



Leicester  
City Council

## **MEETING OF THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION**

**DATE: MONDAY, 30 JANUARY 2017**

**TIME: 6:15 pm**

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

### **Members of the Scrutiny Commission**

Councillor Newcombe (Chair)  
Councillor Alfonso (Vice Chair)

Councillors Aqbany, Byrne, Cank, Dawood and Joshi  
1 Un-allocated Non-Group Place

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

For Monitoring Officer

#### **Officer contacts:**

**Angie Smith (Democratic Support Officer):**

Tel: 0116 454 6354, e-mail: [Angie.Smith@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:Angie.Smith@leicester.gov.uk)

**Jerry Connolly (Scrutiny Support Officer):**

Tel: 0116 454 6343, e-mail: [Jerry.Connolly@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:Jerry.Connolly@leicester.gov.uk)  
Leicester City Council, City Hall, 115 Charles Street, Leicester, LE1 1FZ

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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 15<sup>th</sup> November 2016, and the Special Meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Commission on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2016 are attached, and Members are asked to confirm them as a correct record.

#### **4. PETITIONS**

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

#### **5. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS OR STATEMENTS OF CASE**

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

#### **6. AREA MANAGERS' PRESENTATION - 12 MONTH CHANGES AND CHALLENGES**

**Appendix B**

A presentation will be delivered to provide information to Commission Members on the West Neighbourhood Area of the City.

#### **7. CUSTOMER SERVICE - HOUSING CONTACT**

**Appendix C**

The Director of Finance submits a report for noting which provides the Commission with an overview of Housing contact for the Tenants Advice and

Repairs Service (TARS). The report also reflects customer activity for the period January 2016 until December 2016 as requested by the Housing Scrutiny Commission and explains the future channel shift opportunities for tenant customer interaction.

**8. REVIEW OF THE HOUSING REGISTER / HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY - FEEDBACK OF THE CONSULTATION EXERCISE** [Appendix D](#)

The Acting Director of Housing submits a report which provides the Commission with feedback on the consultation exercise in relation to the proposals that were contained in the report on the 'Review of the Housing Register / Housing Allocations Policy' that was presented to the Commission on 10th October 2016. It is recommended the Commission Members consider the responses from the consultation exercise and provide feedback to Executive.

**9. HOUSING ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES** [Appendix E](#)

The Acting Director of Housing submits a report which informs the Commission of Leicester City Council's approach in the provision of housing and advice and assistance to Armed Forces personnel.

**10. WORK PROGRAMME** [Appendix F](#)

The work programme is attached. The Commission is asked to comment and/or amend as it considers necessary.

**11. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**



Leicester  
City Council

# Appedix A

Minutes of the Meeting of the  
HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: TUESDAY, 15 NOVEMBER 2016 at 6:15 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Newcombe (Chair)  
Councillor Alfonso (Vice Chair)

Councillor Aqbany

Councillor Dawood

Councillor Joshi

In Attendance

Councillor Connelly – Assistant Mayor for Housing

\* \* \* \* \*

**44. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Byrne and Cank.

**45. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were asked to declare any interests they might have in the business to be discussed.

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

Councillor Joshi declared an Other Disclosable Interest in the general business of the meeting in that family members were council tenants. He also declared an Other Disclosable Interest in Agenda Item 7, Monitoring the Homelessness Strategy (24 Months) – Feedback of the Consultation Exercise, as he worked for a voluntary organisation for people with mental health problems. He had not directly been involved with the organisations mentioned in the consultation process and approached the agenda item with an open mind.

Councillor Newcombe declared an Other Disclosable Interest in the general business of the meeting as family members were council tenants.

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

**46. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

AGREED:

that the minutes of the Housing Scrutiny Commission meeting held on 10 October 2016 be confirmed as a correct record.

**47. ACTION POINTS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

There were no actions to report from the last meeting.

Most of the items in the recommendations of the previous meeting would be programed into future meetings of the Scrutiny Commission.

**48. PETITIONS**

In accordance with the Council procedures, it was reported that no petitions had been received by the Monitoring Officer.

**49. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS OR STATEMENTS OF CASE**

In accordance with the Council procedures, it was reported that no questions, representations or statements of case had been received by the Monitoring Officer.

**50. MONITORING THE HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY (24 MONTHS) - FEEDBACK OF THE CONSULTATION EXERCISE**

The Interim Director of Housing submitted a report to the Housing Scrutiny Commission which provided feedback on the consultation exercise in relation to the proposals that were contained in the report on the first 24 months of the Homelessness Strategy that was presented to the Housing Scrutiny Commission on 11th August 2016. The Commission was recommended to consider the feedback and responses to mitigate the assumed negative impacts of the proposals, and provide any feedback to the Executive as a result of the consultation exercise.

The Chair commented on the way the consultation results had been presented, as the figures had included responses from those who did not comment, or had no opinion. He added it had the effect of reducing the impact of the figures in relation to whether the proposal of a budget reduction would have a negative effect. The Chair asked that the figures be re-presented at a future meeting of the Commission, to omit non-responses or no opinion.

The report was presented by Caroline Carpendale, Head of Service. It was

recognised that any proposed reduction could have a potential negative impact on service users, but with the number of people seeking assistance rising and the budget cuts, the Council needed to ensure the service could be targeted and offered to as many people in need as possible and be cost effective.

Eric Waweru, Chief Executive, The Centre Project, addressed the Commission at the invitation of the Chair, making the following points:

- The feeling of most stakeholders was the Centre Project provided a holistic service, and was a link to other services people may need;
- The removal of grant subsidy meant the service would not be sustainable, and the most vulnerable service users would not have the service as and when they needed it;
- The proposal that people would go to the 'Y' Support Project was not supported by evidence;
- The equality impact assessment assumed people would go to the Dawn Centre, but for various reasons people had stated they would not – the two services catered for different groups of people;
- The Centre Project helped people become independent, and provided them with a support network;
- Support would have to be provided by another centre, so there was not money saving, and was a false economy.

Two attendees then gave their views;

- "I used the Dawn Centre when I was homeless for showers and food, but over time I stopped drinking, got a job, and a partner. I left that service behind and now go the Centre Project. I need to move forward and have more confidence. I don't have to go back. I want all these people behind me to move forward with me and not backwards."
- "I still use the Dawn Centre – I use the shower there. There are good people there. Some people have drug problems, alcohol, personal problems. The Centre Project is similar but people there are vulnerable with learning difficulties. The Dawn Centre is a scary place to go. The Centre Project built my confidence up. They are totally separate places. The Dawn Centre AND the Centre Project need to stay open, but not together, they are different centres. It won't work."

Jerry Connolly, Scrutiny Policy Officer then read out a representation received prior to the meeting (name and contact details provided - attached to the minutes for information). The representation referred to the need for protection of tenants from Section 21 of the Housing Act 1988, and the way landlords could evict tenants for spurious reasons. The Chair requested a report on Section 21, and how enforcement and monitoring of landlords in the city worked be brought to a future meeting of the Commission.

The Chair asked those present if they wished to provide further evidence if they had tenancies which had broken down and how it had affected them, to the Scrutiny Policy Officer.

In response to further questions and comments from Members it was noted that:

- Paper copies of the consultation had been made available to enable a wide response from members of the public and service users to respond. Most service users who wanted to respond to the consultation were assisted to do so, and all responses were included in the report.
- The Centre Project expressed concern that the consultation document had been difficult to explain to service users as all the proposals on different services had been placed together.
- The proposals in the report were not about a reduction in family accommodation, but about supported housing linked to singles. It was believed that individuals and their move-on strategy could be sustained by providing floating support services to support and sustain those individuals and tenancies.
- One of the justifications for changing the supported housing model was the welfare changes and anticipated housing benefit cap introduced by Central Government. The model of supported housing would no longer be viable. The reduced bed spaces from 290 to 215 related solely to the Supported Housing units, no reduction in temporary hostel bed spaces was proposed. The supported units are proposed to return to LCC housing stock.
- The authority currently had 21k homes, and it was projected that another 2.5k homes would be lost through Right-to-Buy over the next 4 years.
- There was well regarded floating support provided to the most vulnerable service users from Supporting Tenants and Residents service who had a link to homeless services and with those who had an awareness of people with vulnerabilities. The intention was to maintain a programme where people could move on with floating support.
- The grant to Centre Project was £24k (35-40% of their annual income) with other projects, such as Leicestershire Cares receiving approximately the same. One Roof project had received a one-off grant of £15k.

Eric Waweru, Chief Executive, The Centre Project, responded to Members' questions and made the following points:

- The Centre Project was funded by grants and other funding to provide other activities, but did not have a core grant. It was stated that if the grant funding of £24k was removed, then open drop-in sessions would cease.
- The Centre had seen 185 people the previous year, had been the first point of contact for some of those who had visited the service, and had enabled them to get support without an appointment, signposting them where necessary to other support services. It was not the case that service users would access another service, as not all would go to the Dawn Centre.
- Trustees for the Centre Project were aware of the proposed cut in grant funding and had tried to build up reserves of approximately £50k (including restricted funds). In addition the grant was supplemented by the Church who provided the premises for them to operate.
- Estimated numbers of users in one week for the 3-day drop-in was 45 people – the Centre was contracted to 35 people a week, and already provided a higher service than the £24k grant subsidy.



- Nobody presented with just a housing need, but with multiple needs. If a person presented as homeless they would be referred to Housing Options, and accompanied for support.
- The Centre was a support network of people they trusted, and was an opportunity for them to talk to somebody and feel less isolated.

Members discussed the issues and made the following comments:

- It was stated that the project did provide extra help, and Members' were of the opinion that the £24k funding that the Centre Project received gave them legitimacy to gain further funding because they were providing a service. They added that the social impact and other benefits of the project provided a service in excess of the £24k funding.
- Councillor Dawood, seconded by Councillor Aqbany, moved a recommendation from the Scrutiny Commission that the Centre Project maintain its funding. Upon being put to the vote the motion was carried. Members believed that continuance of the £24k grant gave the organisation legitimacy to gain funding from other organisations.

Councillor Connelly, Assistant Mayor for Housing, was invited to comment on the report. He thanked the Head of Service for the report. He said he was aware that any review about the homelessness strategy was difficult and concerning to those who used the service, but the strategy had been successful and had assisted many people in the city and prevented them from becoming homeless. Though a large report, he thought it was important that the Housing Scrutiny Commission were presented with the same information as he had. He noted that significant savings had to be made a result of government cuts, and each service area had to be looked at to find savings, whilst protecting people from becoming homeless or getting back into secure tenancies as quickly as possible.

The Assistant Mayor added that he understood what Eric had said about the difficulties in engaging with people during the consultation process, and wanted to thank him for the constructive way he had assisted during the consultation, and gave credit to the Project. He also thanked representatives for the Centre Project who had attended the and everyone present that recommendations arising from the meeting would be taken back to the Executive for consideration. It was also noted that there was no point in reducing services if more needed to be invested in the future to provide more help to people who had become homeless again because they could not access support services.

The Chair thanked all who attended the meeting, to those who had shared their experiences, and for the useful debate of the report. He added he was in agreement for the Centre Project to retain the current grant subsidy, and that all Members of the Commission were in favour of the proposal.

The Scrutiny Policy Officer informed the meeting that with the Chair, a letter would be written to the Executive summing up the debate, concerns and issues expressed at the meeting both by the Centre Project and Members. The letter would be circulated to Members of the Scrutiny Commission and the Assistant

Mayor for Housing by Friday 18<sup>th</sup> November.

AGREED:

that:

1. The report be noted;
2. It was the recommendation of the Housing Scrutiny Commission that the Centre Project maintain its funding, and the to the Centre Project would give the organisation legitimacy to gain funding from other organisations, and should not be stopped;
3. The Chair would write to the Executive, summing up the debate, concerns and issues expressed at the Housing Scrutiny Commission meeting, both by the Centre Project and Members. The letter to be circulated to Members of the Scrutiny Commission and the Assistant Mayor for Housing by Friday 18<sup>th</sup> November.
4. A report on 'Section 21' and the monitoring of landlords in the city be brought to a future meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Commission.

Councillor Dawood left the meeting at this point and did not return.

The meeting adjourned for five-minutes and resumed at 8.19pm.

## **51. TECHNICAL SERVICES PROGRAMME OVERVIEW**

The Interim Director of Housing submitted a report for noting, that provided an overview of the Technical Services Programme. Phil Davison, Programme Manager, Housing Systems, presented the report.

It was reported that the second phase of the programme was given a total savings target of £7million per annum in savings through contract consolidation; streamlining services; having appropriate staffing levels, and budget consolidation.

In response to questions from the Chair and Members, the following information was given:

- Transforming Depot Services – a map of the sites across the city which had been closed, how large they were, and what they were used for, would be provided to Members;
- Stores Transformation Project – procurement of a managed service would combine two main elements; how the service was delivered, and expertise and general management of the services, for example, the purchase of materials at the most competitive price. Decisions over use of a suitable site for the procured Stores service would form a part of this procurement. Decisions over future use of existing sites would be made as clarity around the procurement was achieved. The meeting was informed that staff had undergone a redundancy exercise and staffing arrangements were currently being progressed. Reassurance was given that staff were being kept fully updated with regular communications and supported by Management;

- Energy and Environment – there was a lot of work to be undertaken in this area. The Energy and Environment Team had just started a review so there was not much to report at the present time, although a £400k saving had been attached to the Technical Services Programme in that area.
- With regards to site closures and disposals, an exercise to identify sites would be done to see if there was opportunity for development. The streamlining of the process for the disposal of sites would also be looked into, to reduce costs associated with security and maintenance.
- Contracts with the external stores suppliers was discussed, and the programme manager confirmed the need for robust management arrangements to be in place along with appropriate review, challenge and break clauses associated to performance.

Councillor Alfonso requested further information on the 8 sites identified, what kind of storage of materials were proposed (e.g. stock and scanning, 'B&Q' type storage), and what type of contract would be negotiated. She also asked for further information on the figures contained in the report. The Programme Manager said the benefit of an external provider was the authority did not have to carry the cost of holding materials, and the external provider would manage stock, and liability / risk would lie with them. He added that with regard to moving depots, a paper had recently gone to the Programme Board, and costs of upgrading locations if they remained have been factored into the programme.

In response to a question from the Chair, the delivery of target savings of £7million per annum had been presented to the Finance Team and had been confirmed as achievable.

The Chair thanked officers for the report, and in summing up asked for more information on:

- A map of the location of depot sites;
- More information on energy and environment impact be provided to Members;
- Recommended a report be brought back to a future meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Commission on how the Programme was working, and that the item be added to the Commission's Work Programme.

AGREED:

that:

1. The report be noted;
2. More information be provided in the form of maps of the locations of the different sites affected be circulated to the Scrutiny Commission;
3. More information under the heading Energy & Environment impact be provided to the Scrutiny Commission;
4. The Technical Services Programme be added to the work programme of the Scrutiny Commission, and an update report be brought to a future meeting.

## **52. STAR GAMBLING SURVEY 2016**

The Director Delivery, Communications and Political Governance submitted a report for noting which provided the Housing Scrutiny Commission with information about the STAR (Supporting Tenants and Residents) survey of clients who might have difficulties with gambling.

Jerry Connolly, Scrutiny Policy Officer, presented the report, and provided the following information:

- The survey helped to assess issues facing people who used hostels, etc. and the impact of gambling on vulnerable people.
- There was no-one collecting information on people's gambling habits. The survey found that people did not provide straight answers when asked if they had a problem with gambling, but many people who were clients of STAR expressed they had serious difficulties.
- The information had been passed to the Gambling Commission at their request, the East Midlands Scrutiny Network and the national conference of the Local Government Association. The Deputy City Mayor was due to provide the information to a Select Committee.
- Some of the data gained was from users who attended Gamblers Anonymous, who had spent hundreds of thousands of pounds on fixed odds betting terminals.
- There was little evidence that Licence holders intervened to stop vulnerable people betting.

The Chair commented it was a really good piece of work undertaken in order to ascertain the background and effects of gambling on residents.

Members noted how the most deprived areas were usually the very place that gambling premises appeared. The Scrutiny Policy Officer suggested the information be fed into the Local Plan to stop licensed gambling premises, and money lending premises being placed into vulnerable communities, close to each other. It was also noted there were issues around addictions to scratch cards and lottery cards, but it was a problem trying to get people to admit they had an issue.

The Chair thanked the officer for the report.

AGREED:

that the Star Gambling Survey 2016 be noted.

## **53. TENANT FORUM - MEETING NOTES**

The Scrutiny Policy Officer submitted the Tenant Forum Meeting Notes from 28<sup>th</sup> July 2016 and 29<sup>th</sup> September 2016 for noting by the Housing Scrutiny Commission.

AGREED:

that the Tenant Forum Meeting notes be noted.

**54. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair drew attention to the Housing Scrutiny Commission Work Programme for noting.

AGREED:

that the Housing Scrutiny Commission Work Programme be noted.

**55. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

No other items of urgent business had been brought to the attention of the Chair.

**56. CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 9.06pm.



## Dear Esteemed Councillors & Guests,

Homelessness has become a real problem. It is only just the start of never ending complications for individuals and families which also results in a further drain on local services and resources and so can no longer be ignored.

I've looked at recent studies done by the 'Shelter Organization' 'Homeless Link' & 'Government Figures' on the reasons why people in particular families with young children become homeless.

-By the end of March 2016 there were 71,540 households living in temporary accommodation that's an increase of 11% on the same time last year.

-Also 9% more households were accepted as being homeless than during the same period in 2015.

Furthermore, the number of households made homeless due to the end of an assured shorthold tenancy has continued to rise, both in quantity (4,650) and by proportion (31%).

*"Yet again, the private rented sector is shown to be a major contributor to the figures with more people falling out of tenancies and into homelessness, while it offers few solutions to help people out of it."*

(Rick Henderson, Chief Executive of Homeless Link 2016)

Compared to Quarter 1 2015 the latest statistics show that in Quarter 1 2016;

- Homelessness due to the loss of an assured shorthold tenancy remained the biggest cause of homelessness at 31%.

**As a mother of 3 including a disabled son I have been the victim of landlords abusing the assured shorthold tenancy to their advantage. I am currently also going through the same difficult process again as I have recently been given notice by my current landlord.**

Previously, my landlord issued me with a section 21 through the courts claiming he needed the house back so his ill mother could occupy it. Having been the perfect tenant with all the rent being paid on time along with the house being maintained to a high standard the landlord had no choice but to use the Section 21 to evict me with his 'reasons'. To my horror after being evicted the reasons used by the landlord turned out to be false as immediately after I moved out he moved a new tenant in. Here the landlord not only used the section 21 to his advantage but also perjured in court with his reasons as he never intended to move his 'ill-mother' into the property.

**Section 21- Absurdly gives landlords a blanket right to evict families for no reason.**

I'm seeking protection for families from Section 21 being used without a valid reason. Along with consequences for landlords who choose to use Section 21 with malicious intent i.e. revenge evictions. Families across the UK especially in Leicester are in urgent need of long term protection from this cruel practice. The current 6 month protection for tenants is not adequate unless the landlord is selling the property or is himself becoming homeless. A lot more needs to be done to prevent tenants with families being evicted. A mutual agreement from both party should be put into place where a reasonable time frame can be agreed

upon. Moreover, tenants having to pay the court fees under Section 21 brought by the landlord should be totally scrapped.

The whole experience has a lasting effect on everyone involved. My experience has made me feel lost, an unworthy parent, unprotected, weak and at the mercy of my landlord. The local authority who are already stretched were nowhere to be seen. Having put my name and bid on the local housing list numerous times over the past 2 years but to no avail has left me in a further state of depression. Stemming from the fact that all landlords have the ability to take full advantage of the situation without any accountability.

**Today I request you to inform me on what measures you can or will put in place to end these practices and at the same time what immediate support can you offer to people like myself in this situation.**

Thank you.





Leicester  
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the  
HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: MONDAY, 19 DECEMBER 2016 at 6:15 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Newcombe (Chair)  
Councillor Alfonso (Vice Chair)

Councillor Aqbany

In Attendance

Councillor Connelly – Assistant City Mayor, Housing

\* \* \* \* \*

**57. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors Byrne, Dawood and Joshi.

**58. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were asked to declare any interests they might have in the business to be discussed.

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

Councillor Newcombe declared an Other Disclosable Interest in the general business of the meeting as family members were council tenants.

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

**59. PETITIONS**

In accordance with the Council procedures, it was reported that no petitions

had been received by the Monitoring Officer.

## **60. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS OR STATEMENTS OF CASE**

In accordance with the Council procedures, it was reported that no questions, representations or statements of case had been received by the Monitoring Officer.

## **61. HOUSING REVENUE BUDGET 2017/18**

The Acting Director of Housing presented a report which sought the views of the Commission on proposals for setting the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2017/18, before being taken to Executive and then Full Council.

It was noted that the budget would be set in the context of the government's decision to implement a 1% per annum rent reduction for the four year period from 2016 to 2020, and had placed the HRA under significant pressure to deliver a balanced budget, and it was proposed to set a one year budget for 2017/18. Total rent loss for 2017/18 was forecast to be £2.96million.

The Chair commented that almost £30million had been taken out of the HRA by the rent cuts imposed by the Government, which would have an enormous impact on the Council's ability to improve existing homes, provide estate environmental improvements and build new homes at a time when the housing crisis in the city was becoming more serious. He added the cuts had made it impossible to follow the 30-year business plan for the Housing Department to maintain, improve and add to social housing in the city.

It was noted that the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum were highly supportive of the proposed HRA Rent Setting and Capital Programme Budget for 2017/18 as outlined at Appendix H to the report, but did not support the proposed reduction to the Environmental and Communal Improvements budget by £250k.

Arising from Members' questions it was noted that:

- a) Current CCTV units were 20 years old and would require upgrading to digital at a cost. CCTV pod cameras and mobile units enabled the authority to be more responsive.
- b) The authority had a planned programme of cleaning, including shop fronts. The Estate Warden Service only operated from Monday to Friday and proposals to slightly reconfigure the service did not incorporate weekend cleaning.
- c) The reference to the council's potential commissioning role for supported housing services related to the homelessness strategy, and the proposal to remove 60 units as part of the homelessness review change, and any procurement of supported housing, would be done in conjunction with the Homelessness Strategy review.
- d) Additional proposals under Phase 3 of the Housing Transformation Programme in addition to those presented at the commission on the 19<sup>th</sup>

- December to deliver service improvement and efficiencies would be brought to the Commission for consideration.
- e) Under Right to Buy the Authority had lost, on average between 200-250 homes a year. For 2017 it was anticipated that 600 homes would be lost.
  - f) Universal Credit (UC) had not yet been fully rolled out (currently to less than 150 people) though it was acknowledged there would be future challenges in collecting rents from tenants. A future report would be brought to the Commission when UC was fully implemented.
  - g) Members requested that the charge for providing information to mortgage providers and solicitors (currently £125) be increased as a recommendation of the Commission to bring in more income and relieve the burden in other areas. The Acting Director of Housing said any increase would have to be reasonable but that he was happy to consider further to increase the amount.
  - h) Further information on the eight properties in the HRA that had protected rent would be provided to the Commission at the request of Members.
  - i) Private Sector (city wide) rents were taken from the Government's Private Rental Market Statistics for 2014/15 as detailed in the report. Members requested more recent figures when available.
  - j) Decorating allowances for new tenants were paid through a voucher scheme, redeemable at B&Q. The contract with B&Q would run for one more year.

The Chair made reference to Appendix G in the report, and the five major priorities for investment listed. Members of the Scrutiny Commission agreed to support the objectives. Members made observations on the priorities, and received the following responses:

- a) Members endorsed the Department's approach to meeting tenants' priorities, included kitchen and bathroom standards.
- b) If possible, information on how many repairs-related calls were repeat calls would be provided to Members of the Commission.
- c) Members asked that future proposals and achievements in maintaining and improving homes be broken down to Ward level. The Acting Director reported that the Annual Capital programme broken down by Ward would be provided after approval of the 17/18 budget.
- d) A pilot scheme on installing individual heat meters on the district heating scheme had showed tenants saved on average 33.35% on heating / hot water bills. Tower blocks in the St Peter's area had heat meter points installed for meters to be added. The Department would look to introduce to further properties where feasible, the Housing Division was investigating and considering the roll out to meet legislative requirements
- e) Detailed guidance on flexible tenancies under the Housing and Planning Act 2016 were awaited, and would see the phasing out of 'lifetime' tenancies, and the introduction of fixed-term tenancies, which would be introduced to new tenants. Due regard would be given to the protection of children up to the age of 19, end of life, and extensions to tenancies.

The Chair welcomed the comments and observations made by the Tenant's and Leaseholders' Forum at Appendix H to the report, including comments

about CCTV and the need to both upgrade and integrate existing systems, and potentially for other agencies to share the costs of upgrading and running them. The Commission also shared the same concerns as tenants about the reduced posts in STAR, and would look at the service in a few months to see how it was coping following the implementation of Universal Credit.

The comments at Appendix H to the report about tenants who behaved in an antisocial way were referred to and it was asked that quicker action be taken against them. The Acting Director of Housing said the Department had a policy for working proactively and incrementally on antisocial behaviour issues, and said it was a complex issue and needed to be certain when looking to evict someone that it was beyond reasonable doubt that antisocial behaviour had occurred and a court would agree to this being a reasonable action. He added that people could have health / mental health issues, and the Department had to be satisfied that at every step, assistance had been given to help save a tenancy, and that this had to be evidenced in court. Each case was thoroughly investigated and given due consideration, he stressed.

The Chair then asked the Commission to endorse the summary of proposals at Appendix I to the report, and each proposal was agreed. In response to Members' questions it was stated that:

- a) The specific rent figures for proposed 0.9% rent increase at Border House and the Dawn Centre were requested.
- b) The reduced spend on CCTV by £100k could potentially be linked to staffing numbers but this would be determined by the CCTV review
- c) The Anti-Social Behaviour service would be adjusted through the Channel Shift programme, and by working corporately and with LASBU to ensure the service was provided more holistically.

