



Leicester  
City Council

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

**DATE: MONDAY, 5 AUGUST 2019**

**TIME: 5:30 pm**

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

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

Councillor Westley (Chair)

Councillor Nangreave (Vice Chair)

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

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

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*

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### Further information

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

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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 11<sup>th</sup> March 2019 have been circulated, 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 2019/20**

Members are asked to note the membership of the Commission for 2019/20:

Councillor Westley (Chair)  
Councillor Nangreave (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Aqbany  
Councillor Gee  
Councillor O'Donnell  
Councillor Pickering  
Councillor Willmott  
(1 non-grouped place currently unallocated)

#### **6. DATES OF MEETINGS FOR THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION 2019/20**

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

2019/20 municipal year are currently scheduled as follows, all to take place on Mondays at 5.30pm:

5 August 2019  
16 September 2019  
4 November 2019  
6 January 2020  
17 February 2020  
20 April 2020

**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. MANIFESTO HOUSING COMMITMENTS**

The Chair will provide details of the manifesto programme relating to the Commission's remit.

**10. RENT ARREARS PROGRESS REPORT - APRIL 2018 TO MARCH 2019** [Appendix C](#)

The Director of Housing submits a report to the Housing Scrutiny Commission of progress on rent arrears from April 2018 to March 2019.

**11. EMPTY HOMES: UPDATE REPORT** [Appendix D](#)

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

**12. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE** [Appendix E](#)

The Director of Housing submits a presentation to the Scrutiny Commission on the ongoing work to implement to the Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023 since the last report to Housing Scrutiny in November 2018.

**13. TENANTS FORUM MEETING NOTES** [Appendix F](#)

The Scrutiny Policy Officer submits for noting the Tenants' and Leaseholders Forum Meeting Notes from 6<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

**14. TASK GROUPS**

Members are invited to propose topics for review.

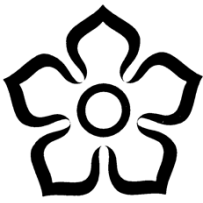
**15. WORK PROGRAMME**

**Appendix G**

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

**16. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**





Leicester  
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the  
HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: MONDAY, 11 MARCH 2019 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Westley (Chair)  
Councillor Alfonso (Vice Chair)

Councillor Aqbany  
Councillor Corral

Councillor Newcombe  
Councillor Willmott

In Attendance

Councillor Connelly – Assistant Mayor for Housing

\* \* \* \* \*

**68. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Joshi.

**69. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Chair thanked the Director of Housing and all officers who had prepared reports, presented them at meetings and answered questions.

The Chair said there were issues that continued to concern the Commission Members, including the erosion of badly-needed affordable social rented housing in a low-wage economy in Leicester. He added there were worries about the impact of Universal Credit. Other issues included repairs and maintenance management and the need to modernise IT systems to make the work more effective and efficient. Also there remained concern over voids and the time taken to get them back into occupation.

**70. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

Members stated their declarations were included on each Councillor's Register of Interests and there were no further declarations to be made.

## **71. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

AGREED:

That the minutes of the Housing Scrutiny Commission meeting held on 7 January 2019 be confirmed as a correct record.

## **72. PETITIONS**

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been received.

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

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

## **74. RENT ARREARS PROGRESS REPORT - OCTOBER 2018 TO DECEMBER 2018**

The Director of Housing submitted a report on progress over the third quarter from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018 to 30<sup>th</sup> December 2018. Scrutiny Commission Members were asked to note the report.

Zenab Valli, Income Collection Manager, presented the report, and the following points were made and Members' questions answered:

- Rent collection was at 99.69% in line with the year-end target.
- The number of cases owing seven weeks rent or more was higher by 23% compared to the third quarter for 2017/18.
- The transfer to Universal Credit (UC) could cause an initial spike in rent arrears due to the 1,270 tenants who had made new claims, 75% of whom had pre-existing rent arrears at an average of £209. It was too early to say if it would be a long-term issue. The team were working with local Job Centre Plus staff to help mitigate the risk of UC on rent arrears. The team have good working relationships with the DWP Service Centre and they were granted the Trusted Partner status which means IMT can verify Housing costs quickly to prevent delays and also allows us to request APA's and deductions from benefits.
- Four Rent Management Advisors had been recruited to support vulnerable tenants, or those with complex needs claiming UC, during which time they received 544 referrals for period June up to Dec 2018 most of which have been short-term and generalist advice. Around 98 council tenants required more long-term support which the Officers are providing. RMA's were supporting tenants with the setup of email accounts, Clockwise Rent payment Accounts and supporting with the UC new claim process and management of claims.
- The team continued to co-locate from the local Job Centre Plus to upskill JCP staff with housing knowledge and also to meet tenants attending their claimant commitment interviews to help mitigate risks of rent arrears. For the period June to Dec 2018 a total of 613 UC Claimants were seen and 44% of those were council tenants. The pilot had been under review and



- monitored for its effectiveness and to help decide on its longevity.
- With regards to one application being refused to Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) due to regulations, non-dependent deductions relate to an adult living in the household, for example, over 18 in employment, in college or university, or on benefit themselves. There were certain criteria that could result in the deduction of benefit payment. If a non-dependent were a student there would not generally be a charge, but if working it would be dependent on the hours worked and/or wage, and there could be a deduction in HB payment. In exceptional circumstances, DHP could be considered to cover Non-Dep Deduction but HB regulations do not normally cover these types of deductions.
  - The council could request payment to a landlord directly, for example, if a tenant satisfied any of the DWP's Tier 1 or 2 criteria's which listed things like mental health, previous homelessness, previous evictions. Officers would assess if the tenant satisfies any of the criteria and put through requests for payments to come directly to the Landlord via the Landlord Portal. Tenants could also ask the DWP to make direct payments for rent if they preferred. Details of the number of those on managed payments would be forwarded to Members and would be included in future reports.
  - Evictions are of last resort after all attempts at saving the tenancy have been unsuccessful. During quarter three there were seven evictions – six single people and one family. Circumstances leading to an eviction vary and can be due to shortfalls in benefit entitlement that's isn't being paid by tenant, transition from benefits into work and failing to pay rent, unresolved benefit issues due to lack of engagement. Officers did all they could to support a tenancy for example considering referrals to specialist supporting agencies, referring to Social Care & Health and referrals to the Homeless Prevention Team are also completed but if a tenant continues to not comply with a court order for example, it could lead to eviction.
  - The Council would receive notification of council tenants who had applied for UC. The team would be proactive and engage with those tenants to iron out issues in a claim. Difficulties arose when tenants did not engage with the team, which would delay the process and claim for UC; for example, where a tenant had never had to pay rent themselves before, they had forgotten to tick the box to say they pay rent, or there could be history with tenant engagement that could cause issues with UC and impact on the tenant's rent account. A referral to Rent Management Advisor would be considered at new claim stage in the event tenant may require support with their new claim, managing their online journal or referrals for Digital Support.

In response to a question as to whether there was evidence of an increase in debt for those not previously in debt, and if it applied to a certain age group, it was reported that there were no new patterns emerging. Tenants might be struggling to keep up with changes in benefits, for example when in receipt of a sickness related benefit such as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and if this comes to an end due to failure to meet the work capability assessments then moving across to UC can result in a delay and change for the tenant which can subsequently lead to rent arrears. Those types of changes to benefit entitlement could cause delays but once UC was up and

running the arrears start to stabilise. It was noted further that it would probably be the working age group that found themselves to be in a rent arrears situation.

It was further reported that during the co-location pilot officers were at the Job Centre every day of the week for an initial three months. The team were able to network and develop positive contacts and were able to deal with some complex cases. The pilot was extended for a further three months, and the people seen were more from the private rented sector and often involved issues not necessarily to do with council rent. The situation was reviewed, and a decision made to continue with the pilot, but modified to appointment-based service on specific days of the week and combined with officers from the Homelessness Prevention Service. It was hoped the service would be promoted with posters in DWP for certain days of the week.

The Chair asked if there were any tenants unfortunate to be affected by bedroom tax and UC. It was noted that there can be situations whereby a tenant is under-occupying or have a combination of under occupation and a non-dependant deduction and at the same time claiming Universal Credit. This would leave a shortfall in their Housing Costs entitlement which the tenant would have to pay themselves from their standard allowance. On such cases a Discretionary Housing Payment could be considered for tenants facing hardship. The team can carry out calculations to determine if tenants will be affected by any shortfall in their Universal Credit if their full circumstances have been disclosed and if they are engaging with services.

