

**Meeting of the Housing and Safer Communities
Select Committee**

**Wednesday 13th September, 2023 at 6pm
In Committee Room 2, The Council House, Priory Road,
Dudley**

**Agenda - Public Session
(Meeting open to the public and press)**

1. Apologies for absence
2. To report the appointment of any substitute members serving for this meeting of the Committee.
3. To receive any declarations of interest under the Members' Code of Conduct
4. To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 20th July, 2023 as a correct record (Pages 4 – 10)
5. Public Forum
6. Progress Tracker and Future Business (Pages 11 – 14)
7. Corporate Quarterly Performance Report – Housing and Communities Directorate – Quarter 1 (1st April – 30th June, 2023) (Pages 15 – 33)
8. Impact of the 2023/24 Rent Increase for Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council Tenants (Pages 34 – 38)
9. Update on Property Condition and Compliance (Pages 39 – 45)



10. To consider any questions from Members to the Chair where two clear days' notice has been given to the Monitoring Officer (Council Procedure Rule 11.8).

Distribution:

Councillor A Davies (Chair)

Councillor S Bothul (Vice-Chair)

Councillors A Aston, D Bevan, J Cowell, T Creed, P Drake, I Kettle, K Lewis, J Martin and M Webb

Cc: Councillor L Taylor-Childs (Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Communities); Councillor S Ridney (Substitute for Councillor P Drake)



Chief Executive

Dated: 5th September, 2023

Please note the following information when attending meetings:-

Health and Safety

- In view of ongoing health and safety requirements in the workplace, you are asked to comply with any safety instructions applicable to the venue. Various mitigating actions are in place to minimise any risks and to ensure we adhere to the latest guidance.

Public Seating

- Seating is subject to limits on capacity and will be allocated on a 'first come' basis.

Toilets

- Toilet facilities are available on site and are subject to safety measures that are in place. All the toilets have hand washing facilities.

No smoking

- There is no smoking on the premises in line with national legislation. It is an offence to smoke in or on the premises. You cannot use e-cigarettes and/or similar vaping devices.

In Case of Emergency

- In the event of the alarms sounding, please leave the building by the nearest exit. There are Officers who will assist you in the event of this happening, please follow their instructions.

Submitting Apologies for Absence

- Elected Members can submit apologies by contacting Democratic Services (see our contact details below).

Private and Confidential Information

- Any agendas containing reports with 'exempt' information should be treated as private and confidential. It is your responsibility to ensure that information containing private and personal data is kept safe and secure at all times. Confidential papers should be handed to Democratic Services for secure disposal. If you choose to retain the documents you should ensure that the information is securely stored and destroyed within six months.

General

- Public Wi-Fi is available
- The use of mobile devices or electronic facilities is permitted for the purposes of recording/reporting during the public session of the meeting. The use of any such devices must not disrupt the meeting – Please turn off any ringtones or set your devices to silent.
- Information about the Council and our meetings can be viewed on the website www.dudley.gov.uk

If you need advice or assistance

If you (or anyone you know) requires assistance to access the venue, or if you have any other queries, please contact Democratic Services - Telephone 01384 815238 or E-mail

Democratic.Services@dudley.gov.uk

If you are reading these documents on an electronic device, you have saved the Council £7.00 (on average) per printed agenda and helped reduce the Council's carbon footprint

**Minutes of the Housing and Safer Communities
Select Committee**

**Thursday 20th July, 2023 at 6.00 pm
At Saltwells Education Development Centre, Bowling Green
Road, Netherton**

Present:

Councillor A Davies (Chair)
Councillor S Bothul (Vice-Chair)
Councillors A Aston, D Bevan, J Cowell, T Creed, P Drake, I Kettle, K Lewis,
J Martin and M Webb

Officers:

K Jones, Director of Housing and Communities and K Malpass - Democratic
Services Officer (Directorate of Finance and Legal).

1 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies submitted for this meeting of the Committee.

2 Appointment of Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members appointed for this meeting of the
Committee.

3 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor J Cowell declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 5 (Programme of meetings and business items for 2023/2024) as a Council tenant.

4 **Comments of the Chair**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Housing and Safer Communities Select Committee and provided a brief introduction of his expectations and requirements of Committee Members throughout the 2023/24 municipal year.

5 **Public Forum**

No issues were raised under this agenda item.

6 **Programme of Meetings and Business Items for 2023/24**

The Committee considered the programme of meetings and items of business for detailed consideration by this Committee during 2023/24.

During the discussion, Councillor J Cowell referred to the report on rent increase programmed for the September meeting and queried whether the report would include information on services charges. The Director of Housing and Communities indicated that the intention of the report on rent increase was to enhance Member's understanding on the requirements around rent increase and the impact the current increase had on residents and the Local Authority. Members would be encouraged to scrutinise the current processes in place and support informed decisions moving forward. It was envisaged that information around service charges would be incorporated in the Review of Housing Finance report programmed for 20th November, 2023 where financial proposals would be discussed and considered for the 2024/2025 municipal year.

In referring to the recent establishment of the Housing Assurance Board following Cabinet approval, Councillor J Cowell queried whether regular updates could be provided to the Committee. The Director of Housing and Communities indicated that draft terms of reference were currently being considered which would provide a link between the Housing Assurance Board and the Housing and Safer Communities Select Committee and would be submitted to the Committee once finalised to provide Members with a clear understanding of how the two groups would interact moving forward. It was essential that assurances were given to Members that work within the remit of the Housing Assurance Board was being carried out and what impact it had on communities. Membership of the Board was still being considered and assurances were given to Members that the Committee would be involved in some way to support and scrutinise the work of the Board. It was suggested that future updates provide information on how the Housing Assurance Board would support the work of the Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Association and associated groups.

Councillor A Aston referred to the project in relation to the stock condition survey, and queried whether a brief update could be provided on progress towards targets for each scheduled Committee. The Director of Housing and Communities indicated that the proposed report on Property Condition and Compliance update programmed for 13th September 2023 would include feedback on progress relating to the stock condition survey. She indicated that rather than reports being provided to each meeting of the Committee, Members receive regular written updates by e-mail which would allow responses to be provided in a timely manner. Members noted that the project was currently ahead of schedule and was expected to be completed by the end of the calendar year rather than by the end of the financial year.

Councillor I Kettle expressed concern at to the low level of housing stock in the Borough that the Local Authority had jurisdiction over, which was considered to be around 13% of houses within Dudley. The lack of support for vulnerable residents in accommodation other than social housing was clear in all wards of the Borough which had resulted in properties being severely neglected due to some residents struggling to maintain properties due to being hospitalised for a period of time, incapacitated or struggling with mental health issues which often resulted in properties becoming empty. It was considered that more could be done within the Housing and Communities Directorate to support a higher percentage of tenants within the Borough to maintain their properties.