Councillor Connelly, Assistant Mayor for Housing stated the report outlined the budget savings and cuts that the authority would ideally not have to make, but the impact of the 1% rent reduction and increase in Right to Buy properties being bought had made cuts necessary. He thanked the Housing Scrutiny Commission for its constructive approach to the budget, and the Acting Director of Housing for the confident report and constructive way he had responded to Members of the Housing Scrutiny Commission.

The Chair thanked all those present at the meeting for their contributions.

AGREED:

1. That the report be received and the Commission support the proposals for the HRA budget for 2017/18, and that the proposals for budget reductions be noted subject to the comments made by Members.
2. The Commission asked that the charge for information to mortgage providers and solicitors (currently £125) be increased as a recommendation of the Commission to bring in more income and relieve the burden in other areas.

3. The Commission be updated on future progress of the budget as it progresses.

**62. ANY URGENT BUSINESS**

No other items of urgent business had been brought to the attention of the Chair.

**63. CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 7.32pm.





# West Neighbourhood Area 2016/17

19



# Councillors of West NA

## Westcotes ward



Councillor Andy Connelly  
Councillor Sarah Russell

## Fosse ward



Councillor Ted Cassidy, MBE  
Councillor Dawn Alfonso

## Abbey ward



Councillor Harshad Bhavsar  
Councillor Annette Byrne  
Councillor Vijay Singh Riyait

## Western ward



Councillor George Cole  
Councillor Dr Susan Barton  
Councillor Malcom Unsworth

## Beaumont Leys ward



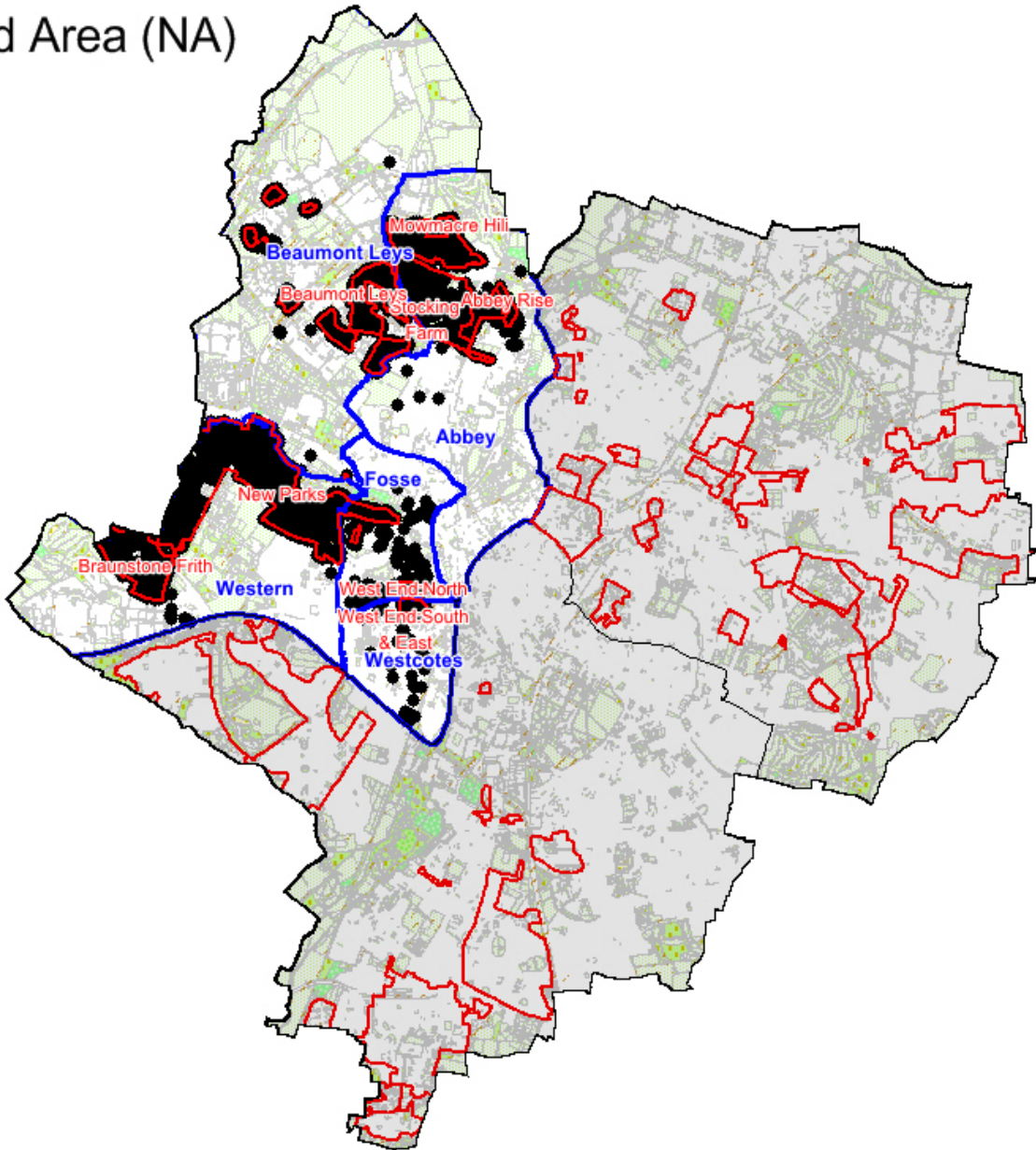
Councillor Hemant Rae Bhatia  
Councillor Susan Waddington  
Councillor Paul Westley



# West Neighbourhood Area (NA)

21

- Council estates
- Council homes
- Wards



# West NA – the overall area (all tenures): pt1

- Contains the MSOAs – Castle Hill, Mowmacre and Stocking Farm, Beaumont Leys, Abbey, New Parks East, New Parks West, Newfoundpool, Western Park, West End.
- West NA as a whole contains around 33,000 households
- West NA has a relatively high proportion of single people and lone parent households
- There is a much higher proportion of people describing themselves as white British residents in West – 63.1% compared with 45.1% for the city

22

## West – the overall area (all tenures): pt 2

- **Deprivation** – according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015, 7 of the 46 lower super output areas (LSOA - neighbourhoods) in the West NA are in the 5% most deprived nationally.
- **The most deprived neighbourhood in West NA** covers Glengarry Way in New Parks.
- In West NA there seems to be a strong correlation between areas with high density of **council flat accommodation and deprivation.**

# Council housing

## Neighbourhood Area West

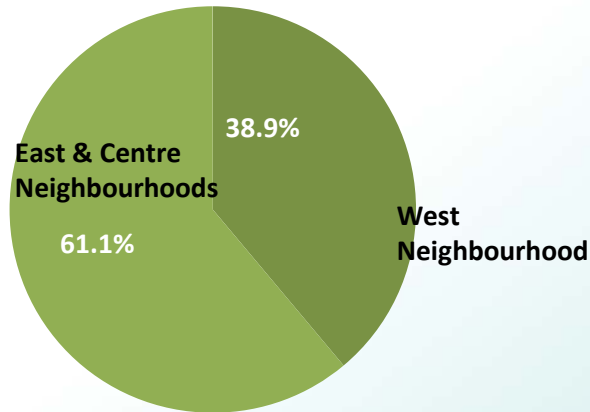
- There are around 7,000 council homes in West NA.
- The council estates in the West NA are New Parks, Beaumont Leys, Abbey, Stocking Farm and Mowmacre.
- 74% of the tenants in West NA are white, 69% =city
- Council tenancy holders in West NA have a younger age profile than is the case for the city as a whole
- West NA council housing has a relatively high proportion of flat accommodation
- **Homechoice:** Over the last year there were 435 homes advertised in the West NA
  - The 22 homes with the most bids in the West NA were 2 bedroom properties

### Gypsy & Traveller Sites

- ❖ Meynells Gorse – 21 plots
- ❖ Redhill Nook – 10 plots
- ❖ Greengate Nook – 6 plots

# Rent Arrears & ASB

## Rent Arrears



38.9% of city arrears

- 17.9% = Western Ward

17 evictions 2015/16

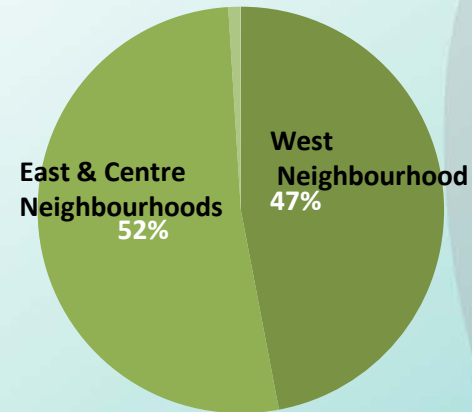
- 13 singles, 3 families, 1 couple

21 evictions 2016/17

- 14 singles, 6 fam, 1cple

- As at 27<sup>th</sup> Nov 2016

## Anti Social Behaviour



2015 = 462 ASB cases

- 917 overall city total

2016 figures as at October

- 45% Nuisance
- 31% conflict neighbours

2015/16 2 evictions

- 1 in the West

No evictions 2016/17

- 1% area not recorded



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# Capital Spend 2016/17

## 2016/17 Estimated Capital Spend in the West District

	Boilers	Electrical Improvements	Kitchens/ Bathr's	Upvc Windows/Doors	Re-roofing	Upvc Fascias/Soffits	Upvc Cladding	Total Spend/properties
New Parks	£573,156	£421,600	£360,000	£4,000	£5,000	£88,400	£0	£1,452,156
Properties		272	72	1	1	26		372
B-Leys	£302,663	£97,650	£130,000	£8,000	£5,000	£6,800	£70,000	£620,113
Properties		63	26	2	1	2	11	105
Mowmacre	£315,797	£192,200	£210,000	£4,000	£315,000	£71,400	£0	£1,108,397
Properties		124	42	1	63	21		251
Total spend	£1,191,615	£711,785	£700,098	£16,003	£325,002	£166,628	£70,011	£3,181,142
Total properties		459	140	4	65	49	11	728

# Environmental and Communal Project Neighbourhood West 2016/17

## Beaumont Leys/Mowmacre

- Improved pathways /shrub clearance
- Resurfacing courtyards
- External decorating
- External Cladding
- **£202,400**

## New Parks

- Landscaping
- Flexi-paving/Hardstanding
- Parking bay installation
- Recycling Facilities
- **£177,000**

27

# Beaumont Leys – External Cladding

28





# Parking Bays – New Parks



# Mowmacre – Resurfaced Courtyards



# Environmental & Communal Projects

## Neighbourhood – West

### 2017/18

#### Beaumont Leys/Mowmacre

##### Beaumont Leys

Various improvement projects inc. landscaping

- Harris Road
- Scalpay Close
- Iona Close
- Kelbrook Close

£56,000

##### Mowmacre

Bridlespur replace bin doors 20 in total @  
£1296.77 per door.

Internal Painting Flats

Garth Avenuen

Wembury Avenue

£43,000

**Total = £99,000**

#### New Parks

##### • Car Parking /improvements Installations

- Blissett Road
- Hassal Road
- Speers Road
- Cufflin Drive
- Withen's close

- Andrewes Walk – fencing

- **Total = £128,000**



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# Challenges for the West

- Performance Management - Staff motivation and support
  - Implementing Welfare visits
  - Communal Cleaning inspections
  - New Policies and procedures, ie Fixed term tenancies
  - Learning & Development for staff
  - Reduced service offer, managing stakeholder expectations
  - Impact on Housing Services of financial cuts to other service areas
- 3 Gypsy and Traveller Sites
    - Allocation of plots to ensure harmony
    - Maintaining trust with community
    - Crime
    - ASB/harassment
    - Fly Tipping
    - Issues with Livestock
    - Building good working relationships with external agencies to support G&T community- ie Health, Education
  - Working with local residents living near to G&T sites.

# Any Questions







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## ***Customer Service - Housing Contact:***

For consideration by: Housing Scrutiny Commission

Date: 30<sup>th</sup> January 2017

Lead director: Alison Greenhill

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- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Alison Musgrove
- Author contact details: 0116 454 2642

## 1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To provide the Scrutiny Commission with an overview of Housing contact for the Tenants Advice and Repairs Service (TARS).
- 1.2 This report will reflect customer activity for the period January 2016 until December 2016 as requested by the Housing Scrutiny Commission and explain the future channel shift opportunities for tenant customer interaction.

## 2. Summary

### An overview of the Housing customer Contact offer

2.1 The customer contact route is predominately through telephony call handling with a hub and spoke approach to face to face contact with a City Centre offer on Granby Street along with seven geographically based multi service hubs following the Transforming Neighbourhood Services programme to introduce the Customer Service on line offer in key locations, in areas of deprivation (predominately housing estates), where possible, across the city.

2.2 The City Councils call centre receives approximately 65,000 – 70,000 calls a month for 15 Council services of which Housing is one service, approximately 26% of these are from Housing. The call centre takes calls from 8am to 6pm every week day and for Saturday only Housing Repairs, management and rent; from 8.00am to 1pm.

2.3 The caller waits for approximately 5:49 minutes for the call to be answered - our target is for 90% of calls to be answered within 2 minutes, and we take on average 6 minutes to handle a call. Callers listen to welcome messages for approximately 1 minute, after this 13% of calls are abandoned – our corporate target is to minimise the loss of calls to 10%.

2.4 Revenues & Customer Support Service operate the Councils call centre with 57 staff in the establishment, of which there are 4 management posts.

2.5 The telephony service is funded utilising the following resources for 2016/17:

	£
General Fund	497,000
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	<u>791,000</u>
	1,388,600

2.6 Customer Services have contributed £0.5m in savings over 2015 -2017 including £200k to the Transforming Neighbourhood Services savings inclusive of £66k savings from the HRA for the outreach face to face provision from 2017/18.

2.7 The Revenues and Customer Support service took management of the service in



June 2014 and have been looking at ways in which to improve the telephone experience to achieve best value and the experience for the caller. This includes the introduction of a performance management regime, regular 1:1's with agents, more focussed and targeted management of absence. Management information has been refreshed and performance targets introduced, for waiting times, abandonment rates, call handling times and customer feedback expectations'

2.8 Through this call centre a tenant can call to book a housing repair, report an estate management issue (e.g. Anti-Social Behaviour), or request a tenant initiated improvement (Housing management), make a payment to or manage their rent account (Rent Enquiries) Housing Options general enquiries and initial homelessness enquiries (tier 2) for Housing Options are handled by Revenues and Customer Support's customer service line.

2.9 The customer service face to face offer was delivered at three outreach locations in addition to the main Customer Contact Centre at Granby Street. These are detailed in the table below. The on-line offer is available throughout the locations operating hours, greatly extending the opportunity for tenants and customers to transact with the council via computer or by free phone on weekdays.

<b>Transforming Neighbourhood Services Customer service changes</b>		
<b>Location</b>	<b>Operated over Days a week</b>	<b>Transferred to Customer Services on line</b>
New Parks Library	5	Reopened - December 2016
Merlyn Vaz Health Centre	2	Venue changed to St Matthews community library from May 2016
Saffron Lane Housing Office	3	Venue changed to Pork Pie Community library from December 2015
<b>New Customer Service on-line locations</b>		
Beaumont Leys library		January 2017

2.10 Historically, tenants had not been encouraged to self-serve until the introduction of the Choice Based Lettings system whereby 97% of housing applications are now made on line on a self-serve basis completed by the prospective tenant. This indicates that tenants are capable of using technology. However Customer Services staff continued to deliver most housing services on a face to face basis regardless of whether the tenant wanted or needed this, whether they were able to do it for themselves or not. During 2015/16, in a lot of instances, Customer Service staff began to sign post tenants to the free phone to call the telephony line for all housing contact where they thought this was appropriate to do. During 2015/16 3,756 customers were helped at these locations and 387 in 2016/17. The locations of Housing Customer Service has changed significantly during 2016 as part of the Council's accommodation strategy completing in December 2016 with a single customer contact centre in the city centre.

2.11 This level of customer contact by telephone has been a challenge in 2016. In order to understand housing customer contact performance it is important to look at the service provision and the channel shift programme.

### **3. Service background**

3.1 In 2012 with the governance of the Organisational Development & Improvement team, Customer Services undertook to deliver a wider range of council service customer contact. This included Housing repairs, Housing management, rent arrears contact and Revenues and Benefits general enquires. Customer Services used the combined funding from three sources (existing Customer Service Line budget, Housing funding and Revenues & Benefit budget) to manage the increased call handling demand and create a training and service improvement team. The argument being a combined centre would and has delivered economies of scale to realise efficiency.

3.2 Before May 2011 Housing repairs, management and arrears calls were receiving approximately 222,000 calls per annum, 73.84% were answered, leaving an average abandonment rate of 26.2%.

3.3 The organisational review undertaken in 2012 created the call centre with 57 staff in the establishment, of which there are 4 managers. Following the review, a Service Level Agreement (below) was introduced and has remained unchanged. This forms the basis for the monthly performance targets and subsequent meeting discussions.

<b>Management information &amp; performance indicators</b>	<b>Target where applicable</b>	<b>Current performance against target*</b>
Percentage of calls abandoned	No more than 5%	
Average wait time	60 seconds	6 minutes
Customer satisfaction levels for TARS	80%	89.41%

\*All Housing contacts including Housing Options.

3.4 In January 2015 the Housing Options Service (HOS) moved from its separate location in Phoenix House to York House. The face to face provision transferred into the Customer Service Centre. In 2015/16 HOS call handling operated a telephone service for on average 26 hours a week. In this time they answered 41% of calls; with 13% abandoning calls and 46% of contact being redirected to a message answering service. On investigation it was found that 2,000 calls were sitting in this message answering service and had not been called back. The calls to Housing Options were absorbed into the customer service line without an additional transfer of budget therefore without increased levels of agents to answer them. In doing so the caller to Housing Options can now get through over a longer period (50 hours per week) because the call lines are open throughout the week compared to 26 hours previously (Mon – Thursday 8.30 to 5pm, no service Tuesday am, Friday 9am to 4.30pm). There is no service level agreement in place for HOS call handling.

3.5 During the last 2 years a number of services have had their calls transferred into the call centre, these include:

- Housing options
- School admissions
- Electoral Services

3.6 Increased levels of agents have not been employed to cover these extra services as call volumes should be manageable within the service establishment however the

agent's numbers have not reached establishment numbers until very recently, individual performance of agents and management of absence has proven to be a challenge for the service. This has had a direct result on call handling across all services not just the housing calls.

#### 4. Current Service delivery performance, challenges and solutions-

##### 2016 Housing calls performance:

4.1 We received 258,651 calls for all four areas of housing business (being Housing Repairs, Housing Management, Housing arrears and Housing Options). This represents 26% of all the call the centre receives. Detailed analysis of call management can be found in appendix B.

4.2 Average call performance was:

- we answered 205,795 of all the calls,
- the caller waited approximately 6 minutes for the call to be answered, and
- we take on average 5.41 minutes to handle a call.
- callers abandon their call in 9% of calls after the welcome messages have ended.

Abandonment of calls December 2015 to December 2016						
Priority lines	Target 2016	Q3 2015/16	Q4 2015/16	Q1 2016/17	Q2 2016/17	Q3 2016/17
Housing Options Homelessness Duty Line	Corporate 10%	11%	16%	11%	21%	12%
Housing Repairs Customer Service Agent	SLA 5%	5%	9%	3%	5%	2%

4.3 Improved call handling has been achieved through changing the priority line called "queue jump" from the housing management line in November 2016 and being applied to the Tier 2 Housing Options line. This was recommended by Housing Services due to the nature of these calls being an emergency and it was felt the resources should be focused here. The Housing Options Tier 2 calls about homelessness and duty to house enquires now wait 3 minutes less to have their call answered (down from 11 minutes to 8 minutes) and more callers got through as the abandonment rate fell from 21% to 13% and continues to do so. This was implemented and evidence shows that although the Housing Management average wait to have their call answered increased to 2.35 mins in November and abandonment rate increased to 12% for tenants calling about anti-social behaviour or handing your notice to quit the tenancy.

Abandonment of calls December 2015 to December 2016						
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	Target 2016	Q3 2015/16	Q4 2015/16	Q1 2016/17	Q2 2016/17	Q3 2016/17
Housing Repairs	SLA 5%	17%	26%	15%	33%	18%
Housing Management		30%	36%	5%	6%	11%
Payments & Rent Enquiries		23%	28%	23%	32%	22%
Housing Options Initial Contact		16%	21%	16%	33%	24%

4.4 This performance does not in most occasions meet the Corporate or Service Level Agreement targets. However various improvements have been put in place which is reversing this trend and performance is now improving over the past quarter.

4.5 There have been a number of challenges the customer call centre has faced which have adversely affected performance during the year however some have offered opportunities. I will explain the issues.

### **Agent resources and performance**

4.6 The call centre has an establishment of 53 FTE call agents, handles calls for 15 services, 3 new services (mentioned previously) have joined the call handling regime since 2015;

- The levels of agents within the establishment have fluctuated from 43 agents to current levels of 52 from December 2016. On average we have 36.5 agents handling calls any one time before recruitment completed in December 2016.
- Northgate Housing administration system went live early January 2016 - with all the associated training and embedding of the new system as our agents directing input data into this system on behalf of Housing. This added between 1.5 and 2 minutes to our call handling time this reducing the numbers of customer calls we are able to answer and we recovered to our previous performance by April 2016.
- The Customer relationship management system was replaced at the end of January 2016 with all the associated training and embedding of the new system.
- The channel shift programme has shifted council tax and housing benefit contact from face to face to telephony, the programme for 2017/18 is to shift this contact from telephone to on line transactions.
- Short term and long absence has been managed down from 10 % to a current absence level of 4% over this calendar year. This means more agents are at work working.
- Between June and August 2016 8 agents resigned from the service which significantly reduced operating capacity.
- We have recruited to 10 vacancies; some agents are recruited to work during peak operating hours to focus resources where they are needed.
- We train new starters on the high demand lines which includes Housing repairs to ensure this contact has resilience in the centre.
- We have an improvement plan in place from November 2016. This focusses on:
  - Increasing resources
  - Advising callers of service expectations to reduce repeat contact
  - Improving Housing processes to minimise repeat contact
  - Exploring a call back facility when the call volume is high
  - Exploring the on-line forms back office integration possibilities

- Reviewing the SLA and introducing SMART performance targets
- Monitoring the plan internally by both services and report outcomes to the Executive Lead member on a monthly basis. See appendix B
- Ensuring robust performance measures are in place in the customer services call centre to meet agreed SLA target

4.7 Callers who wish to make a payment are now served by the automated payment line. This handled 2,743 payments in the last six months totalling £492,461.83. Housing services piloted this services for three months to ensure collection resilience, this was proven and the line was rolled out permanently from 1st October 2015

4.8 Appendix B shows the improvement in housing calls since January 2016; however these still fall short of the SLA set in place when the calls were transferred into the call centre.

### **Improvements made over the last quarter**

4.9 It is important to note that we have currently been working to improve the call handling of the centre and looking at the housing combined data on page 3 of Appendix B this shows the improvement that has been made since October 2016.

4.10 In October the average wait time for a call to be answered was 8 minutes and 34 seconds, recruitment of officers was completed at the end of October, in November the average wait time was reduced to 6 minutes and 26 seconds and reduced again in December to 2 minutes 18 seconds. This is a drop in waiting time of 6 minutes and 16 seconds.

4.11 The abandonment rate has also improved from 28% in October to 7% in December a marked improvement.

4.12 The number of calls answered in 3 minutes increased from 16% in October to 57% in December.

4.13 It is therefore clear to see with the increased staffing and training staff on handling housing calls a marked improvement has been shown, we will continue to work with the Housing Transformation Team to improve processes from the back office to ensure the call handling continues to improve.

4.14 The improvement plan highlights the work that we are concentrating on from both customer services and housing perspective to continue with this improvement over the coming months.

### **Customer Satisfaction**

4.15 We measure overall customer contact satisfaction; the broad corporate target is 85% satisfied.

<b>Customer Contact Survey Results</b>			
<b>Contact route</b>	<b>2015/16</b>		
	Their enquiry was resolved	Either very satisfied or satisfied with their wait time	Either very satisfied or satisfied by the officer's service

<b>Telephony</b>	82.05%	81.26%	99.12%
	<b>2016/17</b>		
<b>Telephony</b>	89.41%	87.19%	94.13%

4.16 In order to continue to improve and meet revised performance targets for call handling it is imperative to move contact onto an integrated on line solution. At present a customer can report a repair and two management reporting change forms through “MyAccount” on-line, however the process remains manually intensive in the back office as call centre staff continue to upload the information onto the Northgate system. This process although appears to be on line for the customer is not. The aim is to implement a self-service portal so that when customers report a repair/change on line the data auto populates the Northgate system without the need for a human resource.

4.17 Some key self-serve objectives to reduce telephone calls are:

- Tenants can view their rent balance on line
- Tenants can view when they need to pay their next rent payment and how much this should be.
- Tenants can apply to pay by Direct Debit on line
- Tenants are informed by email of their repair request; view its progression, comment upon its completion where there are any remaining (snagging) issues.
- Tenants can report a range of estate management related issues online.

## 5. Current Service delivery – Face To Face

5.1 The Customer Contact Centre saw 152 callers at Granby Street in November 2016 with their council housing enquiries. The housing transactions are low volume and represent about 10% of the face to face activity these are customers requiring the Housing Options Service.

5.2 If tenants call at the Customer Service Centre site on Granby Street they will be offered the opportunity to use the MyAccount facility, if appropriate; or sign posted to the phones for all other transactions. There are 8 PC’s (for Leicester HomeChoice applications) and 12 phones which are free to use. An assisted self-serve scanning facility for HOS application document verification is also available. Tenants can pay their rent by card or cash at our two payment points. During 2016 they paid £258,361 rent by card and £265,145 in cash at the machines. Should a customer wish to see a Customer Service advisor to query an outstanding issue we aim to see 90% of customers within a 10 minute wait. **Appendix B** shows the performance against this target.

