

Leicester
City Council

MEETING OF THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION

DATE: MONDAY, 31 JULY 2023

TIME: 5:30 pm

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

Members of the Committee

Councillor Joel (Chair)

Councillor Zaman (Vice-Chair)

Councillors Adatia, Aqbany, Mahesh, O'Neill, Singh Patel and Waddington

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

For Monitoring Officer

Officer contacts:

Georgia Humby (Scrutiny Policy Officer)

Jessica Skidmore (Democratic Support Officer),

Tel: 0116 454 6350, e-mail: committees@leicester.gov.uk

Leicester City Council, Granby Wing, 3 Floor, CityHall, 115 Charles Street, Leicester, LE1 1FZ

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- ✓ where filming, to only focus on those people actively participating in the meeting;
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PUBLIC SESSION

AGENDA

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Appendix A

The minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Commission held on 27 February 2023 have been circulated, and Members will be asked to confirm them as a correct record.

4. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION

Members of the Commission will be asked to note the Membership of the Housing Scrutiny Commission for 2023/24:

Councillor Joel (Chair)
Councillor Zaman (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Aqbany
Councillor O'Neil
Councillor Waddington
Councillor Adatia
Councillor Mahesh
Councillor Singh-Patel

5. DATES OF MEETINGS FOR THE COMMISSION

Members of the Commission are asked to note the Commission meeting dates as follows:

- 31 July 2023
- 19 September 2023
- 30 October 2023
- 27 November 2023
- 9 January 2024
- 11 March 2024

6. CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS

7. PETITIONS

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

8. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS OR STATEMENTS OF CASE

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

9. HOUSING OVERVIEW [Appendix B](#)

The Director of Housing submits a presentation to provide an overview of Housing Services.

10. WHO GETS SOCIAL HOUSING [Appendix C](#)

The Director of Housing submits a report that provides an update to Members of the 'headline' Housing Register and Lettings data, relating to Leicester City Council's Housing Register, for 2022/23.

11. RENT ARREARS - YEAR END REPORT [Appendix D](#)

The Director of Housing submits a report to inform the Members of the Scrutiny Commission on the rent arrears progress within the general housing stock, over the full financial year, from April 2022 to March 2023.

Members will be recommended to note the contents of the report.

12. HOUSE BUILDS AND ACQUISITIONS UPDATE [Appendix E](#)

The Director of Housing submits a report regarding the current new build council house pipeline for the next 4 years, the Council acquisition programme and other delivery routes intended to be used to meet the strategic priority target of 1500 new affordable homes for Leicester.

Members will be recommended to note the contents of the report.

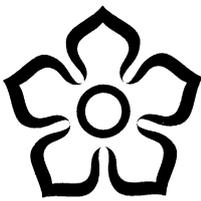
13. DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT / HOUSING ADAPTATIONS REPORT [Appendix F](#)

The Director of Housing submits an update on the two schemes that deliver support for residents to remain within their existing accommodation.

14. WORK PROGRAMME

Members of the Commission will be asked to consider items for the future work programme.

15. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS



Leicester
City Council

Appendix A

Minutes of the Meeting of the HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: MONDAY, 27 FEBRUARY 2023 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Westley (Chair)
Councillor Chamund (Vice Chair)

Councillor Aqpany
Councillor Fonseca

Councillor Modhwadia
Pantling

* * * * *

5. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gee

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no no declarations of Interest.

The Chair Lled on introductions and took the opportunity to thank the Members of the Commission, Officers supporting the Commission and the Officers from the Director of Housing and his team for their contributions throughout the year.

7. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Commission held on 9 January 2023 and the Special Meeting of the Housing Scutiny Commission held on 30 January 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

8. PETITIONS

The monnitoring Officer noted that none had been received.

9. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS OR STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer noted that none had been received.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL BUDGET AND PUBLIC REALM PROJECT UPDATE

The Executive Lead for Housing introduced the item.

The Head of Service delivered an overview of the Environmental Budget. A summary of what works were proposed was provided and Members were informed that, all local ward Councillors would receive a letter advising on the changes to the budget and request what priorities they would like addressed on individual wards.

The Director for Housing noted that the HRA budget went to full council for approval and these amendments to the Capital Programme were a legal requirement in order to balance the budget.

In response to the Chairs query, the Director for Housing noted that there were no additional budgets available beyond what had already been committed or these would have been allocated. It was hoped that the reduction in spends would only be for one year subject to inflationary pressures and other unprecedented obstacles and realign the capital programme the following year to the original levels.

The Executive Lead took the opportunity to note that the District Heating element had spiralled the budgets in different direction and due to this it had previously been identified that this impact would be seen in the public realm work. The HRA budget was there to protect the stock to ensure that the properties are maintained, and repair works are carried out to future proof the stock. The proposed projects were not cancelled although, it may take a while longer to deliver and this was made clear during the conversations around the District Heating, this would be a consequence of the decision that was made at Full Council.

As part of the discussions, it was noted that:

- Members were concerned that if the projects were held up for an extended period of time, tenants would notice that works were not being carried out and this would add to existing pressures they may already be going through
- Members commended the Neighbourhoods Improvements Scheme and it was noted that, this scheme would continue with one cohort of 10 Officers for 12 months
- There were different mechanisms of support that could be communicated to struggling tenants
- The Housing Team were proactively working on delivering what could be achieved with a smaller budget.

In further discussions It was noted that although the HRA budget focussed on housing land other environmental works such as fly tipping can still continue to be reported through the LoveLeicester app, which had been widely celebrated across the city and improvements to the app were also in process.

In response to the Chair's concerns on how the reduced budgets would put great pressure on the work they carried out as elected Members the Executive Lead noted that the programme of cuts was unavoidable and that a report could be produced to the Commission in the future on how the delayed works would be programmed in for the future.

AGREED:

- 1) That the Director of Housing be requested to consider how the programme of cuts could be reversed as much as possible
- 2) That the Director of Housing be requested to provide a report to the Commission on how the delayed works would be progresses
- 3) That the Officers be thanked for the report, and
- 4) That the report be noted.

11. REPAIRS, GAS AND VOIDS PERFORMANCE UPDATE

The Head of Service for the Repairs and Maintenance Service introduced the item and provided an overview of the report. It was noted that the Housing Online platform had over 8,000 people registered and accounted for over 12,000 repairs with progress being made with the online service and most of the service area returning to pre Covid levels.

It was further noted that there had been a 70% increase in reports and damp and condensation and that resources were being directed to address this area.

Gas and heating repairs numbers remained consistent with the previous year with 15,000 gas safety inspections carried out with the team on track to complete 100% compliance across all properties.

A summary of the improvement actions for 2022/23 were highlighted to the Commission.

As part of the discussions, it was noted that:

- The figures for void properties quoted in the report were properties that were actively being worked on to accommodate tenants, there were additional properties that were vacant that were undergoing extensive repairs and were classified elsewhere
- In response to the Chair's query on the status of The Leys on the Beaumont Leys Ward, it was noted that the initial procurement of a builder had been unsuccessful, the building had now been cleared and the procurement process had begun with the aim to start work in summer 2023 and bring it back as part of the housing stock as soon as possible
- Members of the Commission commended the Housing Team who continuously supported Members with queries around housing and repairs
- Emergency Repairs could be reported online which were then categorised by the Customer Services Team
- The team were commended for the use of technology utilised to carry

- out surveys for repairs
- Members suggested that the process to occupy the ready to let properties could be improved further as there were often delays in the process
- On-going work to get void properties back as soon as possible to avoid delays, some properties took longer to return to the market as the extent of work required during the void period
- Members shared their support with Officers that were delivering on bringing back void properties to the stock, including tackling issues with asbestos, damp and mould as part of the process.

The Lead Executive Member for Housing noted that the Damp and Mould Strategy ensured that all our tenants were protected and that generating a better relationship with the Housing associations would allow for cross tenure of the strategy. Significant efforts had gone in before the tragic story that came out in the media and now more resources were being deployed to tackle the issue with damp and mould across the housing sector.

In further discussions, it was noted that tenants across the city were having difficulties with calling in to report issues and Members were getting reports of tenants preferring the face-to-face service. Members of the Commission suggested to have the Customer Services Centre open for longer, as this would be a benefit to the residents. It was noted that, although the customer service centre had limited opening hours, services were still available at other settings within the community and these were regularly assessed as to what was working and what could be improved.

AGREED:

- 1) That the Director for Housing and the Housing Team be thanked for their ongoing efforts to bring back void properties
- 2) That the report be noted, and
- 3) That the option to re-establish customer services be considered

12. WHO GETS SOCIAL HOUSING

The Head of Service for the Housing Register introduced the item and provided the Commission with an overview of the report. It was noted that the report covered a 6-month period between 1 April 22 and 1 October 2022.

As part of the discussions, it was noted that:

- The report helped Members of the Commission understand how decisions are made and how applicants were banded
- General decline in the stock as a result of the Right to Buy scheme and unpredictability in the rising rents market had increased the number of applications for social housing
- The landlord incentive scheme, allowed for good partnership work with private landlords to house some tenants continued
- Tenants were reassured with allocation as the department only worked with reputable landlords and had built working relationships over multiple years and tenants retained the position on the register in circumstances,

this helped tenants overcome the perceived negatives

- Legislative improvements had also helped improve people's perception in the private rented sector to counter balance the need for housing demands
- The team were commended for exploring approaches to deliver on adapted properties for those with additional needs
- Members suggested reviewing the housing allocations register as the 6 years wait for Band 3 applicants was unrealistic
- The demand in the east of the city and preference to remain within the city did have an impact on particular areas but they were compelled to remain in certain areas due to their own barriers around language and employment
- The Housing Act 1996, provided a framework in which councils could build allocation policies and identifies certain groups that required reasonable preference and there were technical issues that didn't allow for Band 3 to be removed which would impact on the Band above making it difficult to prioritise people
- Opportunities for applicants who may have had their application suspended due to various reasons such as the 3 offer policy would have the opportunity to make representation which would see a Senior Officer respond with a decision
- Members requested the Head of Service for Housing Register to provide a breakdown of the number of applications for housing in each ward and it was noted that this would be circulated to the Commission.

In further discussions, Members of the Commission requested the team to consider how the application forms could be adapted to capture a more wider picture and Officers suggested that Members were welcome to communicate any changes they would like considered to improve the application process which was followed up by an assessment to drive the banding and allocation processes.

13. CHANNEL SHIFT UPDATE

The Head of Service for Housing introduced the item and provided an overview of the report.

As part of the discussions and responses to Members questions, it was noted that:

- The reasons for lower uptake of the shift in service had various reasons and localised challenges, proposals for pop up sessions within communities supported by Members and Officers was suggested as a consideration
- In response to the Chairs query about the contributions made by the HRA to Customer Services, the Director for Housing noted that, this was common and the HRA made contributions to various departments as it was required to do so to pay for a service
- The Housing Team were not in full control of Customer Services but, regular accountability reviews on the performance of the service were an

opportunity to communicate what was working well and areas of improvement

- The corporate direction was to shift the service online and it was suggested that if the online platform was accessible and easy to use, tenants would make the shift with additional support available to ensure no tenants were excluded.

In further discussions the Executive Lead for Housing suggested that a task group could work with the tenants to explore the functionality of the online service in the future.

AGREED:

That the report be noted.

14. WORK PROGRAMME

That the work programme be noted.

15. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There being no other items of urgent business, the meeting closed at 7.46pm.

Housing Scrutiny Commission

Introduction to Housing

July 2023

Director of Housing



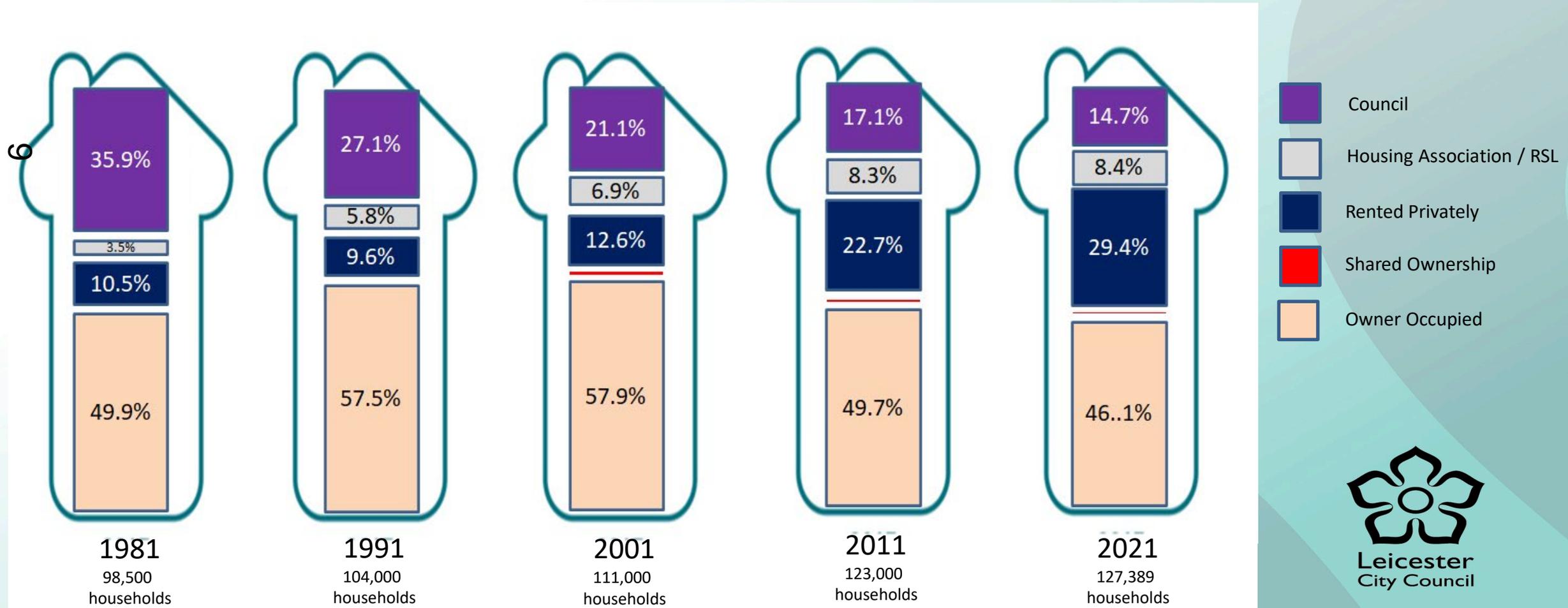
Housing

The overall aim of Leicester City Council's Housing Division is to provide a decent home within the reach of every citizen of Leicester. Under this aim the priorities for the HRA budget are:

