

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

LANDLORD SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

28 JULY 2022

Title:

HEAD OF HOUSING OPERATIONS UPDATE

Portfolio Holder: Co-Portfolio Holder for Housing Paul Rivers

Head of Service: Hugh Wagstaff, Head of Housing Operations

Key decision: No

Access: Public

1. Purpose and summary

To provide an interim report on performance, to advise the Board in a timely manner. Board to review performance for comment and/or review.

2. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board considers the commentary of the housing service, and

- 1) identifies any areas for comment or further exploration, and
- 2) makes any recommendations to senior management or the Portfolio Holders for Housing as appropriate,

3. Reason for the recommendation

To provide review and challenge to housing service performance.

4. Background

4.1 The full Quarter One performance report will not be completed until later in the summer. In the meantime Hugh Wagstaff, Head of Housing can share his draft commentary on performance and KPIs.

4.2 The new financial year started with the commencement of the new responsive repairs and voids contract with Ian Williams. Since the new contract started on 1 April c2400 jobs have been completed (av 800 a month) and 584 jobs have been requested and in progress, however are 238 overdue.

4.3 The Property Services team are working hard with Ian Williams to manage the contract and secure operatives and managers to fulfil the contract promises. Challenges with recruitment for roofing and flooring operative has caused delays and impacted performance.

4.4 The interim contract had not been closed with over 300 jobs outstanding with a value of c£200k. This work was expected to be complete by the end of June. The team are working closely with Ian Williams to develop an updated action plan to close the contract as soon as possible – to complete all works outstanding for tenants and close the budget.

4.5 The voids performance remains a challenge due to a number of longer term vacancies. The team are reviewing the end to end process to maximise the use of the notice period and ensure current outgoing tenants leave their home in good repair for reletting. The majority of spend on empty homes has been carpentry and preparing for decoration – areas which are generally the tenants responsibility.

4.6 We appointed a new Gas Contract Manager in June – unable to recruit directly we've employed a temporary consultant. I'm delighted to see an improvement in the performance of the gas safety checks with only four homes with an overdue safety check at the end of June.

4.7 The Compliance Team continue with the routine fire risk assessment and identification of issues to provide greater safety. Work started, in Faulkner Court, Farnham in June. The work can be completed with the tenants in situ and there is no requirement for waking watch fire wardens. Fire Safety works have also been identified at Blunden Court, Bramley. Preparing for work to start in September 2022.

4.8 The Housing Management team supported the Homes for Ukraine project. With little guidance or notice they commenced a programme of home visits and DBS checks to ensure safe homes for our Ukrainian guests. This work became a priority and impacted the capacity of the team to complete proactive work ie tenancy audits. The Homes for Ukraine and refugee support projects were handed over to new Resettlement team in the Housing Delivery and Communities service in July 2022.

4.9 We have also recruited a temporary officer to resolve backlog of Tenancy audits. Their priority is to confirm details of under occupiers to advice the EasyMove officer, who can target support to tenants who wish or need to move for health or social reasons.

4.10 The Housing Management team also have the support of a new Anti-Social Behaviour Officer through joint funding with the Communities team.

4.11 The housing fraud investigation work during the quarter has resulted in six properties being recovered from tenants who were not using the properties in accordance with the tenancy terms and conditions. Five of these properties were a result of action taken by the council as the tenants were not residing at the properties. The remaining property had been sublet to others whilst the tenant was residing abroad. This work has successfully enabled six households on the housing register to be allocated a home to live in. This work reinforces Waverley's stance that our properties should be used in accordance with our tenancy terms and condition. The support from our tenants is paramount in ensuring that this is achieved. Tenants are asked to raise any concerns they may have relating to housing tenancy fraud at <https://www.waverley.gov.uk/Services/Pay-Report-Apply/Report-it/Report-council-housing-fraud>.

4.12 I am working with Head of Housing Delivery and Strategy and Head of Finance to complete a strategic review of the HRA Business Plan. When setting the budget last year we committed to a review to consider future funding challenges for new homes, stock improvements and energy efficiency of homes. The review outcomes and recommendations will be shared with the LSAB in the Autumn.