5.3 Housing Options customers use the telephones for initial HOS service. Tier 1 calls such as HomeChoice guidance and Housing register enquires are handled by the call centre with Tier 2 being homelessness enquires of which 33% of these are transferred to Duty Officers in the Housing Options Service.

5.4 Housing Options offer pre booked appoints within the centre to deal with duty assessments and on-going housing applications (non-emergency). They saw 495 applicants in 2016 with an average waiting time of 51 minutes.

5.5 The centre has steadily improved on meeting the waiting time targets in key area during the calendar year and achieved this target in November on the housing verification transactions counters, however due to the nature of housing options enquiries it is very difficult to reach this target as the service is reactive to the needs of customers and the immediacy of the need.

5.6 **Channel Shift** - Housing service contact needs to be brought into the modern business environment. Our customers want to transact with us on-line which is available, 24/7. Customer Service snap shot data from the New Parks Library in 2015 shows 60% of tenants present there had access to a PC or smart phone, 92% of Housing Benefit claims are made on line with the vast remainder applying for HB in hostel accommodation. For the past four years about 8% of HB customers have HB awards, in the private sector, paid direct to their landlord demonstrating they are able to pay their rent; compared to other large authorities where the figure is around 25%. We know our customers are IT aware, they have the equipment to transact with us or if they don't we will have provided for them in over 10 locations across the city. If they struggle to do this both Adult learning and the MoneywisePlus offer in the city will support them, even where there are language barriers to get on-line.

5.7 In the modern age of communication demand for a personal service on a person to person basis is no longer cost effective for the Council or required by the vast majority of our customer. As such the Council must make sure the on line offer is responsive, intuitive, straight forward and quicker. Pre-booked appointments will remain available for those who require this service but will manage and assist in reducing the remaining demand to be managed within reduced resources.

## 6. Recommendations

- The Housing and Customer Service management continue work to achieve improvements through the improvement plan.
- The Housing Scrutiny commission are invited to comment on the customer contact performance for the face to face and call handling service to tenants.
- Housing Services, supported by the Customer Contact Transformation Team, work closely with a software supplier to deliver an integrated on line offer at the earliest opportunity.
- Review the SLA, agree priority focus of resources and set SMART and different targets for call handling for all 4 Housing Service calls
- Work with tenant group to establish their acceptable levels of performance
- Report back to Housing Scrutiny Commission every 6 months with current performance and improvements made

## 7. Financial, Legal and other implications

### 7.1 Financial implications

The 'channel shift' agenda towards greater use of on-line self-service (or otherwise telephone contact) is key to delivering efficiencies and cost savings to the Housing Revenue Account and General Fund budgets - Colin Sharpe, Head of Finance, ext. 37 4081

## **7.2 Legal implications**

There are no implications arising directly from the recommendations of this report.

Emma Horton, Head of Law (Commercial, Property & Planning) etc. 37 1426

## **7.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications**

Through the use of Channel Shift the environmental impact of customer contact will be reduced, particularly by reducing the need to travel.

- Mark Jeffcote, Environment Team (x37 2251)

## **7.4 Equalities implications**

Equalities considerations regarding contact with the housing services mentioned in the report tend to focus on ensuring access that meets people's needs because of their protected characteristics, or ensuring that there are no barriers in place that preclude their receipt of intended benefits/outcomes arising from contact with the service. The report discusses volume of contact and abandoned calls, but does not comment on adverse impacts experienced by callers because of these statistics – what was the impact of all those abandoned calls? There is a lack of evidence to determine whether there are any negative equalities implications arising from service performance. Our Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to pay due regard to any negative impacts arising from our decisions (and this would include decisions on how we deliver our services) and put in place mitigating actions to reduce or remove those negative impacts. Unfortunately, the evidence presented in the report does not consider such implications. A broader perspective, collecting evidence on outcomes as well as performance indicators, would enable us to consider our Public Sector Equality Duty implications.

Irene Kszyk, Corporate Equalities Lead, ext 374147.

## **8. Supporting information / appendices**

None

## **9. 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)?**

No.

## **10. Appendices**

Appendix A – Improvement plan

Appendix B – Call handling for period January 2016 until December 2016



**11. Is this a “key decision”?**

No



## Housing Milestone plan 2016/17



Telephony						
Task ID	Action to be taken	Lead officer	Start date	Expected completion date	Expected outcomes	Comments
47 1	Recruitment and training of 15 CSC Advisors (5x 31/10, 5 x 7/11, 5 x TBC) to replace staff who have left or been reallocated elsewhere	Andrew Acklam	Oct-16	Jan-17	Reduction in waiting time and abandonment rate	<b>11 new members of staff have been appointed and trained. An addition 8 FTE and 4 PT posts are being recruited to. Post should be filled by spring 2017.</b>

2	Carry out full review on current performance measures and look to improve this with SMART targets and a transparent improved performance framework that delivers results	Alison Musgrove/ Andrew Acklam	Jun-16	Ongoing	Quicker call handling and SMART targets set. Reduction in waiting times	<b>Performance measures are currently under review. All new starters are being closely monitored with regular one to ones and performance management. At present new starters are taking 7-8 calls per hour this needs to improve to 10 calls per hour. Agreed for general quality monitoring for Housing Transformation Team to listen into calls and to invite members of the Tenants Forum to be involved in a Mystery Shopping activity.</b>
2 <sub>3</sub>	Review of training notes and scripts	Charlotte McGraw/ Alison Musgrove	Dec-16	Mar-17	Improved customer services to tenants	<b>Review is now underway.</b>
4	Perform full audit on all messaging, looking to review the messaging to advise callers to go on line, in all areas where forms are available. Set time lines of changing messaging to force callers on line over a phased approach	Andrew Acklam	Jun-16	Dec-16	Promotion of on line, less calls being taken by officers. Reduction in waiting times	<b>CSC are leading on a soft launch of My Account to enable increased channel shift</b>

5	Once audit of messaging carried out, look to implement the changes over the coming months to hard stop certain activities	Andrew Acklam	Jul-16	Dec-16	Promotion of on line, less calls being taken by officers. Reduction in waiting times	As above
49	Review of Service Level Agreement between Housing and Customer Services	Kevin Doyle	Jan-17	Mar-17	More clarity around roles responsibilities and expectations. Will inform performance management moving forward. Improved use of resource	Existing SLA is under review. We will include recommendations for Housing Scrutiny Commission to receive a six monthly report on progress. In addition reports will be made to the Tenants Forum.
7	Review use of queue jumps	Andrew Acklam	Dec-17	Feb-17	Improved use of resource	Queue jump has been implemented on Housing Options Tier 2 calls successfully. This has had a significant impact on the length of time taken to answer calls and on abandonment rates
8	Channel shift-enabling tenants to self serve	Charlotte McGraw	Jan-17	Jun-18	To reduce the number of callers using the telephone lines to report simple repairs, eventually moving to all repairs to be reported on line.	This is included in the current phase of delivery of Northgate and will enable tenants to self serve on rents and repairs reducing the need for face to face and telephone

9

Review of Housing Options call handling, processes and performance

Charlotte McGraw

Jan-17

Jul-17

To improve processes in call handling

**Data is currently being produced to inform development of an action plan to improve performance**

**Appendix B – Housing Scuting Meeting  
January 2017**

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## **Housing Services Analysis Apr-Dec 2016 Within Customer Services.**

Analysis consists of comparison for Average figures for Apr-Oct To Nov & Dec figures for  
Phone Calls & Face 2 Face

**David Johnson**  
**09/01/2017**

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## HOUSING PHONES COMMENTARY

Within the Customer Service Centre (CSC) Granby Street, phone call numbers for Housing related calls are recorded under 6 Service Lines. They are Housing Management, Housing Repairs, Housing Repairs High Priority, Housing Options Tier 1, Housing Options Tier 2 and Payment and Rent Enquiries.

For the first 10 months of this financial year we answered a total of 171,141 calls at an average of 17,114 per month. For November we answered a total of 19,145 calls and a further 14,309 in December.

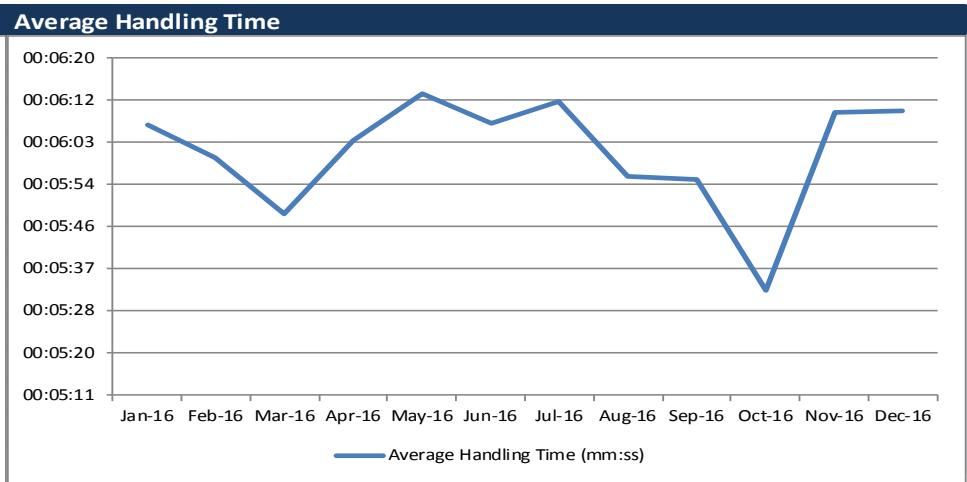
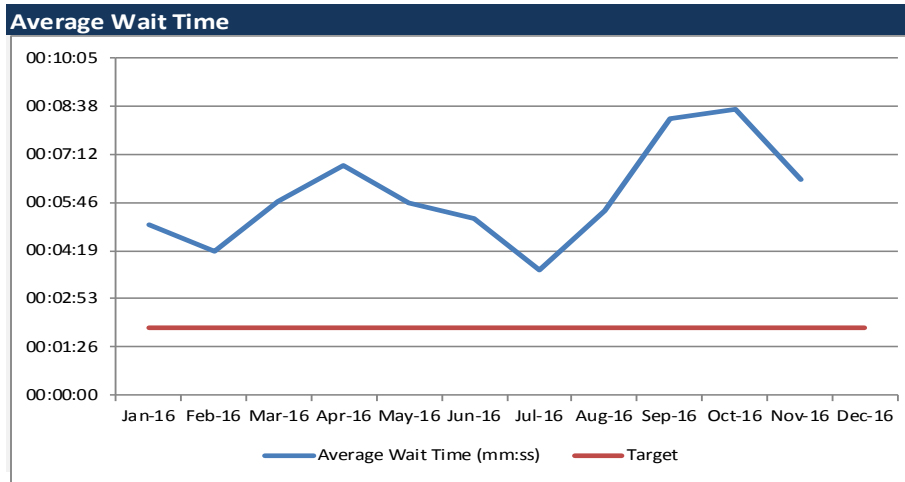
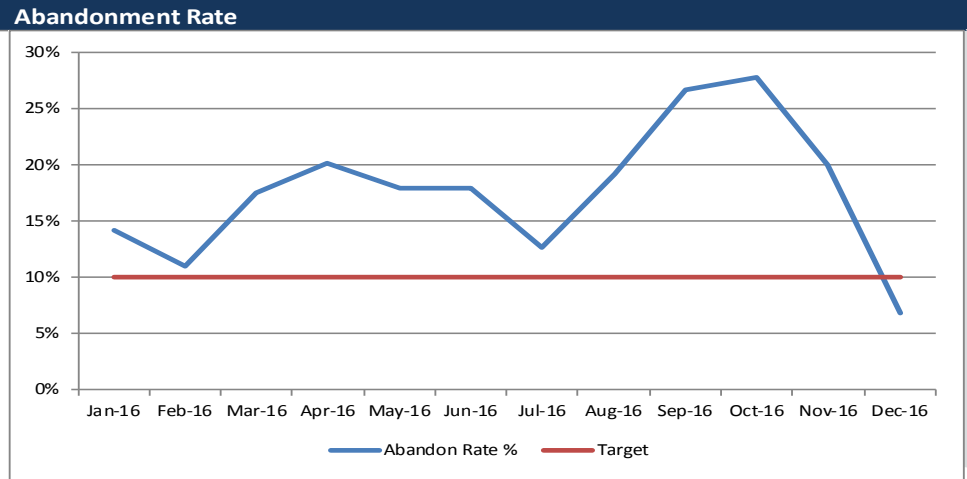
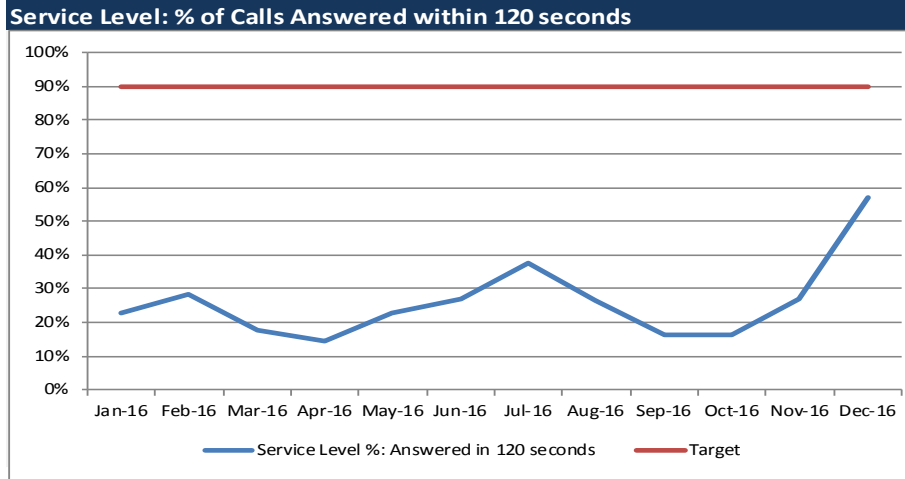
Considering the increase in calls answered in November compared to the average for the previous 10 months the Average Wait Times remained relatively constant. In December the Average Wait Time reduced dramatically to 02:18 mins.

For the same periods the Average Handling Times reduced for three Service Lines and increased for the other three. Overall for the period Average Handling Times have remained constant at around 6 minutes.

Our call Abandon Rates reduced for all of the Housing Services Lines when comparing the average for the first 10 months of the year to November, apart from Housing Repairs and Housing Options Tier 1. In December the combined lines Abandonment Rate reduced dramatically to 7%.

The CSC SLA for % of calls Answered within 2 minutes is 90%. For the first 10 months the average % achieved was 23% which increased to 27% for November. Further improvement was achieved in December with a figure of 57% of calls answered within our SLA.

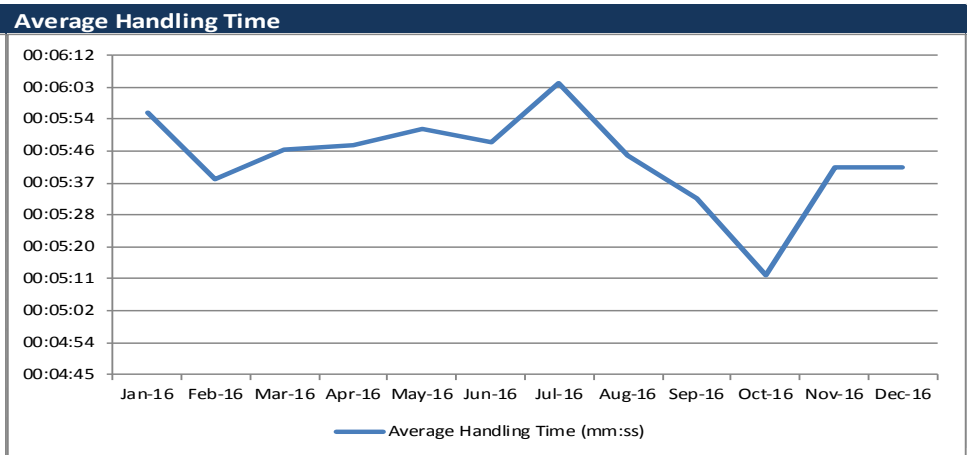
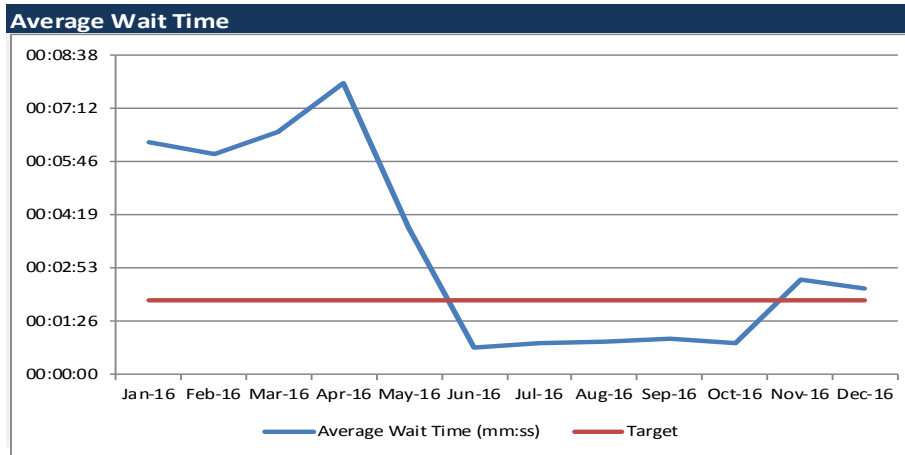
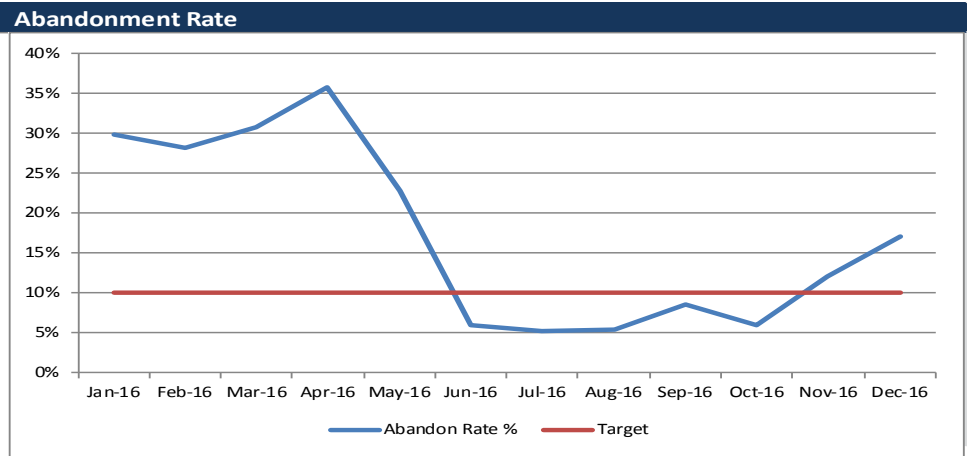
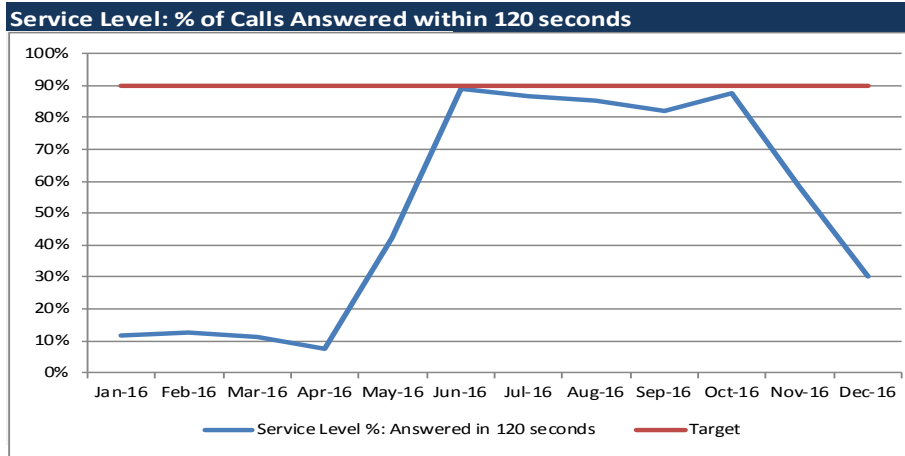
Housing Phones Combined	Jan-16	Feb-16	Mar-16	Apr-16	May-16	Jun-16	Jul-16	Aug-16	Sep-16	Oct-16	Nov-16	Dec-16
<b>Calls Offered</b>	23302	22886	22918	22635	20626	21961	19113	20774	21590	22670	24420	15756
Calls Answered	18926	19325	17786	16691	16160	17843	16536	16641	15614	16219	19145	14309
Calls Abandoned	3320	2517	4018	4550	3700	3935	2432	3976	5749	6297	4904	1071
Calls Redirected	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Abandon Rate %	14%	11%	18%	20%	18%	18%	13%	19%	27%	28%	20%	7%
Service Level %: Answered in 120 seconds	23%	28%	17%	14%	23%	27%	37%	26%	16%	16%	27%	57%
Average Wait Time (mm:ss)	00:05:05	00:04:19	00:05:48	00:06:52	00:05:46	00:05:16	00:03:45	00:05:30	00:08:15	00:08:34	00:06:26	00:02:18
Average Handling Time (mm:ss)	00:06:06	00:06:00	00:05:48	00:06:03	00:06:13	00:06:07	00:06:11	00:05:56	00:05:55	00:05:33	00:06:09	00:06:09



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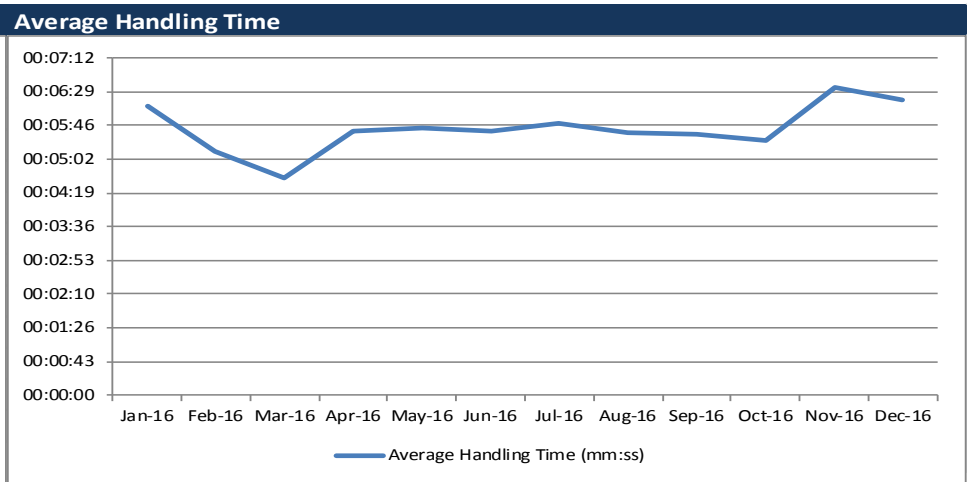
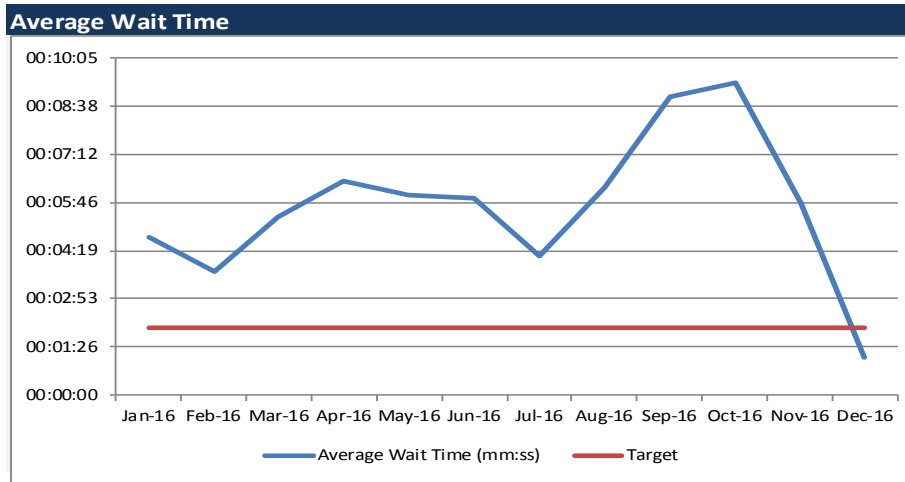
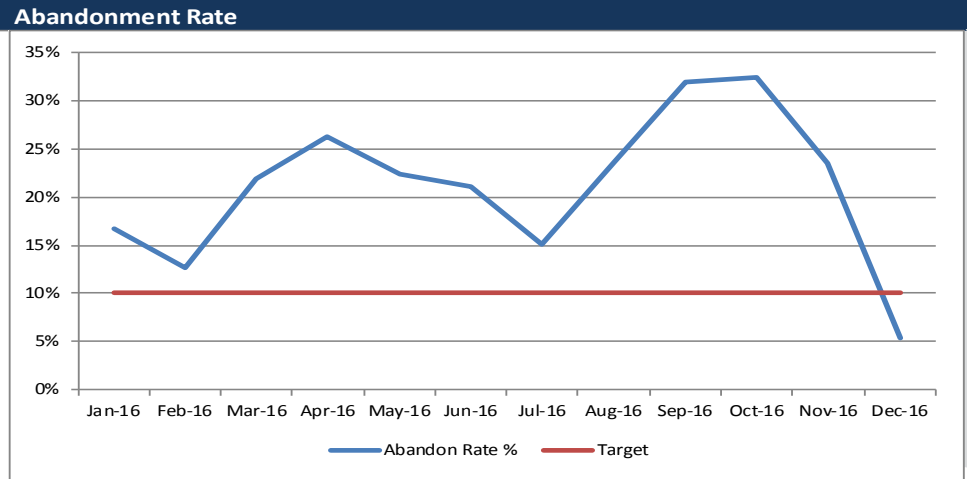
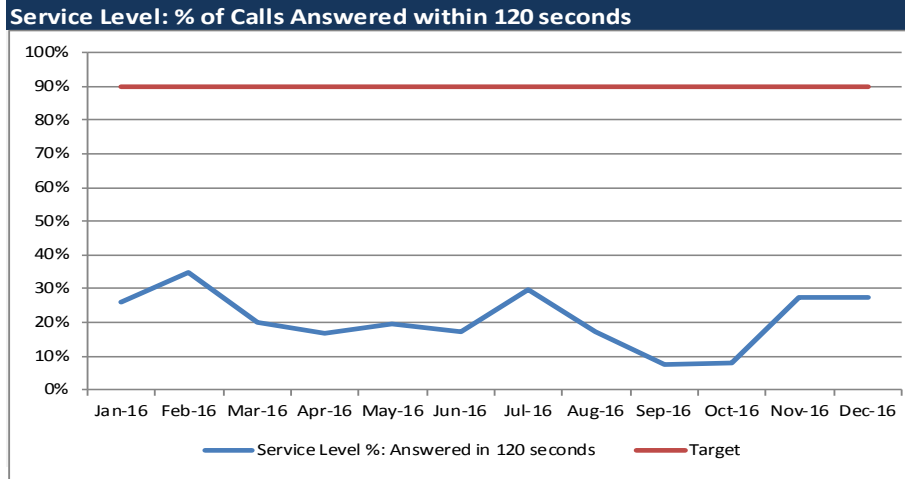
# BREAKDOWN BY LINES

