

Leicester
City Council

MEETING OF THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION

DATE: MONDAY, 10 JULY 2017

TIME: 5:30 pm

PLACE: Meeting Room G.02, Ground Floor, City Hall, 115 Charles Street, Leicester, LE1 1FZ

Members of the Scrutiny Commission

Councillor Cank (Chair)

Councillor Alfonso (Vice Chair)

Councillors Aqbany, Byrne, Dawood, Halford and Hunter
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

Jerry Connolly (Scrutiny Support Officer):

Tel: 0116 454 6343, e-mail: Jerry.Connolly@leicester.gov.uk

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

Information for members of the public

Attending meetings and access to information

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- ✓ to ensure that the sound on any device is fully muted and intrusive lighting avoided;
- ✓ where filming, to only focus on those people actively participating in the meeting;
- ✓ where filming, to (via the Chair of the meeting) ensure that those present are aware that they may be filmed and respect any requests to not be filmed.

Further information

If you have any queries about any of the above or the business to be discussed, please contact Angie Smith, **Democratic Support on (0116) 454 6354** or email Angie.Smith@leicester.gov.uk or call in at City Hall, 115 Charles Street.

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

PUBLIC SESSION

AGENDA

FIRE/EMERGENCY EVACUATION

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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 20 March 2017 are attached, and members are asked to confirm them as a correct record.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE

Appendix B

Members are asked to note the Terms of Reference for the Housing Scrutiny Commission (attached for information).

5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION 2017/18

Members are asked to note the membership of the commission for 2017/18:

Councillor Cank (Chair)
Councillor Alfonso (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Aqbany
Councillor Byrne
Councillor Dawood
Councillor Halford
Councillor Hunter
(1 non-grouped place currently unallocated)

6. DATES OF MEETINGS FOR HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION 2017/18

Members are asked to note that the meeting dates of the commission for the

2017/18 municipal year are currently scheduled as follows, all Monday at 5.30pm:

10 July 2017
14 August 2017
18 September 2017
27 November 2017
18 December 2017 (Special Meeting)
15 January 2018
12 March 2018

7. PETITIONS

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

8. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS OR STATEMENTS OF CASE

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

9. DISTRICT MANAGERS' PRESENTATION - 12 MONTH CHANGES AND CHALLENGES [Appendix C](#)

Members of the commission will receive a presentation on the East District Neighbourhood area, 12 month changes and challenges.

10. GOSCOTE HOUSE - FUTURE USE [Appendix D](#)

The Director of Housing submits a report on the proposed plans for the future use of Goscote House.

Members of the commission are asked to note the contents of the report and will be invited to comment on the proposals.

11. RENT ARREARS PROGRESS REPORT [Appendix E](#)

The Director of Housing submits an annual rent arrears progress report for the period April 2016 to March 2017.

Members of the commission will be asked to note the contents of the report and make any comments.

12. TOWER BLOCK FIRE SAFETY REPORT [Appendix F](#)

The Director of Housing submits a report to provide an update on tower block fire safety in Leicester.

Members of the commission will be asked to note the contents of the report.

13. WORK PROGRAMME

Appendix G

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

14. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS



Leicester
City Council

Appendix A

Minutes of the Meeting of the HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: MONDAY, 20 MARCH 2017 at 6:15 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Newcombe (Chair)
Councillor Alfonso (Vice Chair)

Councillor Aqbany

Councillor Cank

Councillor Joshi

In Attendance

Councillor Connolly – Assistant Mayor for Housing

* * * * *

75. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Byrne and Dawood.

76. 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 Cank declared an Other Disclosable Interest in the general business of the meeting in that family members and herself were council tenants.

Councillor Joshi 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 in that family members were council tenants.

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, these interests were not considered so significant that they were likely to prejudice the Councillors'

judgement of the public interest. They were not therefore required to withdraw from the meeting during consideration of the relevant items.

77. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

that the minutes of the Housing Scrutiny Commission meeting held on 30 January 2017 be confirmed as a correct record.

78. PETITIONS

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

79. 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.

80. AREA MANAGERS' PRESENTATION - SOUTH AREA HOUSING MANAGEMENT

Ellen Watts, District Manager, delivered the presentation on the South Neighbourhood Area.

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

- £60,000 had been identified for parking improvements;
- Improvements to Stoneygate properties included slabbing communal areas, cleaning flats;
- More conversions of houses from 3 to 2 bedrooms were planned, and fencing schemes would continue;
- Updated figures in the presentation to read 5 families and 13 single people had been evicted;
- Tenants could apply to a loft insulation scheme for a loan. Wall insulation had been installed in Saffron and Braunstone which had decreased heating costs for tenants. It was not known if any more investment was being planned;
- A breakdown of Capital spend for boiler replacement, and the number of properties involved would be provided to Members;
- No problems had arisen during garden boundary clarification. Some flats had previously been houses, with some gardens split in non-standard combinations, and boundaries had been revised through negotiation;
- There were 246 cases of anti-social behaviour (ASB) in 2015 leading to just the one eviction. 65% of issues were generally conflict with neighbours but not serious enough to go to the extent of eviction.
- The South area had 31% of the city's arrears which was proportionate to the size of the stock, and were monitored by Income Management;

- Houses in the South area were not difficult to let. Conversions took time but were undertaken because of the design of the properties, with very small bathrooms. A number of void properties were converted over the past 5 years as well as 43 tenanted ones.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the presentation.

AGREED:

that:

1. The report be noted;
2. The Director of Housing to circulate a breakdown of Capital spend on boiler replacements and the number of properties involved.

81. RENT ARREARS PROGRESS REPORT

The Director of Housing submitted a quarterly rent arrears progress report to the Commission for the period 3 October 2016 to 1 January 2017 for noting.

Vijay Desor (Head of Service) and Zenab Valli, Income Collection Manager, presented the report, and made the following points:

- The rent arrears at the end of Quarter 3 were £62,000 higher than for the same quarter in 2015/16, but £108,000 lower than in the same time in 2014/15;
- The service was confident the target of £1.5million by the end of the year would be met;
- There would be an additional £157,000 cash to be collected as a result of the Benefit Income Cap (BIC), due to the lowering of the cap ceiling;
- The Service was continuing to maximise rent collection activities despite economic pressures faced by many households. Most tenants were engaging with the council and continued to pay their rent in a timely manner;
- Actions included the introduction of Direct Debit (DD) arrangements to give tenants the opportunity to pay rent on time. Older people would be assisted to complete forms to move to DD;
- A web-based rent self-serve facility would be introduced to allow tenants access to their rent statements and arrears balances instantly.

In response to Members' questions, the following information was given:

- Comparable rent figures were gained from the Housing Quality Network, and occasionally comparable authorities were contacted for information;
- With regards to a freeze in benefits, any reduction in disposable income for tenants would impact on rent collection. Rent had reduced by 1%, so there had not been as much of an impact on arrears as expected. The number of low paid tenants relying on welfare payments was increasing, and other welfare reform changes might drive arrears up;
- The Income Management Team undertook early intervention to prevent

high rent arrears and tried to assist a tenant in the best possible way to ensure they got the right support and prioritised rent payments. They also offered assistance with income maximisation with benefits, universal credit, etc. Members requested the age profile of tenants with rent in arrears be provided, though it was noted that older tenants tended to be better at paying their rent;

- There were challenges with Universal Credit, with an eight-week wait for tenants to receive benefit and guidance would be sought from other councils who were further ahead with the process;
- Rigorous methods were applied to recover debt. The Exchequer Team assisted with recovery to make contact with former tenants evicted. Evictions were a last resort as recovery of debt was easier when dealing with a current tenant. If a former tenant with a debt entered the system again, Housing Options would liaise to assist in the recovery of the debt;
- People losing Employment Support Allowance from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) had the right to appeal and could apply to have Housing Benefit reinstated. Tenants would be referred to Welfare Rights to assist with the appeal process, to food banks, the Supporting Tenants and Residents Service (STAR) and charity links to help pay for service charges;
- Tenants could go to Citizens Advice for assistance with form filling. The Income Management Team would also assist over the phone or ask the tenant to attend duty appointments with the Income Management Team to complete forms;
- There were robust systems to support those who went through the hostel route into a tenancy. More often than not first time tenants facing eviction had not come through the hostel system but had been given a flat from the list, and the individual might be overwhelmed with bills and by looking after a property. Other evictions might be the result of sanctions from the DWP. It was officers' role to engage with tenants to offer support and prevent evictions.