The Assistant City Mayor for Housing, Councillor Connelly, thanked the officer for the report and comprehensive answers given. He acknowledged that with all of the challenges the team faced, the proportion of rent collected between April to December 2018 of 99.69% was an incredible achievement, and the right decision had been made in employing the four Rent Management Advisors. The Assistant Mayor added that the Income Management Team did an incredibly difficult job and he wished them well for the future.

Members asked if those previously on direct payments could be approached and asked if they wanted to go to an APA. Managed Payment was when the Housing Costs is paid directly to the landlord on behalf of the tenant. It was reported that it was not an automatic right and needed to be requested by the tenant or the landlord if the tenants rent account is in arrears of 8 weeks gross rent or more and if certain other criteria are met i.e. previous homelessness, health reasons (mental health) The purpose of UC was to make tenants more self-sufficient and independent and DWP policy expect we have considered UC claimants manage their own Housing Costs payments unless there are significant vulnerabilities, budgeting issues or previous rent arrears / homelessness situations in which case, APA could be considered but after a period of time this will be reviewed with a view to eventually getting claimants to manage their own UC payments and expenses.

The Chair recommended that APA payment data be included in future reports. The Chair added that he looked forward to receiving an evaluation report on

the success of the co-locating pilot work in job centres.

It was AGREED that:

1. The report be noted;
2. Details of the number of those on managed payments would be forwarded to Members and would be included in future reports.
3. An evaluation report on the success of the pilot work with the DWP be brought to a future meeting of the Commission.

## **75. HOUSING REGISTER REVIEW PHASE 3**

The Director of Housing submitted a report and presentation which sought feedback from the Commission on the proposals and operational changes outlined in the report.

Caroline Carpendale, Head of Service, delivered the presentation included in the report, and highlighted the following points:

- The Housing Allocations Policy framed the priorities around local need and was regularly reviewed to ensure it remained fit for purpose around those in housing need across the city.
- There were 6,178 households on the Register. Overcrowding was the main reason households joined the register.
- The last major review of the Housing Allocations Policy was undertaken in June 2016.

The proposed review and summary of proposals highlighted in the report were:

- Giving increased priority to people who were owed a homeless duty (including those at risk of losing their home in the near future, and those already homeless).
- Giving increased priority to those affected by the most severe levels of overcrowding.
- A review of households needing wheelchair accessible accommodation and initiatives to assist them to resolve their needs.
- A review of all applications with Band 1 priorities.
- A change to the Access, Health, Care & Support criteria to specifically include ill mental health as a result of service in the Armed Forces, and a relaxation of the local connection criteria for divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of Service personnel.
- Changing local connection rules to exempt people who were victims of domestic abuse, fleeing from another local authority area.

The Chair welcomed the report and acknowledged the need to build more social housing. He also welcomed the review on overcrowding.

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

- Members queried the need to move those overcrowded from Band 2 to Band 1, as the same number of people would be chasing housing. It was answered that the policy reflected those in the greatest housing need, for example, those families living in flats, and would reduce the average length of time that those in overcrowded accommodation would have to wait.
- Priority for veterans was placed in Band 2, but for those with medical need would be placed in Band 1 – there would be additional criteria for veterans. It was acknowledged that it could take 10-15 years for PTSD to manifest, and that veterans would be assessed for an award in Band 1 irrespective of time.
- It was noted that Housing Associations were registered providers who have nomination agreements with the Council through which they offered a percentage of vacant stock to let through Leicester Home Choice. Typically this was 50% to 75% of their vacant stock as Housing Associations also had direct waiting lists. The agreements were regularly reviewed. Housing Associations could request a reduction in their nomination requirements but the Council could challenge the request. Officers endeavoured to meet with registered providers on a regular basis. The Chair requested a future paper on housing associations and their impact on tenants in the city be brought to a future meeting of the Commission.
- Band 1 has many different categories and the Homeless category will be time limited. Band 3 had the lowest need, and the offers achieved in Band 3 are low and need to be managed in terms of customer expectations, for example, those on Band 3 would be provided with information on the length of waiting times. Demand outstripped supply and those in band 3 did have a housing need but at a lower level.
- In the report the Equalities Manager had given a recommendation that an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) be undertaken and used to inform a decision on adopting proposals. The assessment would be available once consultation had been undertaken with registered suppliers over a four-week period, following which the report would be updated and a full EIA completed at that time.
- For people requiring 4-5 bedrooms it was acknowledged there was limited availability. The Housing Register was for those who had applied to move and could be complex. The number of bedrooms in the house and numbers in the household, age of people / numbers and age of children would be amongst other considerations taken into account. The tenant could also be asked to consider four-bedroom accommodation even if they wanted five bedrooms due to the limited availability.
- With regards to four or five-bedroom houses where there was a specific need two houses had been converted into one in the past, but this was not done as a matter of course.
- Officers tried very hard not to have families in bed and breakfast accommodation for any length of time – legislation stated for no more than six weeks. The cost of those placed in temporary accommodation would be circulated to Members.

Members stated that a version of the Banding Table would be useful for councillors to explain to residents. Officers would include a version on the six-month report 'Who Gets Social Housing'.

The Assistant Mayor for Housing stated there was a need to review the Housing Register. He said that the 1% rent reduction would cease in 2020 and the council would be in a better position to address the issue of the loss of housing stock, but it would always remain an issue that as quickly as houses were built, the tenant would have the right-to-buy after five years. He continued that council housing would only become available to those most in need, and it was a requirement for any society to provide housing for their citizens, for their health, and to prevent a detrimental effect to their children. The Assistant Mayor stated that Right to Buy should cease to allow councils to invest in their housing stock.

The Chair asked Members to approve a resolution that a letter from the Housing Scrutiny Commission be sent to the Assistant Mayor of Housing, summarising the Commission's observations and recommendations, to be fed into the review process. The letter would be circulated to all Members of the Commission for approval.

It was AGREED that:

1. The report and presentation be noted.
2. A paper on housing associations and their impact on tenants in the city be brought to a future meeting of the Commission.
3. A version of the Banding Table would be included in the six-month report 'Who Gets Social Housing'.
4. A letter from the Housing Scrutiny Commission be sent to the Assistant Mayor of Housing, summarising the Commission's observations and recommendations, to be fed into the review process.

## **76. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Housing Scrutiny Commission work programme was noted.

## **77. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

The Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum Action and Decision Log 14<sup>th</sup> February 2019 was circulated to Members at the meeting and is attached for information.

There being no other items of urgent business, the meeting closed at 7.01pm.



# Appendix B

## 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.



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## **Rent Arrears Progress Report**

**April 2018 to March 2019**

Housing Scrutiny Commission: 5<sup>th</sup> August 2019

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

## Useful information

Ward(s) affected: ALL

Report author: Zenab Valli

Author contact details: [Zenab.valli@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:Zenab.valli@leicester.gov.uk) Ext 0116 454 3573

Report version number: V1a

### 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 2018 to March 2019.

### 2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 At week ending 31st March 2019 the cash amount outstanding for current tenant arrears was £1.627m, this is 12.81% higher than at the same point in the previous financial year – see 3.2, Table 2.
- 2.2 The proportion of rent collected between April to March 2019 was **99.46%**, which is above target.
- 2.3 Between April 2018 and March 2019 a total **£233,926** was paid by Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP's) for all Council tenants. From this figure a total of £92,219 was paid to support those tenants affected by the Bedroom Tax. A total of £13,285 was paid to support LA tenants in receipt of Universal Credit.
- 2.4 Evictions are carried out as a last resort and during year 2018/19 there were a total of 35 evictions that took place due to non-payment of rent. This figure is **lower** in comparison to the same point last year (2017/18) where the figure was 37. From the 20,155 current tenancies at the end of the year, this would amount to less than 1 percent (0.173%) of all tenants being evicted in the year.
- 2.5 Universal Credit Full Service was introduced on 13th June 2018. By the end of Quarter 4 (31<sup>st</sup> March 2019) a total number of 1,879 tenants had made a new claim for Universal Credit and the total value of arrears at the end of year was £443,967.
- 2.6 The Rent Management Advisors have been supporting vulnerable tenants, or those with complex needs who are claiming Universal Credit. By the end of quarter 4 a total of **798** council tenants were supported with their Universal Credit claim. Majority of the tenants only required short-term support and generalist advice.
- 2.7 The number of tenants in serious debt, (owing more than 7 weeks rent) was 1,451, this is 14.79% higher in comparison to the same point last year – see 3.5, Table 3.