Housing Management	Jan-16	Feb-16	Mar-16	Apr-16	May-16	Jun-16	Jul-16	Aug-16	Sep-16	Oct-16	Nov-16	Dec-16
<b>Calls Offered</b>	3546	3693	3626	3906	3367	3053	2787	2882	2652	2604	3066	2200
Calls Answered	2490	2649	2512	2512	2601	2870	2642	2725	2425	2450	2695	1824
Calls Abandoned	1056	1044	1114	1394	766	183	145	157	227	154	371	376
Calls Redirected	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Abandon Rate %	30%	28%	31%	36%	23%	6%	5%	5%	9%	6%	12%	17%
Service Level %: Answered in 120 seconds	12%	13%	11%	8%	42%	89%	87%	85%	82%	87%	58%	30%
Average Wait Time (mm:ss)	00:06:17	00:05:59	00:06:35	00:07:53	00:03:57	00:00:44	00:00:51	00:00:53	00:00:59	00:00:50	00:02:35	00:02:20
Average Handling Time (mm:ss)	00:05:56	00:05:38	00:05:46	00:05:47	00:05:52	00:05:48	00:06:04	00:05:44	00:05:33	00:05:12	00:05:41	00:05:41



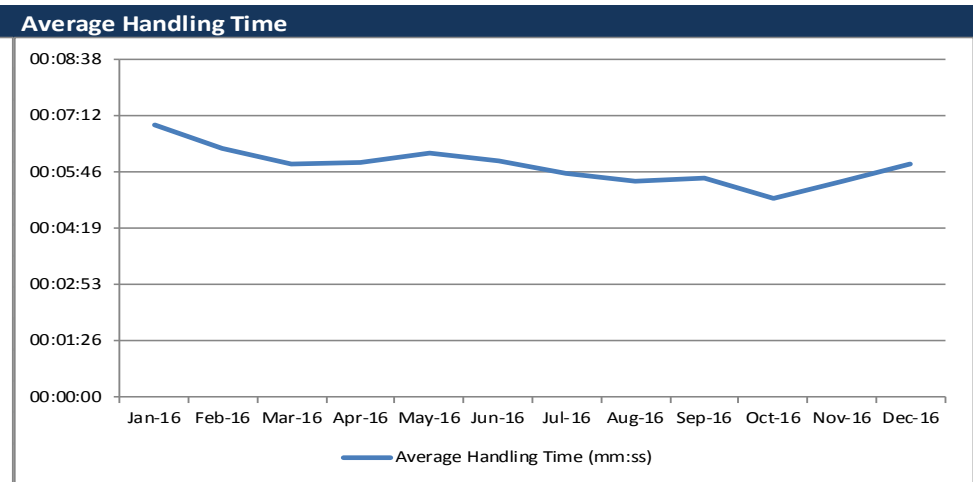
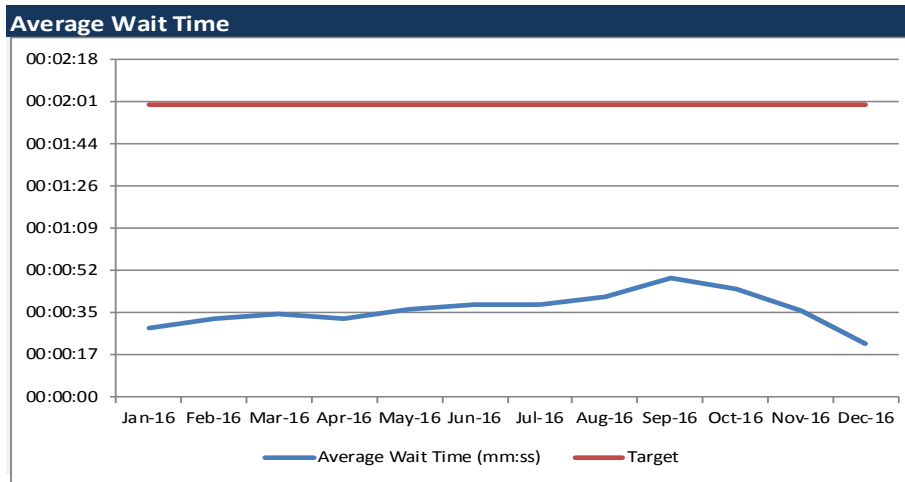
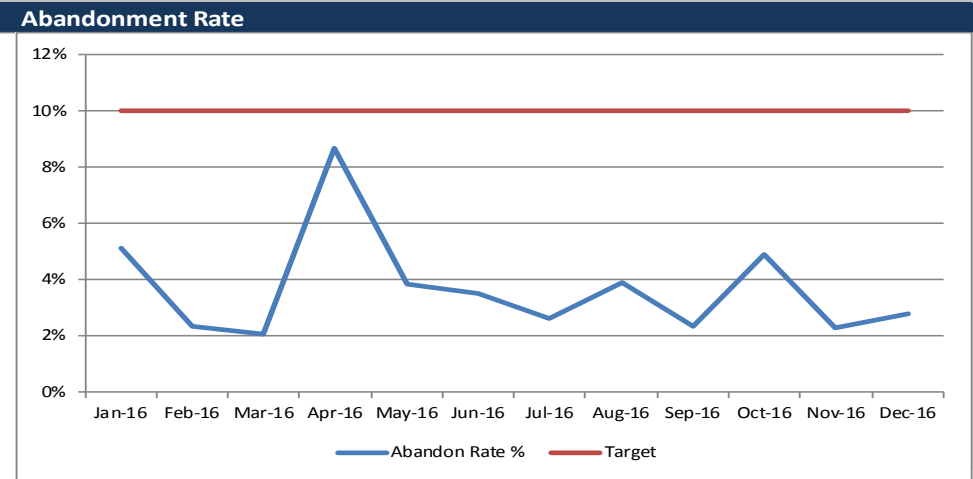
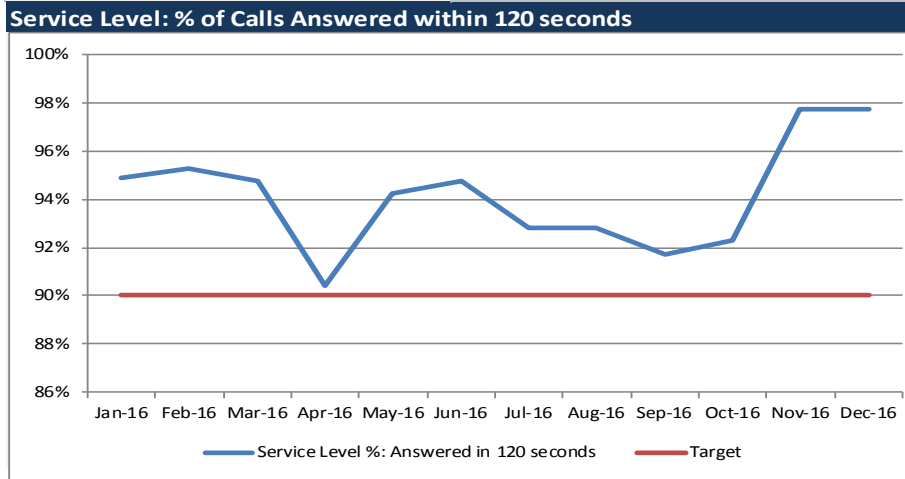
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Housing Repairs	Jan-16	Feb-16	Mar-16	Apr-16	May-16	Jun-16	Jul-16	Aug-16	Sep-16	Oct-16	Nov-16	Dec-16
<b>Calls Offered</b>	11228	10355	10392	10223	9488	10565	8724	9671	10623	11906	13147	7813
Calls Answered	9355	9045	8110	7537	7368	8345	7406	7384	7226	8036	10060	1392
Calls Abandoned	1873	1310	2282	2686	2120	2220	1318	2287	3397	3870	3087	421
Calls Redirected	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Abandon Rate %	17%	13%	22%	26%	22%	21%	15%	24%	32%	33%	23%	5%
Service Level %: Answered in 120 seconds	26%	35%	20%	17%	19%	17%	30%	17%	8%	8%	28%	28%
Average Wait Time (mm:ss)	00:04:42	00:03:43	00:05:20	00:06:23	00:05:58	00:05:53	00:04:11	00:06:12	00:08:55	00:09:20	00:05:45	00:01:08
Average Handling Time (mm:ss)	00:06:10	00:05:12	00:04:38	00:05:38	00:05:42	00:05:39	00:05:49	00:05:37	00:05:35	00:05:26	00:06:33	00:06:18



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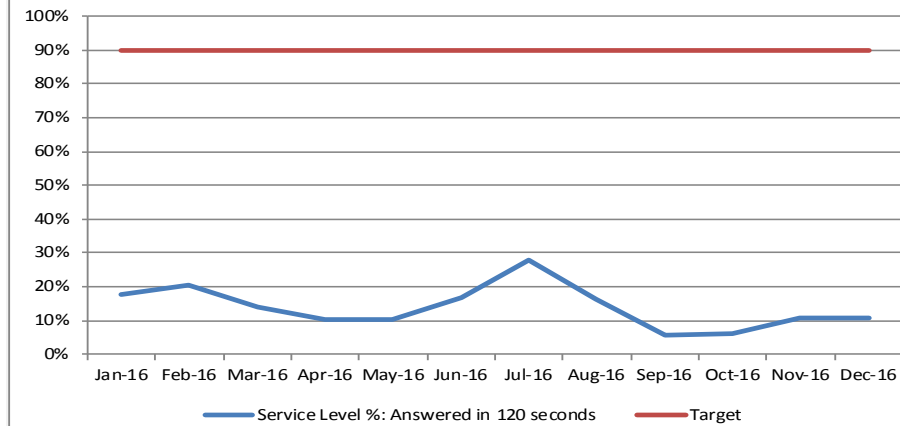
Housing Repairs High Priority	Jan-16	Feb-16	Mar-16	Apr-16	May-16	Jun-16	Jul-16	Aug-16	Sep-16	Oct-16	Nov-16	Dec-16
<b>Calls Offered</b>	78	85	96	115	157	172	153	153	169	143	44	36
Calls Answered	74	83	94	105	151	166	149	147	165	136	43	35
Calls Abandoned	4	2	2	10	6	6	4	6	4	7	1	1
Calls Redirected	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Abandon Rate %	5%	2%	2%	9%	4%	3%	3%	4%	2%	5%	2%	3%
Service Level %: Answered in 120 seconds	95%	95%	95%	90%	94%	95%	93%	93%	92%	92%	98%	98%
Average Wait Time (mm:ss)	00:00:28	00:00:32	00:00:34	00:00:32	00:00:36	00:00:38	00:00:38	00:00:41	00:00:49	00:00:44	00:00:35	00:00:22
Average Handling Time (mm:ss)	00:06:58	00:06:23	00:05:58	00:06:01	00:06:14	00:06:04	00:05:43	00:05:31	00:05:36	00:05:04	00:05:31	00:05:58



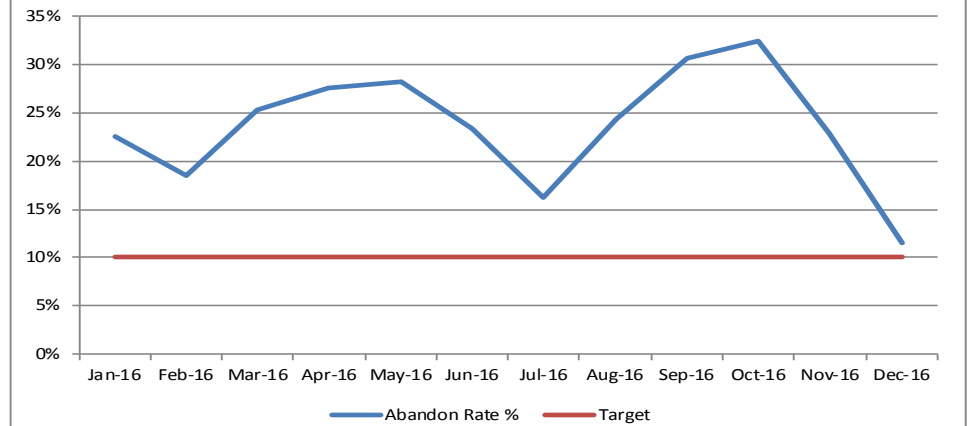
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Payments & Rent Enquiries	Jan-16	Feb-16	Mar-16	Apr-16	May-16	Jun-16	Jul-16	Aug-16	Sep-16	Oct-16	Nov-16	Dec-16
<b>Calls Offered</b>	2798	2789	2825	2634	2235	2286	2229	2110	2271	2386	2748	1934
Calls Answered	2166	2275	2112	1908	1605	1752	1869	1597	1576	1613	2120	1711
Calls Abandoned	632	514	713	726	630	534	360	513	695	773	628	223
Calls Redirected	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Abandon Rate %	23%	18%	25%	28%	28%	23%	16%	24%	31%	32%	23%	12%
Service Level %: Answered in 120 seconds	17%	20%	14%	10%	10%	17%	28%	16%	6%	6%	11%	11%
Average Wait Time (mm:ss)	00:05:56	00:05:11	00:06:24	00:07:48	00:07:24	00:06:15	00:04:25	00:06:17	00:09:25	00:09:58	00:08:37	00:04:00
Average Handling Time (mm:ss)	00:06:15	00:06:00	00:06:19	00:06:07	00:06:02	00:06:40	00:06:13	00:05:55	00:05:50	00:05:33	00:05:29	00:05:30

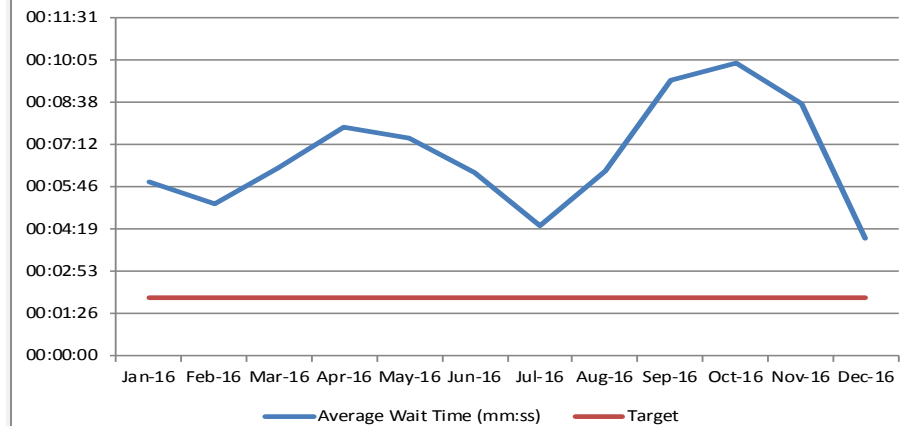
**Service Level: % of Calls Answered within 120 seconds**



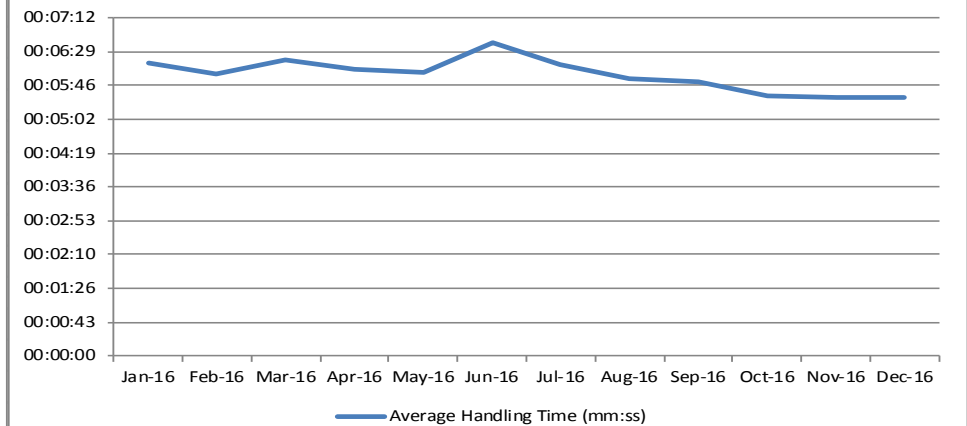
**Abandonment Rate**



**Average Wait Time**



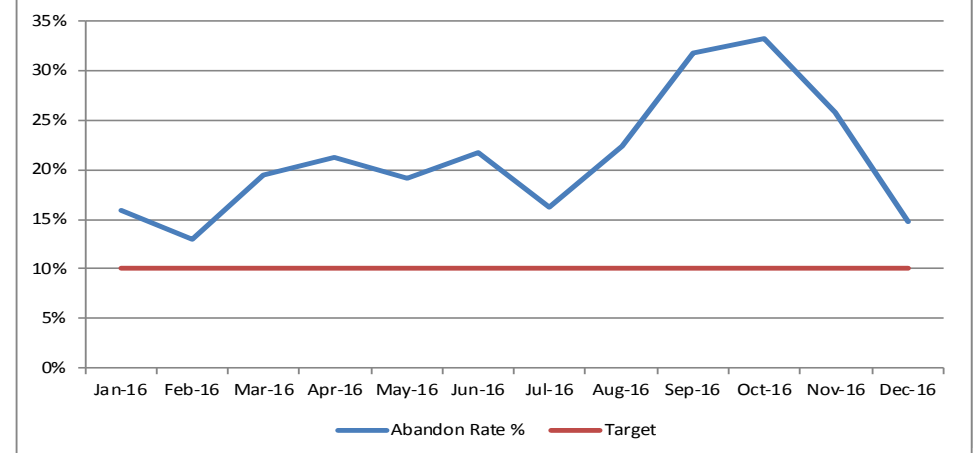
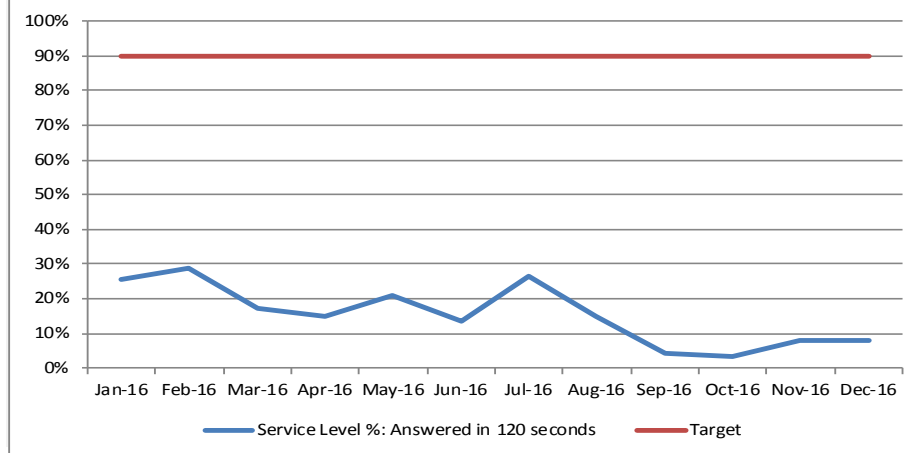
**Average Handling Time**



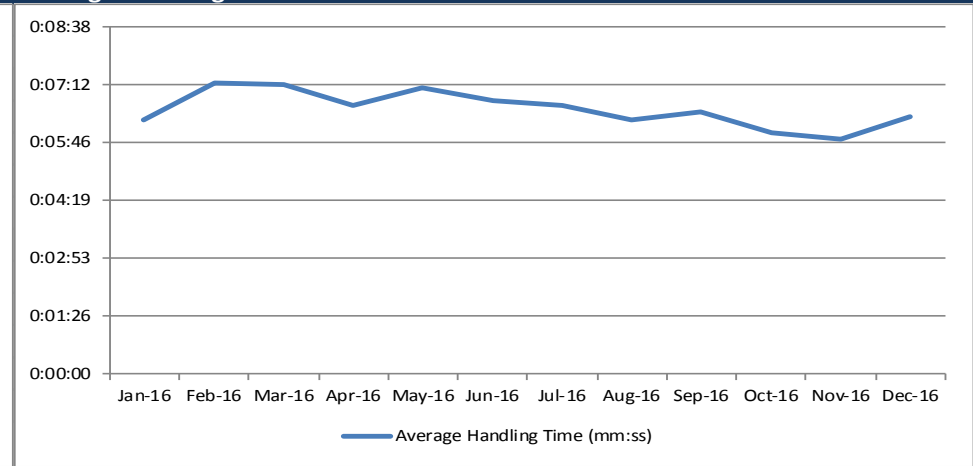
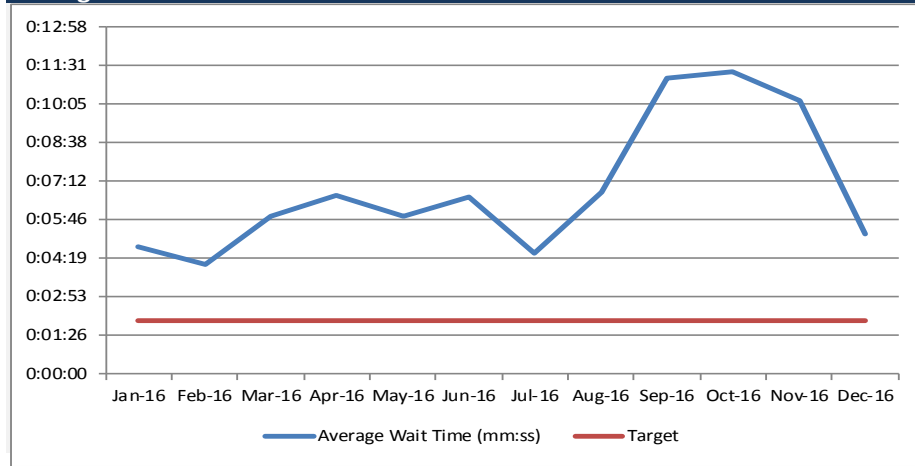
58

Housing Options Tier 1	Jan-16	Feb-16	Mar-16	Apr-16	May-16	Jun-16	Jul-16	Aug-16	Sep-16	Oct-16	Nov-16	Dec-16
<b>Calls Offered</b>	3710	4086	4107	4112	3723	4227	3536	3966	3961	3749	3773	2624
Calls Answered	3122	3556	3307	3240	3009	3307	2963	3077	2700	2500	2799	2238
Calls Abandoned	588	530	800	872	714	920	573	889	1261	1249	974	386
Calls Redirected	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Abandon Rate %	16%	13%	19%	21%	19%	22%	16%	22%	32%	33%	26%	15%
Service Level %: Answered in 120 seconds	26%	29%	17%	15%	21%	14%	26%	15%	4%	3%	8%	8%
Average Wait Time (mm:ss)	0:04:46	0:04:06	0:05:53	0:06:40	0:05:53	0:06:36	0:04:30	0:06:48	0:11:03	0:11:18	0:10:11	00:05:13
Average Handling Time (mm:ss)	0:06:20	0:07:15	0:07:13	0:06:41	0:07:08	0:06:49	0:06:40	0:06:20	0:06:32	0:05:59	0:05:51	00:06:25