The Chair thanked the Officers for the report.

AGREED:

that:

1. The report be noted;
2. The Director of Housing to provide the age profile of tenants with rent in arrears.

82. OVERCROWDING AND UNDER-OCCUPATION PROJECT

Justin Haywood and Michal Nowaczyk delivered a presentation on a project underway to identify levels of overcrowding and under-occupation of Council tenancies.

The following points were made:

- Overcrowding outweighed under-occupation figures, with the exceptions of Braunstone and Saffron;
- A complementary need was a potential swap, and it was found that people

- normally liked to stay in the same Housing Allocations area;
- There were 340 potential housing resolutions, so consideration needed to be given as to why those housing swaps had not been undertaken;
- Only a small number of those properties registered on the HomeSwapper site were under-occupied;
- Pilot aimed at encouraging more customers to register on HomeSwapper. Mail shot to be sent, followed by telephone calls to those with more 'desirable properties';
- Pilot will also include using functionality in HomeSwapper to suggest swaps, which will appear to users when they log in, making it easier for them to use the website.
- HomeSwapper was keen to work with the Council, and it was free of charge to make certain improvements to the app, where it was mutually beneficial

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

- The target audience was those who had expressed an interest in moving;
- Officers had chosen to send letters with information about the HomeSwapper scheme, as it was mainly elderly tenants who were under-occupied, and who may not have access to IT. Members would be informed when letters were sent in case there were queries from constituents. Follow-up telephone calls would be made and a phone tutorial offered to help with the website form completion;
- Expressing an interest in the HomeSwapper site would not affect a tenants place on the Housing Register – the two were entirely separate;
- Advice would be given to those registered to update either their profiles to advertise their properties better, for example, highlight good features of the house, to help prevent home swaps from falling through;
- There were 21,000 tenancies and limited staff in Tenancy Management Services who could ensure properties were maintained to a decent standard. The service was working smarter and pooling information on tenancies from different sections, for example, rent arrears team, repairs service. Some people did not report any repairs which could indicate issues in the house that tenants did not want anyone to see;
- In the past assistance had been given to help someone to move, for example, alerting service providers;
- The HomeSwapper scheme allowed people to move to other areas, not just the city.

The Chair welcomed the report and asked that when the pilot was completed a future report come back to the Commission.

AGREED:

that:

1. The report be noted;
2. The Director of Housing to provide the age profile of tenants with rent in arrears.
3. When the pilot was completed a future report to be brought

back to the Commission.

83. COUNCIL HOUSING VOIDS - A TASK GROUP REPORT TO THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION

The Scrutiny Policy Officer presented a report to the Commission on the work of the Council Housing Voids Task Group.

The Chair asked those present to note that during the course of the review, the task group had received a lot of co-operation from the department. The Director of Housing welcomed the report and thanked officers and Members involved in the preparation of the report.

The Chair also asked that the report be taken to Overview Select Committee for final approval in April 2017, and that the service bring a response to the recommendations back to a future meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Commission.

AGREED:

that:

1. The report be presented to the Overview Select Committee in April 2017;
2. A response to the recommendations contained in the report be brought to a future meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Commission.

84. WORK PROGRAMME

VOTE OF AGREED:

that the Work Programme of the Commission be updated and noted.

85. VOTE OF THANKS

The Chair briefly summarised the work of the Commission over the year and thanked officers and Members for their work and contributions.

Cllr Joshi on behalf of Members on the Commission thanked the Chair and Vice-Chair for their work, the Director of Housing and Assistant Mayor, and officers who had assisted the Commission over the year.

86. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7.50pm.

SCRUTINY COMMITTEES: TERMS OF REFERENCE

INTRODUCTION

Scrutiny Committees hold the executive and partners to account by reviewing and scrutinising policy and practices. Scrutiny Committees will have regard to the Political Conventions and the Scrutiny Operating Protocols and Handbook in fulfilling their work.

The Overview Select Committee and each Scrutiny Commission will perform the role as set out in Article 8 of the Constitution in relation to the functions set out in its Terms of Reference.

Scrutiny Committees may:-

- i. review and scrutinise the decisions made by and performance of the City Mayor, Executive, Committees and Council officers both in relation to individual decisions and over time.
 - ii. develop policy, generate ideas, review and scrutinise the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or particular service areas.
 - iii. question the City Mayor, members of the Executive, committees and Directors about their decisions and performance, whether generally in comparison with service plans and targets over a period of time, or in relation to particular decisions, initiatives or projects.
 - iv. make recommendations to the City Mayor, Executive, committees and the Council arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process.
 - v. review and scrutinise the performance of other public bodies in the area and invite reports from them by requesting them to address the Scrutiny Committee and local people about their activities and performance; and
 - vi. question and gather evidence from any person (with their consent).
- **Annual report:** The Overview Select Committee will report annually to Full Council on its work and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate. Scrutiny Commissions / committees will report from time to time as appropriate to Council.

The Scrutiny Committees which have currently been established by the Council in accordance with Article 8 of the Constitution are:

- Overview Select Committee (OSC)
- Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission
- Children, Young People and Schools Scrutiny Commission

- Economic Development, Transport and Tourism Scrutiny Commission
- Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Commission
- Heritage, Culture, Leisure and Sport Scrutiny Commission
- Housing Scrutiny Commission
- Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission

SCRUTINY COMMISSIONS

Scrutiny Commissions **will**:

- Be aligned with the appropriate Executive portfolio.
- Normally undertake overview of Executive work, reviewing items for Executive decision where it chooses.
- Engage in policy development within its remit.
- Normally be attended by the relevant Executive Member, who will be a standing invitee.
- Have their own work programme and will make recommendations to the Executive where appropriate.
- Consider requests by the Executive to carry forward items of work and report to the Executive as appropriate.
- Report on their work to Council from time to time as required.
- Be classed as specific Scrutiny Committees in terms of legislation but will refer cross cutting work to the OSC.
- Consider the training requirements of Members who undertake Scrutiny and seek to secure such training as appropriate.

