

## Service Summary Sheet

<b>Directorate</b>	<b>Housing and Communities</b>		
<b>Year</b>	<b>2023-24</b>	<b>Quarter</b>	Quarter 2 performance reporting (as at quarter ended 30/09/2023)
<b>Benchmarking</b> with local authorities/nearest neighbours Please consider if a <a href="#"><u>Delivering Better Outcomes proforma</u></a> should be completed also.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>Customer Service Team</b> have visited their colleagues at Sandwell MBC and Wolverhampton Homes to share good practice and begin comparison of initial benchmarking data. They have established that there is an appetite for joint working, including sharing good practice, possible benchmarking and joint training delivery.</li> <li>• The <b>Private Sector Housing Manager</b> has begun approaching other PSH Services locally and nationally with a view to establishing relationships to share good practice and possible benchmarking opportunities.</li> <li>• The <b>Housing Training Team</b> are working with the Chartered Institute of Housing to gain information and access to their established LA Network Groups to pursue possible benchmarking and good practice sharing.</li> <li>• The <b>Community Safety team</b> have close links regionally with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Violence Reduction Partnership and other Local Authorities in the region through attendance at a range of meetings including Heads of Community Safety, OPCC Domestic Abuse Board and its subgroups and the Modern Slavery Human Trafficking Board, also attendance at regional DA, EMVAWG and MSHT local authority 'leads' meetings to ensure sharing of best practice and a joined up approach regionally where appropriate. The team also have representation at a range of national community safety themed meetings coordinated by the LGA.</li> </ul>			
<b>Overview of service delivery</b> Include any issues / risk			
<p><b>Housing Customer Service Team</b></p> <p>The team have implemented changes to ensure Housing Complaints policy and process are compliant with the Housing Ombudsman code of guidance including changes to the Corporate Complaints Policy. The team have completed and published an annual survey relating to the code of guidance.</p> <p>The team have implemented a new weekly monitoring framework, which involves providing all Heads of Services with a weekly spreadsheet detailing all outstanding customer complaints and MP/Member queries. This is leading to a greater focus on this area of work and reductions in response timescales.</p>			

## **Housing Fraud**

A recent investigation led to the tenant being interviewed under caution for sub-letting his social housing accommodation, it was a 'no comment' throughout. However, working in collaboration with the Criminal Legal Team, this case may be settled outside of Court for a substantial amount of revenue and possession of DMBC stock.

Within this period, 5 properties were recovered and brought back into circulation, thus, enabling those on the waiting list and in genuine need of rehousing to bid for them.

## **Community Housing Teams**

The team have undertaken a review of illegal occupiers/trespassers and are working hard to ensure the occupants are rehoused and properties recovered back into our stock for letting.

Door knocking exercises have taken place in Codele and Highfields with Community Housing Officers visiting customers to discuss and raise the profile of the Saville's stock condition surveys.

Housing teams have undertaken 2 Fraud awareness days where all Community Housing Officers, Fraud Officers and the Customer Involvement Team have visited large numbers of properties to raise awareness of tenancy fraud in Highfields and Chapel Street.

## **Housing Options**

Housing Options have now re-registered over three and a half thousand existing housing register applicants from the Northgate system into Huume – no further re-registrations are being accepted and all applicants going forward are being registered as new applications. the Housing Options team are receiving over 150 new applications a week and are continuing to develop the website and form to best meet our needs.

## **Community Safety Team**

The Community Safety Team continue to support and coordinate the work of Safe and Sound, Dudley's Community Safety Partnership and its subgroups, in addition to 'leading' on a number of work streams

## **Communications**

A significant amount of communications continue to take place with monthly plans for our social media channels and a regular e-bulletin going out to a growing distribution list. Topics covered in Q2 include:

- o Honour-based abuse and forced marriage
- o domestic abuse
- o lighter nights
- o modern slavery
- o personal safety
- o bullying
- o substance misuse
- o online safety
- o domestic abuse

Posters and leaflets around Domestic Abuse, Hate Crime and Modern Slavery continue to be available in 6 of our main community languages (Arabic, Mandarin, Punjabi, Polish, Romanian and Urdu) on request.