**Service Level: % of Calls Answered within 120 seconds**      **Abandonment Rate**

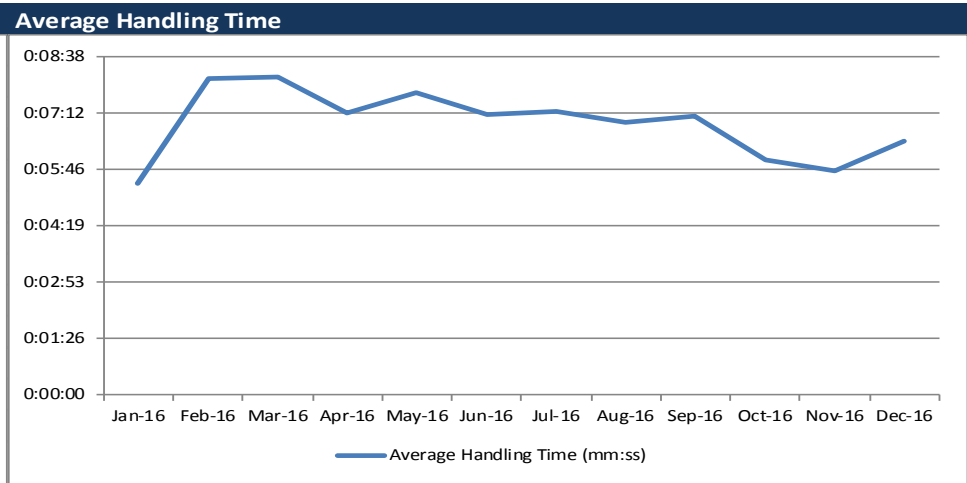
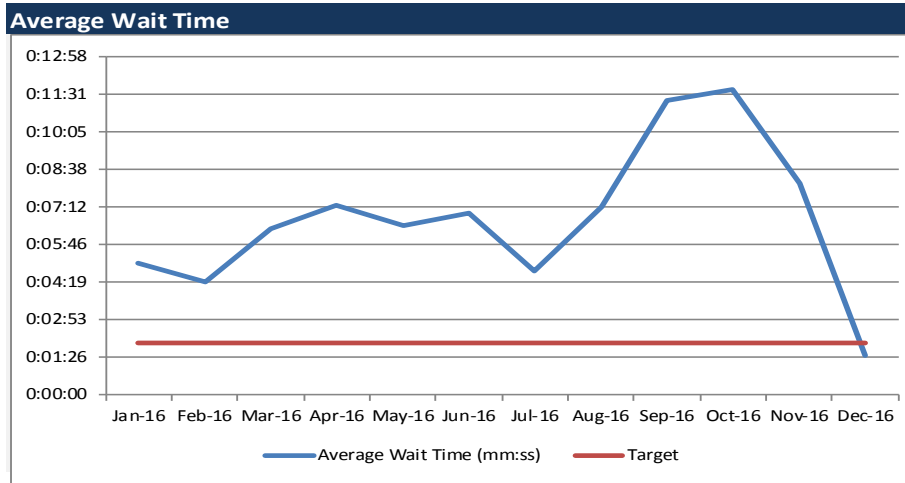
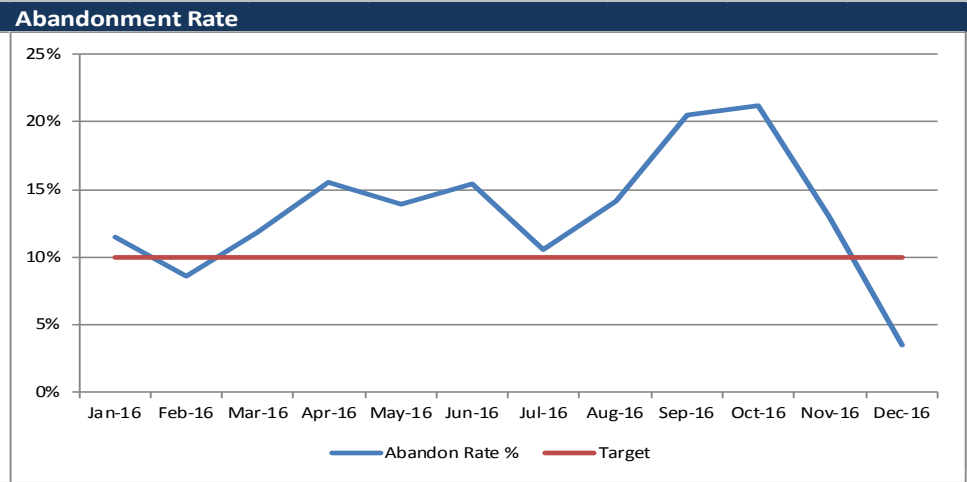
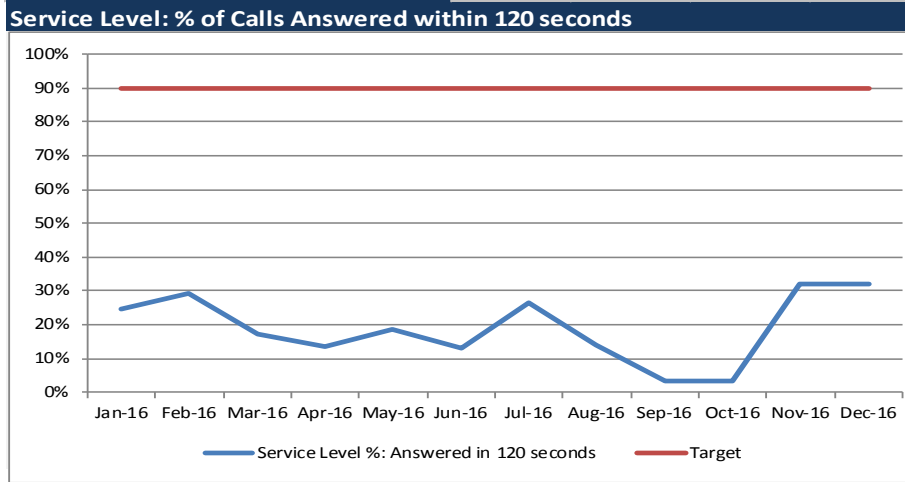


**Average Wait Time**      **Average Handling Time**



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Housing Options Tier 2	Jan-16	Feb-16	Mar-16	Apr-16	May-16	Jun-16	Jul-16	Aug-16	Sep-16	Oct-16	Nov-16	Dec-16
<b>Calls Offered</b>	1942	1878	1872	1645	1656	1658	1684	1992	1914	1882	1642	1149
Calls Answered	1719	1717	1651	1389	1426	1403	1507	1711	1522	1484	1428	1109
Calls Abandoned	223	161	221	256	230	255	177	281	392	398	214	40
Calls Redirected	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Abandon Rate %	11%	9%	12%	16%	14%	15%	11%	14%	20%	21%	13%	3%
Service Level %: Answered in 120 seconds	25%	29%	17%	14%	18%	13%	26%	14%	3%	3%	32%	32%
Average Wait Time (mm:ss)	0:05:03	0:04:21	0:06:21	0:07:15	0:06:30	0:06:57	0:04:44	0:07:14	0:11:18	0:11:41	0:08:08	00:01:29
Average Handling Time (mm:ss)	0:05:24	0:08:06	0:08:08	0:07:12	0:07:44	0:07:11	0:07:16	0:06:57	0:07:08	0:06:01	0:05:43	00:06:29



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## HOUSING FACE 2 FACE COMMENTARY

Within the Customer Service Centre (CSC) Granby Street visitor numbers for Housing related queries are recorded under 3 Services. They are Housing, Housing Options Appointments and Housing Options Emergency.

For the first 10 months of this financial year we have served a total of 1,757 customers at an average of 176 per month. For November we served a total of 150 customers and a further 93 in December.

For the same periods of measures, both Average Waiting Time and Average Transaction Time have decreased. For the Housing and Housing Options Appointments Service Queues the decreases for Average Waiting times were dramatic at over 50%.

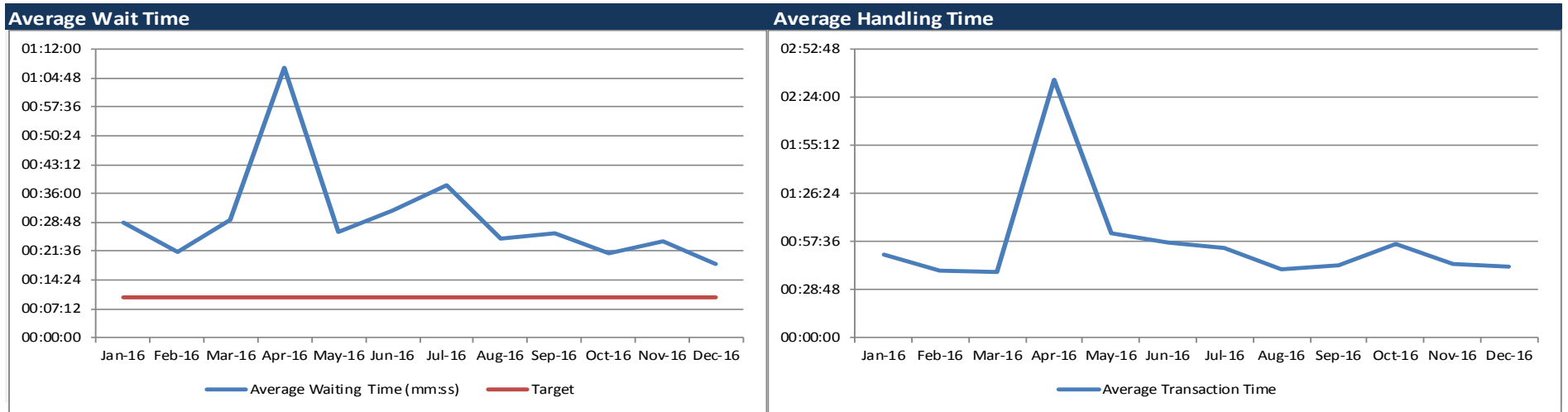
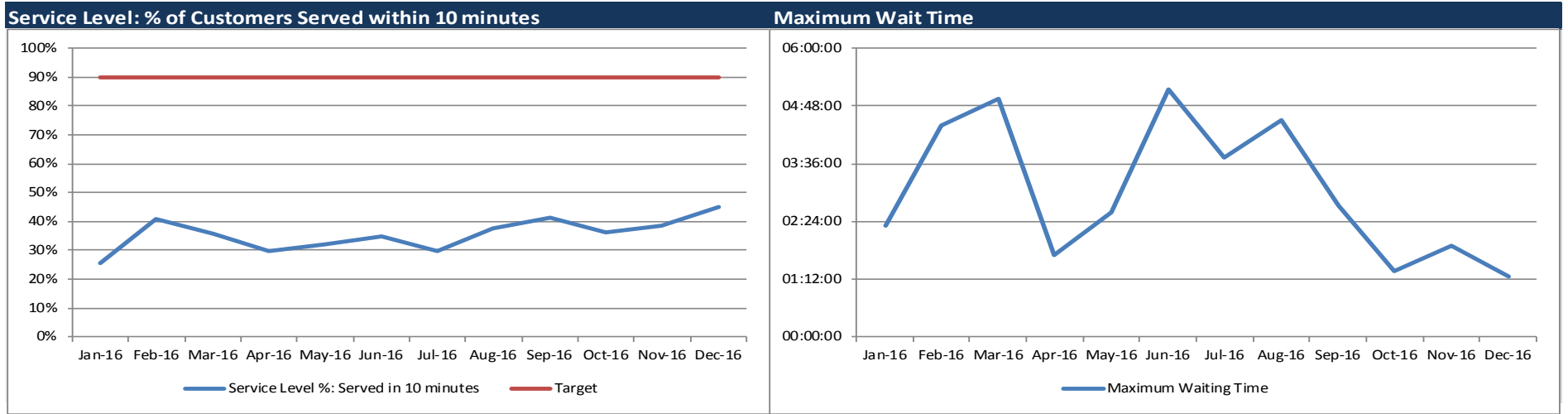
Our Satellite Offices are now closed but for the first 6 months of the financial year they served a further 387 customers.

Satellite Offices	Served Apr-Sept
Housing Management	160
Repairs	26
Keys Fobs	5
Housing Appointment Arrivals	3
Housing Options	4
Housing Applications	40
HomeChoice	1
Housing Rents	127
Other Housing	21

From October these Customers have had to visit the CSC-Granby Street for their Face 2 Face Housing Services queries. At present this has not increased visitor numbers to any great extent.

The CSC SLA for % Served within 10 minutes is 90%. For the first 10 months the average % was 34% which increased to 39% for November. December has seen further improvement with an SLA of 45%.

Housing Combined	Jan-16	Feb-16	Mar-16	Apr-16	May-16	Jun-16	Jul-16	Aug-16	Sep-16	Oct-16	Nov-16	Dec-16
Arrived	196	182	199	213	172	210	176	217	183	152	152	95
Served	187	176	165	193	159	192	161	206	174	144	150	93
Average Waiting Time (mm:ss)	00:28:35	00:21:15	00:29:26	01:07:28	00:26:27	00:31:43	00:38:09	00:24:50	00:25:58	00:20:56	00:24:03	00:18:30
Maximum Waiting Time	02:18:30	04:24:16	04:57:15	01:41:42	02:34:38	05:08:58	03:43:59	04:30:51	02:43:20	01:22:38	01:53:54	01:15:45
Average Transaction Time	00:50:03	00:39:48	00:38:57	02:34:19	01:02:40	00:56:34	00:53:45	00:41:06	00:42:58	00:56:26	00:43:51	00:42:31
Service Level %: Served in 10 minutes	26%	41%	36%	30%	32%	35%	30%	37%	41%	36%	39%	45%

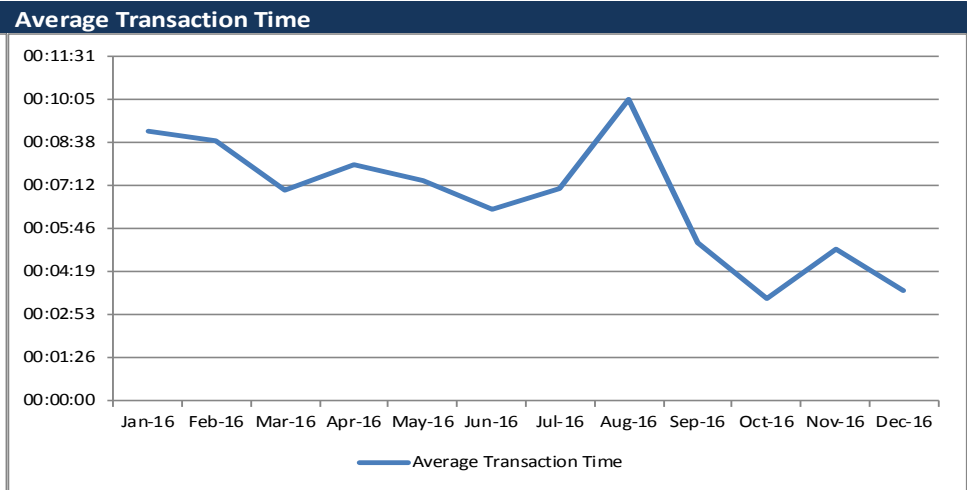
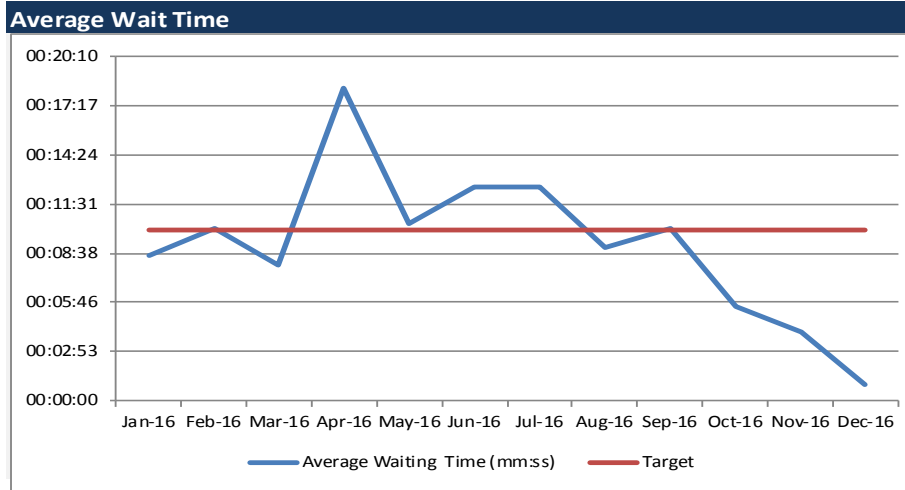
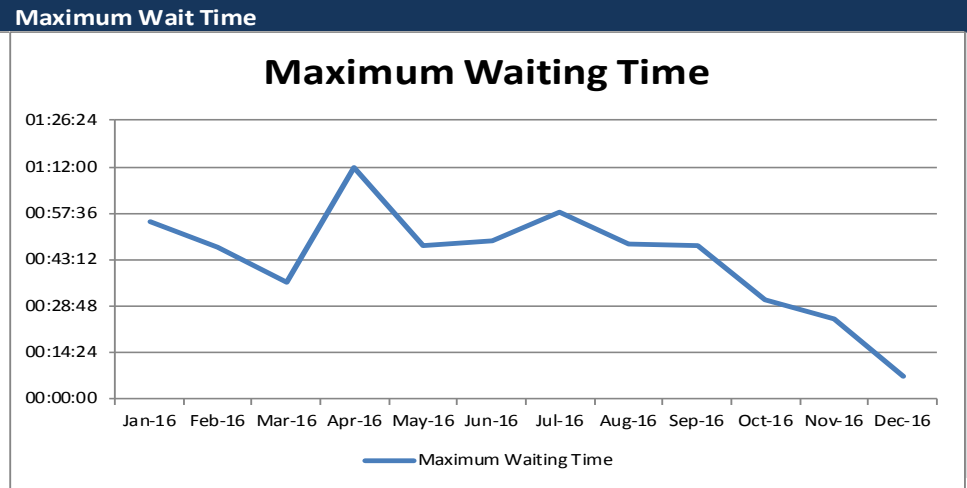
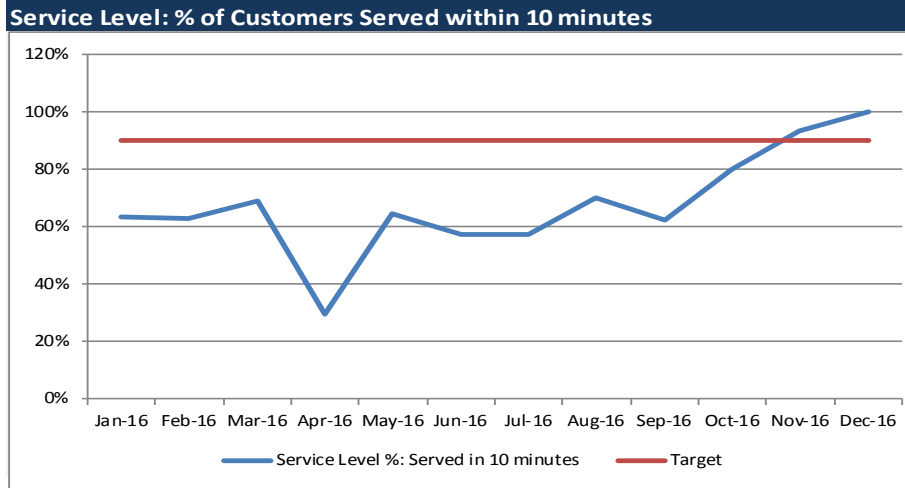


62

BREAKDOWN BY QUEUES

63

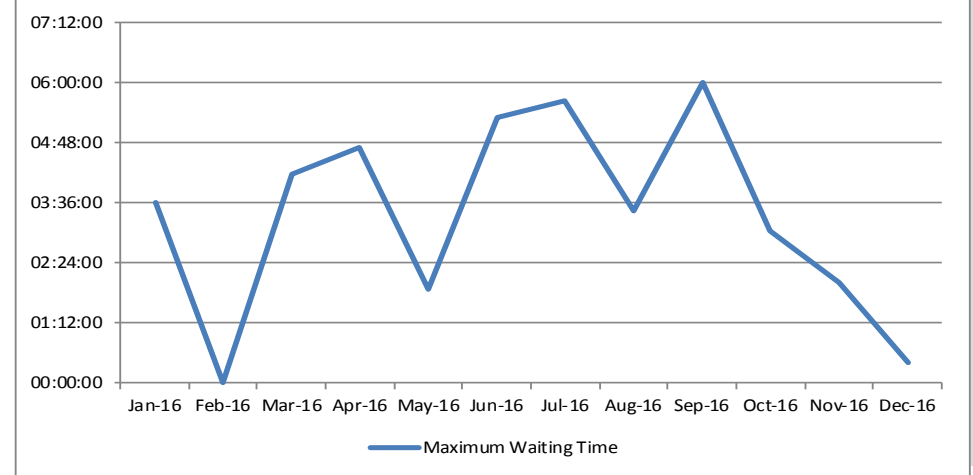
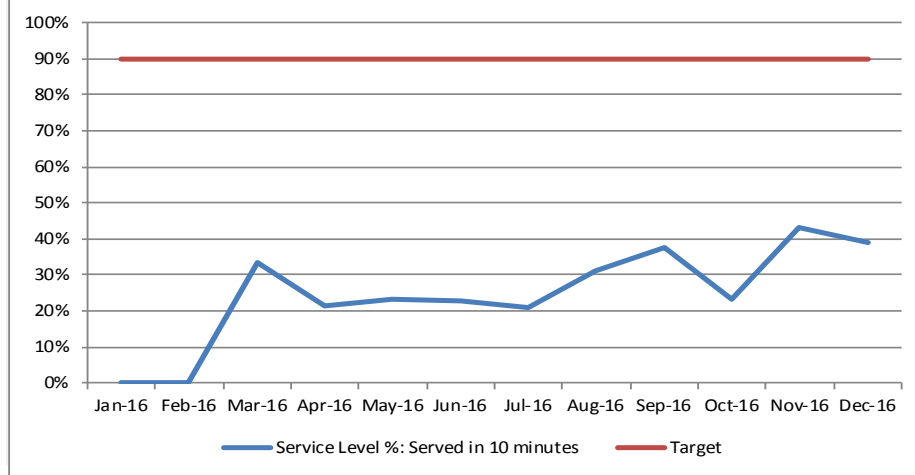
Housing	Jan-16	Feb-16	Mar-16	Apr-16	May-16	Jun-16	Jul-16	Aug-16	Sep-16	Oct-16	Nov-16	Dec-16
Arrived	43	61	50	38	33	48	36	40	36	13	15	15
Served	41	59	45	34	28	47	33	37	32	10	15	15
Average Waiting Time (mm:ss)	00:08:33	00:10:05	00:07:59	00:18:19	00:10:22	00:12:29	00:12:33	00:09:00	00:10:05	00:05:30	00:04:03	00:00:55
Maximum Waiting Time	00:55:10	00:47:12	00:36:18	01:11:40	00:47:34	00:48:49	00:57:50	00:47:51	00:47:39	00:30:38	00:24:59	00:06:46
Average Transaction Time	00:09:02	00:08:42	00:07:03	00:07:53	00:07:23	00:06:23	00:07:05	00:10:04	00:05:17	00:03:26	00:05:06	00:03:41
Service Level %: Served in 10 minutes	63%	63%	69%	29%	64%	57%	58%	70%	63%	80%	93%	100%



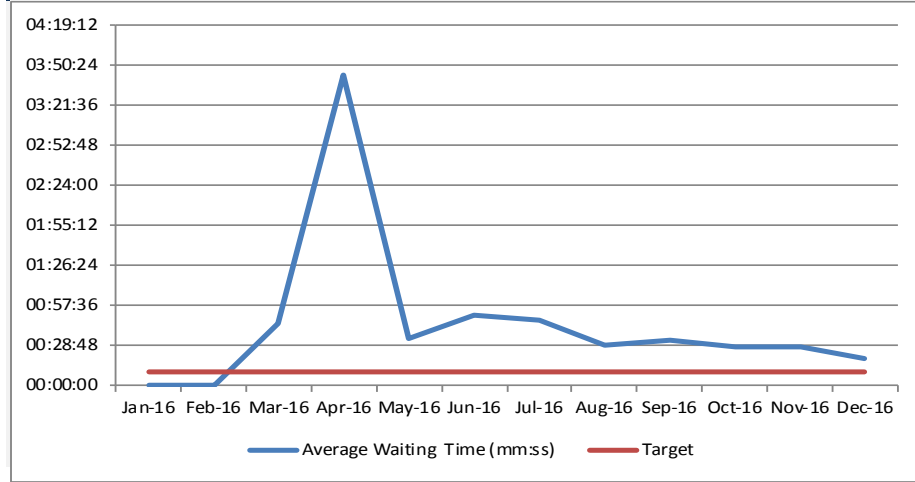
64

Housing Options Appointment	Jan-16	Feb-16	Mar-16	Apr-16	May-16	Jun-16	Jul-16	Aug-16	Sep-16	Oct-16	Nov-16	Dec-16
Arrived	4	0	10	54	33	66	95	114	68	63	45	32
Served	0	0	3	42	30	57	86	109	64	60	44	31
Average Waiting Time (mm:ss)	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:44:02	03:43:16	00:34:21	00:50:21	00:47:26	00:28:50	00:32:38	00:27:16	00:27:22	00:19:40
Maximum Waiting Time	03:36:59	00:00:00	04:11:13	04:41:41	01:51:55	05:17:35	05:37:44	03:27:01	06:00:06	03:01:21	02:01:17	00:23:21
Average Transaction Time	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:11:13	03:08:45	00:38:40	00:56:13	00:47:14	00:48:12	00:48:42	01:04:10	00:38:38	00:53:13
Service Level %: Served in 10 minutes	0%	0%	33%	21%	23%	23%	21%	31%	38%	23%	43%	39%

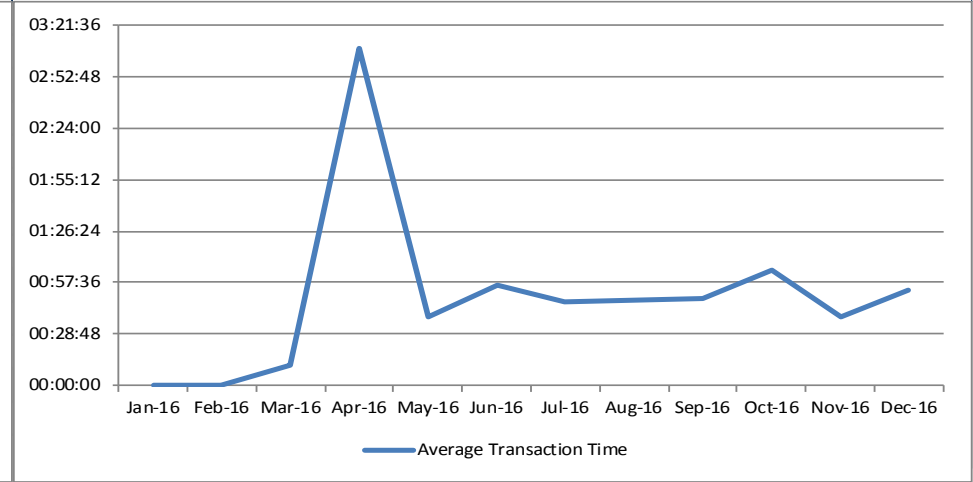
**Service Level: % of Customers Served within 10 minutes**      **Maximum Wait Time**