East District Neighbourhood Area

2016/2017

Nick Griffiths

District Manager

East Neighbourhood Area

Thurncourt



Councillor
Tersa
Aldred

Councillor
Paul
Newcombe

Troon



Councillor Diane
Cank

Councillor
Baljit Singh

Humberstone & Hamilton



Councillor Vi
Dempster

Councillor
Rashmikanth Joshi

Councillor
Gurinder Singh
Sandu

North Evington



Councillor Luis
Fonseca

Councillor Jean
Kohote

Councillor Abdul
Razak Osman

Evington



Councillor Deepak
Bajaj

Councillor Ratilal
Govind

Councillor Sue
Hunter

Belgrave

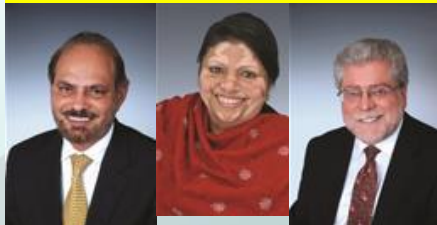


Councillor
Mansukhlal Chohan

Councillor
Majula Sood,
MBE

Councillor
John Thomas

Rushey Mead



Councillor
Piara Sing
Clair MBE

Councillor
Rita Patel

Councillor
Ross
Wilmott

Wycliffe

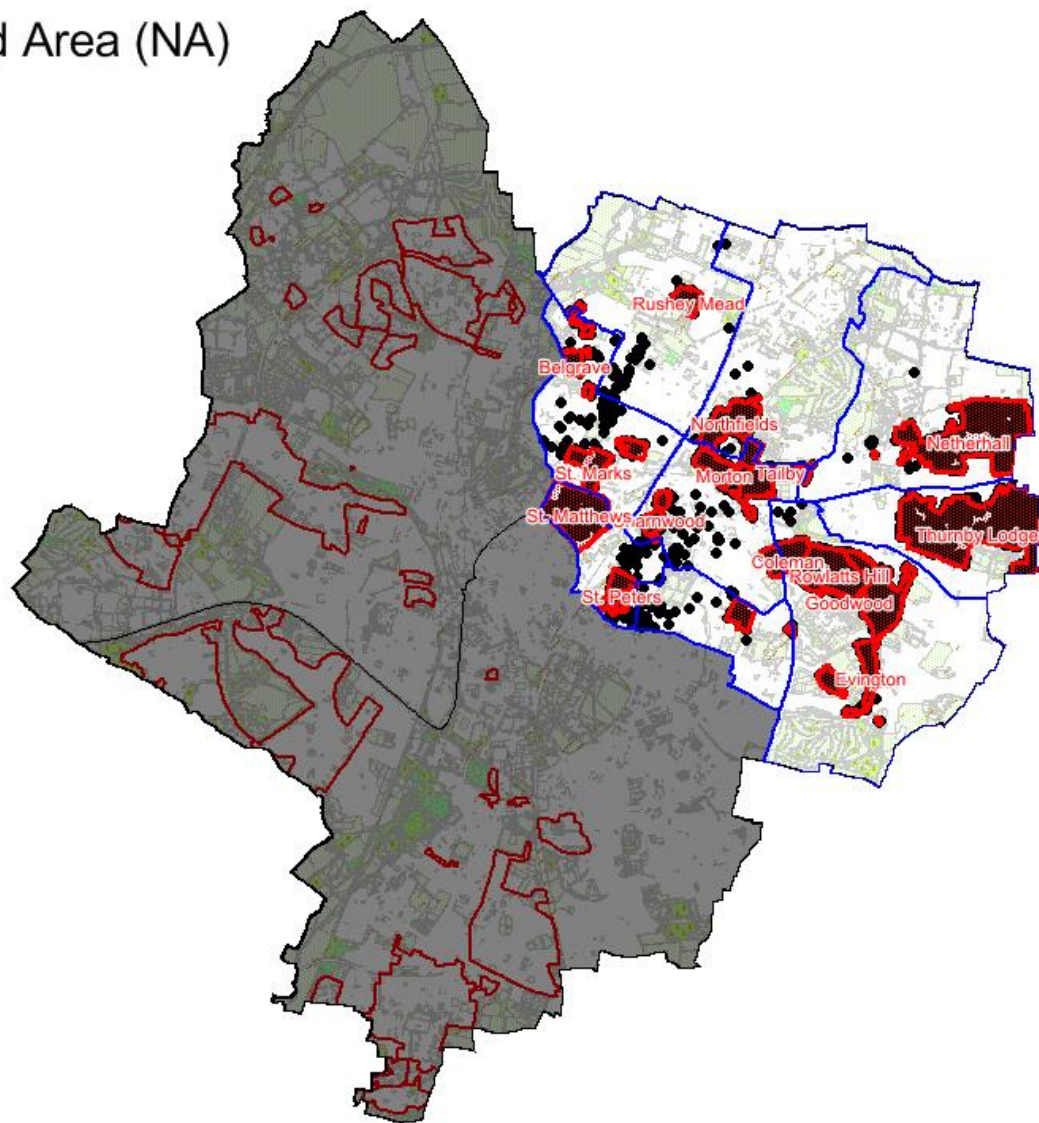


Councillor
Hanif Aqibany

Councillor
Mohammed Dawood

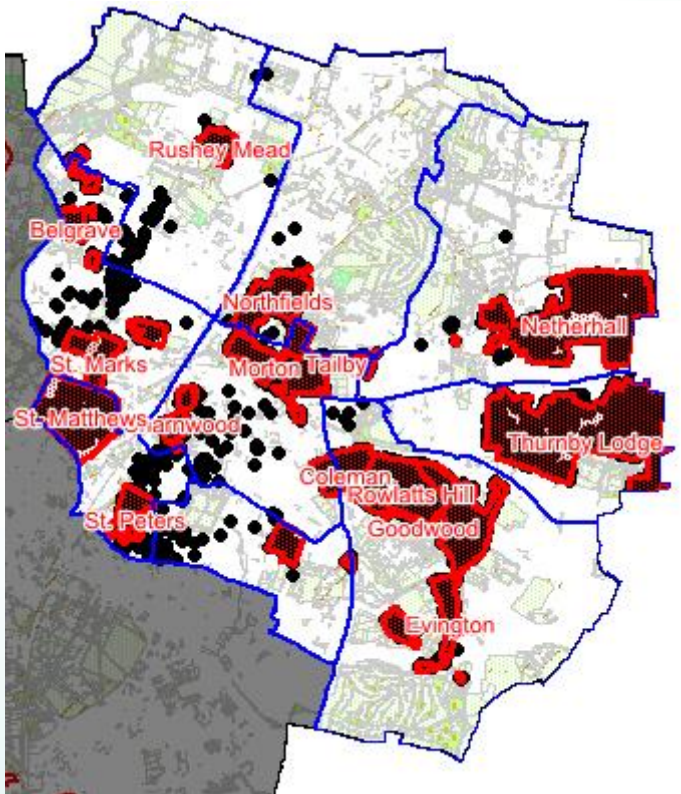
East Neighbourhood Area (NA)

- Council estates
- Council homes
- Wards



East Area - Housing

- c46,000 households
- 7600 council homes
- Estates:
 - St Matthews / St Marks
 - St Peters / Highfields
 - Thurnby Lodge
 - Netherhall
 - Northfields
 - Tailby and Morton
 - Rushey Mead
 - Rowlatts Hill
 - Belgrave
 - Evington



East NA - demographics

East Neighbourhood Area

- Religion
 - 27.9 % Hindu
 - 29.7% Muslim
- 50.9% describe themselves as Indian
- 40.7% report English not first language
- 12.6% state cannot speak English well or at all

South & West

- 6.3%
- 10.9%
- 2.4%
- 18.3%
- 3.8%

East – Deprivation

- Most deprived – St Matthews
 - 14th most deprived in Leicester
 - Next most deprived – Tailby Estate (18th in City)
 - Claydon Road, Martival and Portwey area
 - ¹⁴• Both neighbourhoods in most deprived 5% nationally
 - Fewer than for South or West
 - Average of ranks is lower than South
 - Least deprived – Maidenwell Road (Hamilton)
 - Ranked 185 out of 192
- (2015 Indices of Multiple Deprivation)