### 3. REPORT

#### Current Tenant Rent Arrears

3.1 Current Rent arrears at the end of each quarter for the financial year 2018/19:

Table 1. Quarterly Arrears

Period	Arrears at end of quarter
Quarter 1	£1,713,799
Quarter 2	£1,819,237
Quarter 3	£1,504,978
Quarter 4	<b>£1,627,034</b>

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
2015/16	£1,532,816
2016/17	£1,461,354
2017/18	£1,442,250
<b>2018/19</b>	<b>£1,627,034</b>

3.3 The cash amount owing at week ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 was £1.627m, this is **12.81%** higher than at the same point in the previous financial year and **8.47%** away from achieving the target of £1.5m.

3.4 There are various factors that contributed to the increase in rent arrears with the most prominent being welfare reform changes affecting council tenants. Universal Credit Full Service (UCFS) commenced in June 2018. The categories of people that can claim Universal Credit is broad and it is anticipated that UC migration will be completed by 2023. Following the introduction of UCFS anyone claiming help with housing related costs are required to claim from the DWP and the number of current tenants who have transferred to UC is increasing by the week. The emerging trend is that tenants moving onto UC are already in arrears and as the claim takes 4-5 weeks this puts the tenant further behind. This increases to 8-9 weeks if we apply for managed payments through an APA. It is anticipated this increase will be higher during the transition period but is likely to reduce thereafter.

3.5 Despite these challenges the rent collection figures for Leicester remain good in comparison with other authorities with only **35%** of our current tenants in rent arrears.

## Proportion of Rent Collected

- 3.6 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%. The proportion of rent collected between April and March 2019 was **99.46%**, which is above target.

## Number of Cases

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

Table 3. Breakdown of Arrears Cases by Quarter end 2018-19

Period	Owing 7 Weeks or more Net
Quarter 1	1,419
Quarter 2	1,656
Quarter 3	1,412
<b>Quarter 4</b>	<b>1,451</b>

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

Table 4. Breakdown of Arrears Cases by Year End

Period	Owing 7 Weeks or more Net
2015/16	1,366
2016/17	1,205
2017/18	1,264
<b>2018/19</b>	<b>1,451</b>

- 3.8 The number of cases in arrears increased slightly by **4.90%** over the previous year end figure. The increase is reflecting Universal Credit caseloads and the wait times associated with DWP administering UC payments and Alternative Payment Arrangements (APA's).

## Arrears per Tenancy

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

Table 5. Average debt by quarter end 2018/19

Period	Average Debt
Quarter 1	£84.83
Quarter 2	£90.30
Quarter 3	£74.19
<b>Quarter 4</b>	<b>£80.72</b>

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

Date	Average Debt
2015/16	£72.59
2016/17	£70.59
2017/18	£71.14
<b>2018/19</b>	<b>£80.72</b>

3.10 Tables 5 shows that the average debt increased in the early part of the last financial year 2018/19 and decreased by year-end. However, Table 6 shows that the debt increased in comparison to the previous year by **13.46%**. This figure is variable depending on the number of occupied properties at any given time and the figure is likely to continue at an incline due to the diminishing stock numbers through the Right to Buy Scheme.

#### Top 500 Arrears Cases (by value)

3.11 Tables 7 (below) shows the top 500 accounts with highest arrears and total value for all quarters, regardless of tenant's payment methods

Quarter	Top 500 Arrears	Highest case	Lowest case	Average	Total Value
Quarter 1 2018/19	500	£3,551	£614	£952	£475,859
Quarter 2 2018/19	500	£2,826	£658	£1032	£515,835
Quarter 3 2018/19	500	£3,616	£631	£1021	£510,623
Quarter 4 2018/19	500	£3,527	£604	£976	£488,458

3.12 The table above shows a **4.34% decrease** in the total value of top arrears cases in comparison to quarter 3 figures, however they increased slightly by 2.64% from the start of the year 2018/19. This is in line with the increase seen in table 3 (over 7 weeks net rent) and reflects on the impact and delay of Universal Credit payments. Higher debt cases are generally more complex to manage and require intensive support from the team. The team work collaboratively with other advice agencies and internal departments to help achieve positive outcomes and

resolutions which involves allowing the agencies additional time to work on cases. In addition, higher debt cases are influenced by courts preventing the team from taking possession actions until such time the court orders.

### Impact of Universal Credit Full Service (UCFS)

3.13 Table 8 (below) provides the information about Universal Credit cases since its introduction on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2018.

Quarter End 2018/19	Number of UC Cases	Number in Arrears Before UC Started	Number in Arrears at Quarter End	Total Value of Arrears at Quarter End	Average Arrears per UC Case	Number of APA's
Quarter 1*	92	67 (72.83%)	77 (83.7%)	£22,377	£243	18
Quarter 2	735	465 (63.27%)	605 (82.31%)	£197,711	£269	212
Quarter 3	1,270	955 (75.2%)	919 (72.36%)	£265,988	£209	400
Quarter 4	1,879	1,264 (67.27%)	1,298 (69.08%)	£443,967	£236	590

\*Not a full quarter as UC commenced 13<sup>th</sup> June 2018

3.14 By the end of quarter 4 (31<sup>st</sup> March 2019) a total number of 1,879 council tenants made a new claim under the new system which equates to **9.32%** of all current council tenants. This equates to an average increase of **47** council tenants moving onto Universal Credit claims every week since its introduction.

3.15 An estimated 8,000 council tenants of working age are in receipt of Housing Benefit. On average **200** council tenants will continue to move on to UC each

month until the managed migration process starts where the numbers moving over to UC each month may increase beyond the 200 mark. An additional 7,000 tenants are *not* in receipt of any housing benefit but may be claiming other Welfare Benefits such as tax credits and will also be expected to start claiming Universal Credit over the coming years.

- 3.16 The table above shows when tenants moved into Universal Credit over 60% had pre-existing rent arrears on their rent account. This is because when existing benefit claimant transition from one benefit to another, it results in periods of non-payment of rent whilst the benefit payments are being processed or if there are periods of non-engagement from tenants. Additionally, backdated benefits are only granted under very exceptionally circumstances. In other types of cases tenants claiming UC after a period of unemployment can result in the rent arrears starting to accrue.
- 3.17 A modest migration rate of just 200 cases per month can have a rapidly escalating impact on the arrears and the *estimated* increase in rent arrears by the time UC is fully implemented (2023) is **£1.26m**. Once the managed migration process is complete there would be around **£25.25m**, actual more cash to be collected in a *full year* as Universal Credit is not always paid directly to the landlord.
- 3.18 By year end a total of **590** tenants had successful APA's in place. This compares to a total of **297** tenants that are paying the council directly using other methods of payment once they receive their monthly UC award. The remaining tenants could be waiting for their UC to be awarded, waiting for the APA to be approved and received or there could be other delays due to tenant non-engagement.
- 3.19 The current value of rent arrears on UC cases has steadily increased as more tenant's transition into Universal Credit. The value will vary depending on when the APA payment schedules are received from the DWP. Although APA's can be requested they are not always guaranteed to arrive as changes in tenants' circumstances or benefit sanctions can impact upon the payment being received as expected. The first set of payment is delayed by up to 8 weeks as payments can only be made once the tenants UC pay day has been reached and UC payment has been made, the council then receive this in their next third-party schedule
- 3.20 The team are working collaboratively with the Department of Works & Pensions and Work Coaches from the local Job Centre Plus to minimise any impact of Universal Credit on rent arrears and continue to make suggestions to improve the way APA's are paid to landlords. Any issues that surround the joint working arrangements are elevated to the DWP Partnership Manager's for resolution.
- 3.21 The DWP granted the council 'Trusted Partner' status which gives access to their Landlord Portal IT system. This has meant the Income Management Team can verify housing costs quickly to prevent delays in UC claims being assessed. The Trusted Partner status also allows the council to apply for Alternative Payment Arrangements (APA's) for vulnerable people who may struggle to pay their rent and any arrears themselves.