**Average Wait Time**



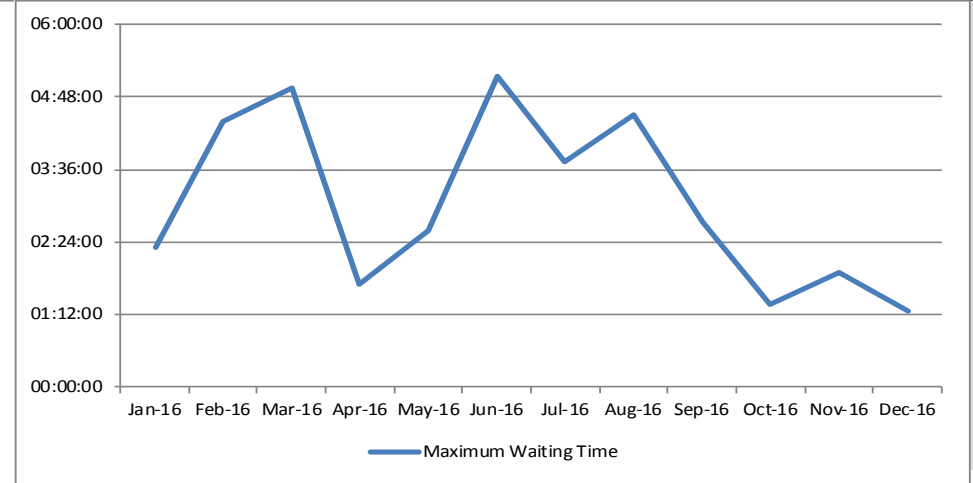
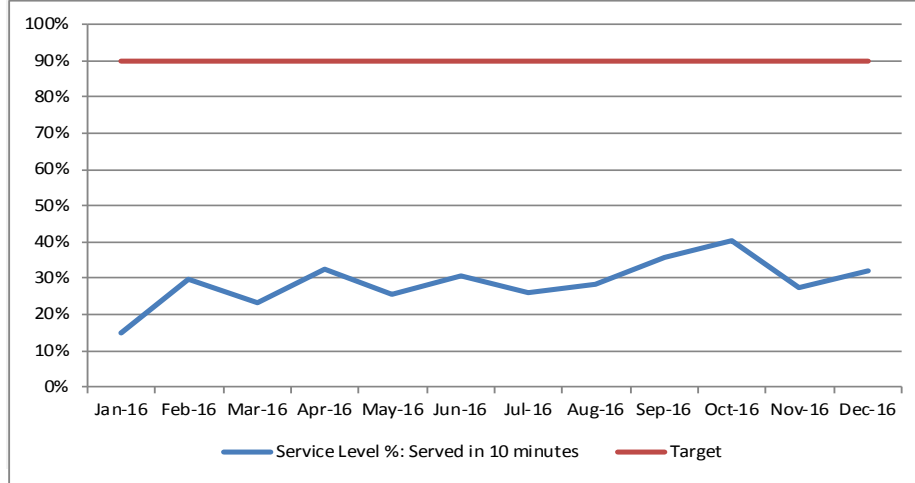
**Average Handling Time**



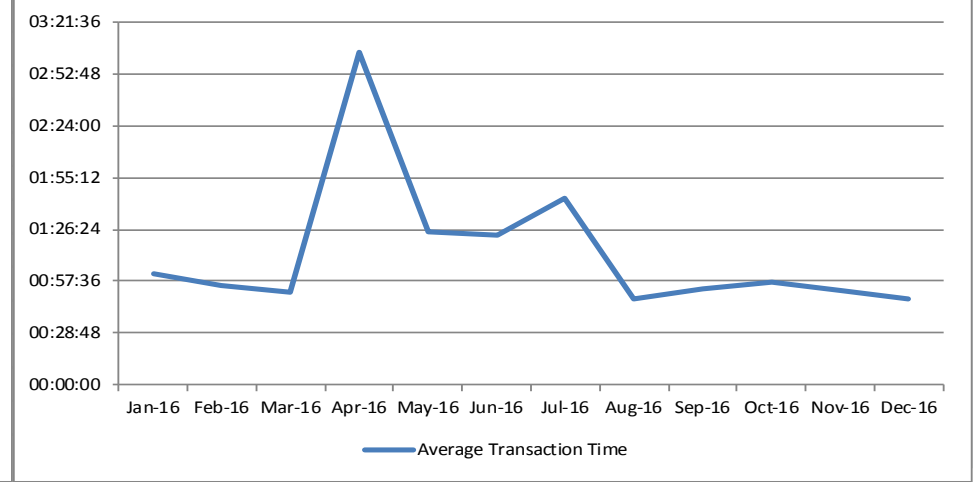
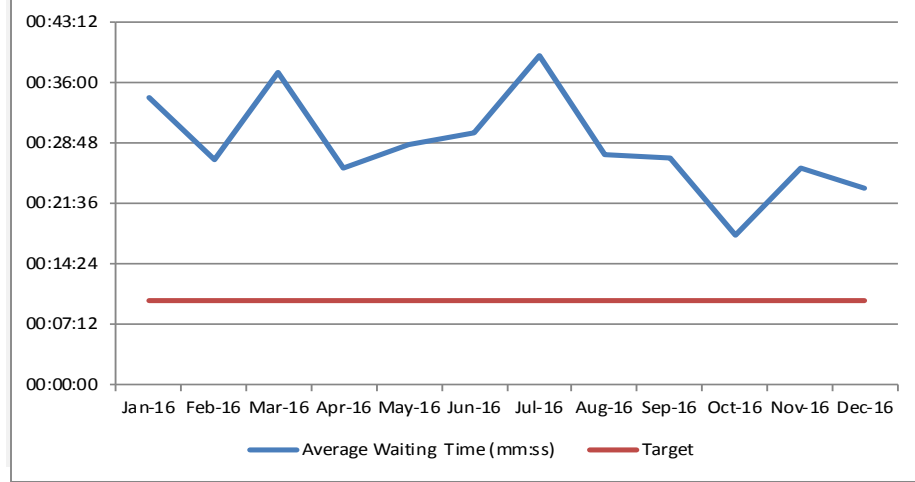
65

Housing Options Emergency	Jan-16	Feb-16	Mar-16	Apr-16	May-16	Jun-16	Jul-16	Aug-16	Sep-16	Oct-16	Nov-16	Dec-16
Arrived	149	121	139	121	106	96	45	63	79	76	92	48
Served	146	117	117	117	101	88	42	60	78	74	91	47
Average Waiting Time (mm:ss)	00:34:12	00:26:53	00:37:19	00:25:49	00:28:33	00:29:56	00:39:16	00:27:20	00:27:01	00:17:54	00:25:45	00:23:21
Maximum Waiting Time	02:18:30	04:24:16	04:57:15	01:41:42	02:34:38	05:08:58	03:43:59	04:30:51	02:43:20	01:22:38	01:53:54	01:15:45
Average Transaction Time	01:01:34	00:55:29	00:51:56	03:04:31	01:25:07	01:23:35	01:43:44	00:47:19	00:53:43	00:57:19	00:52:46	00:47:52
Service Level %: Served in 10 minutes	15%	30%	23%	32%	26%	31%	26%	28%	36%	41%	27%	32%

**Service Level: % of Customers Served within 10 minutes**      **Maximum Wait Time**



**Average Wait Time**      **Average Handling Time**



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## **Housing Scrutiny Commission**

**Commission Meeting 30 January 2017**

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**Review of the Housing Register /  
Housing Allocations Policy  
Feedback of the Consultation Exercise**

Assistant Mayor for Housing: Cllr Andy Connelly  
Lead Director: Chris Burgin

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**City Mayor**  
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# City Mayor

## Useful information

■ Ward(s) affected: ALL

■ Report authors:

Kanwaljit Basra – Housing Register & Allocations Team Leader, Housing Options Service, ext. 37-1745

Caroline Carpendale – Head of Service, ext. 37-1701

Chris Burgin – Director of Housing, ext. 37-5143

■ Report version number: V1

## 1. Summary

- 1.1 To provide feedback to the Housing Scrutiny Commission on the consultation exercise in relation to the proposals that were contained in the report on the 'Review of the Housing Register / Housing Allocations Policy' that was presented to the Housing Scrutiny Commission on 10th October 2016. (Appendix A)
- 1.2 Local Authorities are required to consult and seek the views of Registered Social Housing Providers and it is also good practice to seek views of all those who may be affected by, or have an interest in, the way social housing is allocated.
- 1.3 An online consultation exercise for a 6 week period that ran from 11th November – 23rd December 2016 has now been completed. (Appendix B)
- 1.4 The online consultation provided 47 responses to the proposals although not all responded to each individual proposal.
- 1.5 Overall the range of responses was between 51% - 70% stating that the changes would have either a positive effect or no effect upon them compared with 4% - 34% of the respondents who stated the proposals would have a negative effect on them.
- 1.6 The full results of the consultation are attached at Appendix B.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended the Housing Scrutiny Commission considers the responses



from the consultation exercise and provides feedback to Executive.

### **3. Financial, legal and other implications**

#### **3.1 Financial implications – Peter Coles - Principal Accountant**

Indicative savings are likely due to proposed efficiencies in the reduction of the number of applicants on the register, but further work will be needed to quantify how much and this will be done if any proposals are implemented.

#### **3.2 Legal implications – Jeremy Rainbow – Principal Lawyer (Litigation)**

Section 166A(13) of the Housing Act 1996 obliges a local housing authority to consult with every private registered provider of social housing and registered social landlord with which it has nomination arrangements before making an alteration to its allocation scheme that reflects a major change of policy.

In framing its housing allocation policy the Council must secure that reasonable preference is given to:

- (a) People who are homeless;
- (b) People who are owed a duty by any local housing authority under homelessness legislation;
- (c) People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing, or living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- (d) People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds;
- (e) People who need to move to a particular locality within the district, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or others; and
- (f) Certain former members of the armed services.

#### **3.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications – Mark Jeffcote, Senior Environmental Consultant**

There are no climate change implications associated with this report.

#### **3.4 Equalities Implications - Irene Kszyk, Corporate Equalities Lead**

Our Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to consider the impacts of any proposed changes to our policies or practice to those affected by these changes, the protected characteristics of those affected, and for any adverse impacts, mitigating actions that reduce or remove those impacts.

The proposed changes for the most part maintain the current housing allocation policy's top 3 band prioritisation of housing need, adding a new Band 2 criteria for insanitary or 1unsatisfactory accommodation and increasing prioritisation of the need for sheltered accommodation (people over the age of 50) from band 4 to band 3.

The proposal suggests deletion of the following criteria regarding housing circumstances:

Band 3 criteria of 'single no fixed abode' - this was a category that was never used as intended as there is also an existing Band 3 'Overcrowding' category for people lacking a bedroom. Singles who are NFA will be allocated this Band 3 category.

Band 4 criteria of sharing facilities but having own bedroom – this group of people (i.e. living with family or friends) are suitably housed in regards to the number of bedrooms they have use of but have to share facilities such as the kitchen or bathroom. If their circumstances change for example they are asked to leave, then an assessment is undertaken to verify their change of circumstances. This may result in them being awarded a higher Band 2 priority as they would be regarded as living in insecure accommodation.

Band 4 criteria of needing to be in a particular area of Leicester for emotional support from family, friends or others – there is already within the policy, a Band 3 category for people who need to move on care and support grounds where hardship would be caused if they did not move. This category has been extended to include those that need to move due to medical or welfare grounds with a slighter higher verification of proof required than that was previously required in Band 4.

Band 5 for those whose housing circumstances are not in any of the bands and are therefore not in need for housing in keeping with the intention of the housing allocations policy.

The proposed deletion of bands 4 and 5 are likely to affect all protected characteristics. Band 4 applicants are considered to have very low housing need and who would not realistically achieve an offer of accommodation. Band 5 applicants have no identified housing needs or are considered to be adequately housed. On this basis, no mitigating actions for band 5 are required.

#### **4. Background information and other papers:**

- Leicester City Council Housing Allocations Policy
- Allocation of accommodation: Guidance for local housing authorities in England, June 2012
- Providing social housing for local people: Statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England, December 2013
- The Housing and Planning Act 2016
- Benchmarking with other local authorities

#### **5. Summary of Appendices**

Appendix A	Review of the Housing Register / Housing Allocations Policy Report
Appendix B	Online Consultation Feedback

# Housing Scrutiny Commission

## Commission Meeting 10<sup>th</sup> October 2016

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Review of the Housing Register /  
Housing Allocations Policy

Assistant Mayor for Housing: Cllr Andy Connelly  
Lead Director: Chris Burgin

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Lead Assistant Mayor: Cllr Andy Connelly  
Lead Director: Chris Burgin

## Useful information

■ Ward(s) affected: All

■ Report authors:

Kanwaljit Basra – Housing Register & Allocations Team Leader, Housing Options Service, ext. 37-1745

Caroline Carpendale – Head of Service, ext. 37-1701

Chris Burgin – Director of Housing, ext. 37-5143

### 1. Summary

- 1.1 Executive seeks the comments of the Housing Scrutiny Commission on the proposals to carry out a review of the Housing Register and the Allocations Policy.
- 1.2 This report considers:-
  - 1.2.1 Communities and Local Government issue guidance to housing authorities requiring them to give consideration to reviewing their existing housing allocation policies. The Government has made it clear they expect social homes to go to people who genuinely need and deserve them.
  - 1.2.2 Furthermore the introduction of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 also needs to be considered as it will impact on the Council's Housing Allocations Policy in regards to the mandatory use of fixed term tenancies and 'pay to stay' for higher income local authority tenants.
  - 1.2.3 The Council's Housing Register is a list of qualifying people who have applied for council housing and nominations from the housing associations. A person's priority position on the Housing Register is determined by their housing need.
  - 1.2.4 The Housing Act 1996 section 166A(3) requires that an allocations policy must be framed to give reasonable preference to certain categories of people.
  - 1.2.5 The rules and the procedures that sets out who can apply to join the Housing Register along with their relative priority are governed by the Council's Housing Allocations Policy. The Housing Allocations Policy is subject to change either through the issuing of statutory guidance or by a change in local priorities agreed by elected members. Any changes to the Housing Allocations Policy may mean a person's position on the list can also be affected.
  - 1.2.6 The proposed changes will give greater preference to people with the most housing need who do not have the resources to explore other housing options.
  - 1.2.7 The Housing Options Service have a duty to provide advice and assistance to all citizens of Leicester in relation to the housing options available to them, including advice about the private rented sector.

## Recommendations:

1. To consult with stakeholders and seek the views of the Housing Scrutiny Commission on the following proposed changes to the Housing Allocations Policy:
2. To look to reduce the numbers on the Housing Register and reconfigure the priority order to ensure that the Register is fit for purpose and primarily addresses those in the most housing need.
3. To reduce the administrative burden of managing a Housing Register of 11149 applicants (as at 01/04/2016) of whom circa 1479 have a realistic chance of achieving an offer of accommodation. This is based on the number of lettings for 2015-2016.
4. We need to ensure we manage customer expectations realistically at the earliest opportunity of them applying for assistance to fully inform them of their housing options.

## It is proposed:

- To remove existing households from the Housing Register who have no or little housing need.
  - To remove existing households who own their homes except where there are over-riding circumstances of need.
  - To remove those households who following assessment have the financial resources to secure alternative accommodation.
  - To limit the qualifying income threshold for higher income households.
  - To reconfigure the overcrowding rules.
  - To reconfigure the under-occupation rules.
  - To give priority to people living in insanitary & unsatisfactory housing
  - To reconfigure the bedroom rules to the government bedroom standard.
  - To enable applicants the choice to apply for accommodation with one less bedroom than their normal eligibility.
  - To enable families with 1 child aged 2 years and under the choice to apply for 1 and 2 bedroom accommodation.
5. To report on the results of the consultation to the Executive for a decision on the proposed changes.

## **2. Current Policy**

- 2.1 All households who wish to be offered Council or Housing Association homes are listed on the Housing Register except where legislation or policy prohibit

(e.g. certain persons from abroad and in cases where there is unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant of the authority).

- 2.2 The Policy is used to both allocate the Council's own dwellings and to make nominations to housing associations.
- 2.3 Leicester City Council's current housing allocations scheme is a banding scheme where households are assessed and placed in 1 of 4 bands depending on their current housing circumstances and need (see Appendix 3).
- 2.4 Band 1 is for those households who have been assessed as having the highest priority for an allocation of accommodation, and then on a sliding scale of priority to Band 4 who are, those households who are considered to be in low housing need.
- 2.5 We now have strong links with the private rented sector and many people coming to the Council for advice are helped through the LeicesterLet and Rent deposit schemes.

### 3. Statistics from the Housing Register

- 3.1 As at 1st April 2016 the number of households on the Housing Register were:

<b>BANDS</b>	<b>Total</b>
BAND 1	722 (7%)
BAND 2	2821 (25%)
BAND 3	2818 (25%)
BAND 4	2191 (20%)
BAND 5*	2597 (23%)
<b>Applications</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>11149</b>

\*With effect from 1st May 2014 no new applicants are accepted into Band 5

- 3.2 Lettings from the Housing Register 2015 – 2016 (LCC/Housing Association/HomeCome)

<b>BANDS</b>	<b>Total</b>
BAND 1	342 (23%)
BAND 2	874 (59%)
BAND 3	171 (12%)
BAND 4	86 (6%)
BAND 5	6 (<1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1479</b>

Appendix 2 sets out the total lettings for the last 10 years and highlights the decrease in the number of lettings which places pressure upon the Housing Register and managing the expectations.

Whilst there was an increase in lettings in 2014-2015, this is regarded as a one off due to the large number of new build accommodation that became available that year.

It is projected that going forward up to 800 properties p.a. may be lost to the to Right to Buy which places further pressure upon the Housing Register and the need to ensure as far as possible that available properties are allocated to those most in need.

#### **4. Proposed Changes to the Housing Allocations Policy**

4.1 Appendix 1 lists the proposals along with the rationale for the changes.

#### **5. Options**

There are two options available:

##### 5.1 Option 1

To maintain the status quo and make no changes to the published Housing Allocations Policy.

- Guidance states social housing should go to those households in the most need and the Council's Housing Allocations Policy should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that this is achieved. The last full review was in 2010 when the Housing Allocations Policy changed from a points based scheme to a banding scheme.
- Currently the Housing Allocations Policy is considered to be complex and not easy to understand. This is reflected by the high number of enquiries that are received from both elected members and the general public.
- The introduction of significant changes to the policy in May 2014 and August 2015 were not applied retrospectively. This has added to the complexity and different rules for applicants based upon their date of application. This makes the policy harder to understand e.g. existing homeowners are allowed to remain on the Register whereas new applicants who are homeowners are not allowed to join.

or

##### 5.2 Option 2

To consult on some or all of the proposals outlined in the report and subject to the response to consultation, adopt the relevant changes to the published Housing Allocations Policy.

- The review will ensure that the policy addresses those most in need as well as helping the policy be more transparent, simplified and easier to understand by all.

- It will better manage customer expectations.
- It will achieve efficiency savings in the management of the Housing Register.

## **6. Consultation**

- 6.1 As the proposals to change the Housing Allocations Policy are considered to be major changes there is a statutory requirement that we seek the views of Registered Social Housing Providers which have nomination agreements with the authority but it is also good practice that all those who may be affected by, or have an interest in, the way social housing is allocated are also consulted. Therefore we propose to consult with all parties who may be affected by, or have an interest in the Council's Housing Allocations Policy.

## **7. Financial, legal and other implications**

### **7.1 Financial implications – Pete Coles Principal Accountant (Housing)**

Indicative savings are likely due to proposed efficiencies in the reduction of the number of applicants on the register, but further work will be needed to quantify how much and this will be done if any proposals are implemented.

### **7.2 Legal Implications – Jeremy Rainbow, Principal Lawyer (Litigation)**

Section 166A(13) of the Housing Act 1996 obliges a local housing authority to consult with every private registered provider of social housing and registered social landlord with which it has nomination arrangements before making an alteration to its allocation scheme that reflects a major change of policy.

In framing its housing allocation policy the Council must secure that reasonable preference is given to:

- (g) People who are homeless;
- (h) People who are owed a duty by any local housing authority under homelessness legislation;
- (i) People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing, or living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- (j) People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds;
- (k) People who need to move to a particular locality within the district, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or others; and
- (l) Certain former members of the armed services.

### **7.3 Equality Impact Assessment – Iren Kszyk, Corporate Equalities Lead**

Our Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to consider the impacts of any proposed changes to our policies or practice to those affected by these changes, the protected characteristics of those affected, and for any adverse impacts, mitigating actions that reduce or remove those impacts.



The proposed changes for the most part maintain the current housing allocation policy's top 3 band prioritisation of housing need, adding a new Band 2 criteria for insanitary or unsatisfactory accommodation and increasing prioritisation of the need for sheltered accommodation (people over the age of 50) from band 4 to band 3.

The proposal suggests deletion of the following criteria regarding housing circumstances:

Band 3 criteria of 'single no fixed abode' - this was a category that was never used as intended as there is also an existing Band 3 'Overcrowding' category for people lacking a bedroom. Singles who are NFA will be allocated this Band 3 category.

Band 4 criteria of sharing facilities but having own bedroom – this group of people (i.e. living with family or friends) are suitably housed in regards to the number of bedrooms they have use of but have to share facilities such as the kitchen or bathroom. If their circumstances change for example they are asked to leave, then an assessment is undertaken to verify their change of circumstances. This may result in them being awarded a higher Band 2 priority as they would be regarded as living in insecure accommodation.

Band 4 criteria of needing to be in a particular area of Leicester for emotional support from family, friends or others – there is already within the policy, a Band 3 category for people who need to move on care and support grounds where hardship would be caused if they did not move. This category has been extended to include those that need to move due to medical or welfare grounds with a slighter higher verification of proof required than that was previously required in Band 4.

Band 5 for those whose housing circumstances are not in any of the bands and are therefore not in need for housing in keeping with the intention of the housing allocations policy.

The proposed deletion of bands 4 and 5 are likely to affect all protected characteristics. Band 4 applicants are considered to have very low housing need and who would not realistically achieve an offer of accommodation. Band 5 applicants have no identified housing needs or are considered to be adequately housed. On this basis, no mitigating actions for band 5 are required.

**7.4 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications – Mark Jeffcote, Senior Environmental Consultant**

There are no climate change implications associated with this report.