- Providing Decent Homes
- ∞ • Making our communities and neighbourhoods places where people want to live and keeping in touch with our tenants
- Making Leicester a low carbon city by improving the energy efficiency of homes
- Providing appropriate housing to match people's changing needs
- Making Leicester a place to do business by creating jobs and supporting the local economy

Leicester City Council's diminishing role as landlord

Rise in private rented, reduction in council properties and a steady but underwhelming number of housing association properties



Housing Development



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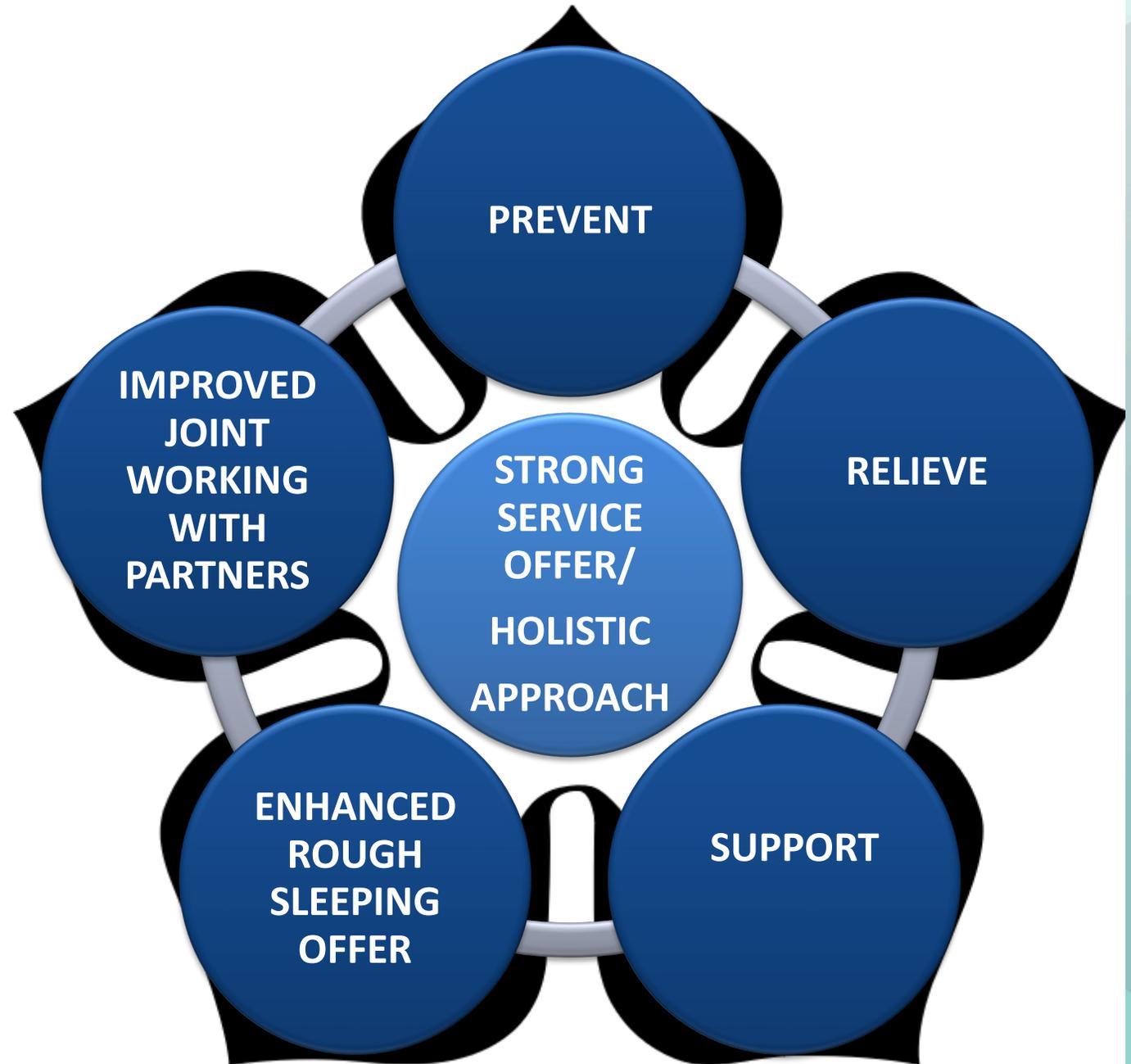
- HEDNA identified need for 786 additional new homes per year
- Loss of 350 homes RTB per year
- 6000 on waiting list
- Development of new Council Housing
- Over 1100 Council Homes delivered over this term
- future Delivery plans being finalised
- Overcrowding Strategy developed
- Adaptations Strategy being developed



Leicester
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Homelessness Services

- Service Objective - to continue to deliver strong, effective homelessness functions to prevent, relieve and support the most vulnerable households facing homelessness.
- Commitment to work towards ending rough sleeping with a strong service offer and strategy over the next 3 years, supported by a successful bid of £2.3m.



Homelessness Services

Key progress areas:

- Review and development of Leicester's new Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy for the next 5 years.
- Improvements to the Dawn Centre to provide additional rooms and a multi-disciplinary centre
- Ending Rough Sleeping Plan supported by successful bids for additional funding.
- Successful bids of over £10m to support new initiatives and enhance service offer.
- Improved joint/partnership working with statutory and Voluntary Sector to ensure services work effectively as a whole.

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Total Applicants on
1st October 2022

6,383

Total Lettings
October 2021 to
September 2022

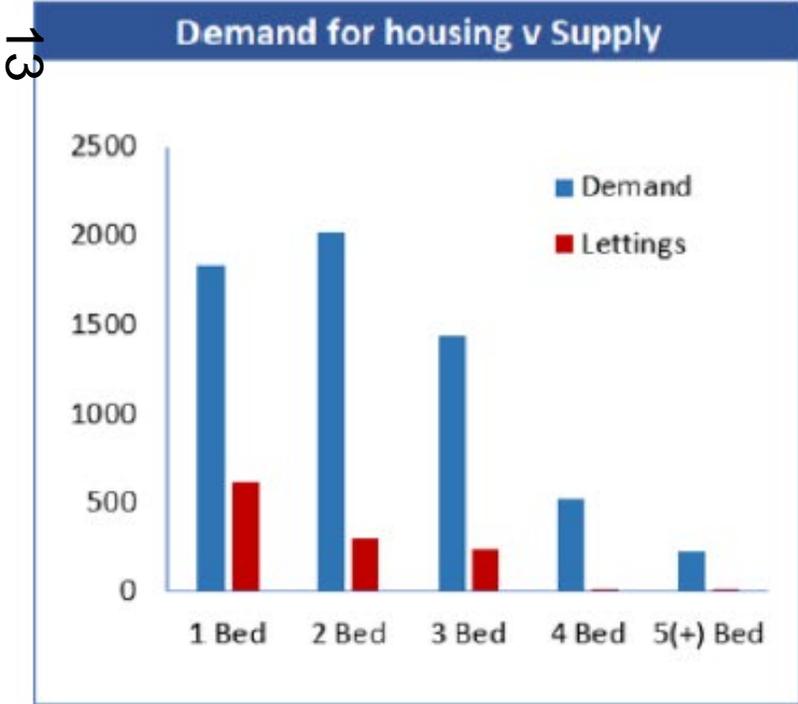
1,102

Average waiting times (months) for different property types*

*Figures quoted are average waiting times for individuals who are bidding regularly across all areas of the city

General Needs Homes						Wheelchair Accessible Homes					
	1 BED	2 BED	3 BED	4 BED	5 BED		1 BED	2 BED	3 BED	4 BED	5 BED
BAND 1	5	9	9	10	12*	BAND 1	31	32	60	52	60*
BAND 2	17	48*	48*	60*	60*	BAND 2	60*	60*	60*	60*	72*
BAND 3	31	72*	72*	72*	72*	BAND 3	72*	72*	72*	72*	84*

Accessible Homes with Level Access Shower						Ground Floor Homes					
	1 BED	2 BED	3 BED	4 BED	5 BED		1 BED	2 BED	3 BED	4 BED	5 BED
BAND 1	6	7	22	48*	60*	BAND 1	3	16	60	60*	72*
BAND 2	8	20	26	60*	60*	BAND 2	9	48*	48*	60*	72*
BAND 3	36*	48*	48*	60*	60*	BAND 3	36*	48*	60*	60*	84*

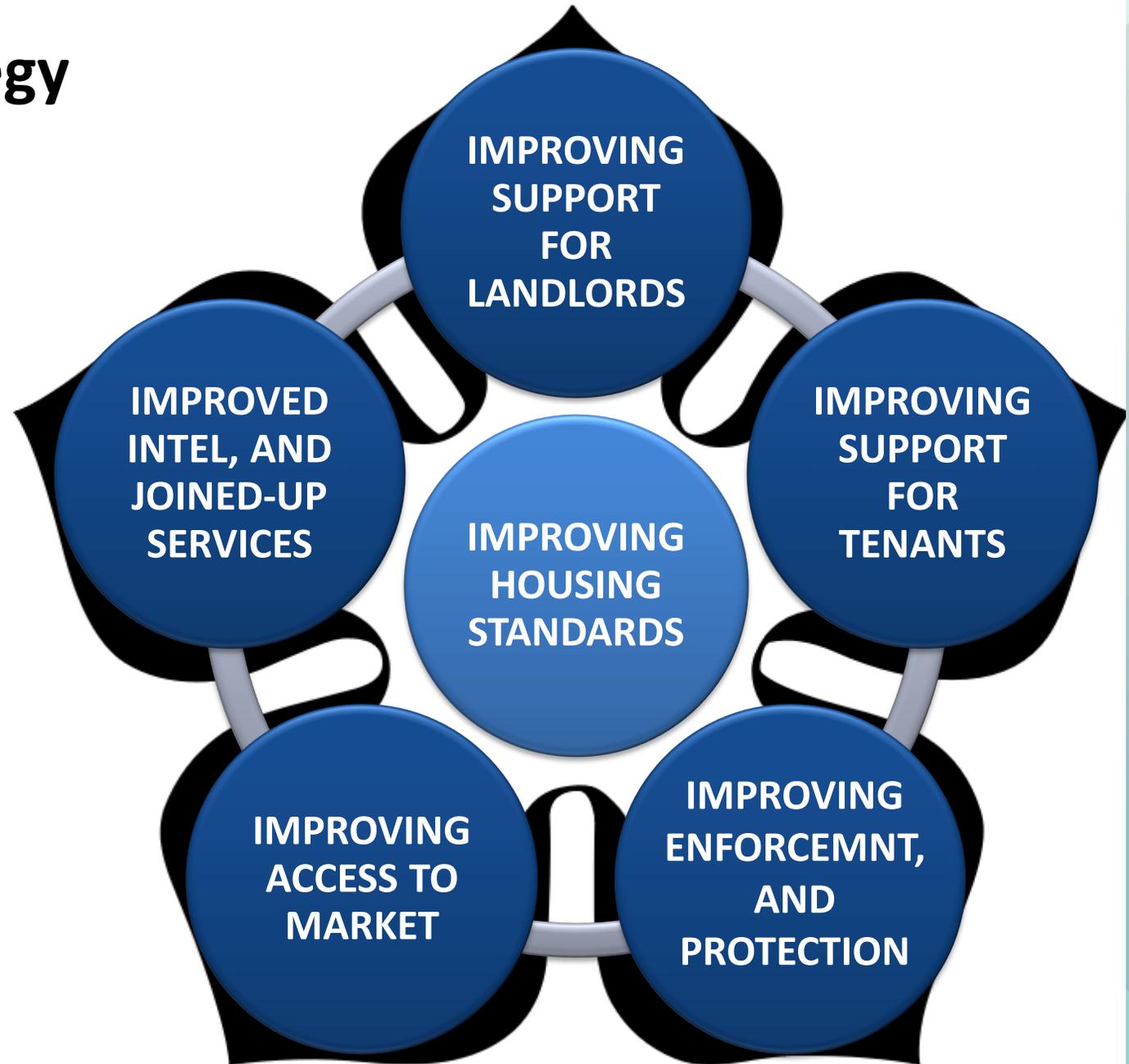


*Estimated waiting times as no actual data available during this period
For further information visit our website at www.leicester.gov.uk/housingapplications

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Private Rented Sector Strategy

- Strategy led jointly by Housing, Neighbourhood and Environment, and Planning.
- Overarching aim to improve housing standards and conditions in the sector.