The Director of Housing and Communities indicated that around 8.4% of housing stock in the Borough was private rented, which was considered low compared to the national average. The percentage of owner occupiers in Dudley was slightly higher than the national average which produced challenges in terms of understanding property conditions and requirements on how houses should be managed and maintained. The private rented sector had an important role within Dudley and considerable work was required around that sector and it was envisaged that detailed information would be included in the report on the review of private rented sector programmed for 22nd January 2024.

Members were advised that the Local Authority had limited jurisdiction around the owner occupier sector unless properties posed significant risks of danger to the public, in which case Compulsory Purchase Orders could be considered, however, robust legal processes would need to be followed. Residents struggling with mobility or physical health issues may qualify for support from social care, however, appropriate assessments would be required in the first instance.

Councillor A Aston expressed his appreciation that the Committee's remit considered housing matters only, and queried whether there would be an opportunity to invite a representative from an Housing Association to provide the Committee with a presentation on requirements to residents as a landlord. The Director of Housing and Communities provided Members with a breakdown of figures in relation to various sectors of housing stock within the Borough. It was reported that regular meetings between the Local Authority and Dudley Housing Partnership were held, and both organisations were governed by the same requirements of the Decent Homes Standard and other regulatory standards overseen by the Regulator of Social Housing.

Councillor A Davies queried whether there were any groups/organisations that recorded data in relation to social housing, housing associations, private rented and owner occupier properties in the Dudley Borough. The Director of Housing and Communities indicated that she would liaise with the Housing Strategy Team and provide Members of the Committee with a written response.

Councillor I Kettle considered that the current council tax banding system operated by the Local Authority should also be considered as it provided information on the quality and type of housing available within the Dudley Borough. Members suggested that The Director of Housing and Communities investigate the possibility of providing Members the opportunity to allow more detailed scrutiny of the housing stock within the Borough.

Councillor T Creed queried the processes followed when considering options for derelict houses and disposal. The Director of Housing and Communities indicated that a stock appraisal was carried out on poor quality/derelict properties to understand costs involved in repairing and maintaining properties and whether during the net present value period (30-year period) the property would earn back the investment spent to bring it back into use. Consideration would also be given to a number of peculiarities of a property, the size of a property, number of bedrooms, driveways attached to the household, area in which properties were located and whether there were shortages of particular properties. Properties would only be considered for disposal should an appraisal result in significant financial loss for the Local Authority.

Councillor I Kettle indicated that a more proactive approach was required when considering bringing properties back into use and to identify “bolthole” category properties within the Borough. It was considered that there was a significant number of empty homes in the Borough that still held a tenancy, where residents had moved in with a partner but had held onto the tenancy for security reasons which often resulted in properties being left in poor condition.

Councillor A Aston suggested that the programme include additional reports relating to community safety. The Director of Housing and Communities indicated that there was a safety aspect around the items identified in the proposed work programme. Reference was made to the Safe and Sound Board, which was the Community Safety Partnership for the Borough and was a Multi-Agency Board chaired by the Borough Commander. There was a number of sub-groups attached to the Board that reported on various safety elements that fed into the Board frequently. The Director of Housing and Communities indicated that the structure of the Safe and Sound Board would be circulated to all Members of the Committee.

The Director of Housing and Communities indicated that the Local Authority were obliged to provide an annual report on the Community Safety Partnership, which would be submitted to the Committee on 13th March, 2024. It was envisaged that a community safety element would be incorporated into each report programmed for the Committee for the municipal year.

In responding to a question from Councillor K Lewis, the Director of Housing and Communities explained that developing a neighbourhood model for the community would ensure that the Local Authority reconnected with communities. Significant improvements were required, and it was envisaged that the report on the Neighbourhood Model programmed for 22nd January 2024 would provide an update highlighting improvements and progress. Consideration was being given to open community-based offices and the role of Housing Managers has been reviewed to ensure a focus on engagement with communities and Members. Members were advised that following the restructure, Housing Managers were now known as Housing Officers. It was expected that every resident was aware of their nominated Housing Officers and that Housing Officers were prominent in their allocated wards to focus on the needs of the residents moving forward.

In responding to a question from Councillor A Davies in relation to the officer structure of Housing Officers, the Director of Housing and Communities confirmed that there were currently thirty-six Housing Officers and six Team Managers that would be aligned to individual wards in the Borough and consideration would be given to the new boundary changes within the Dudley Borough.

Resolved

- (1) That the report on the programme of meetings and potential items of business for this Committee, be noted.
- (2) That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to provide Members of the Committee regular updates on progress on the stock condition survey.

- (3) That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to liaise with the Housing Strategy Team to ascertain whether there were any groups/organisations that recorded data in relation to social housing, housing associations, private rented and owner occupier properties in the Dudley Borough and provide a written response to Members of the Committee.
- (4) That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to circulate the structure of the Safe and Sound Board to Members of the Committee.
- (5) That the Director of Housing and Communities, supported by the Democratic Services Officer, be requested to consider the possibility of providing Members the opportunity to allow more detailed scrutiny of the housing stock within the Borough.
- (6) That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to incorporate a community safety element to each report programmed for the Committee for the municipal year.
- (7) That, subject to resolution (5) and (6) above, the Committee confirm the programme of business as outlined in paragraph 4 of the report submitted, subject to the need for flexibility to reflect any changes that might arise during the municipal year.
- (8) That the Lead for Law and Governance, following consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, be authorised to make all the necessary arrangements to enable this Committee to undertake its programme of scrutiny work during the 2023/24 municipal year.
- (9) That the terms of reference for the Housing and Safer Communities Select Committee, as set out in the Appendix to the report submitted, be noted.

7 **Questions Under Council Procedure Rule 11.8**

There were no questions to the Chair pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 11.8.