**8. Background information and other papers:**

- Leicester City Council Housing Allocations Policy
- Allocation of accommodation: Guidance for local housing authorities in England, June 2012

- Providing social housing for local people: Statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England, December 2013
- The Housing and Planning Act 2016
- Benchmarking with other local authorities

**9. Summary of appendices:**

- Appendix 1 – Proposed changes to the Housing Allocations Policy
- Appendix 2 – Lettings from the Housing Register 2006 – 2016
- Appendix 3 – Current banding scheme
- Appendix 4 – Proposed banding scheme
- Appendix 5 – Benchmarking with neighbouring local authorities

**10. 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)?**

No

**11. Is this a “key decision”?**

Yes. This is because these proposals affect all wards of the City

## Proposed Changes to the Housing Allocations Policy

	Proposed Change	What we do now	What we're proposing	Rationale for changes and the potential impact
1.	<b>Removal of existing Band 5 applicants from the Housing Register</b>	<p>Since 1st May 2014, no new applications are accepted from those with no identified housing need or those who are considered to be adequately housed.</p> <p>As at 1st April 2016 there were 2597 households that remain on the Housing Register in Band 5 whose application dates precede 1st May 2014.</p>	<p>To remove all households in Band 5</p> <p>This would not require further external consultation as this was done when the decision was taken to not accept new applicants with no housing need.</p> <p><b>How?</b></p> <p>Written notification to all remaining applicants in Band 5 advising of their removal from the Housing Register with a right of appeal.</p>	<p>The change would remove circa 2597 households from the Housing Register. It would also remove the complexity of rules that are different due to the date the applicant applied. This will make the policy more easily understood.</p> <p>This will also make it easier to manage customer expectations as only people with an identified need to move will qualify to appear.</p> <p>Band 5 applicants are increasingly frustrated as there is little chance of them receiving an offer.</p> <p>Maintaining Band 5 applicants places an administrative burden on the service as applications have to be continued to be processed from people who are considered to be suitably housed.</p> <p>Removal of Band 5 applicants will reduce the administrative burden on the service and means resources can be more effectively utilised to assist those with a genuine need to move.</p> <p>There will be some financial savings as these applications will no longer</p>

	Proposed Change	What we do now	What we're proposing	Rationale for changes and the potential impact
				need to be processed and annual review letters sent.
2.	<b>Removal of Band 4 applicants from the Housing Register</b>	<p>Any applicant who is eligible to join the Housing Register and meets any of the following criteria will be placed in Band 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People who share facilities with other households but have their own bedroom</li> <li>• People who need to move to, or remain in, a particular area of Leicester to give or receive emotional support from family, friends or others in the community</li> <li>• People over the age of 50 years requesting 1 bedroom sheltered accommodation only</li> </ul> <p>As at 1st April 2016 there were 2191 households in Band 4.</p>	<p>To remove all households in Band 4 except those who are requesting sheltered housing as they will be given increased Band 3 priority.</p> <p>This will mean the Housing Register will just have 3 bands with circa 6766 households (see Appendix 4).</p> <p><b>How?</b></p> <p>Written notification to all applicants in Band 4 advising of their removal from the Housing Register with a right of appeal.</p> <p>Existing Band 4 applicants (405) requesting 1 bed sheltered housing will be moved to Band 3 as sheltered housing is readily available.</p>	<p>The change would remove circa 1786 households from the Housing Register.</p> <p>Band 4 applicants have very little chance of receiving an offer other than sheltered housing. There were 40 lettings of sheltered housing to Band 4 applicants.</p> <p>Removal of Band 4 applicants will reduce the administrative burden on the service and means resources can be more effectively utilised to assist those with a genuine need to move.</p> <p>There will be some financial savings as these applications will no longer need to be processed and annual review letters sent.</p>
3.	<b>Removal of existing owner occupiers from the Housing Register</b>	<p>Since 10th August 2015 owner occupiers no longer qualify to join the Housing Register unless there are extenuating circumstances.</p> <p>There are currently 287 households that remain on the Housing Register who are owner occupiers whose application date precedes 10th August 2015.</p>	<p>To review all owner occupiers on the Housing Register and remove those who do not have any exceptional circumstances to remain.</p> <p>This would not require further external consultation as this was done when the decision was taken to not accept owner occupiers onto the Housing Register.</p>	<p>The change would remove circa 287 owner-occupiers from the Housing Register.</p> <p>The change would also remove the complexity of rules that are different due to the date the applicant applied. This would make the policy more easily understood.</p> <p>There would also be equality in the transparency of the policy that all</p>

	Proposed Change	What we do now	What we're proposing	Rationale for changes and the potential impact														
			<p><b>How?</b></p> <p>Written notification to all remaining applicants who are owner occupiers advising of their removal from the Housing Register with a right of appeal.</p>	<p>owner occupiers are treated the same.</p> <p>As at 01/04/2016 the number of owner occupiers on the Housing Register:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Total</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>BAND 1</b></td> <td><b>16</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>BAND 2</b></td> <td><b>32</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>BAND 3</b></td> <td><b>23</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>BAND 4</b></td> <td><b>71</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>BAND 5</b></td> <td><b>145</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Grand Total</b></td> <td><b>287</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Total	<b>BAND 1</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>BAND 2</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>BAND 3</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>BAND 4</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>BAND 5</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>287</b>
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4.	<b>Removal of applicants with sufficient financial resources to secure alternative accommodation from the Housing Register</b>	Since 10th August 2015 households with a total income of £25k per year (single household) or £40k per year (joint households) or capital assets of over £50k are not allowed to join the Housing Register.	<p>To extend the rules to those with sufficient financial resources whose application date preceded 10th August 2015.</p> <p>This would not require further external consultation as this was done when the decision was taken to not accept people who had the financial resources to secure alternative accommodation onto the Housing Register.</p> <p><b>How?</b></p> <p>Written notification to all remaining applicants after review, advising there is now a threshold for earnings and savings and financial checks will</p>	<p>The change would remove the complexity of rules that are different due to the date the applicant applied. This would make the policy more easily understood.</p> <p>There would also be equality in the transparency of the policy that all applicants are treated the same.</p> <p>Removing existing applicants who exceed the financial thresholds may also help to reduce the number of council properties purchased under the Right to Buy scheme.</p> <p>Current rules allow any public sector tenant who has been a tenant for 3 or more years at any point to qualify to buy the home they currently live in</p>														

	Proposed Change	What we do now	What we're proposing	Rationale for changes and the potential impact
			be undertaken at point of offer.	if it is eligible for Right to Buy.  Qualifying tenants can currently get a 35% discount up to a maximum of 70% or £77,900 for a house.
5.	<b>To limit the qualifying income threshold to join the Housing Register to the level set under the 'pay to stay' limit in the Housing and Planning Act 2016</b>	Currently households who have an income of £40k per year or more do not qualify to join the Housing Register.	To reduce the income threshold to join the Housing Register to the level set under the 'pay to stay' limit in the Housing and Planning Act 2016, which is currently £31k per year.  Only taxable income (i.e. income received for work or through investments) will count towards the £31k per year threshold and does not include any benefits that applicants may receive.  <b>How?</b>  Checks will be made at the point of registration to the Housing Register and at the offer stage to ensure households are within the income threshold.	This would mean any household with a taxable income of £31k per year or more will not qualify to join the Housing Register. The income threshold will increase annually in line with Consumer Price Inflation.  'Pay to stay' means higher income households will be required to pay higher local authority rents than lower income families.
6.	<b>Reconfiguration of the overcrowding banding priorities</b>	Currently there are 3 different priorities given to people who are living in overcrowded conditions.  1. Band 2 'Severe Overcrowding' is awarded for those who are lacking 2 or more bedrooms. This also	Band 2 'Severe Overcrowding' is awarded to all tenants who are lacking 2 or more bedrooms or they are assessed as being statutory overcrowded.  <b>Band 2 'Families Living in 1 Bed Accommodation' is awarded to</b>	The removal of non-tenants will result in the number of households with Band 2 'Severe Overcrowding' priority reducing from 798 households to 444 households.  This better reflects the overcrowding position of tenants in the city.

	Proposed Change	What we do now	What we're proposing	Rationale for changes and the potential impact
		<p>includes people who are statutory overcrowded.</p> <p>2. Band 2 'Families Living in 1 Bed Accommodation' is awarded to families living in 1 bed accommodation with their children who need an additional bedroom.</p> <p>3. Band 3 'Overcrowding' is awarded to those who are lacking 1 bedroom.</p>	<p><b>families living in 1 bedroom accommodation with children 3 years and over.</b></p> <p>Band 3 'Overcrowding' is awarded to tenants who need 1 additional bedroom e.g. a family living in 2 bedroom accommodation needing 3 bedroom accommodation.</p> <p><b>How?</b> Any household identified on the Housing Register as being overcrowded will be re-assessed under the new rules and where there is any change to their priority they will be notified in writing.</p>	
7.	<b>Addition of a new banding priority to non-tenants who are living with others and do not have sufficient bedrooms for their own use</b>	<p>People who are non-tenants i.e. lodgers or living with friends or family are treated the same as tenants when assessing overcrowding.</p> <p>No checks are undertaken to verify or confirm the position of non-tenants joining the Housing Register and receiving this high priority.</p>	<p>Creation of a new Band 3 priority for people who are non-tenants who are living with others and do not have sufficient bedrooms for their own use.</p> <p><b>How?</b> Any applicant who is not a tenant and does not have exclusive use of bedrooms for their household will be placed in this band.</p> <p>Existing applicants who are non-tenants will be re-assessed under the new rules and where there is any change to their priority they will be notified in writing.</p>	<p>This would currently impact on 354 households who are non-tenants and awarded Band 2 'Severe Overcrowding' priority. They would be re-assessed to the new Band 3 priority.</p> <p>Non-tenants who have been given notice to leave or assessed as living in insecure accommodation will be considered for Band 2 'Insecure Accommodation' priority.</p> <p>Statutory homeless households will be re-housed in the private sector unless they fall in one of the exceptions in this category.</p>

	Proposed Change	What we do now	What we're proposing	Rationale for changes and the potential impact
8.	<b>Reconfiguration of the under-occupation banding priorities</b>	<p>Currently there are 3 different priorities given to social tenants who are under-occupying their homes.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Band 1 'Priority Under-occupation' is given to those social tenants who are giving up 3 bed accommodation to move to 1 bed accommodation and those giving up 2 bed accommodation to move to 1 bed accommodation.</li> <li>2. Band 1 'Tenants Incentive Scheme' is given to those social tenants giving up a large home with 4 or more bedrooms and moving to a home with 3 or fewer bedrooms.</li> <li>3. Band 2 'Under-occupation' is given to those social tenants giving up 3 bed accommodation to move to 2 bed accommodation.</li> </ol>	<p>To only have one Band 1 'Priority Under-occupation' category which is given to under-occupying social tenants who are giving up 2 or more bedrooms, those moving to 1 bed accommodation or any other social tenant who is affected by the bedroom tax following assessment.</p> <p>Band 2 is for under-occupying social tenants who do not meet the qualifying criteria for Band 1 'Priority Under-occupation'.</p> <p><b>How?</b> Any social tenant identified on the Housing Register as under-occupying will be re-assessed under the new rules and where there is any change to their priority they will be notified in writing.</p>	<p>This will make the policy on under-occupation clearer by only having one Band 1 priority as opposed to two Band 1 priorities.</p>
9.	<b>Addition of a new banding priority to people who are living in insanitary or unsatisfactory housing</b>	<p>Reasonable preference is currently given for this statutory requirement within a number of different priority bandings which includes statutory homelessness, management and access and health priorities.</p>	<p>Creation of a new Band 2 priority for people who are living in insanitary or unreasonable housing for example applicant does not have access to a bathroom or kitchen, or an inside toilet, or access to hot and cold water supplies, electricity, gas or adequate heating as confirmed by</p>	<p>There is a statutory requirement to give reasonable preference within the allocations scheme to people who are living in insanitary or unsatisfactory housing.</p> <p>This will remove incentives to apply as homeless and acknowledge the</p>

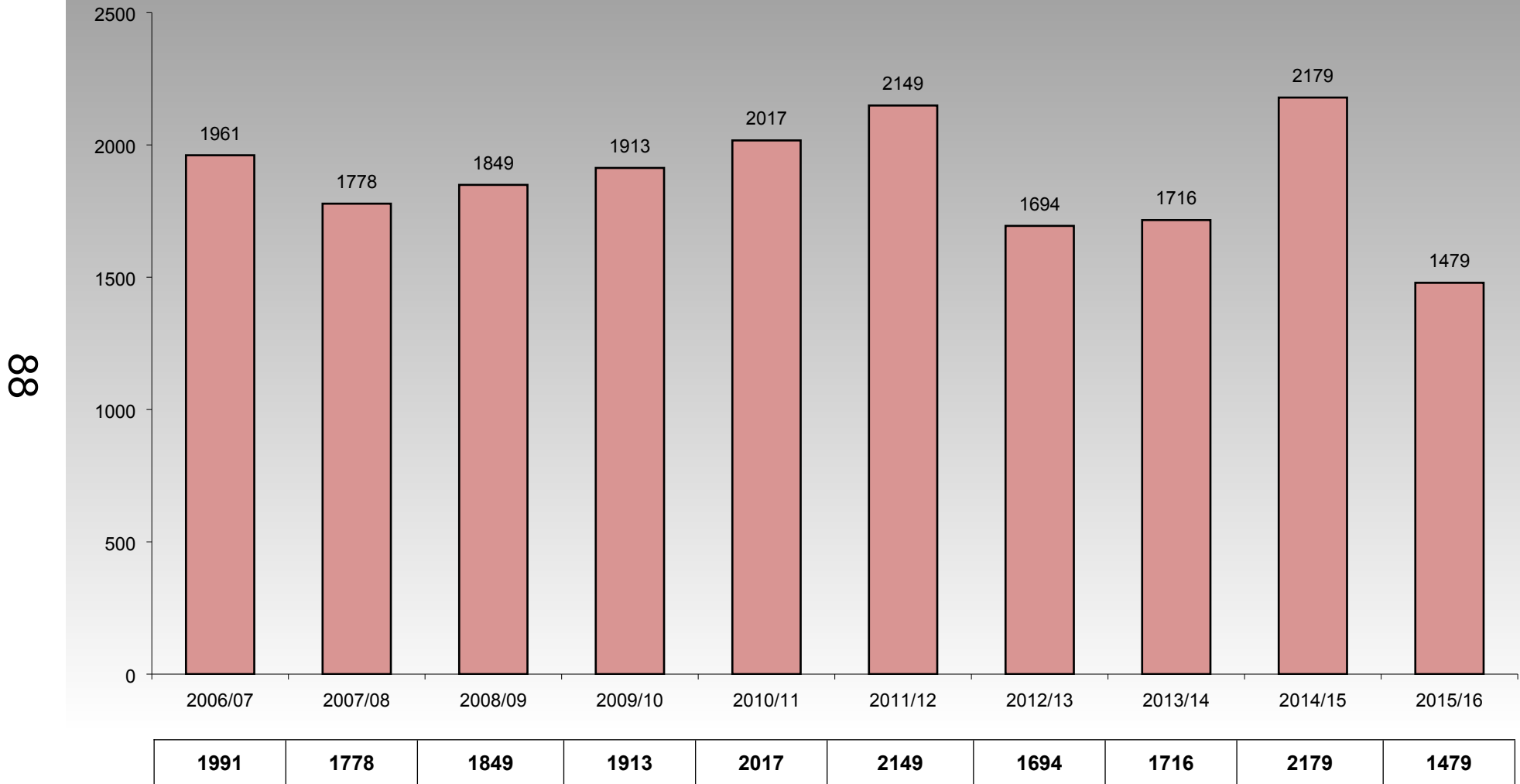


	Proposed Change	What we do now	What we're proposing	Rationale for changes and the potential impact
			<p>Environmental Health Officer.</p> <p><b>How?</b></p> <p>Environmental Health Officer will provide a written report to Housing Options Service confirming that a person's current accommodation is considered to be insanitary or unsatisfactory housing.</p>	reasonable preference groups.
10.	<b>To adopt the Government's Bedroom Standard which will mean persons of the same sex sharing a bedroom up to the age of 20 years</b>	<p>Currently the bedroom rules as used by Housing Benefit to determine how many bedrooms a household is eligible for has been adopted.</p> <p>A separate bedroom is allocated to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each married or cohabiting couple or single parent</li> <li>• Any other person aged 16 years or more</li> <li>• Each pair of children of either sex under 10 years</li> <li>• Each pair of people of the same sex aged under 21 years.</li> <li>• Any person who cannot be paired</li> </ul>	<p>We adopt the current Bedroom Standard as set out in the Housing Act 1985. This means two persons of the same sex are expected to share a bedroom up to the age of 20 years.</p> <p>A separate bedroom is allocated to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each married or cohabiting couple or single parent</li> <li>• Any other person aged 21 years or more</li> <li>• Each pair of children of either sex under 10 years</li> <li>• <b>Each pair of people of the same sex aged under 21 years.</b></li> <li>• Any person who cannot be paired</li> </ul> <p><b>How?</b></p> <p>Any family identified on the Housing Register with children 16 years and over will have their bedroom eligibility adjusted and notified in</p>	<p>Under the current bedroom eligibility criteria any person aged 16 years or more is allocated a separate bedroom.</p> <p>This has resulted in families with older children eligible for larger size accommodation, for example, a family with 4 children (2 daughters ages 12, 16 and 2 sons ages 14, 18) would currently be eligible for 5 bedroom accommodation.</p> <p><b>Given the shortage of large properties, families do not always want to be considered for large properties.</b></p> <p><b>They often want to be considered for a property with fewer bedrooms than they are eligible for in order to give themselves a better chance of securing an offer of accommodation.</b></p> <p>Many local authorities (see Appendix</p>

	Proposed Change	What we do now	What we're proposing	Rationale for changes and the potential impact
			writing.	5) have adopted the Government Bedroom Standard when determining bedroom eligibility.  <b>We will continue to allocate additional bedrooms where there is a health need or where there is a fostering arrangement in place by Leicester City Council.</b>
11.	<b>To enable applicants more choice of accommodation options on the Housing Register, households will be able to choose to apply for accommodation with one less bedroom than they are eligible for.</b>	Households are able to apply for accommodation up to two bedrooms less than they are eligible for, providing it does not create statutory overcrowding.  Families with children also cannot apply for one bedroom accommodation.	Due to increasing need and managing customer expectations households are able to apply for accommodation with one less bedroom than they are eligible for to prevent severe overcrowding.  <b>How?</b> Any household identified on the Housing Register who is able to apply for one less bedroom will have their bedroom eligibility adjusted and notified in writing.	Current and proposed changes to the bedroom rules seek to maximise occupancy. Allowing families the opportunity to apply for accommodation with one less bedroom than they are currently eligible for, gives them a better chance to secure an offer of accommodation  The proposed change seeks to minimise overcrowding whilst still giving families an element of choice.  There will be however still be occasions where households will not be able to apply for accommodation with one less bedroom, for example, where a family have been awarded overcrowding priority as this would result in moving to like for like accommodation.
12.	<b>To enable applicants more choice of accommodation options on the Housing Register and to reduce the pressure on the demand for 2</b>	Families with children are not able to apply for one bedroom accommodation.	Families with 1 child aged 2 years and under are able to choose to apply for 1 and 2 bedroom accommodation.	It is not unreasonable for families with 1 child under 3 years to resolve their immediate housing predicament to move to 1 bedroom

	<b>Proposed Change</b>	<b>What we do now</b>	<b>What we're proposing</b>	<b>Rationale for changes and the potential impact</b>
	<b>bedroom accommodation, families with 1 child aged 2 years and under will be able to choose to apply for one bedroom accommodation</b>		<p><b>How?</b> Any household identified on the Housing Register who is able to downsize will have their bedroom eligibility adjusted and notified in writing.</p>	<p>accommodation to prevent homelessness.</p> <p>This may enable them to secure accommodation quicker as there were 472 lettings of 1 bedroom flats in 2015-16. This accounted for 32% of all lettings.</p> <p>The change would allow circa 928 families with 1 child under 3 years the choice to apply for one bedroom accommodation</p>

Lettings from the Housing Register 2006 - 2016



## Current Banding Table

Band	Summary Descriptions (Reason)	Household Circumstances	Number of Households in Band (as at 01/04/2016)
Band 1	Referred Case	People in need of urgent re-housing and referred by Adult Social Care or Children's Services.	722
	Compulsory Homeless	People in need of urgent re-housing whose properties are directly affected by public redevelopment programmes.	
	Tenant Incentive Scheme	Council and housing association tenants who are currently under-occupying a large property (four bedroom or more) and who wish to move to a property with fewer bedrooms.	
	Priority Under-occupation	Council and housing association tenants who are currently under-occupying a two or three bedroom property and who wish to move to a property with one bedroom.	
	Harassment	People suffering from any form of harassment.	
	Management Case	Council tenants who need to move for management reasons - see the current allocation policy, section 3.6 (available at <a href="http://leicester.gov.uk/allocations">leicester.gov.uk/allocations</a> ).	
	Wheelchair Adapted Housing No Longer Required	Council and housing association tenants occupying a purpose built wheelchair adapted property who no longer require it.	
	High Medical	People whose current housing conditions are having a seriously adverse affect on the physical or mental health of either the applicant or a member of their household.	
	Young Person Leaving Care	Children leaving the care of Leicester City Council's Children and Young People's Service (CYPS).	
Band 2	Statutory Homelessness	People who are statutory homeless and are owed the full housing duty under Section 193 of the Housing Act 1996.	2821
	Severe Overcrowding	People whose homes are deemed to be severely overcrowded (two bedrooms or more short of their assessed need).	
	Overcrowded Families in 1 Bed	Families who are overcrowded and living in one bedroom accommodation.	
	Under-occupation	Council and housing association tenants who are currently under-occupying a three bedroom property by one bedroom and need two bedrooms.	
	Insecure Accommodation	People identified as needing urgent re-housing to prevent homelessness.	
	Temporary Accommodation (Single)	Single people living in designated temporary or supported accommodation.	
	Temporary Accommodation (Family)	Families living in designated temporary accommodation in the city.	

	<b>Leaving Residential Care</b>	People ready to leave residential care supported by Leicester City Council and/or NHS.	
	<b>Care Package</b>	People with a care package where Adult Social Care (LCC) assess that a move will assist independent living.	
	<b>Medium Medical</b>	People whose current housing conditions are having a negative affect on the physical or mental health of the applicant or a member of their household.	
	<b>Leaving Armed Forces</b>	People leaving the armed forces within the last 5 years but do not have a home to return to.	
<b>Band 3</b>	<b>Adult Leaving Care</b>	People identified by Adult Social Care as ready to leave the care of family or carer	2818
	<b>Single NFA</b>	Single people who have no settled accommodation and are of 'no fixed abode'.	
	<b>Care &amp; Support Medical</b>	Families needing to move to a particular area of Leicester where hardship would be caused if they do not move.	
	<b>Overcrowded Household</b>	Families who are living in overcrowded conditions under Leicester City Council's overcrowding standard (one bedroom short of their assessed need).	
	<b>Working Households</b>	Working households or those in local training schemes who need to move closer to their job/training scheme	
<b>Band 4</b>	<b>Sharing Facilities</b>	People who share facilities with other households but have their own bedroom.	2191
	<b>Care &amp; Support Emotional</b>	People who need to move to, or remain in, a particular area of Leicester to give or receive emotional support from family, friends or others in the community.	
	<b>Sheltered Accommodation</b>	People over the age of 50 years requesting 1 bedroom sheltered accommodation only.	
<b>Band 5*</b>	<b>All Other Applicants</b>	People who do not have any of the housing circumstances listed in bands 1, 2, 3 and 4.	2597

\* With effect from 1st May 2014 no new applicants are accepted into Band 5

## Proposed Banding Table

Band	Summary Descriptions (Reason)	Household Circumstances	Expected Number of Households in Proposed Bands (based on waiting list as at 01/04/2016)
Band 1	Referred Case	People in need of urgent re-housing and referred by Adult Social Care or Children's Services.	722
	Compulsory Homeless	People in need of urgent re-housing whose properties are directly affected by public redevelopment programmes.	
	Priority Under-occupation	Council and housing association tenants who are currently under-occupying a two or three bedroom property and who wish to move to a property with one bedroom.	
	Harassment	People suffering from any form of harassment.	
	Management Case	Council tenants who need to move for management reasons.	
	Wheelchair Adapted Housing No Longer Required	Council and housing association tenants occupying a purpose built wheelchair adapted property who no longer require it.	
	High Medical	People whose current housing conditions are having a seriously adverse affect on the physical or mental health of either the applicant or a member of their household.	
Young Person Leaving Care	Children leaving the care of Leicester City Council's Children and Young People's Service (CYPS).		
Band 2	Statutory Homelessness	People who are statutory homeless and are owed the full housing duty under Section 193 of the Housing Act 1996.	2821
	Severe Overcrowding	People whose homes are deemed to be severely overcrowded (two bedrooms or more short of their assessed need).	
	Overcrowded Families in 1 Bed	Families with children 3 years and over who are overcrowded and living in one bedroom accommodation.	
	Under-occupation	Council and housing association tenants who are currently under-occupying a three bedroom property by one bedroom and need two bedrooms.	
	Insecure Accommodation	People identified as needing urgent re-housing to prevent homelessness.	
	Temporary Accommodation (Single)	Single people living in designated temporary or supported accommodation.	
	Temporary Accommodation (Family)	Families living in designated temporary accommodation in the city.	
Insanitary or Unsatisfactory Accommodation	People who have been assessed as living in insanitary or unsatisfactory accommodation.		

	<b>Leaving Residential Care</b>	People ready to leave residential care supported by Leicester City Council and/or NHS.	
	<b>Care Package</b>	People with a care package where Adult Social Care (LCC) assess that a move will assist independent living.	
	<b>Medium Medical</b>	People whose current housing conditions are having a negative affect on the physical or mental health of the applicant or a member of their household.	
	<b>Leaving Armed Forces</b>	People leaving the armed forces within the last 5 years but do not have a home to return to.	
<b>Band 3</b>	<b>Adult Leaving Care</b>	People identified by Adult Social Care as ready to leave the care of family or carer.	3223
	<b>Care &amp; Support</b>	People needing to move to a particular area of Leicester where hardship would be caused if they do not move and people who need to move on medical or welfare grounds.	
	<b>Overcrowded Household (tenants)</b>	Tenants who are living in overcrowded conditions under Leicester City Council's overcrowding standard (one bedroom short of their assessed need).	
	<b>Overcrowded Household (non-tenants)</b>	Non-tenants living in overcrowded circumstances	
	<b>Sheltered Accommodation</b>	People over the age of 50 years requesting 1 bedroom sheltered accommodation only.	
	<b>Working Households</b>	Working households or those in local training schemes who need to move closer to their job/training scheme	



## Bench Marking with Neighbouring Local Authorities

Local Authority	Number of Bands in Allocations Scheme	Bedroom Rules	Do people with no housing need or low need qualify to go on the Housing Register?
Derby City Council	2	Adult/Children of the same sex are expected to share a bedroom (no upper age limit)	No
Nottingham City Council	5	Adult/Children of the same sex are expected to share a bedroom up to the age of 20 years	No
Northampton Borough Council	3	Adult/Children of the same sex are expected to share a bedroom up to the age of 20 years	No

## **SUMMARY FEEDBACK FROM THE STAKEHOLDER/PUBLIC CONSULTATION EXERCISE**

### **Total Responses Received**

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent of All</b>
Member of the public	15	32%
Applicant currently on the Housing Register	26	56%
Housing Association representative	1	2%
Voluntary organisation representative	2	4%
Support organisation representative	3	6%
Not answered	0	0%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100%</b>

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### **1. Do you agree with the proposal for the removal of Band 4 applicants from the Housing Register?**

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### **Number of Responses Received**

<b>Impact</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>%</b>
It won't affect me / us / my clients	16	34%
It will affect me / us / my clients in a positive way	8	17%
It will affect me / us / my clients in a negative way	16	34%
I have no opinion	4	8%
Not applicable	1	2%
Not answered	2	4%

### **Feedback**

Waterloo Housing Group (Registered Provider)

*'We agree that housing should go to those in greatest need and that it is important therefore to manage the expectations of those on the Housing Register. The proposed move to having just three bands on the Register makes sense if this will reduce the amount of time spent on administering the system. It is important however that the time freed up as a result of this change is used in other areas, for example, on verifying information provided by applicants. This would result in this change being a positive move for Registered Providers.'*

Support Organisation (name not given)

*'Many people will begin in Band 4 and then either move to Band 3 (e.g. when they have a child) or Band 2 for temp accom. This helps people at least get their housing application up and running. Some single people have received offers of accommodation, especially bedsits, in Band 4, so wouldn't this mean a potential increase in failed nominations, poorer relations with RSLs, and increase in void times for hard to let properties?'*

*'Will any of these cases who are currently in Band 4 for sharing be eligible for the Band 3 sheltered only priority or the Band 3 Care & Support and will/how will they be assessed for these before removal from Housing register?'*

*Will the care and support/emotional cases automatically be transferred into Band 3 or will they be removed from the register, or have to provide additional proof to get into Band 3 on care and support grounds?'*

The Race Equality Centre (Voluntary Organisation)

*'Majority of our service users are under 30, and will be threatened with homelessness after moving out of their NASS accommodation and have been living in shared facilities. Some are rehoused in shared accommodation through Action homeless accommodation and they will be at disadvantage.'*

*Refugees are vulnerable group and this will have a huge impact on their health and ability to secure private rented accommodation due to barriers they will face in accessing a deposit and high rents'.*

General Public (Representative Sample)

*'I am currently placed in band 4 and have been waiting for housing for over 1 year. My circumstances have changed and I have notified the council. My band has not been reassessed yet. If they remove band 4 from the list, where does that leave people like me?'*

*'The change would expel me from getting help from the council whom are suppose to help people like myself.'*

*'I'm in band four and been bidding. I've been getting offers in the past. Also the positions I'm getting in are close'.*

*'It will easy to get house because our family is in band 2 and we have registered in June 2015, its around 1 year and six months but i have not offered any property yet. So, it will great to remove those applicant who as very low chance to get house'.*

*'There council and housing association will have less administrative duties which will result in money being saved this will enable the council to spend money on properties and other projects e.g. New builds'.*

*'Some support I can only get in certain areas and as a single mum will health issues as well as serious mental health people should be allowed to live where the support is close to them'.*

*'I believe as it is self-explained by you that applicant in Band 4 have a very least chance for offer of accommodation - as this is causing build up of more burden on to your management and financial crisis occurrence, the best would be to get rid of band 4 - then as it is not giving any benefit neither to applicant nor to the council management'.*

## **Response**

Comments noted from stakeholder partners and customers.