East Area – Council Housing

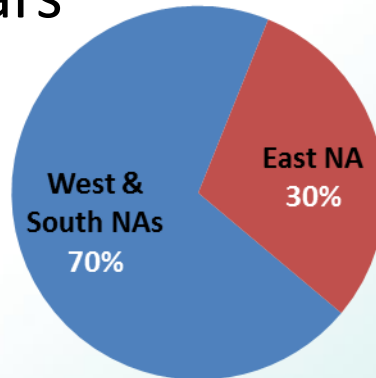
- Inner city high density
- High rise
- Outer estates – “traditional” 1930/1950/1960
- 20 % maisonettes (0.3% West & South)
- 38.7% households with dependent children
 - 29% for East and South
- Only 33.9% houses, 57% in West and South

East – Vacant Properties

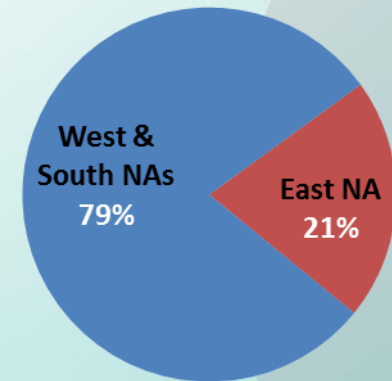
- 444 adverts in past year
- 17 of the 20 highest “bidded” properties were 2 bed
- ⇒ • Remaining 3 were 3 bed
- Bedsits- fewest bids
- Citywide data:
 - Bedsit 7.7 bids per advert
 - One beds 55.4 bids per advert

East NA – Data (36% housing stock)

- Rent Arrears



- ASB



- 30 % of City arrears
- 31% of East NA arrears are in Wycliffe Ward
- 2015/16 – 18 evictions
 - 3 family, 15 single
- To Dec2016 - 17 evictions
 - 5 family, 12 single

- 2015 year
 - 192 cases
 - 917 citywide (c 20%)
- 34% nuisance
- 32 % conflict with neighbour
- No ASB evictions between April 2015 – Dec 2016

East NA - Summary

- High density
- Emerging communities
 - 35% Asian households
 - 5.1 % West & South
- Language barriers
- Lack of houses
- Overall deprivation

But

- Low ASB
- Average Rent arrears
- Main problem seems to be parking !

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East NA – Capital investment

	Boilers	Electrical Improvements	Kitchens/Bath's	Upvc Windows/Doors	Re-roofing	Upvc Fascias/Soffits	Total Spend/properties
Humberstone	£381,660	£306,900	£130,000	£0	£10,000	£0	£828,560
Properties		198	26	0	2	0	226
Rowallts Hill	£442,954	£263,500	£205,000	£4,000	£5,000	£285,600	£1,206,054
Properties		170	41	1	1	84	297
Central East	£166,560	£12,400	£300,000	£4,000	£5,000	£34,000	£521,960
Properties		8	60	1	1	10	80
Total spend	£991,173	£582,800	£635,000	£8,000	£20,000	£319,600	£2,556,573
Total properties		376	127	2	4	94	603

St Peters Refurbishment

- 4 x blocks
- £10 m capital, est 6 years
- Framland & Clipstone – complete
- Gordon due June 2017
- 20 • Maxfield – commencing Sept 17
 - Internal alterations
 - Renew heating
 - New kitchen and bathroom
 - Asbestos removal
- Carrying out fire safety works at same time
- Decision pending on Goscote.

Environmental Projects completed

Included

- Parking spaces
- Bulb planting
- Multi-use area
- Fencing
- Bins and bin stores
- Communal painting
- Flooring

21

From this....



To this



Ontario Close, St Matthews

Spring has sprung



Charnwood Walk

Now you see it

24



Now you don't

25



Beatty Avenue

Rona Gardens

26



Bowhill Grove

Open grass area

Unightly

Mud

Not inviting





Improved



Redwood Walk

Internal Improvements

30

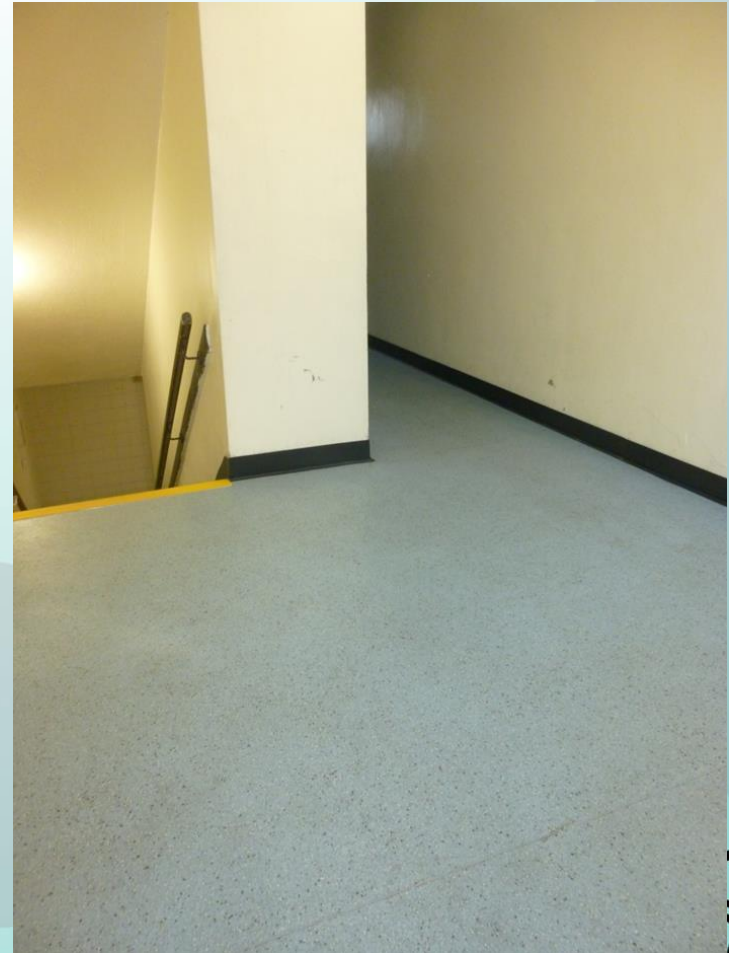


Old and tired



Refreshed

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2017/ 2018

Proposed Projects (examples)

- Parking on Chester Close.
- New gates Everest Court / Bellholme Close.
- Repainting bin room doors.
- Rendering to maisonettes.
- Parking in Charnwood.
- Additional lighting.
- Resurfacing paths in Netherhall.
- Bulb planting in Morton.
- Internal painting.
- Fencing to green areas.
- Lighting to bungalows.
- Landscaping.

Estimated spend – 2017/18

Environmental Improvement Budget

- Wycliffe • £120,000
- North Evington • £61,000
- Humberstone/Hamilton • £10,000
- Troon • £20,000
- Thurncourt • £55,000
- Evington • £12,500

Questions



Housing Scrutiny Commission

The approach to the Refurbishment of Goscote House

Assistant Mayor for Housing: Cllr Andy Connelly

Lead director: Chris Burgin

Date: 10th. July 2017



City Mayor
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Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: Wycliffe
- Report author: Simon Nicholls
- Author contact details: simon.nicholls@leicester.gov.uk
- Report version number: V.1

1. Summary

The purpose of this report is to inform members of the Housing Scrutiny Commission on the proposed plans for the future use of Goscote House and to seek their views on the proposals.

2. Background

Tower block refurbishment project.

The Housing Division have embarked on a project to refurbish 4 tower blocks on St Peters estate, the refurbishment of the 4th block is due to start in September 2017 and is expected to be complete in June 2018. The refurbishments that have already been completed have been well received.

The refurbishment of Goscote House.

Because Goscote House was constructed differently to the other four blocks and presents different challenges, it was agreed that a consultant would be appointed to carry out an assessment of its current condition, and recommend proposals for either its future use or disposal. As a result of this report it has been agreed that Goscote House will be refurbished and reconfigured to provide 1, 2 and 3 bedroomed flats and that it will have a full time concierge service.