The meeting ended at 6.28pm

CHAIR

CESSC/7

Housing and Safer Communities Select Committee
Progress Tracker and Future Business

Subject (Date of Meeting)	Recommendation/action	Responsible Officer/Area	Status/Notes
Programme of Meetings and Business Items for 2023/24 – 20 th July, 2024	<u>Agenda Item No. 6(2)</u> That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to provide Members of the Committee regular updates on progress on the stock condition survey.	Director of Housing and Communities	Ongoing – regular updates to be provided
	<u>Agenda Item No. 6(3)</u> That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to liaise with the Housing Strategy Team to ascertain whether there were any groups/organisations that recorded data in relation to social housing, housing associations, private rented and owner occupier properties in the Dudley Borough and provide a written response to Members of the Committee.	Director of Housing and Communities	Response to be provided to all Members of the Committee

	<p><u>Agenda Item No. 6(4)</u> That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to circulate the structure of the Safe and Sound Board to Members of the Committee.</p>	<p>Director of Housing and Communities</p>	<p>Structure circulated by e-mail to all Members of the Committee on 22nd August, 2023</p>
	<p><u>Agenda Item No. 6(5)</u> That the Director of Housing and Communities, supported by the Democratic Services Officer, be requested to consider the possibility of providing Members the opportunity to allow more detailed scrutiny of the housing stock within the Borough.</p>	<p>Director of Housing and Communities/ Democratic Services Officer</p>	<p>Consideration and update at appropriate Agenda Meeting setting</p>
	<p><u>Agenda Item No. 6(6)</u> That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to incorporate a community safety element to each report programmed for the Committee for the municipal year.</p>	<p>Director of Housing and Communities</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

Future Business 2023/24

<u>Date of Meeting</u>	<u>Work Programme</u>	<u>Responsible Officer/Area</u>	<u>Notes</u>
13th September, 2023	Corporate Quarterly Performance Report – Housing and Communities Directorate – Quarter 1 (1 st April – 30 th June, 2023)	Richard Cartwright/Claire Blunn	Report
	Impact of Rent Increase	Kathryn Jones	Report
	Property Condition and Compliance Update	Kathryn Jones	Report
	Action Tracker and Future Business	Karen Malpass	Report
20 th November, 2023	Review of Housing Finance	Kathryn Jones/Ian Grosvenor	Report
	Tenant Satisfaction Measures	Kathryn Jones	Report
	Customer Involvement	Kathryn Jones	Report
	Action Tracker and Future Business	Karen Malpass	Report

22 nd January, 2024	Corporate Quarterly Performance Report – Housing and Communities Directorate – Quarter 2 (1 st July to 30 th September, 2023)	Richard Cartwright/Claire Blunn	Report
	Review of Private Rented Sector	Kathryn Jones	Report
	Neighbourhood Model	Kathryn Jones	Report
	Action Tracker and Future Business	Karen Malpass	Report
13 th March, 2024	Corporate Quarterly Performance Report – Housing and Communities Directorate – Quarter 3 (1 st October to 31 st December, 2023)	Richard Cartwright/Claire Blunn	Report
	Annual Report 2023/24 and potential items of business for 2024/25	Karen Malpass	Report
	Community Safety Partnership including Anti-Social Behaviour	Kathryn Jones	Report
	Contractor Management	Kathryn Jones	Report
	Action Tracker and Future Business	Karen Malpass	Report

Meeting of the Housing & Safer Communities Select Committee – 13th September 2023

Report of the Chief Executive

Corporate Quarterly Performance Report - Housing & Communities – Quarter 1 (1st April 2023 to 30th June 2023)

Purpose

1. To present the Quarter 1 Corporate Quarterly Performance report of the financial year 2023/24 covering the period 1st April 2023 to 30th June 2023 and is aligned to the new 3-year Council Plan.

In addition, further data relating to directorate service delivery are included as appendices to the report. This quarter concentrates on Housing and Communities Directorate.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the Housing and Safer Communities Select Committee review the contents of this report and that any identified performance issues are referred to the relevant Cabinet Member and Service Director.

Background

3. The Quarter 1 performance report provides the committee with progress against the delivery of the new 3-year Council Plan priorities and our Future Council Programme:
 - Dudley the borough of opportunity
 - Dudley the safe and healthy borough
 - Dudley the borough of ambition and enterprise
 - Dudley borough the destination of choice

The Future Council programme incorporates everything we do, it sits at the heart of the Council Plan enabling our services. The comprehensive programme ensures the council is 'fit for the future'. The programmes are key themes are:

- People
- Digital
- Place
- Process
- Financially sustainable

Directorate plans will show the operational activity to deliver the objectives in the Council Plan alongside our other strategies.

Performance Framework

4. Performance Framework

The [performance reporting framework launched early 2022](#), monitors performance and progress against the delivery of the [Council Plan](#) and sets out the councils approach including:

- Golden thread and hierarchy of plans
- Linking the Borough Vision and Council Plan
- Performance measures and indicators
- Performance reporting and governance
- Annual performance management cycle

Dudley's council priorities and plans are under continual review and need to respond to the changing environment and pressures which we face as a local authority. Dudley's performance approach is inherent in everything we do, and our framework is based on the **Plan, Do, Review, Revise model**.

The council plan cycle is 3 years with Directorate Service Plans being revised annually against the council plan for that year. Reviewing and revising plans allows us to be responsive to developing priorities as well as ensuring we are delivering against the current plan.

Directorate Service Planning

Good service planning is a cornerstone of effective governance and performance management. Services need to plan their strategy and delivery to make sure resources, finances, people, skills and assets are used efficiently.

Our directorate service plans provide an overview of each directorate, setting out their resources, service improvement priorities and how they contribute to delivering the outcomes and priorities outlined in the Council Plan.

They are a vital part of the 'golden thread' which links the council plan and borough vision objectives through to individual annual reviews. They are also a key element of our Corporate Performance Management Framework as they identify the key performance indicators and key initiatives/actions which will allow us to assess our progress against the council plan.

As previously mentioned, Directorate Plans are reviewed annually, however a suitable approach will be agreed to enable Directorate Plans to be updated during the year following a significant change to a service, performance indicator or action. This has been incorporated recently into the performance framework following an audit during the summer 2023.

Directorate service plans are supported by service/team plans. These plans contain details on operational matters and how the overall aims and priorities of the directorate service plan will be delivered.

All directorate plans are available from the [directorate pages in Connect](#).

Benchmarking

In line with the Performance framework as stated in section 5 of this report, an extensive piece of work has been carried out across all directorates to review directorate service plans. These align to the 3-year council plan core priorities and outcomes for this financial year (2023/2024). The review included benchmarking by either using our local data from previous outturns and/or comparing against other authorities.

As a result of this exercise key performance measures and targets have been reviewed and changed accordingly, targets have been removed for this financial year to help us to establish performance baselines for future reporting.

Key Performance Indicators and Summary

5. Overall, there are 38 key initiatives/actions and 5 Corporate KPI's (4 quarterly and 1 annual) being reported on for Housing & Communities. Annual performance measures will be reported at year end.

6. Q1 Performance Summary

The dashboards highlight 4 corporate quarterly measures for Housing & Communities. The table below shows the performance summary against target:

Overview: Number of Corporate key performance indicators (KPI's) due for reporting this quarter:

Housing & Communities	 1	 0	 3
----------------------------------	--	--	--

The Corporate dashboards attached also compares direction of travel as both short-term (Available in Quarter 2) and also annual trend comparing Q1 2023-24 to Q1 2022-23.