Bringing empty properties back into use

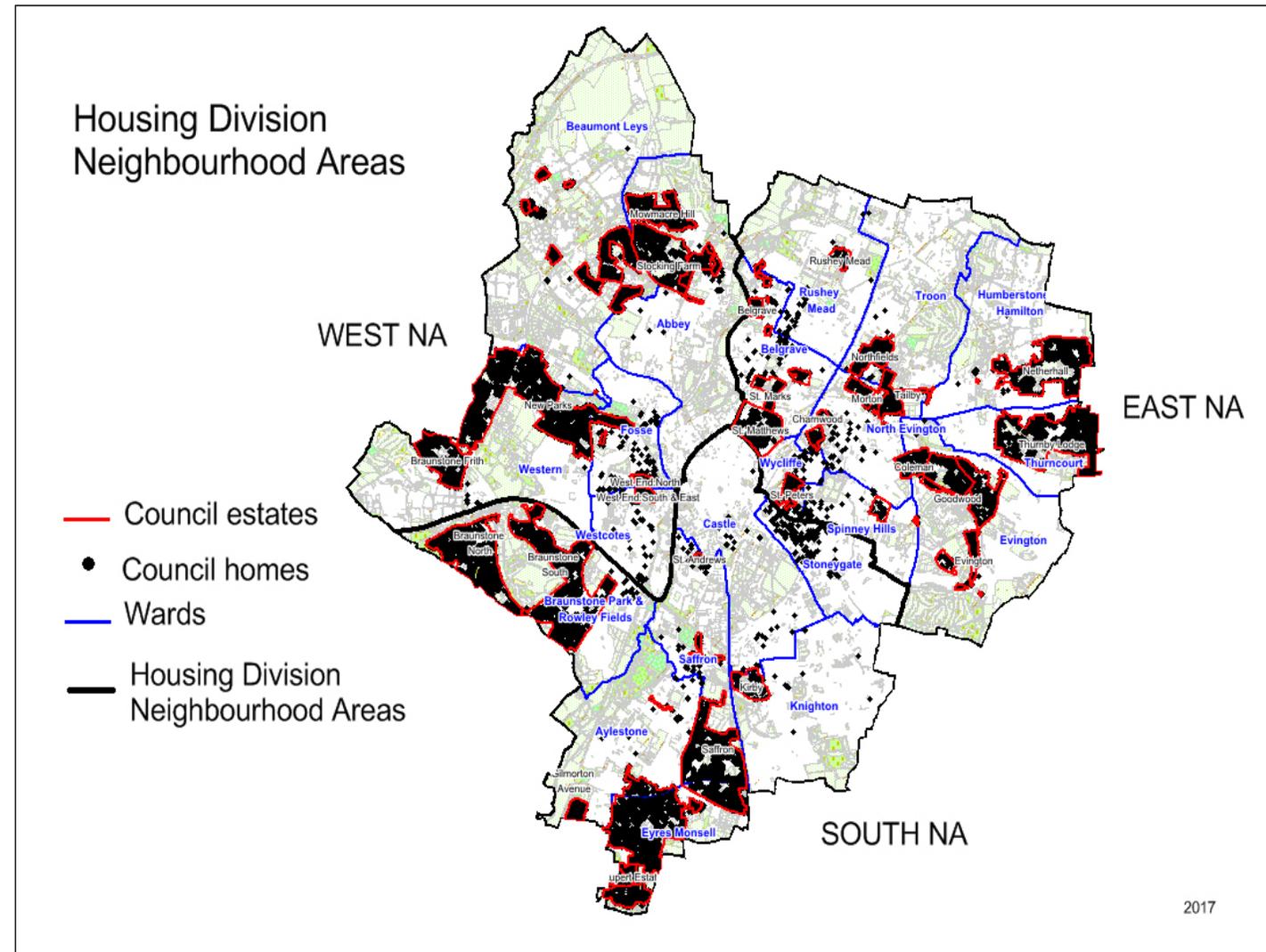
- The **Empty Homes team** work with property owners to bring their long term empty houses back into use as homes for the people of Leicester.
- These are the numbers of properties brought back into use thanks to the work of the Empty Homes Team to date
- The team use an incremental approach when working with owners and use Compulsory Purchase Orders when necessary to bring homes back into use.

18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	Total
205	181	165	205	157	3804

Support for Tenants

£80m in income collected every year- Funding:

- Support for tenants from Tenancy Management, STAR and the Income Management Team to sustain tenancies
- Partnership working with ASC, health, Children's services around safeguarding and health needs



Investing in Council Housing

- Investment into Council Housing through the capital programme every year
- Major refurbishment programme
- ¹/₂ Environmental and communal works
- £4m invested in Public Realm Improvement Programme
- Estate improvements
- Community payback



Repairs & Maintenance

- 91,000 jobs completed annually across the 20,000 council homes and 1,500 leasehold properties, broken down into:
 - 60,000 General Repairs
 - 18,000 Gas Safety Checks
 - ↻ – 13,000 Gas Repairs
- Over 800 Void properties brought up to the 'decent home standard' every year
- £4.8m of materials to complete the necessary works
- Mentors to our craft apprenticeship programme

Employment Opportunities



19



- Over 1000 jobs funded through the Housing Revenue Account
- Women in Construction
- Successful track record in delivering apprenticeships
- Partnership working with BEAM and St Mungos
- Leicester to Work

Asylum and Migration

Longstanding track record for support for asylum seekers and migrants;

- Afghan arrivals
- Homes for Ukraine
- Asylum Seekers
- Vulnerable Person Resettlement programme

Housing Senior Management Team

Contacts and Key Responsibility Areas



Chris Burgin
 Director of Housing
 0116 454 5143



Simon Nicholls
 Head of Service
 0116 454 5273



Gurjit Minhas
 Head of Service
 0116 454 5144



Caroline Carpendale
 Head of Service
 0116 454 1701



Justin Haywood
 Head of Service
 0116 454 1712



Charlotte McGraw
 Head of Service
 0116 454 5167



Joanne Russell
 Head of Service
 0116 454 0245



Kevin Doyle
 Head of Service
 0116 454 5145



Samuel Taylor
 Head of Service
 0116 454 0674

- Capital Investment
- New House Building and Acquisitions
- Home Improvement Team
- Housing Development
- Building Services
- Quality Control

- Districts – East
- Districts – West
- Districts – South
- Gypsy & Travellers Site Managements
- STAR (HRA)
- STAR (AMAL)

- Families Homelessness & Housing Options
- Single Homelessness & Housing Options
- Rough Sleeping & Outreach

- Housing Registration & Allocations
- Property Lettings & Leicester Home Choice
- Private Rented Sector

- Income Management Team
- Housing Administration
- Housing Transformation Team
- Planning and Major Works
- Programme Management – HTP/NEC
- Training Centre of Excellence, Apprentices, NIO Scheme

- Passenger Transport Services
- Fleet – Transport (Maintenance)
- Corporate Fleet
- Empty Homes

- Voids
- Housing Repairs & Maintenance
- Home Maintenance – Handyperson Service
- Gas
- Stores (including DCI team)



Adaptations
Housing Register
Fleet maintenance
Ukraine refugee support
Repairs and maintenance
Property lettings
Rent collection
Leaseholder management
Homeless services
Fire safety
Gypsy and traveller site management
Tenancy management
Tackling ASB
Sheltered housing
Void repairs
Tenant involvement
Tenancy support
Passenger transport service
Housing advice
Temporary accommodation
New build and acquisitions
Support for rough sleepers
Private rented sector advice
Building safety
Private rented sector advice
Environmental improvements

Homelessness Strategy

Private Rented Sector Strategy

Tenancy Strategy

Overcrowding Strategy

Adaptations Strategy

Housing Scrutiny Report

Update Report

Who Gets Social Housing 2022 - 2023

Housing Scrutiny Commission: 31st July 2023

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

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report authors: Sarah Statham, Housing Solutions
Justin Haywood, Homelessness Prevention & Support
- Author contact details: sarah.statham@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 financial year 2022/2023.

2. Headline data from the Housing Register

2.1. Overall number of households on the Housing Register

- 2.1.1. The number of households on the Housing Register is 6008 on 01/04/2023. This is relatively unchanged compared to 6053 on 01/04/2022.

2.2. Banding proportions

- 2.2.1. Band 1 applicants account for 20% (1190). This is an increase of 4% compared to 01/04/2022.
- 2.2.2. Band 2 applicants account for 34% (2057) of all households on the Housing Register. This is a 6% decrease compared to 01/04/2022.
- 2.2.3. Band 3 applicants account for 46% (2761) of all households on the Housing Register. This is relatively unchanged compared to 01/04/2022.

2.3. Primary reasons for joining the Register

- 2.3.1. Overcrowding remains the biggest reason for joining the Housing Register and currently accounts for 60% (3630) of the register. This is relatively unchanged compared to 01/04/2022.
- 2.3.2. Following a Summer 2019 Policy change, there are now three levels of banding priorities for overcrowding, 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. Although this results in a fairer system, and a Policy more capable of allocating housing by level of need, the change did have a consequent negative impact on those remaining in Band 2, who now experience longer waiting times.
- 2.3.3. 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 1988, or otherwise exceeding the property’s maximum occupancy levels. Positively, the number of statutory overcrowded/critically overcrowded households has decreased by 10% from 218 to 197 in the last 12 months.
- 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 – those lacking 2 bedrooms or more, or families living in 1-bed flats. 829 households were in this priority as at 01/04/2023.
- 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 – those lacking just one bedroom. 2604 households were in this priority as at 01/04/2023.

2.3.4. People who are homeless or threatened with homelessness accounts for 20% (1199) of all households on the Housing Register. This is relatively unchanged compared to 01/04/2022.

2.3.5. More detailed information on reasons for joining the housing register can be found at Appendix 1.

2.4. Housing demand vs. Housing Need

2.4.1. Housing demand and housing need are different.

2.4.2. Housing need is driven by population growth and various socioeconomic factors and is measured by the Local Authority in terms of circumstances. These circumstances are then assessed, and priority is awarded on the housing register depending on the level of housing need.

2.4.3. Housing demand includes housing need as a driver, but other drivers exist. Housing demand is also driven by preference, for example wanting to live in a certain area of the city. This can subsequently drive-up waiting times in that particular area. Preference is a key element of Leicester City Council’s Housing Register, as we operate a choice-based lettings scheme, allowing applicants to bid on properties as they wish (except for those priorities that require auto-bidding due to urgency).

2.4.4. In Leicester, information indicates the following:

Type of accommodation (i.e., house, bungalow, flat, maisonette)

- Need for all types of accommodation is high, and significantly outstrips supply.
- When looking at family-sized housing, houses have higher demand than maisonettes and flats, leading to lower average waiting times for the latter.

Adapted accommodation

- Need for fully wheelchair adapted accommodation outstrips supply significantly. Work is ongoing to analyse this and determine how we can increase supply.

Size of accommodation

- The highest size-need is for 2-bedroom accommodation which accounts for 34% of total need.

Area of accommodation

- Housing need in all areas of the city is high, but needs are highest in Troon Ward and Eyres Monsell Ward where the highest proportion of people on the housing register are awarded the highest priority (Band 1). Lowest need is in Stoneygate Ward and North Evington Ward, with the lowest proportion of people on the housing register awarded Band 1.
- Housing demand shows us a different picture. By comparing various data sets we can reliably conclude that demand for housing in Belgrave, North Evington, Wycliffe, and Stoneygate Wards is highest, despite housing need in those areas being relatively low in severity. Evidence from customer interactions backs up this conclusion, and also suggests that those currently living in those areas prefer to remain there if possible and will wait longer on the register in order to do so, potentially leading to the high number of ongoing applications in those wards.
- Supply (lets) across the city is disparate, with the north-west seeing high numbers of lettings, as well as pockets in the south and south-west. With the exception of Evington, lets in the east of the city are much lower, with the lowest being seen in Rushey Mead Ward. Supply in various wards can be affected by a number of factors but is primarily driven by the level of Council stock in the area, and the frequency with which tenants leave accommodation.

Landlord preference

- Demand for Council tenancies is higher than Housing Association tenancies, which are also available through the Housing Register. This leads to marginally lower average waiting times for the latter.

2.5. Other observations

2.5.1. Social Housing tenants (Leicester) account for 23% of all households on the Housing Register.

3. Lettings Headline data

3.1. Overall number of lettings

3.1.1. The number of lettings in the last 12 months has decreased by 110 (9%) from the corresponding period last year. This is driven by a lack of tenancy terminations.

3.1.2. To combat this;

- Leicester City Council will continue to seek to maximise the supply of new affordable housing in the city via both new build and acquisitions and through producing new council homes itself and supporting the provision of new affordable homes by Registered Providers and other Providers. We have committed to a target of 1500 new and acquired properties over the next 4 years.
- Leicester City Council also has a strong private rented sector access scheme. There were 200 lettings to private landlords via schemes. We continue to review these schemes to ensure they continue to provide excellent support to both landlord and tenants, and continue to be competitive in the private sector market.

3.2. Which applicants are achieving the lettings?

3.2.1. Of all lettings in 2022/2023;

- Band 1 accounted for 75% of all lets in 2022/2023.
- Band 2 accounted for 17% of all lets, although there were only 7 family-sized lets to Band 2 families seeking general needs accommodation in the period. This has resulted in longer waiting times for Band 2 families with an average waiting time of over 48 months for 2- and 3- bedroom accommodation in Band 2.
- Band 3 accounted for 8% of all lets but it should be noted that around 40% of these were allocations of Sheltered Housing, which is under less demand. Band 3 applicants have the lowest assessed housing need and will generally not have success on the Housing Register for general needs housing. They are advised to seek other housing options.

3.2.2. 558 (52%) of all lettings were for households who became homeless or were at threat of homelessness. This is proportionate to the previous year and reflects the support given to homeless households to secure settled accommodation through the housing register.

3.2.3. New Parks had the most lettings (192) in the last 12 months followed by Braunstone (112) and Saffron (90). This is largely driven by the locations in which Leicester City Council is actively acquiring accommodation.

3.2.4. More detailed information on lettings can be found at Appendix 2.

3.3. Time taken to achieve an offer of accommodation

Please note: Where the charts below state a number, the number indicates the average time, in months, to achieve an offer during the period. The amount of time spent on the register, and waiting times, is highly dependent on the applicant's level of bidding activity and choices. As such, waiting times could be significantly above average if an applicant is demonstrating lower bidding activity and/or activity that is focused on particular areas of the city, or particular property types.

3.4. Waiting times for 'General Needs' properties

Band 1 applicants

- 3.4.1. For properties that were not directly allocated, the current average waiting times for Band 1 applicants seeking general needs accommodation¹ are showing in Fig 1, below (shown in months):

Fig 1 ave. waiting times for B1 applicants seeking general needs accomm 2022/2023:

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
BAND 1				
House / Maisonette	-	10	11	10
Bungalow	5	18	-	-
Flat	5	7	-	-
Bedsit	2	-	-	-
Sheltered	-	-	-	-

* A – symbol indicates there were no lets of that type in the period.

- 3.4.2. Compared to 2021/2022 (see Fig2) we can see a 3 month increase in average waiting times for 2-bed flats and 3-bed houses, but otherwise waiting times remain steady.

Fig 2 ave. waiting times for B1 applicants seeking general needs accomm 2021/2022:

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed+
BAND 1				
House / Maisonette	-	9	8	10
Bungalow	5	19	-	-
Flat	5	4	-	-
Bedsit	2	-	-	-
Sheltered	1	-	-	-

Band 2 applicants

- 3.4.3. For general needs properties that were not directly allocated, the current average waiting times for Band 2 applicants within 2022/2023 are shown in Fig3:

Fig 3 ave. waiting times for B2 applicants seeking general needs accomm 2022/2023:

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed+
BAND 2				
House / Maisonette	-	39	55	-
Bungalow	10	-	-	-
Flat	20	27	-	-
Bedsit	31	-	-	-
Sheltered	3	-	-	-

- 3.4.4. Compared to 2021/2022 (see Fig4) we can see that waiting times have increased for many property types and sizes, in some cases very significantly.

¹ General needs properties are known as Cat C properties and are defined as those that do not have any significant adaptations installed.