The original layout had up to 7 units of accommodation on each floor which included bedsits. The proposed layout has removed these bedsits and increase the number of two bedroom flats, the net effect being an overall reduction in the total number of flats from 134 to 101.

Existing layout



AS EXISTING
5th FLOOR LEVEL
SCALE 1:50

- KEY**
- Bedsit Type A
 - Bedsit Type B
 - 1 bedroom flat
 - 2 bedroom flat
- 7 dwelling units – 8 bedrooms

Proposed layout



AS PROPOSED
5th FLOOR LEVEL
SCALE 1:50

KEY

- 1 bed flat (unchanged)
 - 2 bed flat (created from Type A and Type B bedsit)
 - 2 bed flat (unchanged)
- 5 dwelling units – 8 bedrooms

The approach to the refurbishment:

The last of the four original blocks is now being refurbished so we are in a position to progress the refurbishment of Goscote House.

It is proposed to do this in two separate stages; this report will focus on the first stage, the pre-construction phase.

Pre-construction phase:

This is the work that we need to do to ensure that we appoint a competent contractor to physically do the building work.

1. Agree and carry out any necessary capital works to the block to ensure ongoing compliance.
2. Prepare the design brief to be used for the appointment of a consultant who will prepare the tender documentation.
3. Agree the timescales for the de commissioning of the block
4. Agree the budget
5. Agree the pre-construction phase project team.

Capital works.

Goscote House is of interest to the Fire Service because there have been localised fires in the recent past and several false activations of the communal fire alarm. Work to rectify these issues have been carried out and funded from the existing capital budget for fire safety works. There is a current fire risk assessment which supports the works that are being carried out.

A sprinkler system will be installed as part of the refurbishment/reconfiguration works.

Prepare the design brief:

The design brief is important because it will set out what we want to happen to Goscote House and tell the contractor what to do. This will be carried out by our in house Technical Services Team.

Timescale for the de commissioning of the block.

This is very important, we need to make sure the block is empty so that we can carry out the refurbishment but we don't want to have it empty for too long because we will be losing out on income. We also need to use some of the flats as temporary homes for those tenants whose flats are being refurbished at Maxfield House. The tenants that currently live in the bedsit will lose their homes as part of the reconfiguration works so we need to make permanent provision for them elsewhere.

What we know so far:

There are:

94 permanent tenants
5 vacant flats

34 flats being used as temporary accommodation.
(1 flat has been decommissioned due to fire safety concerns)

What will happen as a result of the reconfiguration:

Type	Existing	Proposed
Bedsit	73	0
1 bedroomed flat	38	39
2 bedroomed flat	19	57
3 bedroomed flat	0	5
4 bedroomed flat	4	0
Total	134	101

Any existing tenants that are unable to move back after the reconfiguration of the block will receive a home loss payment of £5,500.

It is proposed to reduce the financial impact to relet the vacant flats on a short term basis (explore temporary lets) and to use the decant flats as temporary homes for the residents of Maxfield House and then decommission them from October 2018 (approximate date we will start to empty the block)

It is anticipated that refurbishment/reconfiguration works are expected to cost £5.9m

Potential loss of rent will be £200k, based on decants being decommissioned in October 2018 and tenanted flats being decommissioned in January 2019. (A decision will be made on the financial viability of each let when a flat becomes void). The rent loss figure does not include the lost rent during the construction phase. The appointing of consultants to produce the tender documents is estimated to be £100k

The next steps involve appointing a consultant to prepare the full detailed specification (it will include the fitting of a sprinkler system) and work on the detail of the project plan including agreeing the process for decommissioning the block.

4. Details of Scrutiny

This report will be presented to the HSC on the 10th July 2017

5. Financial, legal and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

The total cost of refurbishing and reconfiguring Goscote House is estimated to be £5.9m (as detailed within the report). Rent loss during the refurbishment stage will be offset by other dwellings in the tower block re-development programme coming back into use. Rent loss will also occur for the period of time prior to decommissioning the building when properties become void, and has been estimated at £200k. As noted within the report, efforts can be made to minimise these cost by letting properties on a

temporary basis when they become available.

In relation to funding, £1.2m can be made available from within the capital programme by reprofiling work on kitchens, bathrooms and rewires. The remaining £4.7m can be funded from the Major Repairs Fund (within HRA reserves) which exists to fund spikes in capital expenditure that cannot be met from in-year rents. The HRA earns interest on reserve balances so would lose approximately £24k per year by using them to fund the refurbishment. Using reserves also has an opportunity cost since they are not then available for any other purpose.

Following refurbishment and reconfiguration it has been estimated that annual rental income will be £60k-£70k lower than currently, due to the reduction in the number of dwellings. However, void levels will be reduced by having properties that meet current demands.

Stuart McAvoy – Principal Accountant (Housing) 37 4004

5.2 Legal implications

Any proposed refurbishment works and the appointment of the consultant identified in this report may be subject to the Public Contracts Regulations 2015- (“Regulations”) and the Council’s Contract Procedure Rules and as such the Council’s Procurement team and Legal services will need to be engaged to provide advice and ensure such works are procured in accordance with the Regulations.

Seema Patel- Solicitor, 37 1406

The Council is under a statutory duty to ensure the health and safety both of their tenants and other users/workers and occupiers of their premises under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (as amended). In addition the Council is required to ensure its homes meet the Government’s Decent Homes Standard in respect of their dwelling being free of those defined as Category 1 hazards. Any works to the property in respect of refurbishment should be to a standard to ensure the future health and safety of the tenants and residents and other users of the property.

In respect of potential home loss payments, these will be payable to qualifying tenants on termination of their tenancies pursuant to s.29 of the Land Compensation Act 1973 (as amended) and at the amounts prescribed by the Home Loss Payments (Prescribed Amounts) (England) Regulations 2016. The Council may rely on the appropriate grounds for possession as contained in Schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1985 (as amended) subject to suitable alternative accommodation being available. Legal Services will continue to provide advice during the course of this project.

John McIvor. Principal Lawyer (Commercial, Property & Planning Team)

5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

None sought

5.4 Equalities Implications

None sought

6. Background information and other papers:

n/a

7. Summary of appendices:

n/a

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

No

Rent Arrears Progress Report

April 2016 to March 2017

Housing Scrutiny Commission: 3rd July 2017

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

Useful information

Ward(s) affected: ALL

Report author: Vijay Desor, Zenab Valli

Author contact details: Vijay.desor@leicester.gov.uk Ext 37 5177

Report version number: V1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the Scrutiny Commission of progress in the above area of work over the full financial year, from April 2016 to March 2017.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The cash amount owing as at 3rd April 2017 was £1.461m, this is 4.7% **lower** than at the end of the previous financial year – see 3.1, table 2.
- 2.2 The number of tenants in serious debt, (owing more than 7 weeks rent) was 1,205, some 11.8% **lower** than last year – see 3.5, table 4.
- 2.3 For the financial year from April 2016 to March 2017, c. £1.12m **extra rent** was collectable as a result of the “bedroom tax.” see 3.16 below.
- 2.4 £326,386 was paid by Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP’s) for all Council tenants, of which £207,968 was for those affected by the Bedroom Tax, from April 2016 to March 2017. This compares to about £203k for Bedroom Tax the previous year.
- 2.5 The arrears among those affected by the Bedroom Tax **fell by £51,528** from £183,159 to £131,630 over the course of the 2016/17 financial year.
- 2.6 There were 54 evictions in 2016/17, compared to 52 the previous year. This is an increase of 3.8%. Out of 20,702 live Council tenancies at the end of the year, this would amount to just 0.26% of all tenants being evicted in the year.