In relation to the annual trend, for Housing & Communities, there are 1 improved, 0 consistent and 3 worsening trends.

The below Corporate reported performance measures provides a snapshot of where areas of concern (below target) are being monitored closely within the Directorates.

The below target performance measures are reported within our management teams at both service and strategic levels to ensure understanding of the issues and assurances that appropriate actions are being taken to address the issues.

7. Housing and Communities:

- **PI.2027 Satisfaction – way your anti-social behaviour complaint was handled?**

The data tells us that satisfaction with the service is decreasing. Upon reflecting on comments made by service users it indicates a theme around contact and time taken to resolve matters.

The decrease in satisfaction infers a shortcoming, which if left unaddressed could lead to reputational damage and/or increased risks to service users/tenants.

Poor feedback can have an impact on staff morale, leading to staff loss and the inability to deliver services.

Assurance: evidence that actions are in place and having an impact

The structure and operating model of the team is currently being reviewed and changes have been/will be made.

Work is underway to further interrogate the survey data to identify the extent of any correlation between outcome and satisfaction, and to review the associated cases to get a better understanding of whether there are operational issues that must be addressed or whether customer perception relies entirely upon achieving the desired result.

- **PI.1191 V&L05 Average re-let time for Standard Re-Lets**

Average re-let times for standard re-lets have shown a decrease from 60.23 days in Q4 2022/2023 to 49.26 days in Q1 2023/2024. This is below the same period last year when the figure for Q1 2022/2023 was 61.7 days.

The re-let time for standard voids continues to vary between property types.

- Performance for houses shows no significant change with a minimal increase to 31 days.
- For bungalows there has been an increase from 36.65 to 51.85 days.
- For maisonettes there has been an increase from 49.22 to 59.13 days.
- For all flats excluding sheltered there has been a decrease from 53.85 to 41.89 days.

Bedsits excluding sheltered have shown a decrease from 43.24 to 28.33 days.

Impact on service delivery is the Loss of revenue, impact on reputation.

Assurance: evidence that actions are in place and having an impact

All teams involved in the void process continue to review and refine procedures working together to minimise rent loss and void turnaround times.

- **PI.1899 Rent Loss - % of potential receipts lost (dwellings)**

The total cumulative rent loss in Q1 equates to £558,598.31.

The cumulative rent loss due to voids shows an increase from 1.97% in Q4 2022/23. This is an increase from 1.92 for the same period last year.

£119,219.62 is directly attributable to void loss where we are carrying out improvement programmes in our sheltered stock or decanting people to facilitate them. (85 properties)

£19,243.43 is attributable to properties being used for decant or held for future decant (not as part of the sheltered improvement programme) (19 properties)

£108,580.04 is attributable to 95 properties awaiting an investment decision.

Therefore a total of £247,043.09 of rent loss in Q1 (44% of rent loss) is attributable to 199 properties that were at these statuses at the end of the quarter.

As a result of delivering our Asset Management Strategy we will continue to have a certain level of rent loss associated with strategic voids, which will be managed through efficient decision making and project management.

We also recognise that routine voids therefore account for over 56% of rent loss, this is a decrease from 70% in Q4 2022/23. There is a significant opportunity to increase our income by improving processes and performance.

Assurance: evidence that actions are in place and having an impact

The end-to-end voids review continues and has started to have a positive impact on void turnaround times which will, in turn, impact positively on void rent loss in the future. With the current focus within the service on stock condition we may see an impact on void loss in the short term as additional checks are undertaken at void stage. A further review of voids requiring an investment decision is currently underway and recommendations for each of these properties will be made during Q2.

8. Key Initiatives / Actions Monitoring

The Directorate Service Plans feature service improvement actions that are updated each quarter to monitor progress. At quarter 1 2023-24, for Housing & Communities, of the 38 actions reported, 4 were completed, 27 were on ahead or on target and 7 behind target.

9. Key activities / awards and accreditations

In addition, inclusive to the report, Directorate Service Summary documents provide a detailed account of service delivery for the quarter period. Some key highlights from both directorates are outlined below, for a more detailed account, please refer to the appendix – Quarter 1 Service Summary Sheets for further information.

10. Housing and Communities:

- The Asset team are working with the Housing teams to ensure that the 6 community hubs which are being opened and which will be staffed by key teams from across the Housing and Communities directorate will be refurbished and ready for phased operational openings in Q2 and Q3 of 2023/24, these sites are key to the reengagement in our communities.
- A greater level of focus is now being placed on damp and mould issues with the creation of a dedicated team, that are reducing the times for resolution. This is happening in conjunction with the recovery programme, which was set up to return DMBC to a place of full compliance with building safety requirements by March 24.
- ASB – change in operational delivery model was implemented- Team now to focus on more serious ASB.

11. There are no alternative options to be made in receiving this report.

Council Plan Refresh

Our current Council Plan from 2022-2025 sets out our vision and priorities under four core priorities. The plan is refreshed every three years, mapping out our journey and commitment that the council will constantly strive to improve the way we deliver services to meet the needs of local people and to ensure that we can measure and demonstrate our achievements.

The current Council Plan runs to March 2025, work will commence early next year (2024) to refresh the plan and review our strategic priorities. A report will be presented to the board in due course outlining the timeframes, process and any recommendations that the upcoming LGA peer review may suggest.

Finance

12. There are no direct financial implications in receiving this report

Law

13. There are no direct law implications in receiving this report

Risk Management

14. The current performance reporting period, risk management is contained and reviewed in the performance reporting, however as part of the new risk management framework approved at audit and standards committee, risk reporting will not sit within performance and each directorate has developed a risk register for monitoring purposes.

Equality Impact

15. There are no special considerations to be made with regard to equality and diversity in noting and receiving this report.
16. No proposals have been carried out.
17. No proposals have been made, therefore does not impact on children and young people.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

18. There are no specific direct human resource issues in receiving this report. In terms of the Council's sickness level and the management of attendance, the

HR and OD team continues to work with Directors and Heads of Service to assist and provide support in tackling those areas identified as having high levels of sickness.

Commercial/Procurement

18. There is no direct commercial impact.

Council Priorities

19. The Council Plan and the Performance Management Framework enables a consistent approach for performance management across the organisation, aligning the Council Plan, Borough Vision and Future Council Programme and provides that golden thread between them.

Our Council Plan is built around 4 key priority areas, and our Future Council program. The Council Plan is a 3-year '[Plan on a Page](#)'. Each directorate has a Directorate Plan that aligns to the priority outcomes that the Council is striving to achieve, as outlined within the Council Plan, and includes an assessment of how the service has contributed towards these priorities along with a range of key performance indicators to enable us to keep track of progress.