- 3.22 To help mitigate this risk of Universal Credit **4** new Officers were recruited in May 2018 called Rent Management Advisors. Their role is to support vulnerable tenants, or those with complex needs who are claiming Universal Credit. They have been helping tenants to set up e-mail accounts, supporting people to make and manage their UC claims, promoting and helping to set up Clockwise Rent Payment Accounts which ensures rent is paid on time and encouraging people to attend digital learning courses.
- 3.23 By the end of the year 2018/19 the Rent Management Advisors had received a total of **798** referrals and most of these tenants have only required general advice or short-term support whilst they make their initial UC claim. Around **160** had been identified as requiring more long-term support, which the officers are providing.
- 3.24 In June we started a 3-month pilot of co-locating Income Management Team Officers in the 3 Job Centre Plus sites (JCP). This is so we can meet with our tenants at the same time they have their first meeting with their work coach. We use this opportunity to advise on their responsibility to pay their rent themselves and establish whether they need any support to manage their claim, for which a referral to a Rent Management Advisor is made. There has been some positive feedback from staff working as part of co-location. The pilot has been reviewed at the end of each quarter since implementation. The pilot continues, and the new service offer combines two separate service areas from Housing who provide services from JCP on an appointment basis. This includes IMT and the Homeless Prevention Team.
- 3.25 Around **704** Universal Credit claimants have been seen by Income Management Officers since the start of co-location (June 2018) and **46%** of these were council tenants. Other enquiries have included those from JCP staff (work coach), private sector and housing association tenants. In these circumstances our officers have provided housing related advice or signposted to other services available.
- 3.26 The pilot continues to be reviewed and evaluated to determine if co-location is proving effective and productive for the council and to help decide on the longevity of co-location.
- 3.27 Overall the key risks to the council with the introduction of Universal Credit Full Service is the potential increase in rent arrears, as majority of tenants will be responsible for paying the rent themselves. From the total number of people claiming UC a higher proportion of tenants are in arrears which relate to the initial assessment period of claims and delay in the payment of APA's. The team are supporting those tenants in arrears by making affordable repayment agreements for the outstanding debt and continually seeking to network with the DWP to mitigate the risks of increased arrears.



## Evictions

- 3.28 Evictions remain at a relatively low level compared to earlier years and this is despite the economic difficulties experienced over the period and ongoing welfare reform challenges. Management scrutinise all potential eviction cases to ensure that all avenues of maximising tenant income and sustaining tenancy have been explored. This includes ensuring that any vulnerability has been identified and the necessary referrals to supporting agencies are considered well in advance of any eviction process being followed. The eviction route is pursued as an ultimate last resort and after all efforts to sustain tenancy has been demonstrated and exhausted.
- 3.29 There were **35** evictions carried out for non-payment of rent from April 2018 to March 2019. This compares to 37 evictions in whole of the previous year (2017-18).
- 3.30 Of the 35 evictions, 8 were family cases and 27 were single people.
- 3.31 From the 35 evictions 20 tenants had no Housing Benefit (HB) in payment prior to the eviction or were not engaging therefore could not be supported with a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP). A total of 10 tenants had previously been awarded DHP's and in some cases they had been awarded DHP multiple times. A further 3 tenants had made applications for DHP, but the award was refused as they failed to meet the qualifying criteria.
- 3.32 Prior to taking eviction action the team work closely with Social Care & Health (SCH) department to help sustain tenancies. From the 35 evictions, 20 tenants were not known to the Adult Social Care (ASC) team and were identified as having no community care needs, 15 tenants had previous involvement with the Children and Young People Services (CYPS) and ASC teams and attempts to contact tenants failed due to non-engagement.

## DHP's (Discretionary Housing Payment)

- 3.33 Between April 2018 and March 2019 a total **£233,926** was paid by Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP's) for all Council tenants. From this figure a total of **£92,219** was paid to support those tenants affected by the Bedroom Tax. A total of **29** council tenants in receipt of Universal Credit were supported by DHP with the total value of **£13,285** in payments being awarded.

## Housing Online Account

- 3.34 The Housing Online (Rent Self-serve) portal went live in January 2019. This is where council tenants can view their rent balance, manage their rent account, print rent statements and update their contact details. The Housing Online will further expand allowing tenants to log new repairs and make housing related enquiries. Currently a total of **185** tenants have registered to use this service with an additional 363 tenants have shown interest but are yet to fully complete the registration process. The team are promoting this new service to encourage

council tenants to become more independent in managing their Housing accounts online.

### **Direct Debits**

3.35 Direct Debits have always been the most preferred method of payment for the council. Historically there has always been two payment dates offered when paying rent by Direct Debit (1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of each month). During the last financial year, the team have successfully added two further dates creating more flexibility and option for tenants and to encourage the direct debit scheme. In addition to the existing two dates tenants can now pay rent on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of each month creating 4 different dates for tenants to choose from. Currently a total of 3,247 tenants pay housing or garage rent by direct debit.

### **Clockwise**

3.36 The team have renewed their focus on Promoting Clockwise Rent Payment Accounts. The Rent Management Advisors can help set up the accounts with tenant consent. This in turn helps tenants to budget and manage their rent payments much more efficiently preventing arrears that can occur due to delays caused by the administration of UC and APA's.

3.37 By the end of the year the team had set up a total of **6** Clockwise Rent Payment Accounts and collected a total of **£8,320** using this payment method. The vision is that the number of account and value collected will continue to grow throughout this new year.

### **REPORT AUTHOR**

4.1 Zenab Valli, Income Collection Manager – Tel 0116 454 3573

# Housing Scrutiny Commission

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## **Empty Homes Update**

Assistant Mayor for Housing: Councillor Elly Cutkelvin

Date: 5<sup>th</sup>. August 2019

Lead director: Chris Burgin

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## Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: Citywide
- Report author: Simon Nicholls/Carole Thompson
- Author contact details: [simon.nicholls@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:simon.nicholls@leicester.gov.uk)
- Report version number: V5

### 1. Purpose of report

To update members of the Housing Scrutiny commission on the work that the Empty Homes Team are doing to bring long term private sector homes back into use.

### 2. Supporting evidence

- During 2018/19 continue to maximise our efforts on reducing total number of private sector properties empty over 18 months 5 and 10 years.
- Where we are unable to negotiate terms for the purchase of properties by agreement or are unable to locate owners, we will continue to use Compulsory Purchase Powers (CPO) to bring long term empty properties back into use.

#### Team Structure

See Appendix A – flow chart

#### 2.1 Working Smarter

Empty homes officers are all highly experienced with good skills and local knowledge which is shared within the team. We are flexible, negotiate with owners on a wide range of individual and varied property situations, no matter what each empty property presents. We are committed to continually working with each owner to ensure properties are returned into occupation.

This involves:

- contacting all owners at an early stage;
- providing advice & support and information about their options;
- further information is available on the empty homes website at: <https://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-community/housing/privately-owned-empty-homes/>
- owners can also complete the on-line e-statement of intentions form;
- agreeing Undertakings with timescales to bring the properties back into occupation;
- practical assistance through leasing schemes.

- 2.2 **Leasing options include:**
- HomeCome/lease
  - LeicesterLet or
  - Renting through private agents

2.3 **Outcome of Council Intervention:**  
The outcome of council intervention has brought a total of 661 properties back in to use over 3 years, though clearly others have become vacant.

2.4 **Over 5 Year Empties Forecast for 2018-19:**  
The forecast for reducing over 5-year empties is set at 45.

Workstream	31/03/15 Baseline	31/03/16	31/03/17	31/03/18	31/03/19	% Reduction
18 Months	450	378	345	292	319	29%
5 Years	87	74	66	52	50	43%
10 Years	29	19	15	7	7	76%

2.5 **Comparison of Total Active Caseload (March 2015 to March 2019):**  
The total active caseload has reduced very noticeably when compared to the baseline in 2015. For example, 18-month empties have had a 29% reduction, over 5-year empties have fallen by 43% and 10-year empties by 76%.

2.6 **Council Tax Data Source:**  
The Council Tax database is our prime data source for newly vacant properties. Each month more houses become vacant whilst some are brought back into use. We identify those unsuitable for residential use, misreported or 2<sup>nd</sup> homes.

2.7 **Data Analysis (Empty Homes Team)**  
Data analysis is carried out on a monthly and quarterly basis for misinformation (MI), second homes (2<sup>nd</sup> Homes) and non-priority housing (NPH). If the original reason is no longer valid and properties have become empty again, these are added back onto our caseload. This exercise ensures the quality of data held by the empty homes team is as accurate as possible with only genuinely empty properties held on our caseload.

2.8 **Council Tax Liability:**  
From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 some council tax exemptions have been abolished and then replaced with a locally set discount premium unless the Valuation Office assess the property as uninhabitable. All empty properties will receive 100% discount for one month only and will then be liable for full charges.  
From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 properties empty over two years will become liable for an additional 100% premium.