'Dudley Have Your Say', a statutory requirement for the partnership to consult with the community and give them the opportunity to meet and ask questions of senior officers from the 5 Responsible Authorities is being planned for March 2024.

### Domestic Abuse

- The DA Board continues to implement the DA Act and progress actions identified from the needs assessment and Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs)
- The updated DA needs assessment has been completed and is in final draft and will be signed off by the DA Board in Q3 and the updated strategy has been drafted, again to be agreed in Q3. The recommendations from these documents will inform the new DA board action plan, along with recommendations from recent and ongoing DHR's
- Risk around amount of active DHR's in terms of capacity and funding. At the end of Q2 there were 4 in progress and one awaiting quality assurance from the Home Office. A DHR Governance Group has now been convened to monitor the actions from the DHRs
- A local MARAC governance group continues to meet to support the restructure of MARAC regionally.
- The 'refreshed' DA and VAWG forum will be meeting in Q3
- The Domestic Abuse training offer continues to be promoted widely and continues to develop further modules and resources – these can be accessed at: <https://blackcountrywa.thinkific.com/pages/dudley-safe-and-sound>

## Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

- The VAWG group continues to meet and progress their work plan

## Modern Slavery

- A Modern Slavery Subgroup has been developed under the safe and sound board, this group has started mapping the borough's response to Modern slavery and human trafficking.
- The DMBC Modern Slavery Statement has been updated and at end of Q2 was awaiting sign off from the Chief Exec, Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition (at time of writing this has now been agreed)
- Modern slavery eLearning continues to be available on the DSPP website, and links can be found to this, and government NRM eLearning (among other useful information) on the safe and sound help hub page <https://www.dudleysafeandsound.org/modernslavery> In addition multi agency briefing sessions were delivered over teams in Q2 by West Midlands Anti-Slavery network.

## Violence prevention

- Work in relation the implementation of the serious violence duty continues and we are on track in respect of this

## Prevent

- Significant progress has been made in terms of the Prevent duty with nearly all of the Housing directorate trained and aware of current issues and threats.
- Community Safety Team have supported officers from across the West Midlands area with regards to far-right extremism.

## ASB

- Work is ongoing around new PSPOs for the borough, around public places and open spaces, and anti-social vehicle usage.
- Car Cruising legal arguments continue in the high court, but work is on-going within the borough to reduce the risk of harm as a result of car cruising with a zero tolerance approach being adopted by DMBC and Police partners.

## **Homeless Prevention Resettlement Team**

We have had 1358 homeless approaches to the service, this is 50% up on last quarter, at this rate we shall double last year's numbers which was already at an increase. We have made changes to the service to manage this demand but if it continues at this rate we shall have resource issues. However, despite this increase we have maintained low numbers of TA and prevention and relief of

homelessness remains high. This has been achieved in difficult circumstances, with high demand for social housing and low stock availability.

## **Climate Change**

The Housing and Communities Directorate, in conjunction with other government agencies and external energy providers, are currently working on a number of schemes, mostly within the private sector, aimed at increasing sustainability and tackling poor energy efficiency, as detailed within this report.

### LA Flexible Eligibility

The ECO4 Local Authority Flexible Eligibility Scheme provides boilers and insulation for vulnerable groups in the private sector. The works are 100% funded by Energy Providers and undertaken by their own contractors. The Council assist in ratifying eligibility for households and the scheme is currently in progress.

### Great British Insulation Scheme

The Great British Insulation Scheme is a new government efficiency scheme (formerly known as ECO+) that will be administered by Ofgem. It is designed to deliver improvements to the least energy-efficient homes in Great Britain to tackle fuel poverty and help reduce energy bills within the private sector. This is due to be rolled out shortly.

### Local Authority Delivery Phase 2 (LAD2)

The LAD2 scheme, completed in June 2022, delivered energy saving work (High heat retention electric Night Storage Heaters, External Wall Insulation and Solar Panels) to 296 local authority owned properties that were previously rated D or below. High heat retention storage heaters are now considered to be an efficient way of providing clean energy that are more controllable and easier to use and over 20% cheaper than standard night storage heaters. The scheme was funded through £1.5M grant paid into the Housing Revenue Account, match funded with £1M from the DMBC Housing Revenue Account.