Fig 4 ave. waiting times for B2 applicants seeking general needs accomm 2021/2022:

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed+
BAND 2				
House / Maisonette	-	28	38	48
Bungalow	8	36	-	-
Flat	16	30	-	-
Bedsit	16	-	-	-
Sheltered	3	-	-	-

3.5. Waiting times for Wheelchair Accessible Accommodation²

3.5.1. For wheelchair accessible properties that were not directly allocated, the current average waiting times for households within 2022/2023 are shown in Fig5:

Fig 5 ave. waiting times for wheelchair accessible accomm 2022/2023:

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
BAND 1	30	30	60	51
BAND 2	37	-	-	-
BAND 3	-	-	-	-

3.5.2. Compared to 2021/2022 (see Fig6) we can see that waiting times have increased, in some cases very significantly. This is attributed to a supply and demand issue that is being actively addressed through development of an Adaptations Strategy. The Strategy, led by Housing Development, will look at how we can better meet adapted demand (and specifically fully-wheelchair accessible accommodation) with our existing stock, and any new stock we acquire.

Fig 6 ave. waiting times for wheelchair accessible accomm 2021/2022:

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
BAND 1	10	27	35	40
BAND 2	36	48	48	-
BAND 3	48	-	-	-

3.6. Other Adapted Accommodation³

3.6.1. For other forms of adapted accommodation, the current average waiting times for households within 2022/2023 are shown in Fig7:

Fig 7 ave. waiting times for adapted accomm 2022/2023:

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
BAND 1	6	6	14	-

² Known as Cat A accommodation, and defined as being fully adapted for wheelchair users, which would include widened doorways.

³ Known as Cat B accommodation, and defined as being significantly adapted, for example the need for a through-floor lift and level-access shower in situ.

BAND 2	7	20	15	-
BAND 3	20	30	-	-

3.6.2. Compared to 2021/2022 (see Fig8) we can see that waiting times have increased moderately for those requiring 1-bed adapted accommodation, but decreased for those needing 2-bed and 3-bed adapted accommodation, in some cases a significant reduction.

Fig 8 ave. waiting times for adapted accomm 2021/2022:

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
BAND 1	4	9	20	48
BAND 2	5	31	41	-
BAND 3	8	48	48	-

3.7. Ground Floor Accommodation⁴

3.7.1. For ground-floor-specific accommodation, the average waiting times for households within 2022/2023 are shown in Fig9:

Fig 9 ave. waiting times for ground-floor- specific accomm 2022/2023:

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
BAND 1	6	13	68	48
BAND 2	7	18	-	-
BAND 3	-	-	-	-

3.7.2. Compared to 2021/2022 (see Fig10) we can see that waiting times have increased moderately for those requiring 1-bed adapted accommodation, and increased more significantly for those needing 2-bed and 3-bed accommodation.

Fig 10 ave. waiting times for ground-floor- specific accomm 2021/2022:

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
BAND 1	5	7	36	-
BAND 2	8	8	48	-
BAND 3	12	12	-	-

3.8. Housing Associations

3.8.1. Lettings to Housing Associations and HomeCome accounts for 235 (22%) of all lettings in the last 12 months. This has remained proportionate to the overall lettings for the corresponding period last year.

⁴ Known as Cat G accommodation and defined as being a property all on the ground floor or having facilities that would make it suitable for someone unable to use stairs.

3.8.2. PA Housing was the largest provider with 102 (43%) of the lets with EMH Homes the next highest provider with 27 lettings (11%).

3.9. Direct Allocations

3.9.1. Leicester City Council's Housing Allocations Policy allows for direct allocations of housing to be made to applicants whose circumstances merit priority rehousing on the basis of managing risk, emergencies, and best use of stock.

3.9.2. The number of direct lettings accounts for 26% (280) of all lettings for the 12-month period. This has remained relatively unchanged from the corresponding period last year.

3.9.3. Direct lets to homeless households account for 81% of total direct lettings.

4. Summary of appendices:

4.1. Appendix 1 - Households on the Register by Band & Priority and as at 01/04/2023

4.2. Appendix 2 - Lettings by Priority for the 12-month period 01/04/2022 – 31/03/2023

4.3. Appendix 3 - Customer Information Dashboard

5. Is this a private report? No

6. Is this a "key decision"? If so, why? No – update only.

Households on the Register by Band & Priority and as at 01/04/2023

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5 Bed	6 Bed	7 Bed	8+Bed	Total
BAND 1	247	443	320	114	50	16	-	-	1190
Compulsory Homeless	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Harassment	11	21	9	3	2	-	-	-	46
Management Case	20	7	6	4	1	1	-	-	39
Medical	61	79	68	31	7	2	-	-	248
Priority Under-occupation	63	5	1	-	-	-	-	-	69
Referred Case	-	5	6	3	1	-	-	-	15
Statutory Overcrowding	2	58	69	30	26	12	-	-	197
Statutory Homeless	51	262	161	43	13	1	-	-	531
Young Person Leaving Care	39	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	43
BAND 2	605	758	349	235	76	27	5	2	2057
Care package ASC	29	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	30
Leaving Armed Forces	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Leaving Residential Care	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Medical	96	118	184	81	13	4	-	-	496
Overcrowded Families in 1 Bed	-	471	96	7	1	-	-	-	575
Severe Overcrowding	-	9	23	133	59	23	5	2	254
Statutory Homeless	187	110	29	9	1	-	-	-	336
Temporary Accommodation	288	34	6	3	1	-	-	-	332
Under-occupation	-	12	11	2	1	-	-	-	26
BAND 3	877	816	860	197	10	1	-	-	2761
Sheltered Housing Only	96	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	96
Adult Leaving Care	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Medical Care + Support	30	15	5	1	2	-	-	-	53
Overcrowding - Non-Tenants	732	607	116	25	2	1	-	-	1483
Overcrowding - Tenants	16	193	737	170	5	-	-	-	1121
Workplace Move	2	1	2	1	1	-	-	-	7
Grand Total	1729	2017	1529	546	136	44	5	2	6008

Lettings by Priority for the 12-month period 01/04/2022 – 31/03/2023

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5 Bed	Total
BAND 1	280	260	237	18	1	796
Compulsory Homeless	1	2	-	-	-	3
Harassment	10	19	10	1	-	40
Management Case	33	9	8	-	-	50
Medical	47	17	16	2	-	82
Priority Under-occupation	25	1	1	-	-	27
Referred Case	1	4	2	1	-	8
Statutory Overcrowding	2	55	60	2	-	119
Statutory Homeless	122	152	140	12	1	427
Young Person Leaving Care	39	1	-	-	-	40
BAND 2	188	15	9	-	-	212
Care package ASC	6	-	-	-	-	6
Leaving Residential Care	4	-	-	-	-	4
Medical	49	9	6	-	-	64
Overcrowded Families in 1 Bed	-	3	2	-	-	5
Statutory Homeless	55	1	-	-	-	56
Temporary Accommodation	73	1	1	-	-	75
Under-occupation	-	1	-	-	-	1
BAND 3	66	3	2	-	-	71
Sheltered Housing Only	24	-	-	-	-	24
Medical Care + Support	4	-	-	-	-	4
Overcrowding - Non-Tenants	38	3	2	-	-	43
Grand Total	534	278	248	18	1	1079

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

Updated every 6 months
Last update: April 2023

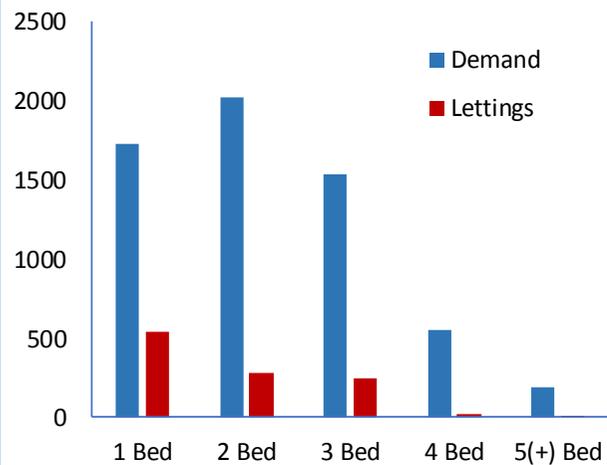
Total Applicants on
1st April 2023

6,008

Total Lettings April
2022 to March 2023

1,079

Demand for housing v Supply



Average waiting times (months) for different property types*

*Figures quoted are average waiting times for individuals who are bidding regularly across all areas of the city

	General Needs Homes					Wheelchair Accessible Homes				
	1 BED	2 BED	3 BED	4 BED	5 BED	1 BED	2 BED	3 BED	4 BED	5 BED
BAND 1	5	11	11	10	18	30	30	60	51	60*
BAND 2	20	48*	48*	60*	60*	37	60*	60*	60*	72*
BAND 3	31	72*	72*	72*	72*	72*	72*	72*	72*	84*

	Accessible Homes with Level Access Shower					Ground Floor Homes				
	1 BED	2 BED	3 BED	4 BED	5 BED	1 BED	2 BED	3 BED	4 BED	5 BED
BAND 1	6	6	14	48*	60*	6	13	68	60*	72*
BAND 2	7	20	15	60*	60*	7	18	48*	60*	72*
BAND 3	20	30	48*	60*	60*	36*	48*	60*	60*	84*

*Estimated waiting times as no actual data available during this period

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

Housing Scrutiny Report

Rent Arrears Report

April 2022 to March 2023

Housing Scrutiny Commission: 31st July 2023

Assistant Mayor for Housing: Cllr Elly Cutkelvin
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: V.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Members of the Scrutiny Commission on the rent arrears progress within the general housing stock, over the full financial year, from April 2022 to March 2023.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The report is for information and Members are asked to note the contents of the report.

3. SUMMARY

- 3.1 At the end of the financial year (2nd April 2023) the cash amount outstanding was **£1.725m**, for current tenant rent arrears within the general housing stock. This is **9% higher** than at the same point in the previous financial year. (see 4.4, Table 2).
- 3.2 The proportion of rent collected between April to March 2023 was **99.66%** which is above target.
- 3.3 The team supported tenants to apply for Discretionary Housing Payments. A total **£396,361k** was paid in awards for all qualifying Council tenants. This is a 28% decrease in awards compared to the previous financial year as the DWP grant was substantially reduced compared to previous years.
- 3.4 The team worked in partnership with the Housing Options service to support households at risk of homelessness. A total of **72 households** were supported to clear or reduce their rent arrears with a combined total of **£103,245k** being paid out in Government funding. (see 4.37).
- 3.5 The team supported tenants with applications to the Household Support funds. A total of **£30k** was paid across **26 households**. A further **4,223** tenants or 22% of all Council tenants were supported with fuel, water costs, food, and white goods. Many tenants received multiple awards for different things. (see 4.38 & 4.39)
- 3.6 The total value of the top 500 arrears cases **decreased 15%** by year-end when compared to quarter 1 and since 2019/20 the overall debt in this category **decreased by 25%**. (see 4.12, Table 7 & 8)
- 3.7 By the end of the financial year 2022/23, a total number of **6,483** council tenants

are claiming UC equating to **34%** of all current council tenants. This compares to **35%** of council tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit. A total of **55%** of UC tenants were in rent arrears which is a **2% increase** from the same point last year. (see 4.18, Table 9).

- 3.8 The Rent Management Advisors have been supporting tenants with welfare benefit claims and had received **938 referrals** throughout the year. A total of **73%** of the tenants required **short-term support** and the remaining **27%** were being provided with **longer-term support**. (see 4.24)
- 3.9 A total of **5 evictions** were carried out over the past year which compares to 7 in the previous year 2021/22. This is the **lowest number** of evictions since the inception of the specialist rent team. Since April 2022, a total of **80 cases** were submitted to court for rental possessions which equates to an **average of 7 cases** per month and this compares to 51 court submissions in the year 2021/22. Pre-Covid, the average court submissions were around 80 cases per month which represents **92% annual reduction** in possession actions. (see 4.32 & 4.34)

4. REPORT

Current Tenant Rent Arrears

4.1 Current Rent Arrears at the end of each quarter for the financial year 2022/23:

Table 1. Quarterly Arrears

Period	Arrears at Quarter End
Quarter 1	£2,136,975
Quarter 2	£2,470,861
Quarter 3	£1,666,364
Quarter 4	£1,724,846

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

Table 2. Financial Year End Figures

Period	Arrears at Financial Year End
2019/20	£2,036,496
2020/21	£1,799,863
2021/22	£1,576,981
2022/23	£1,724,846

- 4.3 Table 1 shows the cash amount owing at the end of each quarter in the last financial year with arrears higher at the start of the year and decreasing towards year-end which are normal patterns and trends seen historically.
- 4.4 Table 2 shows the cash amount owing at week ending **2nd April 2023** was **£1.725m**, this is **9% higher** than at the same point in the previous financial year but lower when compared to 2019/20 and 2020/21. The 2022/23 performance resembles similarly to the performance seen in 2020/21, which was the first full year of the covid pandemic.

This figure does not represent non-dwelling properties. Like Many Social Landlords, the team are facing a very challenging environment in which to collect rent and arrears, tenants have faced a struggling financial period in their lives but despite this, the team have performed relatively well, and tenants have maintained their rent payments at reasonable standards as the overall rent arrears position could have been far worse due to the current economic climate.

4.5 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 2023 was **99.66%**. The figure reflects a rolling 52-week performance and demonstrates the hard work and tremendous efforts made by the team in maximising rent collection. The rent collection figures for Leicester remains good in comparison with other authorities with only **37%** of our current tenants in rent arrears.

4.6 There are many positive reasons which have attributed to good collection rates. Some examples of good working practices and achievements are listed below.

- The team communicate with tenants in various different ways to encourage rent payments, maximise rent collection and reduce rent arrears. A total of **47,538 telephone contacts** were made or received by the team in the financial year 2022/23 including duplicated contacts made by the team to the same tenant.
- A further **7,876 text messages** were sent by the team to reach out to tenants for payment and support. This doesn't include the automated bulk texting facility that was also introduced in the last year.
- Emails were also sent and received to tenants and a total of **14,438** were sent and **8,432** were received which is a combined total of **22,870**.
- A total of **1,090 home visits** were completed to tenants home which is an average of 4 visits per working day throughout the year.
- The team produced and issued **51,910 letters** throughout the year not including the system generated automated letters. This includes a combination of general rent payment reminder letters and invites to appointments alongside anything more serious where legal actions due to persistent non-payment is being considered.
- Effective joint partnership working with the District Managers (Tenancy management) and the Repairs managers to agree decisions to progress complex cases and discuss any tenant issues which might be causing reasons to withhold rent payments.
- Applying internal system messages to identify cases at threat of legal action or where tenants are not engaging so all staff across Housing are able to identify tenants that need to engage with the team urgently enabling the team to offer the appropriate support quickly.
- Developing electronic court files to improve efficiency of the court process and providing time savings for the team.
- A non-engagement strategy was launched to give the team a renewed focus on non-engagers and focussing on creative ways to enable tenant engagement.
- Frequent complex case review meetings with Manager and Team Leaders to explore serious arrears in excess of £1,500. The meetings help produce a plan of action and kept the team challenged as the cases were overseen by management.
- An ongoing emphasis on performance management to ensure output and productivity is not affected whilst the service continues operating from home.