2.9 **Keeping Council Tax Informed**  
Following site visits the empty homes officers provide evidence confirming empty or occupancy to enable Council Tax to update their records so the information held on their database is vastly improved in accuracy and is in keeping in line with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

2.10 **Council Tax Charging Orders**

The team works closely with Council Tax liaising on the best way to recover council tax arrears which can often be thousands of pounds. Once an empty property reaches the stage where we are considering CPO, a management decision will be made on who will pursue it. Council Tax now have a system in place to recover council tax arrears by using Enforced Sale or a Bankruptcy Orders.

As a last resort the Empty Homes team will continue to progress the CPO. The Empty Homes Team liaise closely with Council Tax to ensure that any property we are pursuing for CPO with council tax arrears has a Charging Order against the property to reclaim any outstanding arrears from the owner's compensation.

**2.12 CPO Forum:**

Bi monthly forums are held with Legal Services and Estates and Building Services to review and progress compulsory purchase cases and those undergoing negotiated purchase and sale at auction. The empty homes team also receives advice on CPO cases with complex or individual issues. The forum has proved to be invaluable for joined up thinking, deciding ways forward for complex cases and for sharing information.

**2.13 5 Year Empty Letter**

Every property between 5-9 years empty has been sent a "5-Year Empty Letter", like the 10-year empty letter, giving owners 6 months to improve and occupy properties otherwise a report will go to the Executive seeking approval for proceeding with a CPO. This measure has proved successful in reducing the over 5-year empties which are currently at 50. This is an ongoing process.

**2.14 10 Year Empty Letter**

Many of our properties empty over 10 years change owners, multiple times. Every time there is a new owner the process must start again at stage 1 again because the CPO is against the owner not the property. Most owners are sent our "10 Year Empty Letter" giving them 6 months to improve and occupy these properties. This is an ongoing process. We have had great success in reducing the number of over 10- year empties down to 7. See Appendix E

**2.15 CPOs Approved by the Executive:**

During the last year the Executive have approved 3 CPOs.

As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 a total of 117 cases have been approved by the Executive from it's conception. See Appendix F

**2.16 Cases currently with Legal Services:**

There is a total of 7 properties with legal services approved by the Executive

**2.17 CPO Compensation:**

No compensation is outstanding for 2018-19.

**2.18 Negotiated Purchase:**

During the last year there have been 3 negotiated purchase offers made 2 are being considered and 1 has completed. See Appendix G

Valuations for negotiated purchases by the council are usually lower than the purchase price paid when the property is sold at auction. This means that the council is not losing out.

### 2.19 **New Homes Bonus:**

The New Homes Bonus is a grant paid by central government to local councils to reflect and incentivise housing growth in their areas. It is based on extra Council Tax revenue raised for new-build homes, conversions and long-term empty homes brought back into use. There is also an extra payment for providing affordable homes.

In 2018-19 the time to claim New Homes bonus has reduced to 4 years.

As per the return submitted to Government by Council Tax, the number of properties empty for more than 6 months has increased from 1,303 in October 2017 to 1,374 in October 2018 – an increase of 71.

Every July/August council tax sends an annual letter to empty property owners. The last letter was sent to 1,171 empty property owners on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2018. There was a 76% response to their letter.

Owners who responded to the letters confirmed whether properties were still empty or now occupied which enabled Council Tax to update their records and claim under the New Homes Bonus as above.

### 2.20 **Comparison of how other Local Authorities perform:**

The information provided is not a benchmarking comparison. Each Local Authority has their own reporting mechanisms. Leicester's stats are from Council Tax data source and excludes properties which do not fall under the Empty Homes remit whereas we do not know the source of the other information provided or how it is made up.

Another difference is that Leicester City Council targets long term properties empty over 18 months because we find the majority of these are genuinely empty. We have evidence to show there is less abortive work by targeting long term empties over 18 months rather than 6 months when we find that approximately half of those empty over 6-month become occupied without council intervention. See Appendix H

## 3. Details of Scrutiny

**Report prepared for Housing Scrutiny Commission.**

## 4. Financial, legal and other implications

### 4.2 Financial implications

By bringing properties back into use, the Council benefits financially through increased collection of Council Tax and additional income through the New Homes Bonus.

Stuart McAvoy – Principal Accountant (37 4004)

### 4.2 Legal implications

The Council is entitled to acquire land and property for the purpose of providing housing in accordance with Sections 9 and 17 of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended). This includes acquisition by or if considered appropriate by the use of compulsory purchase powers. As explained in this Report the Council will need to ensure that any acquisition or other action (including use of Compulsory Purchase powers) is in accordance with the Council's adopted Empty Homes Strategy and is compliance with both the legal basis and criteria for compulsory purchase (including published guidance).

John McIvor, Principal Lawyer, ext. 37-1409

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

Where refurbishment work is carried out to empty properties to bring them back into use, this provides an opportunity to improve the energy efficiency of the property – for example through insulation, draft proofing, replacement lighting or new heating systems. Where this is possible, it has the potential to reduce the carbon emissions when families move into the homes. By reducing the need for new housing to be built, the service also helps to reduce the 'embodied' carbon emissions from manufacture of the construction materials.

Duncan Bell - Senior Environmental Consultant (37 2249)

#### **4.4 Equalities implications**

In carrying out its duties, the council must comply with the public-sector equality duty (Equality Act 2010) by paying due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Bringing empty homes back into use can help to meet demand for affordable housing in the city and potentially households on the housing register, and provide housing for people in need of a home. Empty homes brought back into use can help to meet the diverse housing needs of all sections of our communities

The benefits of returning an empty home into use can impact on the wider community, homes that are lived in help to support safer communities.

The impacts of returning empty homes into use would be positive on people from across all protected characteristics.

Surinder Singh Equalities Officer 37 4148

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

Department for Communities & Local Government website

Leicester City Council Revenue & Benefits – New Homes Bonus Return

LCC Empty Homes Team e-files

LCC Citywide Empty Homes strategy



Climate Change, Environment Team  
Derby City Council, Empty Homes Information Request  
Nottingham City Council, Empty Homes Information Request  
Sheffield City Council, Empty Homes Information Request

**6. Summary of Appendices:**

<b>Appendix A</b>	<b>Empty Homes team structure as at 31.03.18</b>
<b>Appendix B</b>	<b>Analysis of total empties showing downward trend</b>
<b>Appendix C</b>	<b>Analysis of average totals showing downward trend</b>
<b>Appendix D</b>	<b>Summary of active caseload</b>
<b>Appendix E</b>	<b>Yearly comparison of vacant properties</b>
<b>Appendix F</b>	<b>Outcome of CPOs annual progress</b>
<b>Appendix H</b>	<b>Benchmarking empty homes with other Local Authorities</b>