Performance management is key in delivering the longer-term vision of the Council. Quarterly Corporate Performance Reports are reported and reviewed by Strategic Executive Board, Informal Cabinet, the Deputy and Shadow Deputy Leader and all Scrutiny Committees.

This will help to enable the council to deliver the objectives and outcomes of the Council Plan and in turn the Borough Vision.



Kathy Jones

Director of Housing & Community Services

Contact Officer: Richard Cartwright, Acting Performance Officer

Telephone: 01384 818174

Email: richard.cartwright@dudley.gov.uk

Appendices

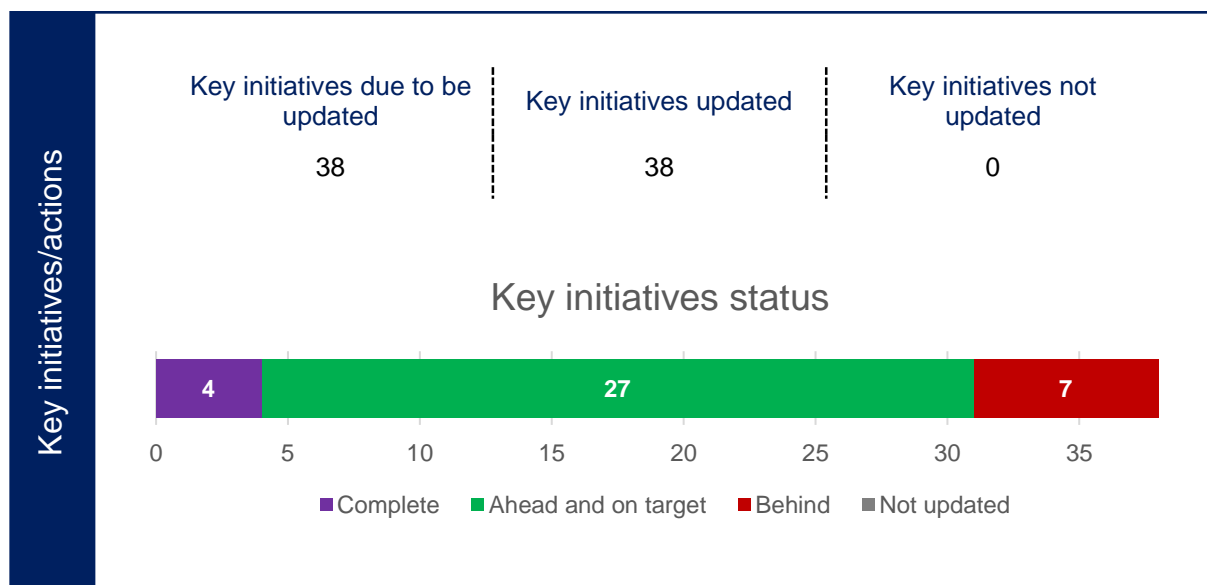
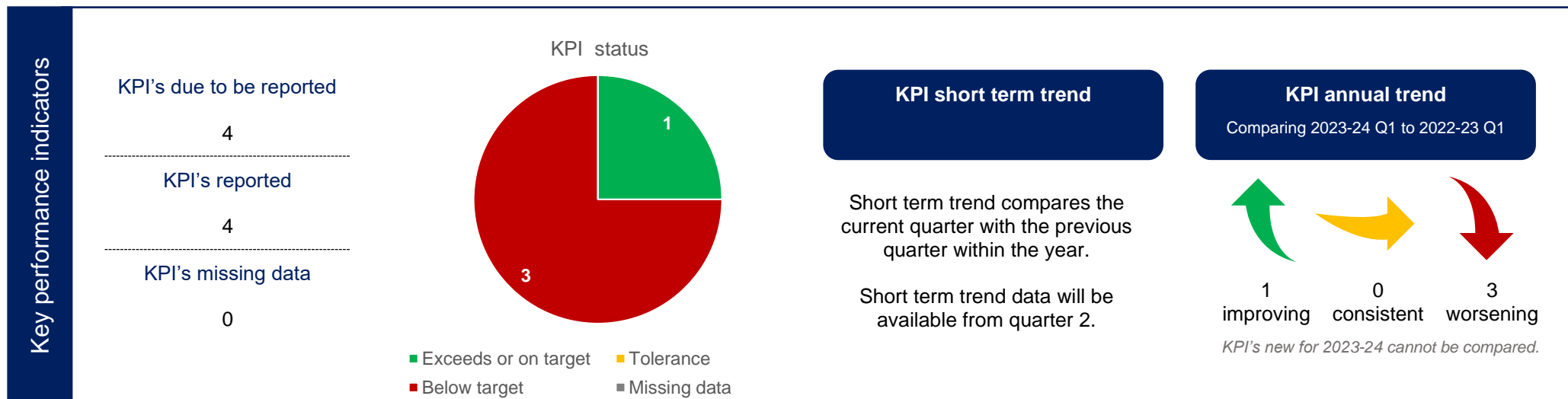
Corporate Quarterly Performance reports - Housing & Communities

Directorate – Q1 (1st April 2023 to 30th June 2023)

Housing and Communities Directorate Service Summary Sheet Q1 2023-24

Housing & Communities overview

The following pages provide a dashboard overview for the directorate of Housing & Communities. They show the status of corporate key performance indicators and of key initiatives/actions being delivered. KPI scorecards are used to report and monitor performance outturns for the given quarter along with exception commentary for those measures below target.



Council plan links

Council plan priority	Key initiatives	Corporate KPI's
Dudley the borough of opportunity	4	0
Dudley the safe and healthy borough	11	1
Dudley the borough of ambition and enterprise	3	0
Dudley borough the destination of choice	6	4
Future council	14	0
Total	38	5

Housing & Communities scorecard

	Performance Indicator	2022-23				2023-24					Benchmarking comparator data
		Qtr. 1 outturn	Qtr. 2 outturn	Qtr. 3 outturn	Qtr. 4 outturn	Qtr. 1 outturn	Target	Score	Short term trend	Annual trend	
Safe & healthy	PI.2027 Satisfaction - way your anti-social behaviour complaint was handled?	63.1%	65.9%	64.2%	68.1%	59.8%	70%	▲	Available Q2	↘	60.7% (HouseMark Median 2021/22)
Destination of choice	PI.913 RP01 Proportion of homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard	0.41%	0.46%	0.97%	0.58%	8.04%	20%	★	Available Q2	↘	
	PI.1191 V&L05 Average re-let time for Standard Re-lets.	61.7 days	65.91 days	66 days	60.23 days	49.26 days	40 days	▲	Available Q2	↗	36 days (HouseMark Median 2021/22)
	PI.1899 Rent loss- % of potential rent receipts lost (Dwellings) Non-Acct PI	1.92%	1.95%	1.94%	1.97%	2.28%	1.8%	▲	Available Q2	↘	1.42% (HouseMark Median 2021/22)