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 2022-23

Period	Owing 7 Weeks or more Net
Quarter 1	1,258
Quarter 2	1,375
Quarter 3	1,037
Quarter 4	968

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
2019/20	2,319
2020/21	1,431
2021/22	956
2022/23	968

4.8 The number of cases in arrears owing 7 weeks or more net rent, **increased by 1%** over the previous year end figure. The 7-week arrears include lower amounts of net rent, so this is not a true reflection of the serious debt cases.

Average 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 2022/23

Period	Average Arrears
Quarter 1	£233.91
Quarter 2	£254.44
Quarter 3	£281.91
Quarter 4	£246.94

Table 6. Average Arrears per Debtor by Financial Year End

Period	Average Arrears
2019/20	£266.45
2020/21	£264.10
2021/22	£233.14
2022/23	£246.94

4.10 Table 5 shows the average arrears increased steadily up to Quarter 3 however by year end, they decreased compared to the figures at Quarter 1. At Quarter 3 the

averages are higher due to the non-rent payment weeks in December which reduces the numbers of tenants in arrears.

Table 6 shows average arrears per debtor increased in comparison to the previous year by **6%**. This figure is variable depending on the number of tenants in arrears at any given time. The increase is reflective of the number of tenants in rent arrears at year end which had increased slightly from 35% to 37% when compared to the previous year 2021-22. The increase is not concerning at this stage and is as expected due to the current challenges tenants are facing due to the cost-of-living crisis.

Top 500 Arrears Cases (by value)

4.11 Table 7 & 8 (below) shows the top 500 accounts with the highest arrears and total value of arrears at the end of each quarter and year end regardless of tenants payment methods.

Table 7. Top 500 Arrears Cases by Quarter End

Quarter End 2022/23	Highest Case	Lowest Case	Average	Total Value
Quarter 1	£4,463	£733	£1,089	£544,280
Quarter 2	£3,849	£777	£1,144	£571,770
Quarter 3	£3,219	£704	£1,098	£549,091
Quarter 4	£3,009	£650	£930	£464,865

Table 8. Top 500 Arrears Cases by Year End

Period	Highest Case	Lowest Case	Average	Total Value
2019/20	£3,535	£846	£1242	£620,823
2020/21	£7,211	£706	£1,296	£647,951
2021/22	£3,569	£607	£940	£470,151
2022/23	£3,009	£650	£930	£464,865

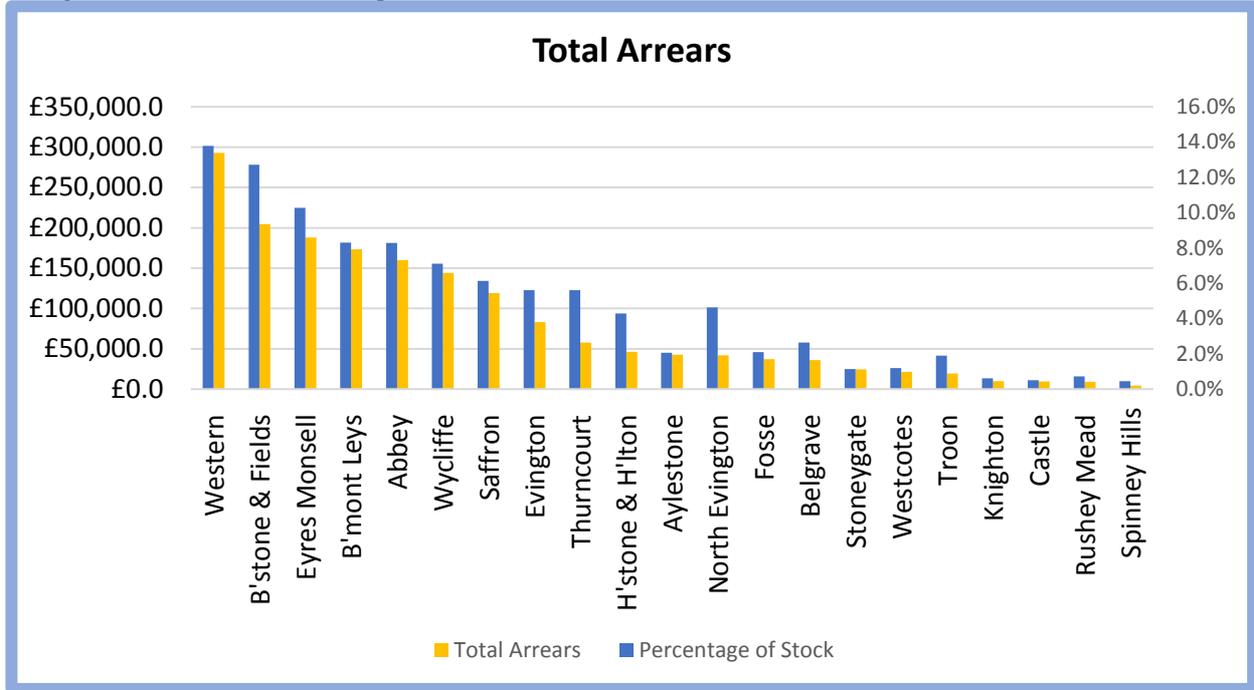
4.12 Table 7 shows that the total value of top arrears cases **decreased by 15%** at year-end when compared to quarter 1. Higher debt cases are generally more complex to manage and require intensive support from the team. The team work collaboratively and in partnership with other advice agencies and internal departments to help achieve positive outcomes and resolutions for tenants. At times these serious cases are influenced by courts preventing the team from taking possession actions until such time the court orders.

4.13 Table 8 shows the total value of the top 500 cases at year-end 2022/23 was the lowest when compared to performances at previous year ends. Since 2019/20 the overall debt in this category **decreased by 25%** which demonstrates that the complex rent arrears cases are now in a manageable position and have stabilised compared to the peak that was experienced during the pandemic.

Arrears by Ward

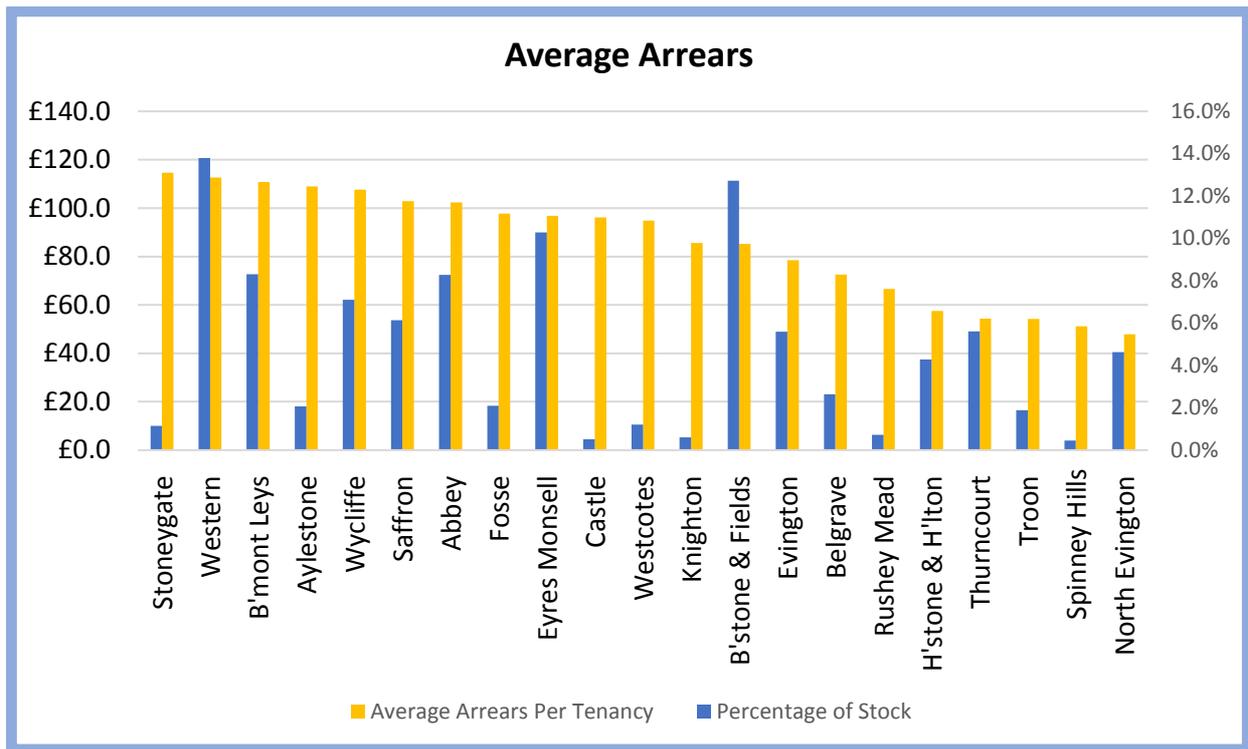
4.14 The graphs presented below show the total arrears and average arrears by ward at end of financial year 2022/23.

Graph 1. Total Arrears by Ward



4.15 The total arrears chart shows that the ward areas with the most stock have the highest arrears values and the arrears are proportionate against the percentage of stock. The most significant change compared to last year is that Eyres Monsell has switched places with Beaumont Leys as Monsell's arrears increased by 26% (39k) and Beaumont Leys saw a reduction of almost 2%. There are a combination of reasons for rent arrears to fluctuate for example, an increased number of monthly payers that fail to pay their rent on time or, opting to use pay point causing delays in payments reaching rent accounts in time for year-end. Historically, some tenants need reminders and encouragement to pay rent in a timely way and therefore, pockets of underperformance issues within certain areas in the team that can lead to negative impacts within the ward areas.

Graph 2. Total Average Arrears by Ward



4.16 The average arrears chart presents the total average arrears per tenancy. Areas like Aylestone, Castle, Westcotes and Stoneygate are lower in stock but have higher 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.

Furthermore, these area’s contain flats and bedsits which 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.

Universal Credit & Rent Management Advisor Support

4.17 It’s almost 5 years since the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) in Leicester. Table 8 (below) provides information about Council tenants claiming this DWP benefit.

Table 9. Universal Credit Key Performance Indicators

Quarter End 2022/23	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 Debtor	No. of APA's*
Quarter 1	6,485	60%	68%	£1,162,261	£265	2,336
Quarter 2	6,022	59%	72%	£1,285,421	£293	2,968
Quarter 3	6,236	57%	49%	£934,764	£307	3,148
Quarter 4	6,483	59%	55%	£948,607	£265	3,285

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

- 4.18 By the end of the financial year 2022/23, a total number of **6,483** council tenants were claiming UC equating to **34%** of all current council tenants. This compares to **35%** of council tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit. By the end of the year a total of **55%** of tenants claiming UC were in rent arrears which is a **2% increase** than at the same point last year.
- 4.19 Table 8 shows when tenants moved onto Universal Credit an average of **59%** 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.
- 4.20 By year end a total of **3,285** 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.
- 4.21 The team continue 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 team continue to provide an appointment service form the Job Centre Plus where appropriate and if tenants require urgent appointments to support benefit claims.
- 4.22 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.

- 4.23 The teams **8 Rent Management Advisors** (RMA) are responsible for supporting our most vulnerable tenants, or those with complex needs with claiming and maintaining Universal Credit claims. They have been helping tenants set up e-mail accounts, supporting people to make and manage their UC claims, supporting tenants with backdated payments and reconsideration of welfare benefits 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.
- 4.24 The RMAs received a total of **938 referrals** which is **55% higher** than at the same point in the previous year and **65%** from the total number of referrals had an identified vulnerability disclosed by the tenant. From the 938 referrals a total of **93% were accepted** and **6%** of referrals were **refused** as they did not meet the criteria for support. A total of **71%** of cases are **now closed** due to the support ending and **19%** of the closed cases failed to engage with RMAs. The current active caseload is **207 cases**.
- 4.25 The cases are separated into two types of support 'Short-Term' usually up to two months and 'Long-Term' up to six months. From the 672 cases that have been closed so far, a total of **73%** of the tenants required **short-term support** in making benefit claims or basic budgeting advice and the remaining **27%** required **longer-term support** to help manage their claims and also, to apply for any additional elements within their claim for example, Limited Capability for Work Related Activity. This is worth an extra **£390.06 per month** to tenants, however it can take several months for this to be awarded as tenant would usually be required to complete a Work Capability Assessment (WCA) to qualify for this payment.
- 4.26 The average wait time for the referrals to be allocated was **2 working days** and the average time to make the first contact with the tenant was **1 working day**. This demonstrates a waiting list process did not need to be used, as the team effectively managed the workloads and tenants were offered support without any unnecessary delays.
- 4.27 The referrals were marked within a priority banding high, medium, and low. **High** defines tenants at immediate risk of homelessness i.e., pending evictions which amounted to **23%** from the **879 referrals received**. **Medium** priority referrals where tenants who were at risk of court possession proceedings equated to **59%** of the referrals. **Low** priority referrals where tenants had low level arrears with no legal action being considered were **18%**.
- 4.28 The team pursue legal action only as a last resort when all opportunities to sustain tenancies have been exhausted. From the 672 closed cases, **10%** of cases were pursued with **legal actions** due to non-engagement or persistent non-payment despite RMA intervention. This demonstrates that **90%** of households were supported with **tenancy sustainment** and any threat of possession proceedings as removed. On current and active cases, it demonstrates there is further scope to provide tenancy sustainment and support. For ongoing eviction cases RMAs provide frequent support and maintain efforts to engage with tenants until such time the eviction is cancelled or goes ahead.
- 4.29 RMA's supported tenants to claim welfare benefits, discretionary housing payments (DHP), backdated payments, reconsiderations, and underpayments. In

the last 12 months a total value of **£182,609k** was achieved by supporting **672 households**. This amount includes any potential entitlements for the next 12 months for disability related benefits which are awarded for a minimum of 12 months before reviewed. Decisions on mandatory reconsiderations and backdates can take a few months to resolve and reconsiderations on disability related benefits can take even longer for resolutions.