**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)?**

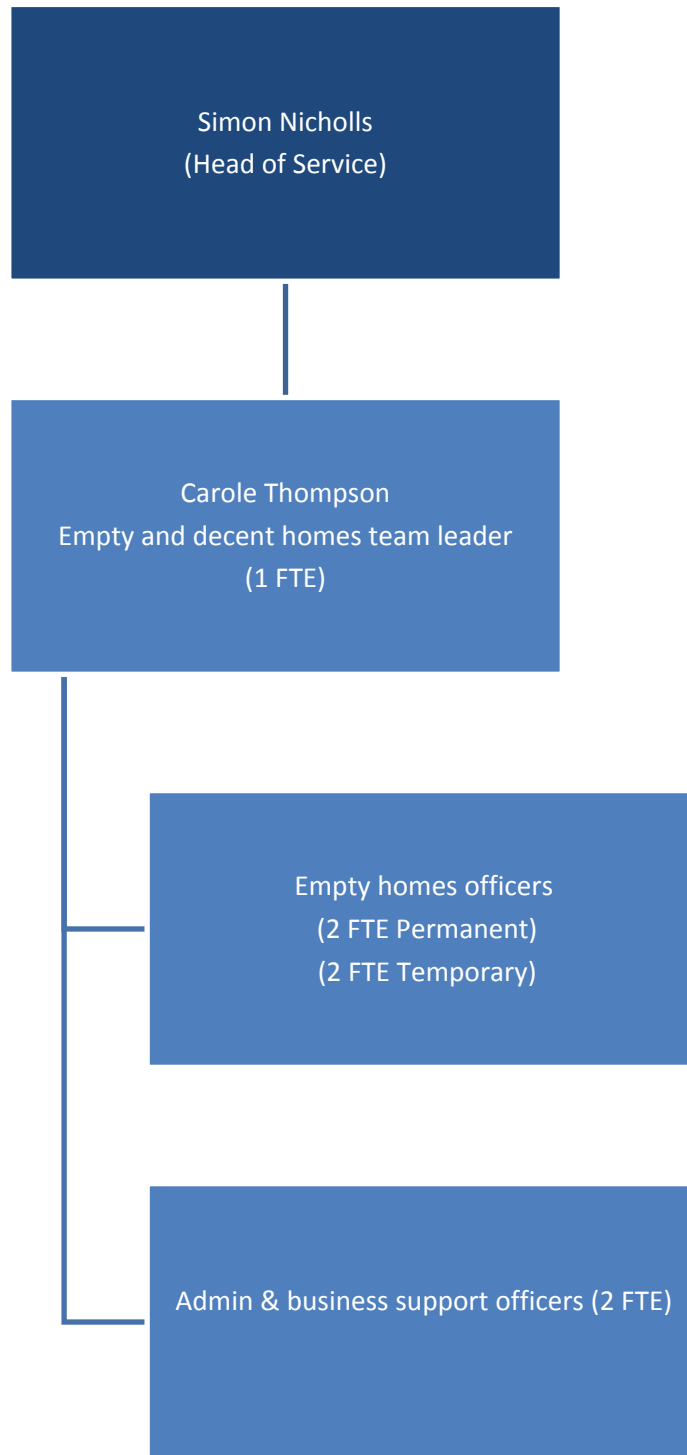
No

**1. Is this a “key decision”?**

No

## APPENDIX A

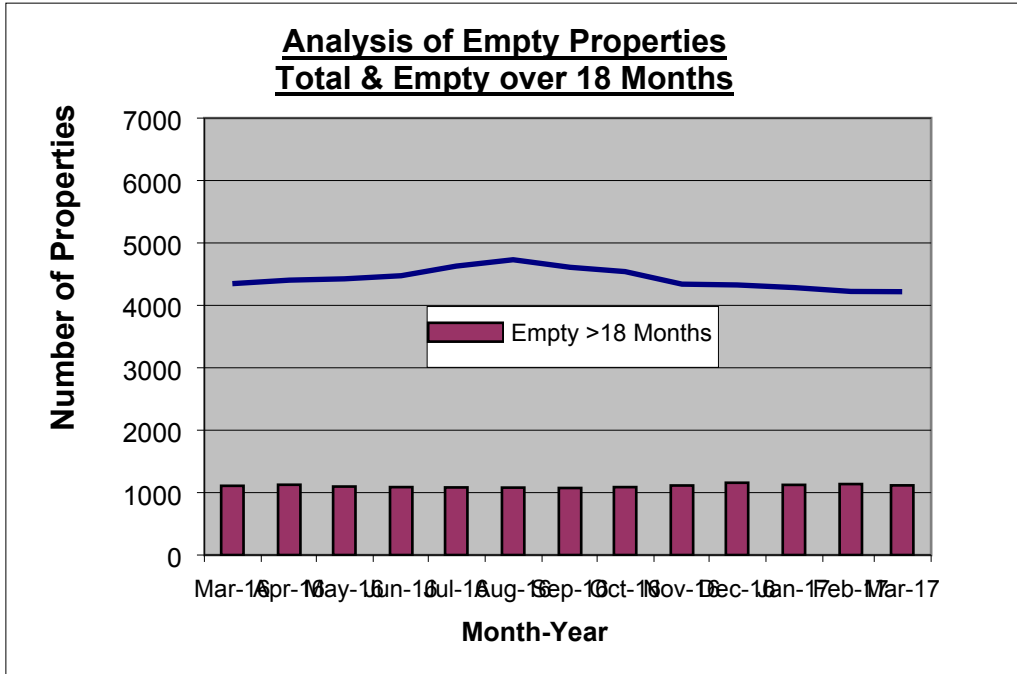
### EMPTY HOMES TEAM STRUCTURE CHART AS AT 31.03.19



**Table 1**

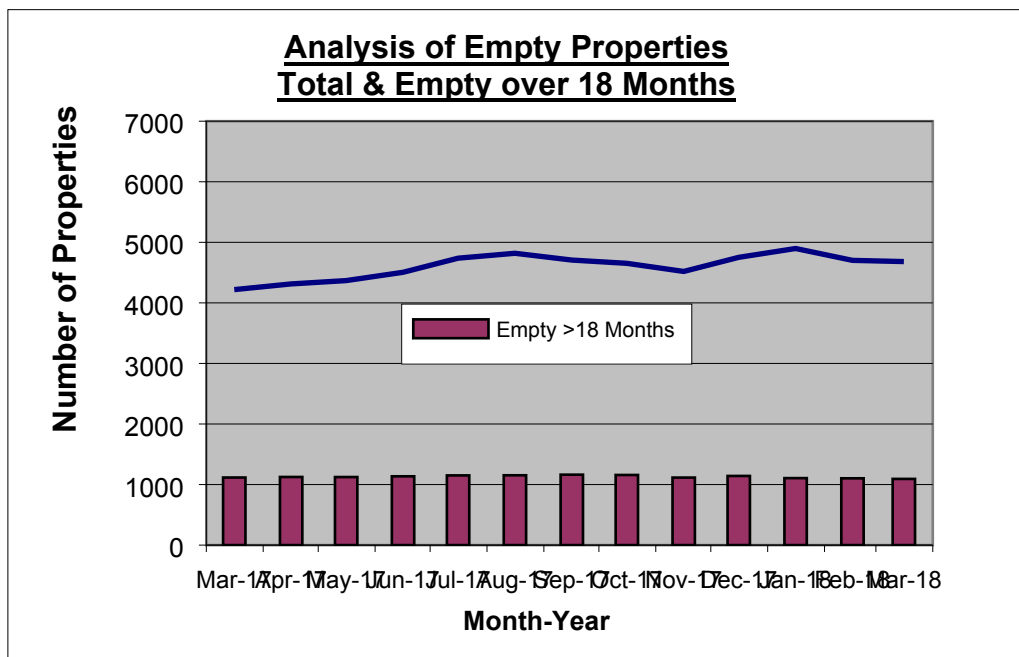
**APPENDIX B**

**Analysis of Empty Properties showing the trend from 31.03.16 to 31.03.17**



**Table 2**

**Analysis of Empty Properties showing the trend from 31.03.17 to 31.03.18**



**Table 3**

APPENDIX B (continued)

Analysis of Empty Properties showing the trend from 31.03.18 to 31.03.19

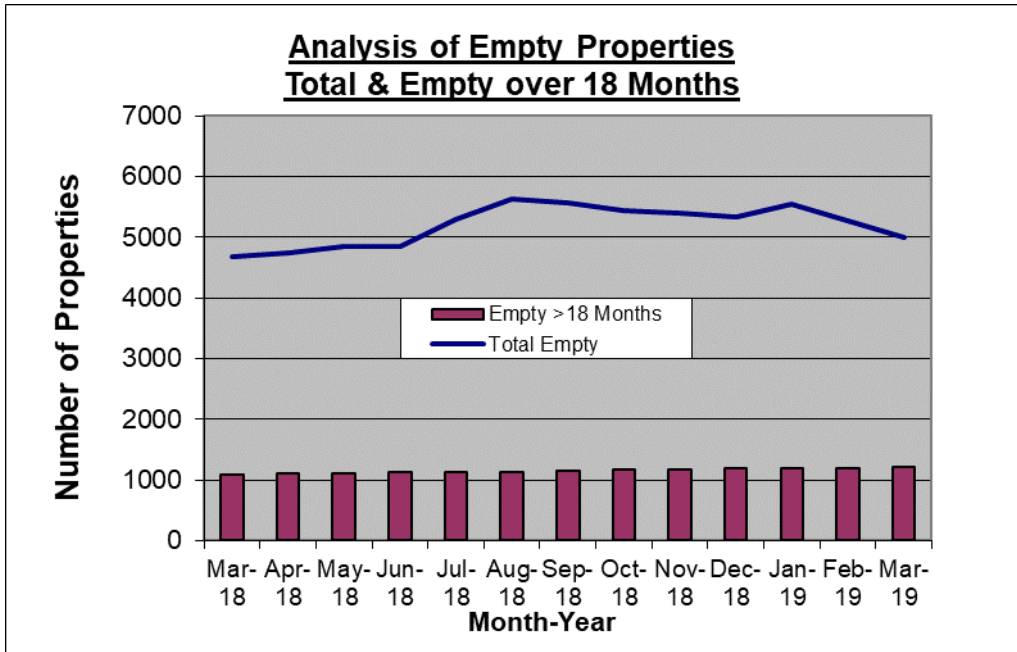


Table 4

## APPENDIX C

### Analysis of Empty Properties showing what is happening

#### 2016-2017

<b>Average</b>	
<b>Average Total Empty – down 309</b>	<b>4427</b>
<b>Average vacant over 18 months – down 65</b>	<b>1107</b>

Table 5

#### 2017-2018

<b>Average</b>	
<b>Average Total Empty – up 179</b>	<b>4606</b>
<b>Average vacant over 18 months – up 23</b>	<b>1130</b>

Table 6

#### 2018-2019

<b>Average</b>	
<b>Average Total Empty – up 596</b>	<b>5202</b>
<b>Average vacant over 18 months – up 20</b>	<b>1150</b>

Table 7

The increase in total number of empty properties may be due to uncertainty in the housing market and Brexit and other unknown factors.