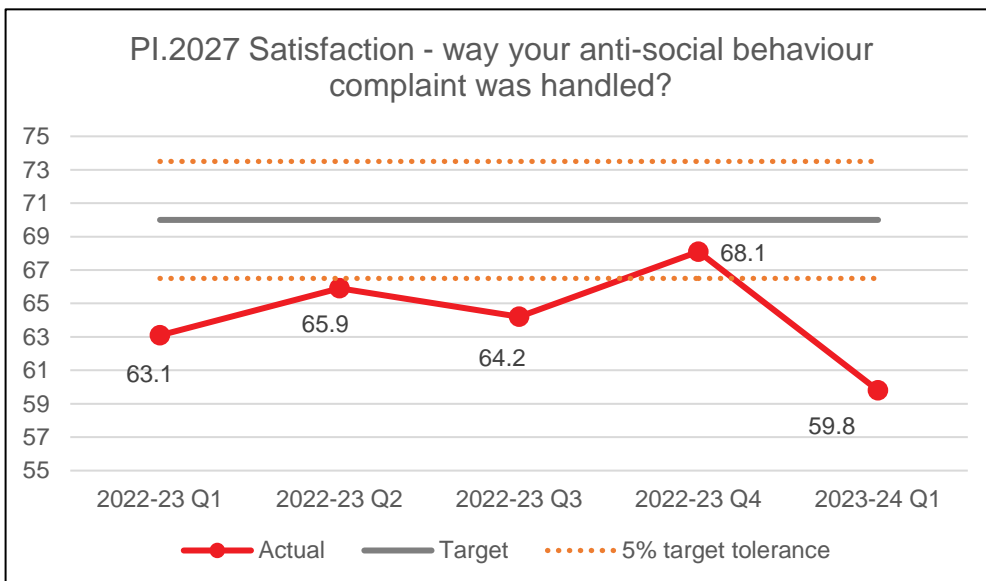
Short term trend compares current quarter with previous quarter within the same year. Annual trend compares the same quarter between years.

* New measure. Targets will be set once a baseline is established.

Housing & Communities exception commentary

PI.2027 Satisfaction - way your anti-social behaviour complaint was handled?

PI	2022-23				2023-24			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Quarter 1			
					Outturn	Target	S	T
PI.2027	63.1	65.9	64.2	68.1	59.8%	70%	▲	-



Performance: what is the data telling us?

The data tells us that satisfaction with the service is decreasing. Upon reflecting on comments made by service users it indicates a theme around contact and time taken to resolve matters.

This result represents all residents and shows 52 residents were satisfied out of 87 who responded to this question.

Impact: what are the issues/risks for service delivery?

The decrease in satisfaction infers a shortcoming, which if left unaddressed could lead to reputational damage and/or increased risks to service users/tenants.

Poor feedback can have an impact on staff morale, leading to staff loss and the inability to deliver services.

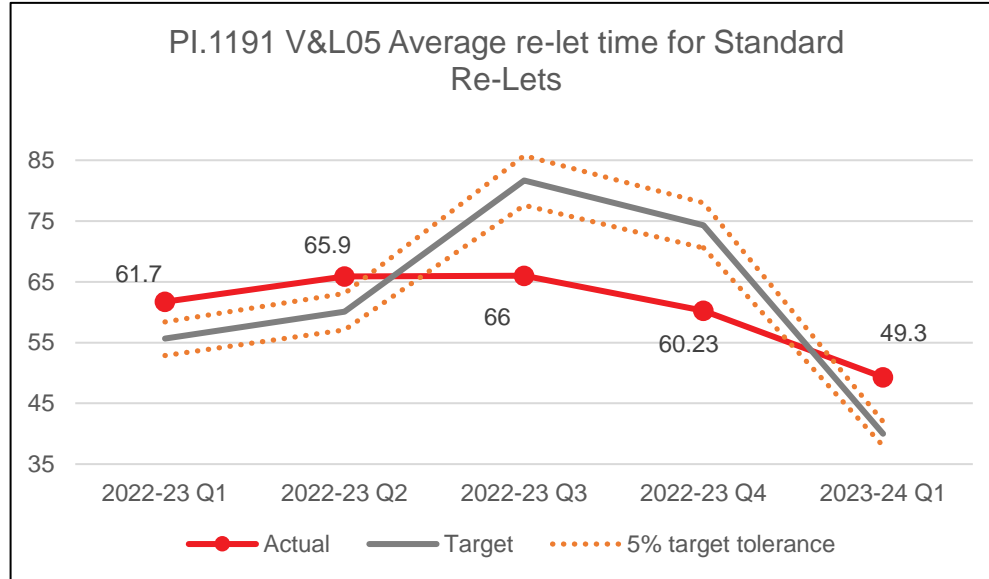
Assurance: evidence that actions are in place and having an impact

The structure and operating model of the team is currently being reviewed and changes have been/will be made.

Work is underway to further interrogate the survey data to identify the extent of any correlation between outcome and satisfaction, and to review the associated cases to get a better understanding of whether there are operational issues that must be addressed or whether customer perception relies entirely upon achieving the desired result.

PI.1191 V&L05 Average re-let time for Standard Re-Lets

PI	2022-23				2023-24			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Quarter 1			
					Outturn	Target	S	T
PI.1191	61.7	65.9	66.0	60.2	49.26 days	40 days	▲	-



Performance: what is the data telling us?

Average re-let times for standard re-lets have shown a decrease from 60.23 days in Q4 2022/2023 to 49.26 days in Q1 2023/2024. This is below the same period last year when the figure for Q1 2022/2023 was 61.7 days.

The re-let time for standard voids continues to vary between property types.

- Performance for houses shows no significant change with a minimal increase to 31 days.
- For bungalows there has been an increase from 36.65 to 51.85 days.
- For maisonettes there has been an increase from 49.22 to 59.13 days.
- For all flats excluding sheltered there has been a decrease from 53.85 to 41.89 days.
- Bedsits excluding sheltered have shown a decrease from 43.24 to 28.33 days.

Impact: what are the issues/risks for service delivery?