4.13 During April and May the Service Improvement team ran a significant and large scale Tenancy Review consultation. The team consulted on the future use of flexible tenancies, amendments to the conditions of tenancy and updated Tenancy Policy and Tenancy Strategy. The results were presented to the Landlord Service Advisory Board in June. The Board advised the Co Portfolio Holder to stop using Flexible tenancies, adopt the tenancy policy and update the tenancy agreement. Work is now in place to give notice to all tenants of the change in tenancy conditions from 5 September 2022. All flexible tenants are invited to register to convert from a flexible to secure tenancy (project to run from September to December). Letters will be staggered over the last week of July and first week of August. Further information available www.waverly.gov.uk/tenancyreview

4.14 Eight members of the Housing Service attended the Chartered Institute of Housing Conference in Brighton in May. Hearing direct from the CIH Chairman, Regulator for Social Housing, Housing Ombudsman and DLUC. Key themes and discussions were held on the cost of living crisis, supply of affordable homes, future of regulation, building safety, tenant engagement and the importance of data and communications. These themes are all reflected in the Housing Service Plan for 2022/23 as part of our ongoing service improvements.

4.15 A Senior living away day was held in May to review the roles and responsibilities of the team, the needs of residents and future of the service. The awayday was arranged following the LSAB discussions on the outcomes of the Senior Living consultation. The team have faced many challenges during covid and following the withdrawal of support funding. The team identified key areas of responsibilities, ways to promote the service and identified risks to the service. A new Housing Graduate Management Trainee has been recruited to work with the team to develop and manage the improvement project.

4.16 Officer and Tenants Panel representatives support a review of the Allocation Scheme by an O&S task and finish group. They provided tenants views, context and background information. The group reported their findings to Resources O&S in June. Recommendations regarding income thresholds, joint residency and debt were made.

4.17 The wider team have also been working effectively with tenants at Lucas Fields. A new residents group has been created, with officers, residents and support from Cllr Keen. The Tenant Involvement Officer and Housing Graduate Management Trainee have created an action plan to address issues raised by the group and improvements are being made, including new street signs, formation of Neighbourhood Watch and improved access to water meters.

4.18 I continue to face the challenge of recruiting to vacant posts. The 2021/22 outturn report identified that savings were generally due to staff costs savings, but

this has an impact on our ability to deliver services and improvements. No applicants were received for the compliance roles despite numerous adverts and therefore I have had to appoint consultancy staff, to the gas and electric officer posts at a premium payment. I am working with Human Resources to simplify the recruitment process and promote opportunities.

5. Relationship to the Corporate Strategy and Service Plan

The report supports the Council's Corporate commitment to promote "*Good quality housing for all income levels and age groups*" and aim to "*be the best council landlord in the South East and to be acknowledged so by our tenants.*"

Annexes:

Annexe 1 – Draft Housing Operations Quarter One KPIs

Background Papers

There are no background papers, as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972).

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Housing Ops - Hugh Wagstaff								
KPI	Description	Data Type	Q1 21-22	Q2 21-22	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22/23	Q1 Target
HO1	Total current tenants rent arrears as a percentage of the total estimated gross debit (lower outturn is better)	%	0.87%	0.96%	1.18%	0.79%		1%
HO2	Average number of working days taken to re-let 'normal void' property (lower outturn is better)	Days	26	29	28	26	28	20
HO3	Percentage of annual boiler services and gas safety checks undertaken on time (higher outturn is better)	%	99.9%	100%	99.9%	99.5%	99.91%	100%
HO4	Responsive Repairs: How would you rate the overall service you have received? (Tenants' view of the service) (higher outturn is better)	%	Suspended until April 2022				79%	90%
HO4b	Responsive Repairs: Average number of days to complete a repair (lower outturn is better)	Days	14	15	15	40	12	7
HO5	Responsive Repairs: Was repair completed right first time? (Tenants' view of the service) (higher outturn is better)	%	Suspended until April 2022				58%	78%
HO5b	Responsive Repairs: Percentage of jobs not completed within 28 days (lower outturn is better)	%	22%	15%	32%	39%	8%	10%
HO6	% of tenancy audits completed against scheduled appointments in a quarter.	%	91%	Suspended until July 2022				95%

HO1 awaiting final figure – as at end June total arrears £258,708 against rent roll of c£30m
HO4 and HO5 indicative figures from 270 surveys completed in April, May and June