**APPENDIX D**

**QUARTERLY COMPARISON OF TOTAL VACANTS AS AT 31/03/19**

<b>Description</b>	<b>Baseline as at 31.03.18</b>	<b>Q.1 as at 30.06.18</b>	<b>Q.2 as at 30.09.18</b>	<b>Q.3 as at 31.12.18</b>	<b>Q.4 as at 31.03.19</b>	<b>Trend since last Quarter</b>	<b>Cumulative Trend</b>
Active Caseload	288	289	286	298	287	Down by 11	Down by 1
Total Vacant over 18 Months	292	313	307	329	319	Down by 10	Up by 27
Sub Total Vacant over 5 Years	52	50	51	54	50	Down by 4	Down by 2
Sub Total Vacant over 10 Years	7	6	6	8	7	Down by 1	Unchanged

**Table 8**

**APPENDIX E**

**Comparison of Vacant Properties From 2015-2019  
for Stage 0s, 18 Months, 5 and 10 Years**

<b>Quarterly from 2015-2017</b>	<b>JUN 15</b>	<b>SEP 15</b>	<b>DEC 15</b>	<b>MAR 16</b>	<b>JUN 16</b>	<b>SEP 16</b>	<b>DEC 16</b>	<b>MAR 17</b>	<b>JUN 17</b>	<b>SEP 17</b>	<b>DEC 17</b>	<b>MAR 18</b>	<b>JUN 18</b>	<b>SEP 18</b>	<b>DEC 19</b>	<b>MAR 19</b>
<b>Total Vacant over 18 months</b>	479	432	403	378	361	363	382	345	354	348	338	292	313	307	329	319
<b>Stage 0 only - Number where contact yet to be made with owner</b>	212 *	132 *	103 *	95 *	123 *	121 *	106 *	50 *	56 *	56 *	48 *	4 *	24 *	21 *	31 *	32 *
<b>Number vacant over 10 years</b>	27	25	24	19	17	16	14	15	16	13	12	7	6	6	8	7
<b>Number vacant over 5 years (including those over 10 years).</b>	82	85	75	74	73	70	75	66	64	58	56	52	50	51	54	50

\* The majority of Stage 0 properties have had scheme referral letters so first contact has been made

**Table 9**

**APPENDIX F**

**ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT**

**Final Outcome of all CPOs agreed by Executive as at 31.03.19**

<b>Outcome of CPOs</b>	<b>Pre- April 2018</b>	<b>Apr – Jun 2018</b>	<b>July – Sep 2018</b>	<b>Oct – Dec 2018</b>	<b>Jan – Mar 2019</b>	<b>Mar 2017 To Apr 2018</b>	<b>Total</b>
Total Number of CPOs agreed by the Executive.	<b>114</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>117</b>
Withdrawn before Public Inquiry i.e. Occupied	<b>47</b>	<b>2</b>			<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>50</b>
Withdrawn before Public Inquiry i.e. Restarted, Misinformation, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Home	<b>18</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>			<b>2</b>	<b>20</b>
Public Inquiry held - Order Confirmed by DCLG/LCC	<b>8</b>					<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>
Public Inquiry held - Order Not Confirmed by DCLG/LCC	<b>3</b>					<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>
Written Representation - Order Confirmed by DCLG/LCC	<b>6</b>					<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>
Written Representation - Order Not Confirmed by DCLG/LCC	<b>4</b>					<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>
Non- contested CPO's Confirmed by DCLG/LCC	<b>13</b>					<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>
Non- contested CPO's Not confirmed by DCLG/LCC	<b>0</b>					<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

**Table 10**



## APPENDIX H

### Examples of How Other Local Authorities are Performing

As at 31/03/17	Examples of Other Local Authorities			
Benchmarking: Total Active Caseload	Leicester	Derby	Nottingham	Sheffield
Over 18 Months Empty	345	1301	393	840
Over 5 Years Empty	66	156	251	283
Over 10 Years Empty	15	72	121	126
No brought back into occupation	243	18	118	100
Active caseload	295		427	400
No Approved by the Executive/Cabinet	10	10	1	0

Table 13

As at 31/03/18	Examples of Other Local Authorities			
Benchmarking: Total Active Caseload	Leicester	Derby	Nottingham	Sheffield
Over 18 Months Empty	292	Not available	505	82
Over 5 Years Empty	52	Not available	318	40
Over 10 Years Empty	7	Not available	145	14
No brought back into occupation	213	83	109	15
Active caseload	288	Not available	543	88
No Approved by the Executive/Cabinet	2	Not available	1	0

Table 14

As at 31/03/19	Examples of Other Local Authorities			
Benchmarking	Leicester	Derby	Nottingham	Sheffield
Over 18 Months Empty	319	Not available	505	Not available
Over 5 Years Empty	50	Not available	318	Not available
Over 10 Years Empty	7	Not available	145	Not available
No brought back into occupation	205	83	109	8
Active caseload	287	256	543	Not available
No Approved by the Executive/Cabinet	3	Not available	1	1

Table 15

**Note:**

The information in the tables 13-15 is not a benchmarking comparison;

- Each Local Authority has their own reporting mechanisms;
- Only Leicester City Council has the remit to bring back into use properties identified as empty over 18 months;
- Most of the other Local Authorities target properties empty over 6 months.
- Due to lack of resources, Derby City Council could only provide the number of cases on their active caseload and those brought back into occupation.
- Sheffield City Council could only provide the number brought back into occupation and how many were approved by their Cabinet.

# Homelessness Strategy Implementation *Update*

Lead Director: Chris Burgin

Lead Head of Service: Caroline Carpendale

# Homelessness Strategy Update

## **Purpose of presentation:**

To update Housing Scrutiny on the ongoing work to implement the Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023 since the last report to Housing Scrutiny  
∞ November 2018



## Partnership Working

- Charter launched by the City Mayor, Bishop & Police & Crime Commissioner at the Cathedral
- Charter working groups meeting regularly
- Pay points for the City to be rolled out to enable public to donate to charities supporting the homeless and providing additional services such as the winter shelter.



## Homelessness Prevention

- My Home app to launch late Summer 2019
- Changes successfully made to implement the duty to refer
- Further recruitment of Homeless Prevention Officers

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### Accommodation for families

- Increased numbers of families presenting
- Measures put in place to ensure B&B use minimised
- Options appraisal of family temporary accommodation to be considered 2019/20

## Accommodation for singles

- Safe Space at Andover Street launched Feb
- Tendering for wider range of accommodation services for singles
- £7m to be invested in council housing in the city

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# Accommodation for offenders

- New contracts in place from 1<sup>st</sup> July
- Number of units available increased and close working with partnership working with NPS
- Housing Options surgeries introduced at Leicester Prison

### Eligibility criteria for single homelessness

- New eligibility criteria to be implemented Autumn / Winter 2019 to ensure those most in need are offered the relevant support and accommodation options.
- Recognition of the complex needs of this client group.

## Accommodation for young people

- Joint working group established with children's services to develop joint commissioning exercise

### Housing-related support

- Developing options for tendering for new improved floating support services
- Management review bringing together Outreach & Revolving Door services enabling coordinated support from the streets to a home

## Support for rough sleepers & repeat homeless

- 2019/20 RSI funding of £350k confirmed from MHCLG. Funding 20 additional hostel beds at Action Homeless and additional staff supporting rough sleepers
- Successful bid for Rapid Rehousing Pathway funding £211k working in partnership with local charities to fund Rough Sleeping Navigators





## Day centres

- No.5 drug and alcohol recovery centre received almost 8,000 visits since opening
- Analysis of day services for people who are homeless will start in the later phases of implementation

## Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum Action and Decision Log

6<sup>th</sup> June 2019, G0.3, Ground Floor, City Hall

### 1) Welcome and apologies

**Forum members present:** Wendy Biddles (WB), Joe Carroll (JW), Jean Williams (JW), Gwen Clifford (GC), May Jones (MJ), Phil Allen (PA), Peter Hookway (PH)

**Guest Speakers:** Simon Nicholls (Head of Service, LCC), Ian Craig, (Head of Service, LCC)

**Facilitator(s):** Justin Haywood (LCC) (JH), Russell Taylor (LCC) (RT).

WB announced today's meeting will focus on Repairs.