- 4.30 Due to RMA involvement and contributions in rent arrears cases the total value of **reduction in rent arrears** through RMA intervention equated to **£206,712k**. This figure has been drawn out by taking the value of rent arrears at case opening stage and subtracting this from the value at the time of closing the case, resulting in the difference RMA intervention made to the rent arrears.
- 4.31 RMAs measured “Soft Outcomes” to help identify tenants confidence levels *after* their support had ended. It also helped to determine if the tenant felt empowered to be able to manage their claims for benefits without support in the future. An initial assessment gives scores between 1 and 5 based on tenant confidence. When the case is closed the assessment is then carried out again and re-scored to establish any improvement. If the score is higher than when the support initially started, it demonstrates an improvement in tenants confidence. Based on the 672 closed cases, **67%** of tenants confirmed they had a **marked improvement** in their level of confidence. The remaining **33%** were tenants who felt their confidence levels **did not improve** or did not engage with the service

Court & Evictions

- 4.32 The team have continued careful consideration before instigating possession proceedings and ensured all avenues of supporting tenants had been explored in advance of any legal action. Any potential court case was reviewed by management before submissions to courts. Since April 2022, a total of **80 cases** were submitted to court for rental possessions which equates to an **average of 7 cases** per month and this compares to 51 court submissions in the year 2021/22. Pre-Covid, the average court submissions were around 80 cases per month which represents **92% annual reduction** in possession actions. This demonstrates, the effective prevention and management of rent arrears by the team, the tenancy sustainment support provided to tenants, all of which subsequently removed any threat of possession proceedings.
- 4.33 Evictions and warrant requests were being pursued only where it was absolutely necessary, with a view that ongoing efforts to sustain tenancies continue to be provided until such time an eviction takes place. Tenants were encouraged and provided with ample opportunities to reach reasonable payment solutions to avoid possession orders and evictions.

Management scrutinises 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.

4.34 In the last financial year, **5 evictions** were carried out for non-payment of rent, and this is the **lowest number of evictions** since inception of the specialist rent team. This figure compares to 7 in 2021/22 and 37 in 2019/20. Evictions remain at a relatively low level compared to earlier years despite the economic difficulties experienced over this period, the ongoing welfare reform challenges, and the continued impact due to the cost-of-living crisis. The household make up for all 5 evictions were single people who had abandoned their homes and chose to not continue with their Council tenancy. The team are exceptionally proud of their achievements in ensuring families were supported with sustaining their tenancies.

DHP's (Discretionary Housing Payment)

4.35 Between April 2022 and March 2023 the team supported tenants to apply for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs). A total **£396,361k** was paid in awards for all qualifying Council tenants. This is a 28% decrease in awards compared to the previous financial year as the DWP grant was substantially reduced compared to previous years which meant the Council had to top up the allocation using the Household Support Fund. The team use DHPs to provide assistance to the most vulnerable tenants to sustain their tenancies and to safeguard them in their homes. The support helps alleviate poverty, prevent homelessness, and enables tenants time, to seek alternative accommodations and to better their financial position.

4.36 The current years forecast remains bleak as central government continue to reduce funding. The team have successfully bid for a top up allocation from the Household Support Fund which has been approved and will see a combined allocation of **£700k** in this new financial year (2023/24) to prevent Council tenants being put at risk of homelessness. DHPs are a crucial lifeline for tenants and supports reductions in rent arrears. Our aim will be to prioritise and support those experiencing income shock for example, redundancy, reduced hours at work, illness or caring responsibilities which can often lead to sudden financial hardship due to fluctuating incomes.

Homelessness Prevention Grant

4.37 The homelessness section received Government funding to support those at risk of homelessness. Income Management Team identified tenants that met the criteria set out by the Government and worked in partnership with the Housing Options service to support households with this funding. During the final quarter the team supported a total of **72 households** with a combined total of **£103,245k**. The funding was paid into tenants rent accounts to clear or reduce outstanding rent arrears. These households which included singles and families had exceptional circumstances and were at risk of eviction, pending legal actions or affected by significant affordability issues due to the cost-of-living crisis. All tenants identified were supported with this funding under strict conditions such as engagement with the team and ongoing compliance with rent payments.

Household Support Fund (HSF)

4.38 Due to the impact of Covid and the cost-of-living crisis, the Government introduced support funds which are being administered by the Council. The fund focusses on supporting people primarily with fuel, water costs, food, and white goods. Over the

last financial year the team referred **4,223** council tenants for this support which equates to 22% of all council tenants. Many tenants received multiple awards for different things. See Table 10.

Table 10. Household Support Fund

Description of Assistance Provided	Number of Households
Food	4,028
Utilities	4,069
Water / Sewerage	1,275
Other essential items (white goods)	666
Referral to Energy wise	63
HB / UC advice offered	310
Council Tax advice offered	480

4.39 The Household Support Fund was also used to support tenants in exceptional cases where there was a genuine emergency and where tenants did not meet the qualifying criteria for existing housing support schemes for example, DHP, Housing benefit or Universal Credit. A total of **£30k** was awarded across 26 households with average awards of **£1,154 per case**. We found 81% of the tenants had accrued rent arrears in the last 12 months and 54% were aged 50+ but under Pension age and the main reason for support was changes to employment status due to medical conditions.

5.0 Key Challenges 2023/24

5.1 The last few years have been incredibly difficult and tough, the team will continue to face significant challenges and pressures in the coming year due to the ongoing rising inflation, unprecedented rising costs of fuel and energy, and the cost of living crisis. The team will also be collecting additional rents due to the 7% increase from 3rd April 2023 to core rents and the significantly increased District Heating charges due to the rising price of gas from April 2023. The team will be responsible for collecting any debt transferred back to the Council after the installation of gas meters in properties and if tenants fail to pay for their heat consumption over a 7-week period. A number of tenants will qualify for the Household support fund from central government however, this is a short-term fix to what's likely to be a medium to long term problem. The rent arrears are expected to rise, and performance is likely to be very unstable.

The team remain resilient and endeavour to stay focussed and positive, aiming to continue delivering high performance and maintaining good standards. Tenant support will remain the primary focus during what's going to be another extremely challenging and difficult year. The team will continue working consistently to support tenants with their financial burdens, helping them to ease this by maximising incomes wherever possible.

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

6.1 Financial implications

This report sets out the position in relation to net rent arrears for current tenants at the end of March 2023. Not documented in this report are the arrears associated with non-dwelling properties (such as garages and parking spaces), hostel bedspaces and former tenants. The overall gross debt outstanding for all Council tenancies remained largely unchanged from March 2022 to March 2023. A provision for bad debt is made to recognise that a proportion of debt will go uncollected.

Stuart McAvoy – Head of Finance

6.2 Legal implications

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

Jeremy Rainbow – Principal Lawyer (Litigation) – x.371435

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 2022 to March 2023. 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. It is important that officers continue to offer early appropriate professional support and guidance to tenants to reduce rent arrears. Tenants will continue to face significant challenges and pressures in the coming year due to the ongoing rising inflation, unprecedented rising costs of fuel and energy, and the cost of living crisis. The

work carried out by the Rent Management Advisors in relation to supporting vulnerable people some of whom will have complex needs helps to impact positively on people from across all protected characteristics.

Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh, Ext 37 4148

6.4 Climate Emergency implications

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

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284

Housing Scrutiny Report

House Building and Acquisitions update

Housing Scrutiny Commission: Date 31st. July 2023

Lead member: Cllr Elly Cutkelvin
Lead director: Chris Burgin



City Mayor

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: potentially all
- Report author: Simon Nicholls, Head of Service
- Author contact details: 395273
- Report version number:

Summary

The Council has an ambitious commitment to deliver 1,500 more new council, social and extra care homes over the next four years. Delivery during the preceding four years was heavily reliant on our ongoing acquisition programme due to the time it takes to get a new build programme up and running, the COVID impact and the challenges the construction industry faced with rising process and skills shortages.

This main focus of this report will be our current new build council house pipeline for the next 4 years and our acquisition programme.

The second half of the report talks more generally about the other delivery routes we intend to use to meet the manifesto target of 1500 new affordable homes for Leicester.

This report also sets out the issues and risks affecting its achievement.

Recommendations

That the Housing Scrutiny Commission note the content of this report.

3. Supporting information including options considered:

Current new build council house pipeline:

Scheme	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27
Saffron Velodrome		38		
Lanesborough Road			37	
Phase 2b	2	16		
Phase 3			44	
Southfields/Newry		28	25	
Stocking Farm		20	30	
FLEC		33		
Totals	2	135	136	

Saffron Velodrome: 38 New homes

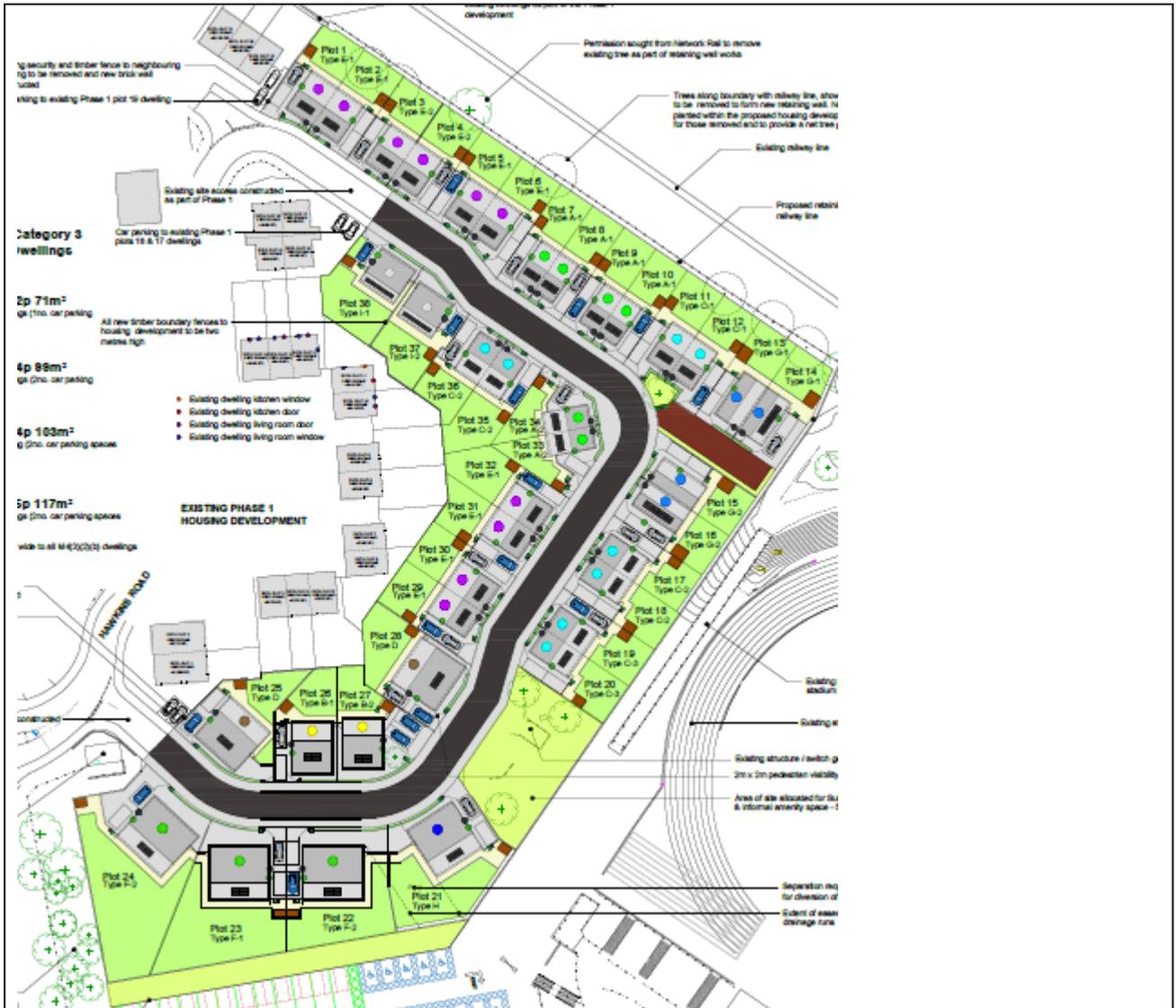
Saffron Lane was tendered, and the contract awarded to Robert Woodhead Construction, unfortunately they went into voluntary liquidation soon after starting on site. We are due to go out to tender in the summer to be able to appoint a new contractor who we hope will be back on site this year.



View of site in current condition



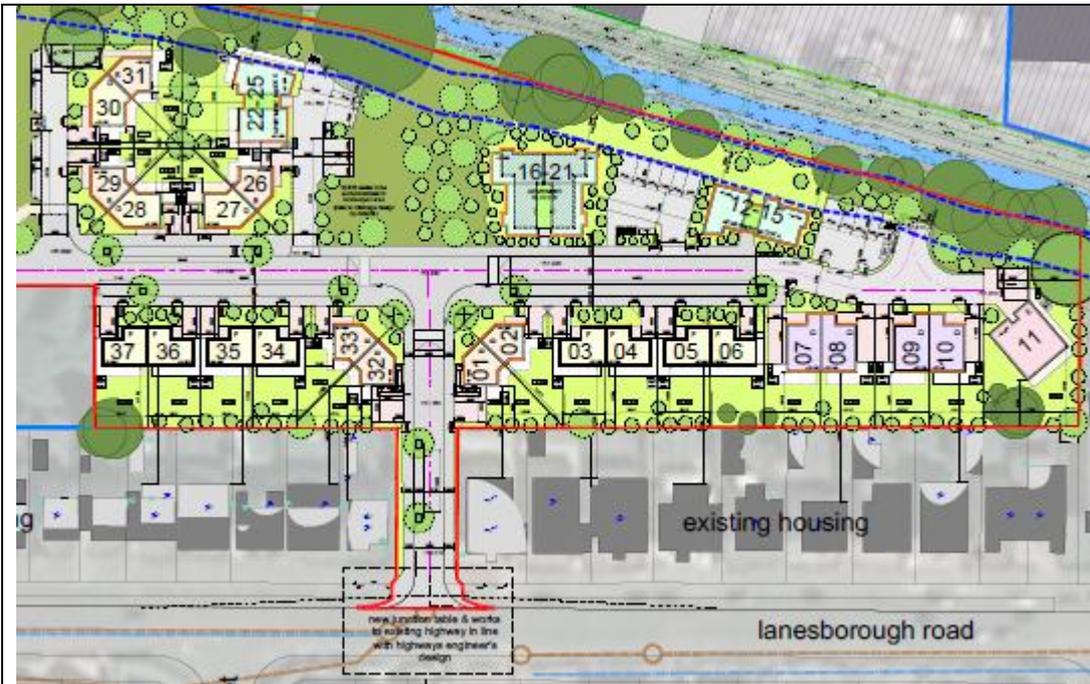
Image of proposed street scene



Layout plan.