3. REPORT

Rent Arrears

- 3.1 Rent arrears at the end of each quarter for the financial year 2016/17:

Table 1. Quarterly Arrears

Period	Arrears at end of quarter
Quarter 1	£1,793,931
Quarter 2	£1,808,214
Quarter 3	£1,191,775
Quarter 4	£1,461,354

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

Table 2 year end (quarter 4's) figures

Period	Arrears at end of financial year
2013/14	£ 1,545,119
2014/15	£ 1,537,967
2015/16	£ 1,532,816
2016/17	£1,461,354

- 3.3 There is a clear seasonal trend for rent arrears to increase in the first part of the year, falling rapidly towards the latter part of the financial year. The rent collection figures for Leicester remain good in comparison with other authorities.
- 3.4 Rents were reduced by 1.0% on average in April 2016. The arrears fell slightly between April 2016 and March 2017 by 4.7%, compared to a decrease of 0.3% over the same period in 2015/16. This shows that arrears performance has improved over the previous year.

Number of Cases

- 3.5 After removing monthly payers (i.e. Direct Debits, Wage Stops, Arrears Direct (DWP), Bank Standing Orders) the number of tenants with rent arrears is shown in tables 3 & 4 below:

Table 3. Breakdown of Arrears Cases by Quarter end 2016-17

Period	Owing 7 Weeks or more Net **
Quarter 1	1,462
Quarter 2	1,492
Quarter 3	1,839
Quarter 4	1,205

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

***Those owing 7 weeks or more rent are included within the figure for owing 2 weeks or more.*

Table 4. Breakdown of Arrears Cases by Year Ends

Period	Owing 7 Weeks or more Net **
2013/14	1,841
2014/15	1,438
2015/16	1,366
2016/17	1,205

- 3.6 The number of cases in arrears decreased by 11.8% over the previous year end figure. There is a lot of variability in these figures, but the overall trend is reducing.

Arrears per Tenancy

- 3.7 The total arrears divided by the total number of tenancies are shown in tables 5 & 6 below:

Table 5. Average debt by quarter end 2016/17

Period	Average Debt
Quarter 1	£85.50
Quarter 2	£86.59
Quarter 3	£57.42
Quarter 4	£70.59

Table 6. Average debt by year end (Quarter 4)

Date	Average Debt
2013/14	£72.44
2014/15	£72.27
2015/16	£72.59
2016/17	£70.59

- 3.8 These tables (5 & 6) reflect the decrease in the actual rent arrears over the period. As can be seen, arrears have been stable over three of the past four years but reduced this year. This figure is usually at its lowest point at the end of Q3, immediately after the two 'rent free' weeks.

Highest 10% of Debt (by value)

- 3.9 Tables 7 and 8 below shows the highest 10% of arrears cases:

Table 7 Highest 10% of arrears cases by quarter – end 2016/17

Period	No.Cases	Highest arrears case (of the top 10%)	Lowest arrears case (of the top 10%)	Average	Total Value
Quarter 1	927	£2,840	£447	£719	£666,353
Quarter 2	917	£2,846	£459	£732	£671,272
Quarter 3	595	£2,995	£439	£732	£436,043
Quarter 4	659	£2,758	£458	£728	£479,384

Table 8 Highest 10% of arrears cases by year-end

Period	No.Cases	Highest Case (of 10%)	Lowest Case (of 10%)	Average	Total Value
2013/14	810	£3,119	£460	£757	£613,186
2014/15	737	£2,607	£452	£745	£550,429
2015/16	776	£3,250	£420	£744	£678,231
2016/17	659	£2,758	£458	£728	£479,384

- 3.10 Table 7 shows that the highest arrears cases have been varying over several years. Due to the volatility of these figures it is difficult to make a clear conclusion from them. However, the average value per case has reduced over the past 3 years, which corresponds with other figures for the same period.

Rent Arrears Comparison with 2015/16

- 3.11 At the start of the year 2016/17 the arrears were running consistently over £100k higher than 2015/16. However, the performance improved by the end of the year and the arrears reduced significantly making them lower than the previous year.
- 3.12 Appendix 1 shows the detailed comparison of rent arrears in the form of a graph for 2016/17, 2015/16 and 2014/15.

Impact of the Bedroom Tax (BT)

- 3.13 When the Bedroom Tax was introduced (April 2013), 12% (2,701) of our tenants were affected by the bedroom tax and 39% (1,044) of these were already in rent arrears.
- 3.14 From the 2,701 cases that were originally identified, by April 2017 the number of active cases had reduced to 1395. This is because the numbers affected are constantly changing as people come out of the bedroom tax, and new cases arise, due to changes in household composition or financial circumstances.
- 3.15 The actual extra rent charged by the end of 2016/17 financial year was **£1.12m**.

What we do know about Bedroom Tax cases is:

- 116 tenancies had terminated between April 2016 and March 2017.
- In April 2016, there were 53% of affected tenants in arrears. This fell to 52% by end of March 2017 (726 out of 1,395).
- For the year from April 2016 to March 2017, a total of £326,386 of Discretionary Housing Payments had been received on behalf of all Council tenants, of which £207,968 was for bedroom tax cases. This compares to £258,356 and £202,915 respectively last year.
- The arrears among those affected by the Bedroom Tax have decreased by about £51k over the course of the 2016/17 financial year.
- These numbers will continue to change as the situation evolves.

Impact of Benefit Income Cap (BIC)

- 3.16 The BIC threshold decreased from £26k per year for families outside London to £20k per year in the year 2016/17. The 1st tranche affected those that were already existing cases from November 2016 and the 2nd tranche affected those who had previously not been affected by the BIC from January 2017.
- 3.17 An estimated 83 LCC tenants were affected by the BIC at the start of April 2016, increasing to 188 by the end of March 2017, an average across the year of 135.5. The average loss of Housing Benefits for this group was £56.60 per week.
- 3.18 For the year from April 2016 to March 2017, this would equate to an extra collectable rent of about £383k.
- 3.19 The arrears among those affected by the Benefit Income Cap have increased by **£31,229** (or 226%) over the course of the 2016/17 financial year, from £13,809 to £45,037. The significant increase in arrears and extra collectable rent is following the introduction of the lowering of the cap amounts. This brought many more households into range of the BIC.

Proportion of Rent Collected

- 3.20 The Income management team had a key performance management target to ensure the proportion of rent collected at the end of the financial year is 99.1%. The proportion of rent collected between April and March 2017 was 99.26%, which is above target

Evictions

- 3.21 There were 54 evictions carried out for non-payment of rent from April 2016 to March 2017.
- 3.22 This compares to 52 evictions in whole of the previous year.
- 3.23 Of the 54 evictions, 13 were family cases, 1 was a childless couple, and 40 were single people.
- 3.24 There were 6 evictions whose debt included some Bedroom Tax.
- 3.25 Only 11% (6 out of 54) of the evictions were directly affected by the impact of Welfare Reforms. Bedroom Tax and BIC cases account for about 10% of all tenants. The majority of evictions, along with the majority of the rent debt, occurred among the 90% of tenants NOT directly affected by Welfare Reforms.

4. Priorities for Income Management Team 2017/18

4.1 The priorities identified for the coming year are:

Welfare Reform (WR) changes:

- ❖ Training all housing staff to respond to future changes including Universal Credit (FULL SERVICE), the capping of social housing rents for under 35's, Under 21 year old's nil HB entitlement and Fixed Term tenancies.
- ❖ Raising awareness among LCC tenants including targeted contacts to those affected by Welfare Reform changes.
- ❖ Establishing protocols with DWP to help sustain vulnerable tenancies through Alternative Payment Arrangements.
- ❖ Adapt working practices to meet challenges faced in maximising income collection.