### Local Authority Delivery Phase 3 (LAD3) and Home Upgrade Grants (HUGS1)

£255k of grant funded work to around 50 private sector properties to provide predominantly Cavity Wall and Loft Insulation works together with some ancillary ventilation measures. The programme is currently in progress.

### Home Upgrade Grants (HUGS2)

Around £2M worth of funding to deliver 'fabric first' measures to privately owned 'off-gas' properties. This work is being administered and delivered by the West Midlands Combined Authority with the Council entering a Memorandum of Understanding on that basis, and will commence shortly.

## Switchee

1,691 smart thermostats have been installed across the borough to assist in reducing energy consumption.

## Dudley Energy Advice Line (DEAL)

The DEAL provides energy efficiency and carbon reduction advice for all residents. Historically the service also assisted with energy switches which are slowly returning as energy costs start to reduce. The service signposts people to areas of income maximisation and issues food and fuel vouchers for those in need. The Team also provide energy saving behavioural advice to residents who contact the team with between 3,000 to 3,500 contacts per year.

## Housing Assistance Grants

Repayable grant funded works to poor and vulnerable homeowners, subject to eligibility where the work is identified as being required to eradicate a hazard to health and/or safety in accordance with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System via the Council's own grant process.

Available throughout the year, works include but are not limited to boiler installations, roofing works, doors, and windows. Some urgent low-cost minor repairs are also provided to those that are non-repayable. Again, this is subject to eligibility.

## Net Zero Neighbourhood (NZN) programme

Demonstrator programme to identify, survey and provide net-zero retro-fit measures to up to 50 properties within Brockmoor. £1.65M of grant match funded with £1M of Better Care funding. A £42,000 contribution has also been received from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) which has been added to the NZN pot. Further funding opportunities are being investigated including provision of ECP's, Heat Pumps and improvement to green space. Resident consultation will take place through the programme.

The Council have identified a framework contract that will enable the appointment of a 'one-stop' provider to facilitate all feasibility, consultancy and design work together with the on-site delivery of the project with a brief to work towards phase 2 of the project.

A preferred bidder has been identified and bespoke contractual terms and conditions have been drafted. In the meantime the preferred provider has been undertaking preparatory work 'at risk' alongside the Council to ensure that a good start is made when the contracts are exchanged, and the Council have not incurred any costs to date.

Engagement will start in the Autumn followed by monitoring during the winter and measures undertaken in Spring 2024 with a view to complete by the backstop date of March 2024.

The scheme will also involve a mobility and transport assessment, a small community greenspace project and a strategy for the local school.

## **Housing Maintenance**

The housing maintenance service is ceasing utilisation of high spend contractors with works being brought back into the internal workforce where possible.

Commenced transformation project to

- Support the implementation of new IT system
- Implement better and more efficient ways of working
- Support recovery of building compliance
- Evidence vfm for maintenance to ensure regulatory notice is removed
- Review of Out of Hours service arrangements to reduce costs whilst providing a more comprehensive service
- Introduce H&S Performance meetings for Housing Directorate
- Review of working times and practices
- Review of material usage, costs and specifications
- Review of contract arrangements with high spend contractors.
- Review of fleet arrangements to improve efficiencies
- Produce first draft procurement strategy for Property Services
- Redrafted Repair Responsibilities document to reduce unnecessary works and bring in line with industry norms
- Commenced review of policies to ensure they align with regulatory requirements and TSM's

## **Private Sector Housing Team**

The Private Sector Housing Manager has completed a draft Damp and Mould Action Plan, which is a requirement from the Secretary of State for DLUHC. The action plan will provide greater focus for this area of work including training, and advice for tenants and landlords.

## **Asset Management and Development and Building Safety**

The Building Safety and Compliance team have set up the following key activities to ensure great transparency of building compliance:

- Introduced a weekly certificate and asset reconciliation activity.
- The introduction of a new single BS&C asset management team who manage and validate all certification.
- The development of site inspection surveys that feed directly into C365

- The team have undertaken a significant overhaul of the contract supply chain to standardise and improve delivery from the contractors.
- Improvement in contractor billing processes have allowed greater challenge and improved contractor cost recovery.
- The BS&C team have worked to develop a full suite of BS&C documents which form the revised BS&C Policy framework for the authority.
- The BS&C team are working with the Housing team to implement a new access process which will see the access timeline reduce to 35 days across all compliance activities.