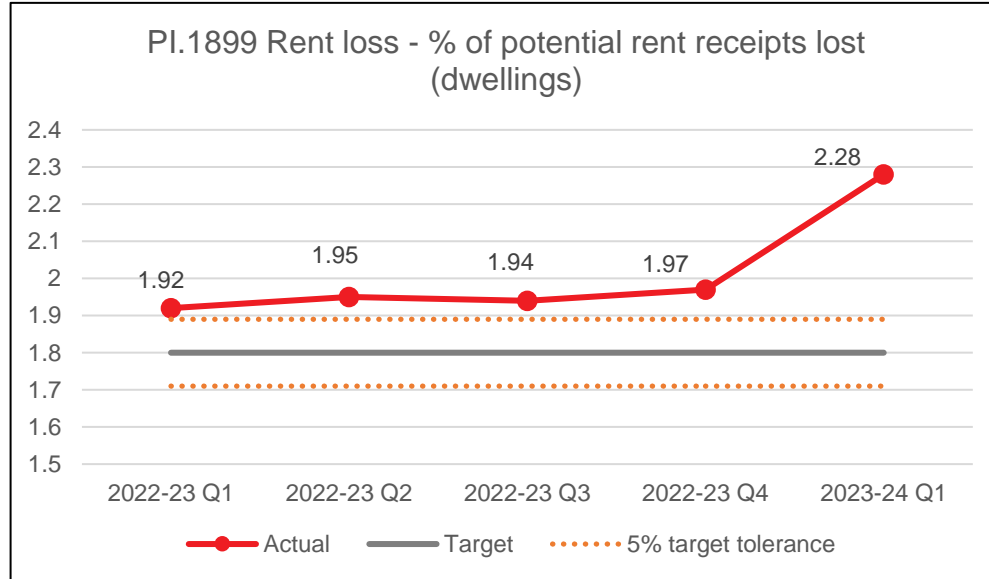
Loss of revenue. Impact on reputation.

Assurance: evidence that actions are in place and having an impact

All teams involved in the void process continue to review and refine procedures working together to minimise rent loss and void turnaround times.

PI.1899 Rent loss - % of potential receipts lost (dwellings)

PI	2022-23				2023-24			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Quarter 1			
					Outturn	Target	S	T
PI.1899	1.92	1.95	1.94	1.97	2.28%	1.8%	▲	-



Performance: what is the data telling us?

The total cumulative rent loss in Q1 equates to £558,598.31.

The cumulative rent loss due to voids shows an increase from 1.97% in Q4 2022/23. This is an increase from 1.92 for the same period last year.

£119,219.62 is directly attributable to void loss where we are carrying out improvement programmes in our sheltered stock or decanting people to facilitate them. (85 properties)

£19,243.43 is attributable to properties being used for decant or held for future decant (not as part of the sheltered improvement programme) (19 properties)

£108,580.04 is attributable to 95 properties awaiting an investment decision.

Therefore a total of £247,043.09 of rent loss in Q1 (44% of rent loss) is attributable to 199 properties that were at these statuses at the end of the quarter.

Impact: what are the issues/risks for service delivery?

As a result of delivering our Asset Management Strategy we will continue to have a certain level of rent loss associated with strategic voids, which will be managed through efficient decision making and project management.

We also recognise that routine voids therefore account for over 56% of rent loss, this is a decrease from 70% in Q4 2022/23. There is a significant opportunity to increase our income by improving processes and performance.

Assurance: evidence that actions are in place and having an impact

The end-to-end voids review continues and has started to have a positive impact on void turnaround times which will, in turn, impact positively on void rent loss in the future. With the current focus within the service on stock condition we may see an impact on void loss in the short term as additional checks are undertaken at void stage. A further review of voids requiring an investment decision is currently underway and recommendations for each of these properties will be made during Q2.

Service Summary Sheet

Directorate	Housing and Communities		
Year	2023-24	Quarter	Quarter 1 performance reporting (as at quarter ended 30/06/2023)
Benchmarking <i>with local authorities/nearest neighbours</i> <i>Please consider if a Delivering Better Outcomes proforma should be completed also.</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Housing Training Team have been in early discussions with Community Housing colleagues to investigate if there is any scope for benchmarking and/or sharing good practice. The Training Team are also contacting other Local Authority Housing Training Teams to see if there is any appetite to develop a Bench Marking/Good Practice Club. The Housing Complaints Team have reached out to Local Government Ombudsman to provide details of Local Authority Groups working on benchmarking/good practice. We have been informed there is a National Complaint Managers Group and are awaiting information on any Regional Group we could join. 			
Overview of service delivery <i>Include any issues / risks</i>			
<p>Housing Fraud</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have had a criminal case that a tenant has been prosecuted in Crown Court. They received a 32-month prison sentence. In April 2023 the property was recovered after relinquishing their tenancy in prison. There is a current Proceeds of Crime Act order in place so that has been ongoing during the quarter and is expected back in Crown Court in late August for a final hearing on confiscation matters etc. The value of her Fraud was approx. £200,000. The POCA action being taken by DMBC is looking to recover approx. £32,000 from her joint ownership of a property. This figure is the cost of adaptations to her DMBC property and the difference in Council rents to Private rents for the same area over the period of her tenancy. The Fraud Team has another tenant who was found to be subletting his property whilst living with his partner in the Sheffield area. After being interviewed under caution he voluntarily handed the property back. We are currently considering further action against him. <p>Income Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qtr1 – we collected £23,974.177 – Current tenant arrears as a % of rent debit is 0.81% (not including arrears) Arrears as a% of debit including arrears is 2.7% 42% of tenants are claiming universal credit Collection rate including arrears is 97.7% Collection rate excluding arrears is 99.19% 			

Community Housing Teams

- We have six Community Housing Teams across our Dudley Housing stock. We have mobilised our new approach, patches and have now recruited several new housing managers and staff across these teams.
- We have identified our neighbourhood hubs where we will be visible in our communities working hard to bring these to workable standard whereby, we will be working with partner agencies such as the police and other agencies working together in our communities.
- We will be moving our approach in our housing teams in attending customers' homes more, being highly visible in our community and proactively dealing with issues in our customers' homes.

Customer Involvement and Satisfaction

- We have started work on looking into the Tenant Satisfaction Measures and linking in with the Customer Involvement Strategy.
- We have a future scoping away day session with Tenant Housing Board and Dudley Federation Tenant Resident Association upcoming which will look at the compliance work and feedback in all our neighbourhood areas working closely with these groups and our customers.