Lanesborough Road: 37 New homes

Robert Woodhead's was also due to deliver Lanesborough Road but were unable to because they went into voluntary liquidation. We are currently agreeing a new delivery route for this site and the phase 2b sites that follow



Layout plan





Phase 2b

18 New homes across 4 sites:

These sites were also going to be delivered by Robert Woodhead's. Hydra Walk is currently progressing with another contractor due to it being a reconfiguration rather than a traditional new build project. The other three sites will be procured as a package with Lanesborough Road

- Hydra Walk (2 homes),
- Rockingham Close (3 homes),
- Austin Rise (8 homes),
- Whitteney Drive (5 homes)

Phase 3

These sites are currently being assessed.

44 New homes across 6 sites

- Cranstone Crescent (3 homes),
- Tatlow Road (2 homes),
- Somers Road (3 homes).
- Tilling Road (18 homes),
- Glazebrook Square (10 homes),
- Dysart Way (8 homes).

Forest Lodge Education Centre (FLEC) 33 New homes

The site is due to be cleared in the summer. We have started consulting with the neighbouring residents and will soon be submitting a full planning application and seeking a contractor to deliver the scheme.





Layout plan

Southfields Newry 53 new homes

This is the site of a former school, which has since been demolished. The project is due to be tendered in the coming weeks.



Aerial photograph of site



Proposed layout



View of proposed scheme

Stocking Farm: 50 new homes

This is an exciting and complex redevelopment of the area that includes existing residential units, shops, garages and community facilities. An extensive stakeholder engagement exercise has taken place, the scheme is currently being considered by Planning and once planning has been secured the project team will seek to secure a developer to deliver the project.



Aerial picture of the existing site



Layout plan



Visual of proposed scheme

Key milestones

Scheme	Tender return date	Start on site	Completion
Saffron Lane	Sept 23	Jan 23	March/ April 24
Southfields and Newry	Oct/Nov	March 23*	tbc
Stocking Farm	Oct/Nov	March 23*	tbc
FLEC	Nov 24	Jan 25	tbc

*estimated

Acquisitions:

The number of properties we can buy using Right to Buy Receipts is governed by the number of new build houses that are built using retained right to buy receipts.

For 22/23 and 23/24 the Council is permitted to retain 100% of the receipts from the sale of properties through Right to Buy. These receipts must be spent within 5 years and can be used to fund up to 40% of eligible capital expenditure. We call this retained right to buy receipts (RTBR).

To encourage Councils to use RTBR for building rather than buying properties, the Government introduced a cap on the number of property acquisitions. In 23/24 and 24/25, for each house that is built using RTBR we can buy one, also using RTBR. We can also buy houses using other forms of finance such as Home England Funding or by bidding to The Department of Levelling Up, which we are currently doing.

The following table shows the number of acquisitions we expect to be buying every year for the next 4 years and their funding stream:

	23/24 (actuals)	23/24 pipeline	24/25	25/26	26/27
RTBR	30	92	85		
Homes England	11	30			
SHAP					
LAHF	17				
other					
totals	58	122	85	129*	171*

*estimated, funding route to be confirmed.

The majority of our programme is buying single 2/3 bedroomed former council houses. This meets the demand for family accommodation and the homes fit back easily into our planned and responsive works programmes.

We do consider larger acquisitions, the following are currently in our pipeline

The ZIP building:

This is a former student block located on Rydall Street. It consists of 58 units of predominantly 1 bedroomed flats. We are due to complete on this building by 1st September 2023.

Other affordable housing delivery routes

The main purpose of this report is to set out our new build delivery pipeline and acquisition programme but to meet the manifesto commitment of 1500 new affordable homes the following delivery routes will also be used:

- The development of non-strategic Local Plan sites for new council housing
- The development of non-strategic Local Plan sites for delivery by Registered Providers (RP)
- Known schemes being delivered by others, including Extra Care and Supported Living schemes.
- Planning gain affordable housing

The development of non-strategic local plan sites for new council housing:

The local plan is not due to be adopted until early 2024, once it is sites will be identified for the delivery of new council housing, however these sites cannot be delivered until 25/26 at the earliest,

The development of non-strategic local plan sites for delivery by Registered Providers (RP's)

We know registered providers have had difficulty in the past securing sites but are keen to deliver in Leicester therefore we intend to work with RP's to deliver new affordable units on non-strategic Local Plan sites once the Local Plan has been adopted

Known schemes being delivered by others, including Extra Care and Supported Living schemes

The following are 100% affordable housing schemes we know are likely to be delivered during the course of the manifesto period by registered providers in the city.

Site	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27
Abbey Park Road former bus depot site – phase 1		117		
Phase 2		100		
Loughborough Road		100		
Sturdee Road	14			
2 x Extra Care Schemes				155
The Exchange – supported living scheme		27+		
Barkby Thorpe Road		18		
Totals	14	362		155

Planning gain affordable housing

The following table is a summary of the affordable housing to be delivered through planning gain linked to the development process. Planning Gain affordable housing is secured as a planning condition and is typically 30% of the total number of homes being built. The developer normally works with a registered provider who will own and manage these units. Typically the Council will nominate the tenants on 100% of the first lets.

Ashton Green is the single biggest development currently in the city and will be delivering the majority of the planning gain affordable units we expect to be delivered during the manifesto period.

Development		23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27
Ashton Green					
AG Phase B		20	18	20	20
AG Phase C			10	20	20
AG Phase D				5	15
AG Phase E				5	10
totals		20	28	50	65

Delivery Summary including current pipeline

Delivery phase	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	Grand Total
Current Housing Pipeline	2	135	136		273
Phase 4 – nonstrategic LP sites *			100	100	200
Non-strategic sites, delivery by RP's**			100	98	198
Section 106– Planning Gain	20	28	50	65	163
Known future delivery by others, 100% affordable schemes	14	362		155	431
Additional Brownfield Sites			138		138
Total New Builds	36	525	524	418	1503
Allowable acquisitions	180	85	129	171	565**
Grand Total	216	610	653	589	2068

*Assumes only 200 of the totals will be delivered during the specified timeframe

** subject to funding.

Climate credentials

The following is the current specification for Saffron Velodrome, it is expected that all schemes will be delivered to this or a similar specification:

The new houses will be constructed under current Part L of the Building regulations, below is the proposed specification for the new houses, the following is based on the 38 homes at Saffron Velodrome, we are still finalising the Lanesborough Road site, however it will follow the same principles:

Item	Standard	Specification
Walls - Brick	0.16 W/m2.K	Masonry cavity wall with partial fill or full fill insulation.
Party wall	0.00 W/m2.K	Fully filled party wall
Roof (ceiling)	0.09 W/m2.K	Tradition trussed roof with 500mm mineral wool insulation
Ground Floor	0.12 W/m2.K	Suspended floor with either insulated blocks or insulation on beam and block floor
Windows & Glazed doors	0.80 W/m2.K	Triple glazed 'g' value = 0.57
Front door	1.00 W/m2.K	
Air test	3 m3/hr/m2	
Accredited Details	Accredited and Concrete Block Association	Separate lintels

The 'U' value is a measure of how efficient a material is as an insulator, the lower the number the better the materials insulating qualities.

These homes will have increased thermal efficiencies compared to that is required under the current building regulations, below is a comparison table that shows you the improvement as a percentage:

Item	Standard	Building Regs	Improvement
Walls Cavity	0.16 W/m2.K	0.30 W/m2.K	47%
Roof (Ceiling)	0.09 W/m2.K	0.20 W/m2.K	55%
Ground Floor	0.12 W/m2.K	0.25 W/m2.K	52%
Windows	0.80 W/m2.K	2.00 W/m2.K	60%
Front Door	1.00 W/m2.K	2.00 W/m2.K	50%
Air Permeability	3 m3/hr/m2	10 m3/hr/m2	70%

The proposed building fabric improvements show an up to 70% improvement based on current building control standards.

Building Services, heating and hot water:

Item	Standard	Specification
Heating and ventilation	Air to Air Heat Pump	Nilan Compact P**
Heating Controls	Programmer and room thermostat	
Heating Features	Via air (Nilan Compact)	
Hot Water	Via the Nilan Compact	180 litre storage tank, 0.84 kWh/day losses
Ventilation	Via the Nilan unit	
Lighting	100% low energy lighting	

Air to Air Heat pump:

An air source heat pump takes heat from the air and boost it to a higher temperature, the pump needs electricity to run but should use less electricity than the heat that it generates.

The proposed Nilan Compact P is a multi-function air to air heat pump that provides highly efficient space heating, hot water and integrated heat recovery ventilation.



Solar PV panels:

PV panels convert solar radiation into direct current electricity. They are a very good source of renewable energy as they convert the most abundant source of energy on the earth, the sun, into the most useful source of energy, electricity.

PV panels are silent in operation, they have no moving parts, low levels of maintenance and a long-life expectancy. They are connected into the grid via an inverter and more recently battery technology has improved so the electricity can now be stored.

Solar PV is more efficient in lower temperatures, they should be located to avoid over shading and preferable face due south at an angle of 35 degrees. The output of PV panels is measured in KWP, kilowatts peak. The average cost of an installation will be between £2k - £3k.

We are proposing installing 6 x 250-watt panels to each of the roofs with the exception of two plots that will need 8 panels to achieve the required EPC 'A' rating, see below:

	Plots	Panels per roof	Total PV panels	kWp PV	Energy kWh/yr
South Roofs	5	6	30	7.50	6,475
SW Roofs	29	6	174	43.50	35,815
West Roofs	2	6	12	3.00	2,435
West Roofs	2	8	16	4.00	3,247
TOTAL	38		152	58.00	47,972

Based on the above 47,972kWh/year on site renewable energy will be generated.

Carbon emission summary,

House Type	No.	Floor area	TER	DER	Baseline	Actual	Saving	Saving
		m2	kgCO2/m2/yr	kgCO2/m2/yr	kgCO2/yr	kgCO2/yr	kgCO2/yr	%
Type A1	4	64.4	28.25	5.35	7,277	1,378	5,899	81.06%
Type A2	2	64.4	25.34	6.58	3,264	848	2,416	74.03%
Type B	2	70.84	31.45	6.69	4,456	948	3,508	78.73%
Type C1	4	81.84	25.95	6.05	8,495	1,981	6,514	76.69%
Type C2	6	81.84	25.75	5.95	12,644	2,922	9,723	76.89%
Type D	2	98.76	28.44	8.7	5,617	1,718	3,899	69.41%
Type E	10	92.88	24.95	6.56	23,174	6,093	17,081	73.71%
Type F	3	117.06	27.27	8.62	9,577	3,027	6,550	68.39%
Type G1	2	146.58	21.09	7.97	6,183	2,336	3,846	62.21%
Type G2	2	146.58	21.96	8.47	6,438	2,483	3,955	61.43%
Type H	1	103.33	28.18	9.72	2,912	1,004	1,907	65.51%
	38				90,036	24,738	65,298	72.52%

All dwellings will have an EPC rating of A and the predicted annual electricity bill of £440 per year, or £36 per month, which compares well to £443 per year for a similar sized Passive House.

This is compared to the average dual fuel energy bill in the UK of £1,138 per year or £93.83 a month. (Ofgem 2020)

Sustainability Electricity usage

These houses will be carbon free because they will be solely powered by electricity. The councils energy supplier, Robin Hood Energy supply only electricity from renewable sources.

Risks and issues to delivery:

- The lack of available sites for residential development, the majority of the sites are currently subject to the Local Plan process
- A decrease in Planning Gain Affordable Housing, with only Ashton Green showing any significant delivery
- The risks to the delivery of the 155 new Extra Care units.
- Changes to the RTBR rules on acquisitions, whilst these have been relaxed for the next two years it will impact on our ability to buy more houses.
- Significant increases in actual and predicted costs for the delivery of schemes and the impact this has on viability and delivery.
- The delivery of the sites pending the adoption for the new Local Plan, any delays to the LP will mean that these sites will not be delivered in the current manifesto period.
- The new build and acquisition programmes are reliant of the use of RTBR for funding.
- The rents that we charge are capped at LHA rates. Whilst the cost of building and buying properties has increased significantly over recent years, the LHA rates have remained frozen, affecting the financial viability.

4. Details of Scrutiny

5. Financial, legal and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

£215m has been added to the HRA capital programme for affordable housing since November 2019, for the acquisition and building of new dwellings.

Given that sub-market rent is charged for affordable housing, its development relies on capital subsidy. Typically, this takes the form of retained Right to Buy receipts, but can also be through Homes England grant, along with other more recent grants which the government has made available.

High inflation on build costs combined with the continued freeze on Local Housing Allowance rates means that identifying schemes which are financially viable for affordable housing is increasingly difficult. A financial assessment will need to be undertaken for each scheme proposed within this report to estimate the likely impact on HRA finances.

Stuart McAvoy – Head of Finance

5.2 Legal implications

While there are generally no legal implications to note, the following provides some general guidance.

As a statutory housing authority, the Council has general powers under the Housing Act 1985 (sections 9 and 17) to acquire land and property for housing purposes and to construct new properties on land within its ownership. The Act also gives the Council powers (under section 32) to dispose of land and property for housing purposes. Any potential acquisition, new build or disposal referred to in this report would therefore be permitted within the remit of the 1985 Act.

The Council's Constitution and Scheme of Delegation contains the internal framework of decision-making for acquisitions and disposal of property.

While the Housing Act provides powers for housing purposes, Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 imposes an obligation on local authorities to dispose of land for "the best consideration that is reasonably obtainable in the circumstances". However, the Council is permitted to dispose of land for less than best consideration in certain circumstances under the 2003 General Disposal Consent ("the GDC"). The disposal must be one which will secure the economic, social or environmental well-being of the area in question. If a property is sold at less than best consideration, the undervalue for

the purposes of the GDC must not exceed £2m. In that instance, Secretary of State consent would need to be obtained. The provision of new housing is generally recognised as falling within the remit permitted by the GDC.