The Asset management and Development team have delivered and completed the following key tasks:

- Revised the supply chain to deliver the aids and adaptation in a more compliant manner and to an increased number of units
- Phase two of the SCS exercise has been successfully rolled out and the communication process has been adapted to reflect the no access rate
- Jack Newell and Woodhouse Court Sheltered and Supported schemes have been handed over and residents are now beginning to occupy the properties.
- The asset team have been managing the asset viability process at every void property which exceeds the threshold of viable investment, this has identified savings of £2.5m of investment in assets which was not required

## Service achievements

*Report of any external accreditation, awards, positive publicity, during the past quarter*

A Baseline **Tenant Perception Survey** has been completed. The perception survey is part of a responsibility for all social landlords to carry out a new annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey. This involved external consultants carrying out a telephone survey with over 1000 tenants to gauge their opinion on the Council's housing services. The survey was carried out within timescales and provides a valuable insight into areas of satisfaction and concern from tenants. The learning from the baseline survey will be used to inform the actual survey to be carried in Quarter 4.

## Asset Management and Building Safety and Compliance

The team have positively progressed work on the compliance recovery programme and reduced the outstanding BS&C backlog by an overall 84% from the original non-compliant position, this includes 100% of Fire\risk assessments being complete, 100% of historical FRA actions being closed down, as well as 298 of the original 300 no access gas sites being accessed and no compliant.



## **Housing Maintenance**

Contributed positively towards the recovery of building compliance by the introduction of a Damp and Mould dedicated team.

Apprentice Awards sponsored by Jewsons.

Reduced spend on subcontractors.

Reduced spend on materials.

Reduced head count.

Increased staff engagement through staff survey and implementation of improvements utilising feedback.

Baseline TSM survey identified repairs as being the highest performer in customer satisfaction.

## **Opportunities for improvement**

*Information relating to service complaints / compliments and learning from these*

### **Private Sector Housing Team**

A new PSH Manager has been appointed who will be undertaking a full internal review of the team, policies and procedures. The PSH Manager will be assisted in the review by other members of the Housing Strategy Team. The review will take account of the internal audit of the service published earlier in the year.

### **Customer Service Team**

The team are working with neighbouring organisations to improve processes and procedures in the delivery of services. An internal review specifically of MP/Member queries is to be undertaken.

### **Asset Management and Development and Building Safety**

The assets team have been reviewing the planned investment programme, it has identified that unphased programming of works have caused significant negative impact on investment dates. The teams are working to reprofile the planned works to improve delivery to the customers and best financial return to the authority.

### **Housing Maintenance**

All areas of Maintenance are being reviewed and overhauled to implement industry standard working practices to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements and to demonstrate vfm.

A number of areas have been identified which are duplicated across the Council and a project is now being commenced to look at the opportunities for the centralisation of duplicated working areas, contracts, services and teams.

## **Housing Options**

The new Huume system allows for the service to be more adaptive and responsive to the needs of the business, a administrators group has been formed across the teams using the system to work on development and change.

## **Any additional information relating to performance**

### **Performance Management**

The Housing Performance Team are working on being easily able to transfer data from Spectrum to Power BI for the purposes of Performance Management meetings. Power BI is visually a better platform to present performance data on.

### **Asset Management and Development and Building Safety**

The level of transparency now available on the performance of Decent Homes, EPC ratings, BS&C performance has vastly improved as a result of the SCS exercise, and the huge influx of fresh and real-time data being fed into the business.

The revised implementation programme surrounding C365 and the refreshing of the Keystone and work around Northgate has provided greater clarity and assurance around the core asset and BS&C data sets allowing for easier and more reliable reporting from these and other sources

### **Housing Maintenance**

Whilst implementing reductions in multiple areas of resources, the overall performance of the service has been maintained at a steady level. Ceasing the utilisation of contractors on voids has resulted in the start of a back log, this will be addressed by diverting internal resources.