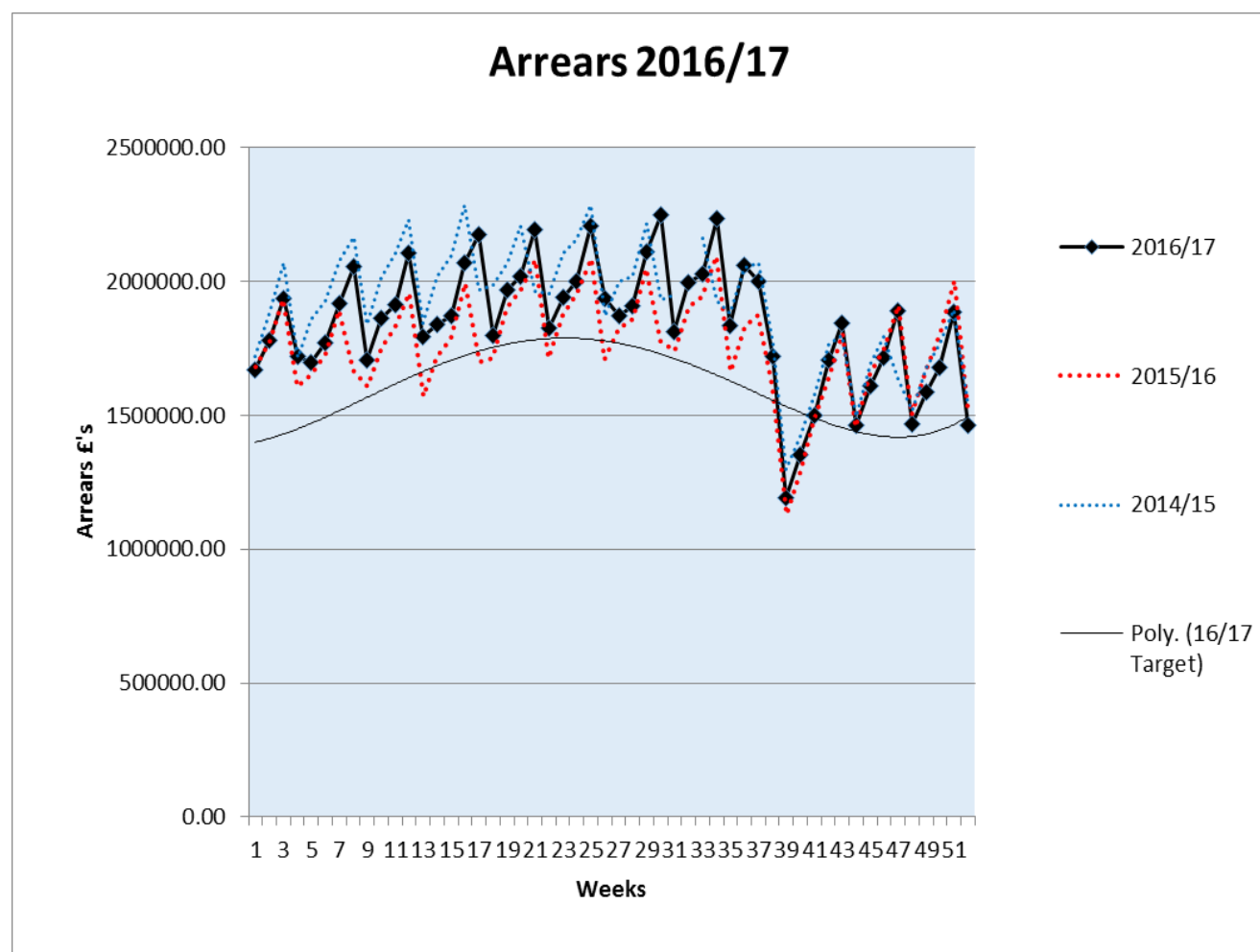
Modernise ways of working:

- ❖ Introduction of paperless direct debit facility – making it easier for tenants to set up DD arrangements via IMT
- ❖ Developing and introducing a web based Rent Self –Serve facility that will allow tenants access to their rent statements and arrears balance instantly
- ❖ Develop smarter ways of customer contacts including use of social media platforms e.g. mobile phone applications, text messaging, QR code scanning, email use etc.

5. REPORT AUTHORS

5.1 Vijay Desor, Head of Service, tel.37 5177
Zenab Valli, Interim Income Collection Manager, tel.37 3573

Appendix 1 Rent Arrears Comparison With Last Year



GLOSSARY

Gross annual rent. This is the total amount due on a property over the course of a year. E.g. if the average rent is £78, times 22,000 properties, times 50 payable weeks = approximately £86m.

Collectable rent – the gross annual rent, plus the carried forward arrears, less Housing Benefit payments, less void loss or any other miscellaneous income. E.g. £86m (gross rent), plus £1.3m arrears, minus £50m Housing Benefit, minus £2m void loss, less £250k miscellaneous income, EQUALS £35.05m actual cash to be collected from tenants.

The percentage of rent collected shown is based on the proportion of gross rent, less void loss and miscellaneous income that has been received. HB received is included in this calculation, as is the arrears carried forward. This figure is used for comparative purposes only.

Poly.(Polynomial) – a statistical function used to generate a curved target line that reflects the established annual trend.

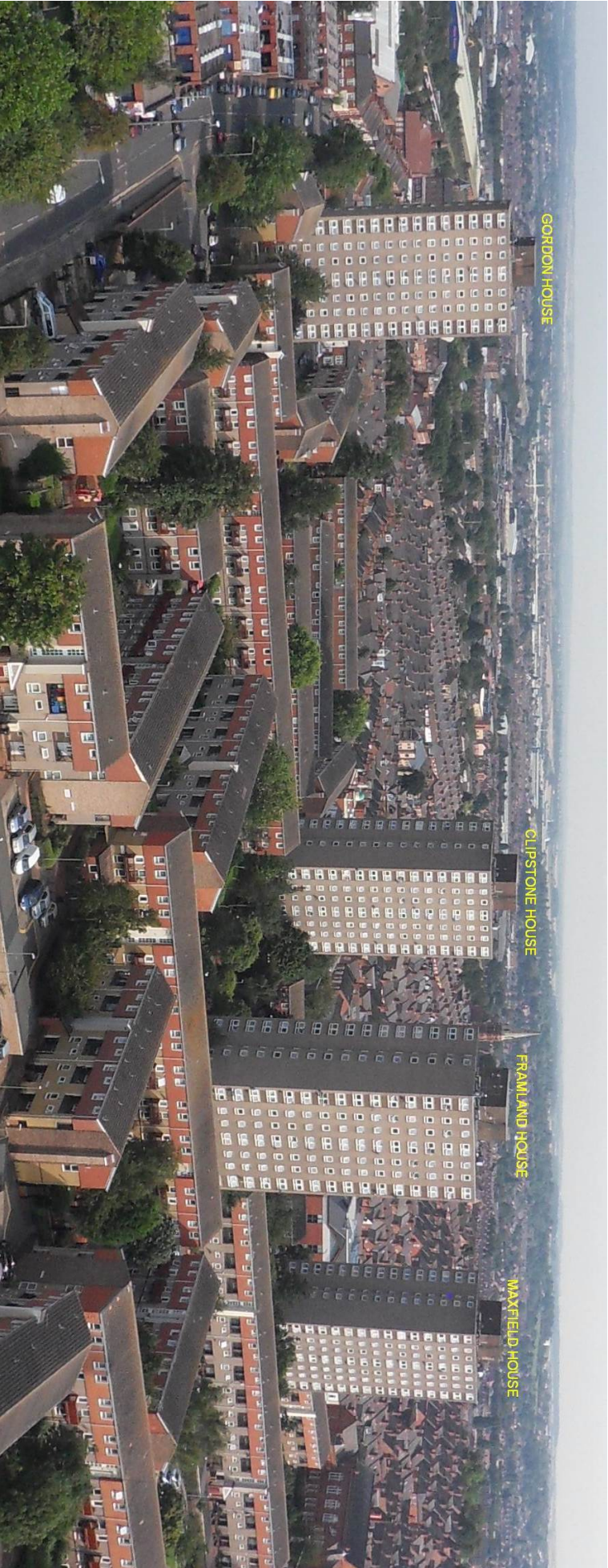
Housing Scrutiny Commission

Tower Block Fire Safety Update

Assistant Mayor for Housing Andy Connelly

Lead director: Chris Burgin

Date: 10th. July 2017



Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: Castle
- Report author: Simon Nicholls
- Author contact details: simon.nicholls@leicester.gov.uk
- Report version number: V.2