It is acknowledged this will remove circa 4300 households in Bands 4 & 5 from the Housing Register. However the change will make it easier to manage customer expectations and will reduce the administrative burden on the service. Resources will also be more effectively utilised to assist those with a genuine need to move.

Where there has been a change in circumstances, applications will be re-assessed under the criteria of the higher banding priorities.

**In light of the consultation feedback, it is recommended there is no change to the proposal** to remove all households in Bands 4 & 5 who have no or little housing need from the Housing Register.

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## 2. Do you agree with the proposal to limit the qualifying income threshold to join the Housing Register?

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### Number of Responses Received

Impact	Number of Responses	%
It won't affect me / us / my clients	26	55%
It will affect me / us / my clients in a positive way	7	15%
It will affect me / us / my clients in a negative way	6	13%
I have no opinion	3	6%
Not applicable	3	6%
Not answered	2	4%

### Feedback

Waterloo Housing Group (Registered Provider)

*'We recognise that these proposals may be subject to change following the announcement re the Pay to Stay proposals at the Autumn Statement.*

*Whilst we agree with the importance of ensuring that social housing is provided to those that cannot afford other options, we believe the proposed move to a £31,000 threshold would have a negative impact. Depending on the area, it can be very difficult to get suitable properties with such an income. It would be useful to approach local lenders in Leicester to see what mortgage options would be available for a household earning £31,000, and what sorts of properties they would be able to afford.*

*This is especially likely to have a negative impact on vulnerable members of the community who may happen to earn more than £31,000. For example, a tenant with a disability earning just over the threshold may find it hard to get a suitable adapted property in the private sector with such an income.*

*Will household income also take into account assets? If so, it may be appropriate to apply a degree of discretion for elderly applicants who are more likely to have a higher level of assets. It can be difficult to attract applicants to CAT 1 & 2 properties, so this may limit the number of suitable applicants for such schemes.*

*This proposal also relies on having up to date information about household income. This is likely to require a significant amount of resources in order to ensure that the data is accurate'.*

Support Organisation (name not given)

*Will this change at all given that pay to stay has been withdrawn. £40,000 still seems a large amount, if this is now going to remain the same. How will proof of financial resources be provided by the applicants? Couldn't people easily withhold information regarding savings or income? Will this result in a greater number of proofs being needed from customers and*

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*more difficulties/barriers for customers getting their applications registered, and increased time spent on applications by staff?’*

General Public (Representative Sample)

*‘It should be considered that families on lower income margin to be significantly prioritized; circumstances may include: families with children’s and older people carriage with regards and also regardless of any health needs. emitting some better choice to rehouse such family. although people with more optimum needs should be given first opportunity but, to focus extra sometime also on to the other needy requirement and facilitate them equally in a limited timescale’.*

*‘I think this is wrong and you are encouraging people not to work as sometime I believe people on benefits get as much as someone on a low income. I do agree should have a cut off but 40,000 seems fairer as I think as with it being 30,000 I can see private landlords increasing the rent and making people live on unaffordable housing’.*

*‘I think that the financial threshold should be lowered to the suggested amount’.*

*‘Social housing for people who are of low incomes is what it was originally set up for’.*

*‘I believe that this change will is a effective way to move forward. Council and housing association homes should only be let out to families and people who are on low income and cannot afford to buy or rent in the open market’.*

*‘Would need to be aware of charges made by private landlords to make sure that people in that income threshold would not be financially disadvantaged due to high rents/charges’.*

**Response**

Comments noted from stakeholder partners and customers.

Whilst it is noted that the Government has now withdrawn the income threshold from its ‘Pay to Stay’ proposal in the Housing and Planning Act 2016, **In light of the consultation feedback, it is still recommended to proceed with the proposal** to reduce the current qualifying income threshold to join the Housing Register, to ensure that social housing is allocated to those most in need and who require affordable housing due to income levels.

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### 3. Do you agree with the proposal for the reconfiguration of the overcrowding banding priorities?

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#### Number of Responses Received

Impact	Number of Responses	%
It won't affect me / us	21	45%
It will affect me / us in a positive way	7	15%
It will affect me / us in a negative way	8	17%
I have no opinion	8	17%
Not applicable	1	2%
Not answered	2	4%

#### Feedback

Waterloo Housing Group (Registered Provider)

*'We do not agree with the proposal to allow families with a child under the age of three to live in a one bedroom property. We believe that this would be a short term solution that would actually create further overcrowding situations in the future. This is also likely to increase the turnover at properties, resulting in an increase in voids and letting costs.'*

*'From a RP point of view, a large number of our one bed properties may be unsuitable for families with young children due to floor level, storage for prams etc. Storing such equipment in corridors would be a fire hazard. RPs are expected to follow strict regulations regarding health and safety and fire, and we believe moving more young families into one bed properties may increase the risk of such an incident.'*

Support Organisation (name not given)

*'Children aged 3 should be sleeping in a bed not a cot - how would this work in a 1 bedroom situation?'*

Support Organisation (name not given)

*'Non-tenants will be affected who are overcrowded by more than 1 bedroom, as they will only go into Band 3. This seems unfair as tenants in the same overcrowded circumstance are given the Band 2 priority.'*

*'There is the proposal to only award severe overcrowding priority to tenants. This means presumably that people lodging/living with relatives who are overcrowded by 2 bedrooms or more will now only be eligible for Band 3 priority. This seems unfair, as surely a tenant living in accommodation and needing more than 2 bedrooms more than they have is in a better situation than someone who doesn't even rent their own home, they have to share facilities too? The rationale given is 'This better reflects the overcrowding position of tenants in the*

*City', but what about the many non-tenants? Why are they being put at a disadvantage, when they are in the same if not worse circumstances? Other rationale given is that they will be awarded insecure accommodation if relevant, but for the 354 cases specified, they do not have this priority at present, so assuming they would all drop to Band 3? Will it put pressure on the service in terms of receiving asked to leave letters, completing home visits, taking decs, etc?'*

#### General Public (Representative Sample)

'Would effect only - if the length of time in getting rehoused are far extended. this means in today's date even band 2 applicant are undergoing long waiting time in getting a swift offer as per their bid, and the property they do bid by checking the previous property list. what we see is that accommodation bided three to four months are still under process for a offer or awaiting allocation'.

'I'm currently a single mother in a one bed first floor flat with a 18 month old and another child due next year my flat is smile and struggling for space i would like a additional room for my two children and ground floor as i struggle to carry my son up the stairs and its going to be even more of a struggle with two children'.

'Situation doesn't change'.

#### **Response**

Comments noted from stakeholder partners and customers.

The register of housing need should reflect applicants' current housing circumstances and it is misleading to categorise those who do not have their own accommodation as overcrowded in the same way as tenants. Removing non-tenants from the current overcrowding banding priorities will enable us to accurately record and monitor overcrowding of tenants in the city.

The proposal to allow families with a child under 3 to be allocated 1 bed accommodation will only be used on a choice based approach whereby applicants can choose to be rehoused into accommodation with one less bedroom than they are currently eligible for. Given the shortage of larger size accommodation the change will assist those families that choose to downsize a better chance of securing an offer of accommodation which for those who choose this option it will resolve immediate housing need, prevent impending homelessness and provide housing resolutions for those who are without secure accommodation.

Occupancy levels on individual properties will not be exceeded with this change.

**In light of the consultation feedback, it is recommended there is no change to the proposal** to reconfigure the overcrowding banding priorities.



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**4. Do you agree with the proposal for the addition of a new banding priority to non-tenants who are living with others and do not have sufficient bedrooms for their own use?**

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**Number of Responses Received**

<b>Impact</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>%</b>
It won't affect me / us	22	47%
It will affect me / us in a positive way	5	11%
It will affect me / us in a negative way	10	21%
I have no opinion	6	13%
Not applicable	2	4%
Not answered	2	4%

**Feedback**

Waterloo Housing Group (Registered Provider)

*'We agree with this proposal'.*

Support Organisation (name not given)

*'Tenants are being given an unfair advantage over non-tenants.'*

*'There is the proposal to only award severe overcrowding priority to tenants. This means presumably that people lodging/living with relatives who are overcrowded by 2 bedrooms or more will now only be eligible for Band 3 priority. This seems unfair, as surely a tenant living in accommodation and needing more than 2 bedrooms more than they have is in a better situation than someone who doesn't even rent their own home, they have to share facilities too? The rationale given is 'This better reflects the overcrowding position of tenants in the City', but what about the many non-tenants? Why are they being put at a disadvantage, when they are in the same if not worse circumstances? Other rationale given is that they will be awarded insecure accommodation if relevant, but for the 354 cases specified, they do not have this priority at present, so assuming they would all drop to Band 3? Will it put pressure on the service in terms of receiving asked to leave letters, completing home visits, taking decs, etc?'*

The Race Equality Centre (Voluntary Organisation)

*'Some of our clients who are single and not in priority need become homeless from their NASS accommodation end up moving into their friends accommodation until they find permanent accommodation so to prevent street homelessness. They will be moved from band 2 to band 3. This will create street homelessness as they will have to wait longer to get rehoused and their friends will not allow them to stop in their property for too long'.*

## General Public (Representative Sample)

*'We have been waiting for 5years and people can say they are homeless and go in front of us so good if you could do something about it'.*

*'We are overcrowded our self's and have my mother in law living with us as she was made homeless and had no where else to go so this would benefit us both. It's a great idea'.*

*'I don't think the creation of a priority band 3 should be made'.*

*'I honestly think this will not only let people take the Mik out of the sistum because of the no check out and make it harder for those who are in real life trouble'.*

*'This does seem fairer'.*

*'I am concerned that under the current system "No checks are undertaken to verify..." '.*

## **Response**

Comments noted from stakeholder partners and customers.

The register of housing need should reflect applicants' current housing circumstances and it is misleading to categorise those who do not have their own accommodation as overcrowded in the same way as tenants. We need to make key changes to accurately record and monitor overcrowding in the city and also to reflect the number of households who do not have their own accommodation.

In response to The Race Equality Centre comments, single people living with friends without their own bedroom currently get a Band 3 priority so there would be no change in their current banding priority.

**In light of the consultation feedback, it is recommended there is no change to the proposal** that non-tenants are given a separate overcrowding banding priority to tenants.

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**5. Do you agree with the proposal for the reconfiguration of the under-occupation banding priorities?**

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**Number of Responses Received**

<b>Impact</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>%</b>
It won't affect me / us	22	47%
It will affect me / us in a positive way	11	23%
It will affect me / us in a negative way	2	4%
I have no opinion	6	13%
Not applicable	4	8%
Not answered	2	4%

**Feedback**

Waterloo Housing Group (Registered Provider)

*'We agree with this proposal'.*

General Public (Representative Sample)

*'Stick with your said proposal'.*

*'I support this change'.*

**Response**

Comments noted from stakeholder partners and customers.

This change will make the policy easier to administer and understand.

**In light of the consultation feedback, It is recommended there is no change to the proposal** to reconfigure the under-occupation banding priorities.

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**6. Do you agree with the proposal for the addition of a new banding priority to people who are living in insanitary or unsatisfactory housing?**

---

**Number of Responses Received**

<b>Impact</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>%</b>
It won't affect me / us	25	53%
It will affect me / us in a positive way	7	15%
It will affect me / us in a negative way	4	8%
I have no opinion	7	15%
Not applicable	2	4%
Not answered	2	4%

**Feedback**

Waterloo Housing Group (Registered Provider)

*'We believe that people falling under this category should be placed into Band one due to their circumstances'.*

General Public (Representative Sample)

*'Everyone should be able to live in a clean and safe environment'.*

*'I'm not against it'.*

*'Stick with your said proposal'.*

**Response**

Comments noted from stakeholder partners and customers.

This change will make the policy compliant with statutory guidance. Band 2 priority is appropriate in relation to other banding priorities set out in the allocations policy.

**In light of the consultation feedback, it is recommended there is no change to the proposal to give priority to people who are living in insanitary or unsatisfactory housing.**

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**7. Do you agree with the proposal to adopt the Government's Bedroom Standard?**

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**Number of Responses Received**

<b>Impact</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>%</b>
It won't affect me / us	21	45%
It will affect me / us in a positive way	10	21%
It will affect me / us in a negative way	7	15%
I have no opinion	3	6%
Not applicable	4	8%
Not answered	2	4%

**Feedback**

Waterloo Housing Group (Registered Provider)

*'We believe that the proposals should be in line with the Government's Welfare Reform Act 2012 – and the rules set out in the "Under occupation penalty/Removal of spare room subsidy".'*

General Public (Representative Sample)

*'At present I have a son age 5 and a daughter age 9. I pay a bedroom tax anyway so I'm unsure if this would affect me. If I were told I would have to downsize and my children would have to share a room after not sharing for so long this would cause much hassle between them. I have also spent a lot of money decorating and would be very unhappy if I was told I was going to have to give up all I had done and spend money moving. As my daughter is 10 in 6 months it is unlikely that I would move anyway as I would then have to move again. But for people with younger children this would be unfair  
If new tenants will be allocated in this way then that is fine as it is all new for them anyway. I think for tenants that are settled they shouldn't have to move in all circumstances'.*

*'I have one bedroom which i share with my daughter and its too small so it would be good to get two rooms'.*

*'Approve of this proposal as if a family own their own home they make do and work around these situations. This is a fairer way to room allocation'.*

*'There is no real difference between a 16 yr old and 21 yrs old person in my opinion. as both age are well grown up for sharing a bedroom'.*

*'This is a very good idea'.*

*'If the family intend to have a shorter bedroom apart from their requirement and they do take such responsibility on themselves - then a shorter bedroom should be granted or made*

*eligible to them, i.e ; people with grandparents, parents and themselves (two sibling) of either sex male/ female are made eligible for a 4 bed house, unluckily one of the grandparent becomes disable and wheel chair - bound or non - ambulant by obtaining proof from the social care their need are accessed they are all now in band 1 eligible for 4 bed wheel chair adapted accommodation such properties are rarely advertised - in simple ways such applicant should be allocated a alternate three bed house with 10 person occupancy; if available based on their written request'.*

*'I support this change'.*

## **Response**

Comments noted from stakeholder partners and customers.

This change will assist families with older children to apply for more appropriate size accommodation given the shortage of larger size accommodation that becomes available.

We will also continue to allocate additional bedrooms where there is a health need or where there is a fostering arrangement in place by Leicester City Council.

**In light of the consultation feedback, it is recommended there is no change to the proposal** to adopt the current Government's bedroom standard.

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**8. Do you agree with the proposal to provide more choice of accommodation options for households?**

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**Number of Responses Received**

<b>Impact</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>%</b>
It won't affect me / us	21	45%
It will affect me / us in a positive way	8	17%
It will affect me / us in a negative way	6	13%
I have no opinion	7	15%
Not applicable	3	6%
Not answered	2	4%

**Feedback**

Waterloo Housing Group (Registered Provider)

*'We believe allowing households to apply for a property that has one less bedroom than they need is likely to be a short term solution that will not provide RPs with sustainable tenancies – resulting in greater turnover and higher letting costs'.*

Support Organisation (name not given)

*'This does not seem an improvement as currently allow people to apply for accommodation with 2 less bedrooms. Actually giving less choice to people. Even taking into account the change in the bedroom sharing rules, people needing larger family homes may be restricted. It does minimise overcrowding in their new accommodation, however wording the proposed change as enabling applicants more choice seems incorrect as this is clearly not the case'.*

The Race Equality Centre (Voluntary Organisation)

*'Better opportunity for families waiting for four/five bedrooms. This will allow the families to bid for 3 bed properties'.*

General Public (Representative Sample)

*'This is a good proposal'.*

*'This is one of the best that will race forth - and would make many families happier on the waiting list should their needs are re-accessed'.*

*'Will take me and my family longer to obtain a property'.*

## **Response**

Comments noted from stakeholder partners and customers.

The proposal will be a choice based approach whereby applicants can choose to be rehoused into accommodation with one less bedroom than they are currently eligible for. Given the shortage of larger size accommodation the change will assist those families that choose to downsize a better chance of securing an offer of accommodation.

The proposal also seeks to minimise overcrowding whilst still giving families an element of choice.

**In light of the consultation feedback, it is recommended there is no change to the proposal** to allow families the choice of applying for accommodation that is one bedroom less than they are eligible for.



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**9. Do you agree with the proposal to provide more choice of accommodation options for for Families with one child on the Housing Register?**

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**Number of Responses Received**

<b>Impact</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>%</b>
It won't affect me / us	24	51%
It will affect me / us in a positive way	6	13%
It will affect me / us in a negative way	3	6%
I have no opinion	9	17%
Not applicable	2	4%
Not answered	3	6%

**Feedback**

Waterloo Housing Group (Registered Provider)

*'Following on from the answers to previous question around this, we believe that this will result in short term tenancies that will be harder to manage'.*

Support Organisation (name not given)

*'This could begin as a positive for people, but if they are then still looking for 2 bedroom accommodation and knowing the shortage of 2 beds, they could find themselves stuck in 1 bedroom accommodation. Similarly if they have more children, could find themselves stuck in 1 bedroom accommodation'.*

The Race Equality Centre (Voluntary Organisation)

*'Again positive move as 2 bed accommodation is not easily available. At least one bed accommodation will assist with a roof over their head. Less use of Border House accommodation while waiting for 2 bed accommodation which will prevent waste of council resources'.*

General Public (Representative Sample)

*'They only have one child so one bedroom should be sufficient as two bedroom houses can be provided for people that really need them and require two bedrooms instead of families having an extra room just in case they have another child'.*

*'Will take longer for me and my family to be rehoused'.*

*'The choice should be given to families in what accommodation they would be happy to reside in'.*

*'It will make accommodation more affordable and give people an idea of how much it will cost to leave independently'.*

## **Response**

Comments noted from stakeholder partners and customers.

The proposal will be a choice based approach whereby applicants with a child under 3 years can choose to be rehoused into 1 bedroom accommodation. Given the high demand for 2 bedroom accommodation with average waiting times of approximately 15 months which is expected to rise higher for Band 2 applicants, the change will give those families that choose to apply for one bedroom accommodation, a better chance of securing an offer of accommodation and resolve their immediate housing predicament.

**In light of the consultation feedback, it is recommended there is no change to the proposal** to allow families with one child 2 years and under, the choice of applying for 1 or 2 bedroom accommodation.

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## 10. General Comments

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### Feedback

Waterloo Housing Group (Registered Provider)

*'We are keen to work with Leicester City Council on their proposals and would be happy to come to talk to you to discuss our comments in greater detail.'*

Support Organisation (name not given)

*'Does the reduction in the number of bands to just 3 result in increased pressure on each of those bands, with many applications with many different housing needs within that same band, for example is it right to say that someone who needs to move on care & support grounds would have the same level of housing need as someone who is single and sofa surfing?'*

*'Removal of home owners/owner occupiers - Who are the exceptions and how will they be identified before being removed from the housing register?'*

General Public (Representative Sample)

*'Agree with all proposals they seem fair, measured and will go some way to meeting the housing need in the City.'*

*'People need housing and the council can help people the ranking system can be disheartening as only aloud to apply for 3 properties and they should be allowed to seek all if placed in the area required. Kicking people like myself off the chance of a steady home.'*

*'I have highlighted some more key areas in this survey that certainly need to be furnished appropriately being well designed- and the timescale for any lettings to be made quicker for applicant to enjoy in their new home.'*

*'All of the proposed changes seem eminently sensible.'*

*'Doesn't seem to help single adults who are looking to improve their housing needs.'*

*'You should give long term residents of Leicester a priority.'*

*'Looking into the allocation process is a very good idea these proposals would look good but you also need to think about people with disabilities too and when allocating flats, bungalows would be a better option.'*

## **Response**

Comments noted from stakeholder partners and customers.

The proposed changes will ensure that the policy addresses those most in need as well as helping the policy be more transparent, simplified and easier to understand by all.

The changes will also better manage customer expectations and reduce the administrative burden on the service and means resources can be more effectively utilised to assist those with a genuine need to move.

## **Housing Scrutiny Commission**

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### **Housing Advice and Assistance for Members of the Armed Forces**

Assistant Mayor for Housing: Cllr Andy Connelly  
Lead Director: Chris Burgin

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■ Ward(s) affected: ALL

■ Report authors:

Caroline Carpendale – Head of Service, ext. 37-1701

Chris Burgin – Director of Housing, ext. 37-5143

■ Report version number: V1

## 1. Summary

- 1.1 To inform Scrutiny members of Leicester City Council's approach in the provision of housing and advice and assistance to Armed Forces personnel.
- 1.2 The report sets out the guidance for local authorities in the allocation of accommodation for this group and the local approach to assisting those who are leaving the Armed Forces and returning to civilian life.

## 2. Government Guidance

- 2.1 The following provisions recognise the special position of members of the Armed Forces (and their families) who are leaving their employment and returning to civilian life.
- 2.2 The regulations are subject to parliamentary scrutiny and regulate to ensure that authorities do not disqualify the following applicants on the grounds that they do not have a local connection with the authority's district. This includes:
  - Members of the Armed Forces and former Service personnel, where the application is made within five years of discharge
  - Bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner
  - Serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service.
- 2.3 Local Authorities are also required to frame their allocation scheme to give reasonable preference to the following categories who have urgent housing needs:
  - Former members of the Armed Forces
  - Serving members of the Armed Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service
  - Bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner
  - serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service
- 2.4 Authorities are also strongly encouraged to take into account the needs of all serving or former Service personnel when framing their allocation schemes, and to give sympathetic consideration to the housing needs of family members of serving or

former Service personnel who may themselves have been disadvantaged by the requirements of military service and, in particular, the need to move from base to base. This would be in line with terms of the Government's Armed Forces Covenant published in May 2011

- 2.5 Homelessness legislation also recognises this group and includes them as a prescriptive group when considering applications as homeless and the vulnerabilities of this group. This is pertinent to single people who may otherwise not be recognised as a specific group under this legislation.

## **2 Leicester City Council's Approach**

- 3.1 Leicester City Council corporately gave a pledge in 2013 to contribute to the Armed Forces Community Covenant which is a promise by the nation ensuring that those who serve or who have served in the armed forces, and their families, are treated fairly. A dedicated web page has been set up on the Council's website.

- 3.2 The Housing Division have ensured that we comply with all the guidance to assist and support this group.

- 3.3 Leicester City Council's Housing Allocations Policy follows government guidance and includes the following provisions to recognise the special circumstances of this particular client group:

- The Leicester City Requirement is disregarded to give sympathetic consideration to the housing needs of family members of serving or former Service personnel who may themselves have been disadvantaged by the requirements of military service and, in particular, the need to move from base to base, as well as those who may be leaving services due to injury who may need to move into a specific area to access specialist treatment, care and support.
- People leaving the Armed Forces who apply for housing within 5 years of their discharge and do not have a home to return to are prescriptively awarded a high band 2 priority to support and enable the individual to reintegrate and settle with minimal disruption to family life.

- 3.2 In practice advice, assistance and support is provided to members of the armed forces as soon as we are notified that the person is being discharged to manage the housing needs of the applicant to ensure as far as possible that suitable accommodation is available if required at the point of discharge or if not, as soon as possible after that.





## Housing Forward Planner 2016/17 (18/01/2017)

HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17			
MEETING DATE	MEETING ITEMS	LEAD OFFICER	ACTION AGREED
<b>10<sup>th</sup> October 2016, 6.15pm</b> Agenda meeting 14 September 2016	Introduction of new departmental staffing Northgate IT update Rent arrears quarterly update STAR (including refugee resettlement programme) – update Work programme	Chris Burgin  Mike Watson	
<b>15<sup>th</sup> November 2016, 6.15pm</b> Agenda meeting 26 <sup>th</sup> October 2016	Homelessness strategy Technical service and stores update STAR Gambling Survey 2016 Tenant forum – meeting notes Work programme		
<b>19<sup>th</sup> December 2016, 6.15 pm</b> Special Meeting	Special meeting to consider HRA proposals and rent setting Work programme		
<b>30<sup>th</sup> January 2017, 6.15pm</b> Agenda meeting 4 <sup>th</sup> January 2017	Area managers' presentation – 12 month changes and challenges Customer Services Data Housing Register update Ex-forces Homelessness Work programme		

# Housing Forward Planner 2016/17 (18/01/2017)

<p>20<sup>th</sup> March 2017, 6.15pm Agenda meeting 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2017</p>	<p>Area managers' presentation – 12 month changes and challenges Quarterly Rent Arrears Update</p>		
<p>To be allocated 2016/17 18</p>	<p>Tower block management Goscote House remodelling Pay to stay <a href="#">High value vacant homes levy</a> UC/HB cap/ bedroom tax/ rent arrears <b>Update on implementation of the Northgate system</b> <b>Plan of Key Decisions</b> <a href="#">Redevelopment of decommissioned hostels and houses in multiple occupation</a> <a href="#">Council House Building – moved from 15 November</a></p>	<p><a href="#">Awaiting government information</a> <b>Minute 36 refers</b></p>	