The right to buy is a long-established legal right for Council tenants and, as advised in this report, the Council is permitted to utilise a percentage of the RTB receipts for the purpose of acquiring or constructing replacement housing properties. The limits and conditions referred to in this report relating to those receipts are generally set by Government but it should also be noted that the Council has a general fiduciary duty to act in the best interests of the residents of Leicester.

Individual properties acquired using the RTB receipts tend to have been previously owned by the Council (and which had previously been sold under the RTB legislation). As a result, the Council will already have some knowledge of the history of the property. However, whilst that is the case, a full due diligence exercise is undertaken through Estates and by Legal Services. Properties not previously owned by the Council have, on occasion, also been acquired using the RTB receipts but this is not the current practice.

There are references throughout the report to “open space” properties being utilised for housing. This gives rise to other legal procedural requirements such as the obligation to publish a notice of intention to dispose of open space. These notices can often give rise to objections from the public and these objections need to be taken into account when taking decisions whether to dispose or not.

Any land referred to in this report that is owned by the Council but which is not currently held for housing purposes must first follow an internal “appropriation” process. These internal appropriations must be treated as disposals and have the same legal obligations imposed on them as mentioned above.

Legal Services continue to work closely with other services to advise and action all acquisitions and disposals in order to achieve the targets referred to herein

5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

Housing is one of the largest sources of carbon emissions in Leicester, responsible for 33% of the city’s carbon footprint. Following the city council’s declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2019, and it’s aim to achieve carbon neutrality, addressing the emissions from housing is vital to the council’s efforts to reduce carbon emissions. This is particularly important where the council has the greatest level of control and influence over housebuilding and acquisition, including those schemes included within this report.

As such, consideration should be given to all opportunities to ensure that housing delivered within the city is low carbon and energy efficient, either within new build projects or as part of refurbishments. Potential measures could include the use of sustainable materials and construction practices, installation of efficient insulation, lighting and low carbon heating systems and the fitting of renewable energy systems such as solar PV panels and heat pumps. These measures would also reduce energy bills and improve the level of comfort for occupants. Any development will nonetheless be required to follow policy CS2 of the Adopted Leicester Core Strategy and relevant building regulations.

A toolkit is also being developed to support the achievement of reduced carbon emissions in future council capital construction and renovation projects.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284

5.4 Equalities Implications

When making decisions, the Council must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (Equality Act 2010) by paying due regard, when carrying out their functions, to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not. In doing so, the council must consider the possible impact on those who are likely to be affected by the recommendation and their protected characteristics.

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.

The report provides an update on House Building and Acquisitions. Provision of good quality affordable homes for local people that help to address evidenced housing needs in the city both in terms of lack of availability and suitability are likely to have positive impacts in terms of the aim of the PSED to advance equality of opportunity for people from across all protected characteristics. By providing affordable housing where peoples' needs are met in a community setting there is also potential to better foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The impact of the lack of decent, affordable and secure housing goes far beyond reducing the amount of money households have to live on; this also has a wider social impact. The cost of housing is directly related to housing quality and standards. For many, being unable to afford decent housing means having to live in poor quality homes unfit for habitation or overcrowded conditions to reduce costs, to the detriment of physical and mental health.

It is important that new housing is well designed and can contribute to a good quality of life and meet the diverse needs of residents. Accessible and inclusive design will support the general aims of the PSED.

Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh, Ext 37 414

5.5 Other Implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

6. Background information and other papers:

7. Summary of appendices:

8. Is this a private report (If so, please indicated the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

Yes/No

9. Is this a “key decision”?

Yes/No

10. If a key decision please explain reason



City Mayor

Disabled Adaptations, HRA & Disabled Facility Grants(DFG). Housing Scrutiny Commission July 2023

Disabled Adaptations – council tenants

All adaptations are recommended by Adult Social Care.

All adaptations up to £1,000 in value are classed as  minors and completed straight away.

Major adaptations follow the agreed joint working protocol with ASC and are allocated priority points and completed in order of need.

All are directly funded and are not means tested.

Type of adaptation	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
Rails/handrails	358	90	340	351
Ramps	24	12	29	41
General layout alterations	7	6	0	2
Level showers	74	31	75	51
Wash/dry toilets	7	5	4	9
Stairlifts	38	56	48	60
Step lifts	7	3	3	4
Through floor lift	16	11	14	14
Extensions	4	3	3	5
Totals	535	217	516	537

What do we spend each year

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	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
Budget	£900k	£1.2m(inc £300k for adapt to let scheme	£1.2m(inc £300k for adapt to let scheme)	£800(inc £100k for adapt to let scheme)
Actual spend	£811k	£1.1m	£1.2m	tbc

What is Adapt to Let

- Identifying void properties that can be adapted.
- Fully adapting partially adapted properties.
- ∞• Matching applicants with potentially suitable properties and adapting them for the new tenants.
- Historically the numbers have circa 5 per year but so far in 23/24 we have already completed 5.





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Disabled Facility Grants (DFG's)

- The process is similar to that followed as HRA adaptations, but the applicants are homeowners or private tenants.
- 84 • Minor adaptations are carried out straight away by ASC
- Major adaptations follow the same joint working protocol and are actioned in order of need, however there are some differences due to the addition of the means test.



Why do we have to do it?

- A Disability Facilities Grant (DFG) is a mandatory requirement and forms part of the better care fund, this is a pooled fund which includes housing services and health and social care.
- 85 • The DFG grant is administered by the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
- The DFG grant is means tested, the means test identifies if the service user has to pay a contribution towards the adaptation if they are not on passported benefits i.e. Council tax support/reduction

What do we have to do ?

- Provide access to the front and rear of homes by providing:
 - Ramps front and rear
 - Step lifts front and rear
 - Access to rear gardens
- Carry out adaptations to provide access into and around a service users home which meets their assessed needs by providing:
 - Level access showers
 - Stair lifts
 - Through floor lifts
 - Door widening

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DFG Housing Performance

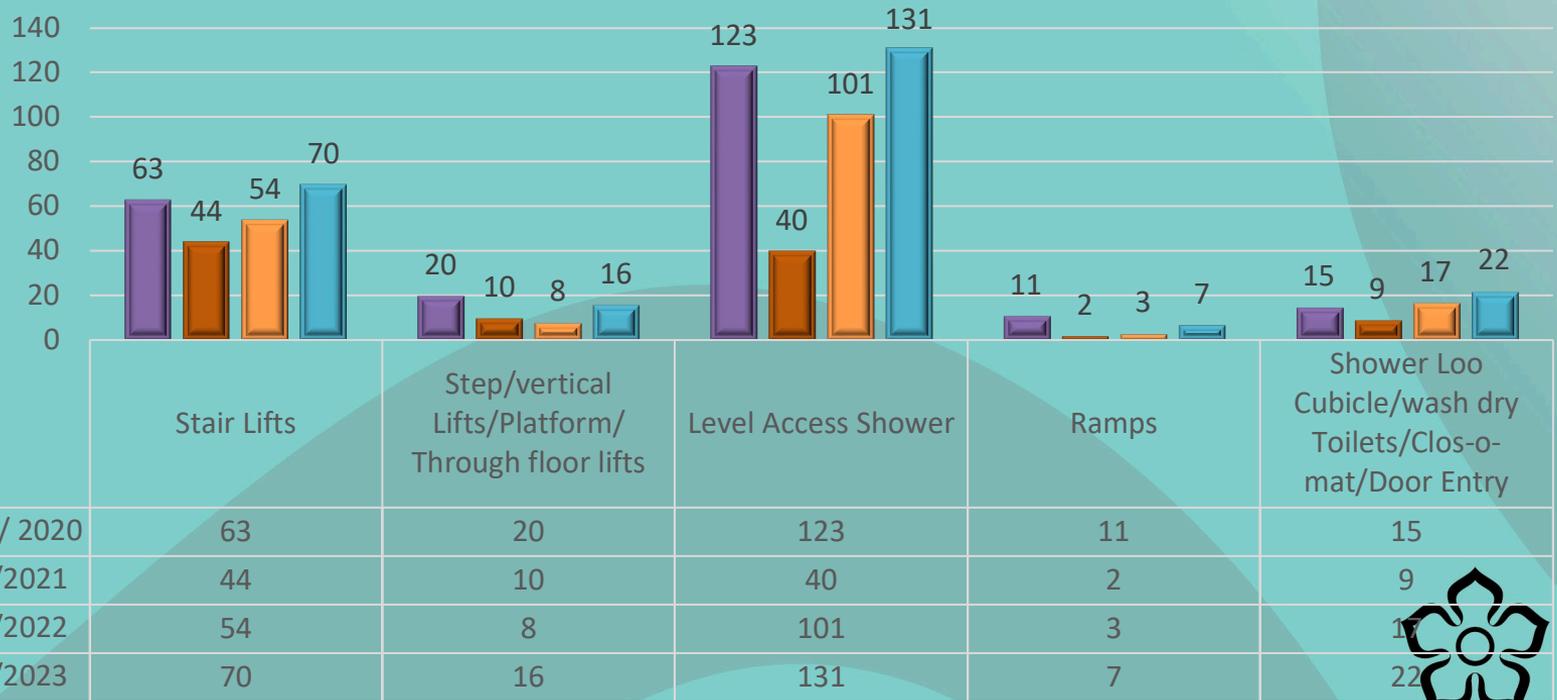
87

DFG	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Applications	532	339	294	264
Approved	248 - 46%	139 - 41%	235 - 80%	184 - 70%
Completed	190	86	149	141
Average cost	£11,321	£12,390	£12,899	£13,964
Overall Spend	2.151m	1.066m	1.922m	1.969m
In Progress	63	105	142	222

DFG Housing - Types of Adaptations

(Approved works) 2019/2020, 2020/2021 & 2021/22, 2022/2023

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Cancellation categories for DFG's

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	No response from service user	Contribution exceeds costs following Means Test	Applicant refused Scheme	Applicant Deceased
2019 - 20	20	17	128	28
2020 - 21	6	4	42	22
2021 - 22	12	6	24	17
2022 - 23	17	15	11	39



Case Management

- End of Life` (EOL) Cases and Children cases prioritised.
- Equipment only Cases (Lifts etc. to access services) issued straightaway.
- External works – Ramps etc. issued straightaway.
- All other cases completed in priority order, based on points awarded by the OT.
- Extensions take longer because we have to get planning permission etc.



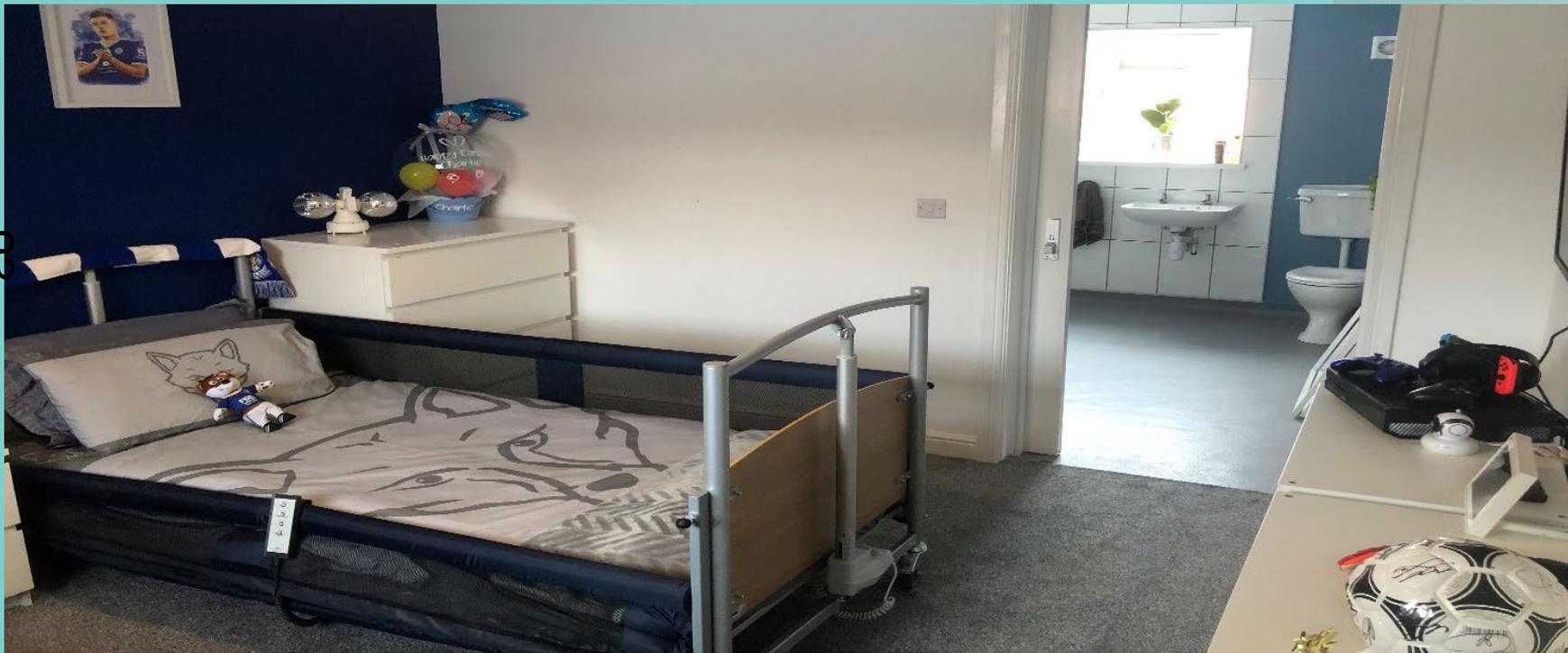
Case study

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Case study

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A joint approach to Adaptations

- A single point for lift breakdowns and installations – all tenures
- A single point for lift invoices and payment processing – all tenures
- A standard specification for all adaptations & all tenures
- Co location with O/T's makes faster response to issues.
- Opportunities for streamlining process.
- We are developing and adaptation strategy which will go live in 2023.

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Leicester
City Council

Current challenges

- Cost of adaptations increasing resulting in funding issues for some major cases
- Lack of contractor capacity to carry out major adaptations
- Increasing number of cases
- Budget pressures in both HRA and GF