1. Summary

The Housing Division has 6 high rise blocks of flats in the city

The ongoing tower block refurbishment project has addressed any outstanding issues relating to fire safety in the four blocks on St Peters estate. Goscote House is due to be refurbished in 2019 (it is supported by a current fire risk assessment). St Leonards Court has been recently upgraded independently of the tower block refurbishment project.

2. Recommendations

This report is for information only.

3. Supporting information including options considered:

Tower block fire safety

The 6 council owned tower blocks are:

Block	No. of Storeys	No of flats in block	built
Goscote House	22	133	1973
Gordon House	17	87	1973
Clipstone House	17	85	1972
Maxfield House	17	85	1972
Framland House	17	85	1973
St. Leonards Court	11	31	1967

No block has external wall insulation fitted.

No block has sprinklers fitted. The decision has been made that sprinkler systems will be fitted as part of the refurbishment project to those blocks waiting for refurbishment and retro fitted in blocks that have been refurbished.

All blocks have a stay put policy. This will be reviewed in association with the Fire Service.

All blocks have a current fire risk assessment.

All blocks have weekly fire safety inspections.

There is **no** gas in the blocks.

Gordon House, Framland House and Clipstone House have all been recently refurbished which included the upgrading of the passive fire protection, for example the renewal of all the internal fire doors, bin chute doors, flat front doors and emergency lighting systems. Gordon House is currently empty waiting to be re occupied.

Maxfield House has had the passive fire protection replaced as per the other 3 blocks but we are now in the process of moving the tenants out so that the other aspects of the refurbishment can take place, e.g. the installation of new heating and hot water systems (not gas), kitchen and bathrooms etc.

Goscote House is due to be refurbished in early 2019, in the interim the decision has been taken not to offer any new lets, this will reduce occupancy, reduce the risk and help with the final decommissioning of the block prior to the start of the refurbishment/reconfiguration works. Goscote House will have a full time concierge service once refurbished.

St Leonards Court has had its communal areas refurbished which included the passive fire protection. The only item that remains outstanding is the addition of a second lift, it is hoped that this will be started during the current financial year. It is not planned to carry out a full refurbishment of the other parts.

What we have done to reassure the tenants living in the tower blocks.

As a result of the fire the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service produced a press release to reassure the residents of high rise blocks in Leicestershire, this was hand delivered to all our tower block residents by locally based staff.

The following day a letter was delivered to our tower block residents from the Assistant Mayor for Housing offering information and guidance.

Locally based tenancy management staff have been available to answer questions and concerns that residents may have.(we have had very few)

A series of events is to be held by the LFRS at all tower blocks, the first Housing block event is on the 30th. June at Clipstone House, it will answer questions residents may have about fire safety. Housing staff will be on hand to answer any tenancy management related questions and deal proactively with concerns that individual tenants have.

Every tenant in the tower blocks will be visited individually by Housing staff to check that they know how to check their smoke alarms and help to address any concerns they have.

General fire safety

We have a number of different types of units with communal areas, these include flats, maisonettes, units in sheltered accommodation, flats in tower blocks and houses in multiple occupation. The level of fire safety works vary from unit to unit depending on the level of risk.

All of our units have inspections carried out and the frequency depends on the level of

risk, tower blocks have weekly inspections but a low level purposed built blocks are inspected every month. These inspections are undertaken by the Assistant Housing Officers.

We have a planned programme to undertake Fire Risk Assessments to all of our units with shared communal spaces. The FRA identifies the level of risk in the unit and it will also identify any fire safety works that will be required. An action plan is then developed to address any issues raised.

Fire alarms are only fitted where the Fire Risk Assessments supports this.

We have a Zero Tolerance Policy for any items that are left in the communal areas.

4. Details of Scrutiny

Report prepared at the request of the Housing Scrutiny Commission



HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18			
MEETING DATE	MEETING ITEMS	LEAD OFFICER	ACTION AGREED
Meeting Date 10 th July 2017 Agenda Date: 14 th June 2017 Papers despatch: 29 th June 2017	Goscote House – future use Rent Arrears Qtr. 4 plus update District Managers’ presentation – 12 month changes and challenges Fire safety update	Simon Nicholls Vijay Desor Nick Griffiths Chris Burgin	
Meeting Date 14 th August 2017 Agenda Date: 26 th July 2017 Papers despatch: 3 rd August 2017	Voids performance report Who Gets Social Housing Mutual Exchange Under/Over occupation pilot update Repairs Service performance report Customer Services - Update	Simon Nicholls Caroline Carpendale Caroline Carpendale Ian Craig Alison Musgrove	
Meeting Date 18 th September 2017 Agenda Date: 30 th August Papers despatch: 7 th September 2017	Rent Arrears Q1 performance report Channel Shift & Northgate update Homeless draft Strategy (2018 – 2023) House Building update including Affordable Housing	Vijay Desor Charlotte McGraw Caroline Carpendale Simon Nicholls	



<p>Meeting Date 27th November 2017</p> <p>Agenda Date: 8th November 2017</p> <p>Papers despatch: 16th November 2017</p>	<p>Voids performance report</p> <p>Homeless Service performance report</p> <p>Technical Services Programme update</p> <p>HRA Savings – HTP3 Update including a breakdown of existing budget contributions</p>	<p>Simon Nicholls</p> <p>Caroline Carpendale</p> <p>Phil Davison</p> <p>Chris Burgin</p>	
<p>Special Meeting Date 18th December 2017</p> <p>Papers despatch: 7th December 2017</p>	<p>HRA Budget Report</p>	<p>Chris Burgin</p>	
<p>Meeting Date 15th January 2018</p> <p>Agenda Date: 20th December 2017</p> <p>Papers despatch: 4th January 2018</p>	<p>Rent Arrears Q2 + Q3 performance report</p> <p>Customer Services Service performance report</p> <p>District Performance & Priorities report (covering all 3 areas)</p> <p>ASB Service review</p>	<p>Vijay Desor</p> <p>Alison Musgrove</p> <p>Suki Supria</p> <p>Suki Supria</p>	
<p>Meeting Date 12th March 2018</p> <p>Agenda Date: 21st February 2018</p> <p>Papers despatch: 1st March 2018</p>	<p>Voids performance report</p> <p>Repairs performance report</p>	<p>Simon Nicholls</p> <p>Ian Craig</p>	



To be allocated
2017/18

Housing & Planning Act – Flexible tenancies
Decorating Allowance Scheme
Repairs Service – Jobs not completed first visit
(potential Scrutiny task group)
Private landlords (Register/Licencing Scheme)
– (potential visit and meeting with team)
Conditions of Tenancy – consultation

Vijay Desor
Simon Nicholls
Ian Craig
Caroline Carpendale
Vijay Desor

