: 519
-
- Total spend: £65.7m.

Summary of acquisitions

type	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	In progress
Bed sits		22			
1 beds	1	13	1	2	9
2 beds	10	42	11	3	9
3 beds	21	104	88	15	52
4 beds		1	9		4
5 beds	1	1			
Hospital Close				174	
Totals (593)	33	183	109	194	74

109

Hospital Close

The site



Summary

- Purchase completed on the 1st April 2021
- Comprised: 174 units
- Cost: £10.5m + stamp duty
- Price reflected the site was vacant and buildings were in need of reconfiguration and renovation

Current Challenges

- Site is attracting regular fly tipping, ASB and vandalism
- 24 hour site security now in place and having a positive effect
- Taking a significant amount of time to secure and clear the site to enable the surveys to be undertaken



112



Proposed Programme

- Emerging timescales:
- Aug 21 Planning Pre-application advice
- Dec 21 Planning application
- Dec 21 Tender exercise
- Apr 22 Contract appointments
- Jun 22 Start on site
- Dec 22 Sectional completions
- Autumn 23 Project Practical Completion

113



Leicester
City Council

Manifesto commitment -1500

114

Delivery type	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	Total
New build by us	0	29	14	93	
Acquisitions - ours	183	109	757	100	
New build by others	144	8	53	19	
Acquisitions - others		19	0	0	
others	13	0	12	0	
totals	340	165	836	212	1553

How acquisitions are financed

- 40% from retained RTB receipts (30% prior to April 2021)
- 50% borrowing
- 10% from other receipts

115



Leicester
City Council

**HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION
WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22**

MEETING DATE	MEETING ITEMS	LEAD OFFICER	ACTION AGREED
<p>↑↑ 15th June 2021</p>	COVID-19 Update – Impact on Housing services	Chris Burgin	Chris to provide verbal update
	Goscote House & Sprinklers redevelopment	Simon Nicholls	
	Environment Budget & Public Realm Project update	Gurjit Kaur Minhas	
	Repairs performance and update report	Kevin Doyle	
	Retrofitting & Climate Emergency	Simon Nicholls	
	ASB report	Gurjit Kaur Minhas	
	<p><i>Informal training sessions to be set-up on the following topics for after this meeting:</i></p> <p><i>Homelessness, Rough Sleepers, Property Lettings (CBL) and the voids process</i></p> <p><i>Repairs, Gas and Technical Services</i></p> <p><i>Income Management, Tenancy Management & STAR</i></p>	<p><i>Caroline Carpendale</i></p> <p><i>Kevin Doyle, Robert Webster, Simon Nicholls</i></p> <p><i>Gurjit Minhas, Charlotte McGraw</i></p>	<p><i>Chris and Scrutiny Support Team to arrange a programme in conjunction with Chair/Vice-Chair</i></p>

<p>6th September</p>	<p>COVID-19 Housing Service Update</p> <p>Who gets Social Housing & Overcrowding Reduction Strategy</p> <p>Annual Rent Performance</p> <p>Rent Arrears Policy</p> <p>Council Housing Building & Acquisitions Programme update</p>	<p>Chris Burgin</p> <p>Caroline Carpendale</p> <p>Charlotte McGraw</p> <p>Charlotte McGraw</p> <p>Simon Nicholls</p>	
<p>4th October</p>	<p>Homelessness Strategy update</p> <p>Tenant Involvement</p> <p>Empty Homes update</p> <p>Disabled Facilities Grant / Housing Adaptation</p> <p>Housing Estate Shops Presentation</p>	<p>Caroline Carpendale</p> <p>Charlotte McGraw</p> <p>Simon Nicholls</p> <p>Simon Nicholls</p> <p>Matt Wallace</p>	
<p>29th November</p>	<p>Manifesto Delivery update</p> <p>Repairs, Voids & Gas Performance report</p> <p>Who gets Social Housing</p> <p>Investment in Council Housing</p>	<p>Chris Burgin</p> <p>Kevin Doyle</p> <p>Caroline Carpendale</p> <p>Simon Nicholls</p>	

<p>10th January 2022</p>	<p>HRA budget Environmental Budget - Update</p>	<p>Chris Burgin Gurjit Minhas</p>	
<p>28th February</p>	<p>Safety Compliance (including Fire Safety) Retrofit & Climate Reduction update Rent Arrears performance report Goscote House & Tower Block Sprinkler installation update</p>	<p>Simon Nicholls Simon Nicholls Charlotte McGraw Simon Nicholls</p>	