WB reminded forum members of the new enquiry process, and what is considered to be appropriate to raise.

### 2) Action Log feedback

WB asked for JH to provide an update on actions outstanding. JH provided the following updates:

- a) The Tenant Participation Advisory Service document "Jargon Buster – A guide to housing jargon for tenants and housing staff" has been sent to all members of the forum, along with the minutes from last meeting. Some forum members did not receive this. RT will bring these to the next meeting for distribution along with a copy of the Handy Persons Service leaflet. Some members said that they did not receive this.
- b) Forum members have requested additional information relating to foodbank usage.  
Update: The experience of usage of foodbanks by some members may not tie in with the use information provided at the last Forum meeting as the Council supported foodbank has different use criteria to some other foodbanks in the city.
- c) Progress is being made on collating key council service contact services. This is to be circulated at the next meeting.

### 3) Fire Safety

Simon Nicholls (Head of Service) attended the forum and provided a presentation on Fire Safety.

#### Key points:

- Leicester City Council prioritise fire safety according to the level of a risk a type of building is assessed to have (for instance high rise blocks have a greater priority than houses).
- Fire safety is an absolute priority for LCC and we have a fire safety strategy to ensure a comprehensive approach. The Strategy includes: ensuring adequate resources are allocated to the area; regular inspections are carried out; block safety strategy is communicated to all tenants; an on-going programme of risk assessments; maintaining a good relationship with the fire service.
- £900k a year is spent on fire safety and work is carried out in priority order.
- The council does not have highrise flats with cladding and none with gas installed. A decision has been made to install sprinklers in our high rise blocks, a process that has already started with the high rise block refurbishment programme that has a focus on fire safety.
- Current projects include: fire escape doors on 3 story properties on St Marks; the ongoing door replacement programme; emergency lighting upgrades and training for operatives.

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- a) SN to have GC's address so that he can look into the limited number of plugs in her home.
- b) GC wanted to know what is council tax allowance for low income / benefit households. RT to investigate and report back.
- c) JW would like to know when the conditions of tenancy are shown to prospective tenants – at the point of signing or before. RT to contact Voids and Property Lettings Team and ask them to contact JW to clarify.

### 4) Repairs

Ian Craig (Head of Service) attended the forum to give a presentation on key issues relating to the Repairs service.

#### Key points:

- Update on mobile working – the new software solution has been introduced – there have been some issues relating to repairs appointments which are being investigated.
- Work is progressing on developing an online repairs reporting function.
- The collection of information to establish tenants' satisfaction with their repairs has been introduced.



- The Handy Person Service is available to residents in all tenures, but applicants should be mindful of the criteria required to use the service.
- IC raised the issue of property access and how unfulfilled appointments impacted on costs and resources.
- IC talked about kitchens and bathrooms replacement and how this was part of the council's responsibility to meet the Decent Homes Standard.

#### **Actions:**

- a) PA to itemise his repair issues over the last three years, IC will visit him to discuss.
- b) MJ raised the issue of an older home she was aware of that had not benefited from modifications – IC to look into this.
- c) MJ raised the issue of the repairs service attending outside of given appointment slots. MJ provided an example, IC to investigate.
- d) PA asked what % of repairs jobs were completed correctly the first time. RT to find out and report back.

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#### **5) Introduction of the new Assistant Mayor for Housing**

Councillor Cutkelvin, the new Assistant Mayor with responsibility for Housing introduced herself. She talked about her background, her interest in housing and her desire to make a positive difference to residents' quality of life in the city. She said that she valued the work of the Forum and would like to stay in touch with its progress. She stated her intention to meet with each of the members of the forum to find out about the issues in their areas.

#### **Action**

- a) Councillor Cutkelvin to personally visit everyone on the forum over the next 6 months. RT to arrange.

#### **4) Any other business**

- a) JW requested that the number on the key safe to her block be changed as too many people had access to it.
- b) PA asked when will the leaseholder handbook be published. RT to speak to the Leaseholder Liaison Team for an update.
- c) Concern was raised about the possibility of losing the Ian Marlow name when IMC closes. RT to escalate this concern.

**6) Date of next meeting**

Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> August 2019 at City Hall, G.03 Meeting Room 3, City Hall  
.The meeting with then run from 1.00pm – 4.00 pm (lunch provided at 12.30)

HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20			
MEETING DATE	MEETING ITEMS	LEAD OFFICER	ACTION AGREED
<b>Meeting Date</b> 5 August 2019	Housing Manifesto commitments	Chris Burgin	
<b>Agenda Date:</b> 24 <sup>th</sup> June 2019	Rent arrears report – Year-end report	Charlotte McGraw	
	Empty Homes update report	Simon Nicholls	
<b>Deadline for papers</b> 24 <sup>th</sup> July 2019	Homelessness Strategy progress report	Caroline Carpendale	
	Tenants' forum notes		
<b>Papers despatch:</b> 26 <sup>th</sup> July 2019	Work programme		

CS

<p><b>Meeting Date</b> <b>16 September 2019</b></p> <p><b>Agenda Date:</b> <b>27 August 2019</b></p> <p><b>Deadline for papers</b> <b>4 September 2019</b></p> <p><b>Papers despatch:</b> <b>6 September 2019</b></p>	<p>Progress update on delivery of new Housing (Housing Company/Acquisitions)</p> <p>Voids &amp; Lettings Report – Year-end report</p> <p>Repairs performance and update Report</p> <p>Channel Shift/ IT update</p> <p>Tenants’ forum notes</p> <p>Work programme</p>	<p>Simon Nicholls</p> <p>Simon Nicholls</p> <p>Ian Craig</p> <p>Charlotte McGraw</p>	
<p><b>Meeting Date</b> <b>4 November 2019</b></p> <p><b>Agenda Date:</b> <b>14 October 2019</b></p> <p><b>Deadline for papers</b> <b>23 October 2019</b></p> <p><b>Papers despatch:</b> <b>25 October 2019</b></p>	<p>Progress report for Goscote House &amp; Sprinklers update</p> <p>Safety Compliance</p> <p>Preparing for winter</p> <p>Housing Capital Programme update</p> <p>Tenants’ forum notes</p> <p>Work programme</p>	<p>Simon Nicholls/Suki Supria</p> <p>Simon Nicholls</p> <p>Martin Clewlow</p> <p>Simon Nicholls</p>	

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<p><b>Meeting Date</b> 6<sup>th</sup> January 2020</p> <p><b>Agenda meeting</b> 16<sup>th</sup> December 2019</p> <p><b>Deadline for Papers</b> 19 December 2019</p> <p><b>Papers despatch:</b> 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2019</p>	<p>HRA Budget</p>	<p>Chris Burgin</p>	
<p><b>Meeting Date</b> 17 February 2020</p> <p><b>Agenda Date:</b> 27 January 2020</p> <p><b>Deadline for papers</b> 5 February 2020</p> <p><b>Papers despatch:</b> 7 February 2020</p>	<p>Repairs performance and update Report</p> <p>Homelessness update &amp; Overcrowding project update</p> <p>Voids &amp; Lettings Report Qtr 2</p> <p>Empty homes update</p> <p>Tenants' forum notes</p> <p>Work programme</p>	<p>Ian Craig</p> <p>Caroline Carpendale</p> <p>Simon Nicholls</p> <p>Simon Nicholls</p>	

<p><b>Meeting Date</b> 20 April 2020</p> <p><b>Agenda Date:</b> 30 March 2020</p> <p><b>Deadline for papers</b> 6 April 2020</p> <p><b>Papers despatch:</b> 8 April 2020</p>	<p>Rent arrears report</p> <p>Goscote House redevelopment</p> <p>Sheltered Housing project update</p> <p>District Service Priorities &amp; performance including ASB service performance</p> <p>DFG/Adaptations report</p> <p>Tenants' forum notes</p> <p>Work programme</p>	<p>Charlotte McGraw</p> <p>Simon Nicholls</p> <p>Simon Nicholls</p> <p>Suki Supria</p> <p>Ian Craig</p>	
<p><b>To be allocated</b></p>	<p>Update on discretionary funding</p>	<p>Alison Greenhill</p>	

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