Climate Change

- The Resettlement and Inclusion Team facilitated a 'Homes for Ukraine' event at Dudley Town Hall to acknowledge the anniversary of the war. All Ukrainian families sponsored under the scheme were invited to the evening event alongside the Deputy Mayor, representatives from faith groups and the voluntary sector.
- Homelessness- contracts are about to go out to tender for the provision of accommodation of single homeless people and for refuge
- Homelessness- successfully defended s204 appeal.
- Traveller Liaison Team- assisted in the removal of an illegal incursion in Pear Tree Lane, providing the evidence to support the utilisation of s62 police powers
- ASB – change in operational delivery model was implemented- Team now to focus on more serious ASB
- Work ongoing to agree out of hours legal cover for car cruising injunctions

Housing Maintenance

- In the last update we advised that a specialist had been appointed to review the service to improve the customer experience whilst demonstrating value for money.
- To date the specialist has made inroads into improving customer service by working closer with the complaints team, which has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of outstanding complaints by reducing the turnaround time for actioning the issue and responding to the customer.
- A greater level of focus is now being placed on damp and mould issues with the creation of a dedicated team, that are reducing the times for resolution. This is happening in conjunction

with the recovery programme, which was set up to return DMBC to a place of full compliance with building safety requirements by March 24.

- A full review of the delivery service structure is underway which is aiming to reduce the reliance on subcontractors.
- A major project to introduce more standard working practices and systems is underway, with an anticipated go live of Q4. This will contribute towards more efficient ways of working and make DMBC more attractive to potential future partners, contractors, and stakeholders.
- There is a large number of other projects underway within maintenance and in future reports updates will be provided.

Private Sector Housing Team

The team provide a statutory function around enforcement of regulations and legislation aimed at improving housing conditions in the private sector and keeping people safe in the private sector.

The previous postholder has stepped down, external recruitment has not been successful in finding a replacement, so a secondment opportunity is being pursued. A review of the review of the service will take part this year.

Asset Management and Development and Building Safety

- The Regulatory recovery programme continues to move at pace, as previously highlighted subject to access the project remains on track to meet the target for recovering all noncompliant work streams by the end of Q4 2023/24.
- The Engagement with The Regulator of Social Housing and Homes England remains positive, the RoSH continues to support the revised approach to Asset and Building safety management, as well as providing advice and guidance to the authority
- The Stock Condition exercise was broken down into 3 separate programmes each with circa 7k properties, this was to allow the internal team and Savills to communicate with the customers in a phased manner while ensuring that every customer had communication no more than 90 days before the first Savills visit, in addition the 3 separate programmes allow the internal team to address and resolve any immediate works that may be required.
- The SCS exercise has seen circa 6.3k properties accessed and has identified an indicative non decency figure of circa 9% rather than the previously reported .5% across the stock, this has been further supported by the significant investment required in a large proportion of voids over the past year.
- The Asset team are working with the Housing teams to ensure that the 6 community hubs which are being opened and which will be staffed by key teams from across the Housing and Communities directorate will be refurbished and ready for phased operational openings in Q2 and Q3 of 2023/24, these sites are key to the reengagement in our communities
- The Asset team is working with internal colleagues to standardise and define the tenant offering and specification relating to all DMBC improvement and investment works to the Authorities housing stock for the coming 10-years. This will offer multiple benefits including improving the customer offering, reducing complaints by reducing the turnaround time for works and component replacements, as well as significantly impacting on the long-term cost of materials and components over a 5- and 10-year period. and service by ensuring

availability of components and the ongoing supply of like for like elements, but additionally should provide benefits

- The SCS data will be modelled to understand the genuine investment needs for the stock for the coming decades, this will support a more efficient way of working and make DMBC more attractive to potential future partners, contractors, and stakeholders.
- The Asset team are drafting a revised Asset Management Strategy that will support investment and viability decisions across the authorities Housing portfolio, including but not limited to Estates, Blocks, street front properties, pepper potted sites and individual properties, as well as garages and the acquisition of new assets. This will be published in draft form for the end of Q3 23/24

Service achievements

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

Opportunities for improvement

Information relating to service complaints / compliments and learning from these

Housing Complaints Team

The Housing Complaints Team has worked with the Corporate Complaints Team to ensure our complaint handling policy and processes are compliant with the Housing Ombudsman Code of Practice. This has led to significant changes in processes (Stage 1 Complaint Response times being reduced from 20 days to 10 days) which are being bedded down. This should lead to better satisfaction levels from customers who have made a complaint.

Asset management and Development and Building Safety

The Asset and Building safety teams are working with Legal and Housing colleagues to address the no access rate that exists in relation to our statutory undertakings, the process is being reviewed to ensure that the teams can access and use the various powers and rights available to them to enter our assets and ensure that they are safe for our customers to live in.

Any additional information relating to performance

Performance Management

A new Performance Management process has been developed with Heads of Services and Team Managers in the Directorate. Heads of Services will Chair all Quarterly Performance meetings, where managers will present highlights (exceptions) of performance from their area in the last quarter. This work involves a significant review and rationalisation of performance indicators by Heads of Services and their managers.

In addition to performance measures the quarterly meetings will be attended by colleagues in the Housing Strategy team that will report on quarterly data relating to training, complaints and surveys in each of the Heads of Services areas. This will ensure a more comprehensive review of the past quarter's performance by the Head of Service and their managers.

All quarterly Performance meetings will be in person. It is envisaged that in the future the performance data being presented will be in PowerBI, to provide better and more detailed visualisation.

Asset Management and Development and Building Safety

The Asset and Building Safety teams have revisited the existing KPI's and SLA to ensure that any data that was being measured and evaluated against was offering meaningful, intelligent and beneficial results to this business. This exercise will be concluded in Q2 2023/24

Meeting of the Housing and Safer Communities Select Committee – 13th September 2023

Report of the Director of Housing and Communities

Impact of the 2023/24 Rent Increase for Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council Tenants

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview to Committee Members of the 2023/24 rent increase for Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (DMBC) homes and the impact of the increase on tenants and DMBC budgets.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that Committee Members note the content of the report.

Background

3. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a ring-fenced account recording income and expenditure arising from the provision of housing accommodation by local housing authorities under the powers and duties conferred on them in Part II of the Housing Act 1985 (and certain provisions of earlier legislation). Expenditure includes costs such as management and maintenance costs, major repairs, loan charges, and depreciation costs. The main source of income to the HRA is from tenants in the form of rents and other associated charges.
4. Registered providers must set rents in accordance with the Government's Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing 2022, complying with the Regulator of Social Housing's 2023 Rent Standard which has been set with due regard to the aforementioned Policy Statement.

5. Paragraph 3.5 of the Rent Standard covers social rent and states that the weekly rent of an existing tenant may not be increased by any more than Consumer Price Index (CPI) +1%, based upon the CPI rate in the September of the preceding financial year. In 2016/17 a four year 1% annual rent decrease was imposed, with a cumulative loss to the HRA of circa £40 million. Aside from the four year rent decrease social housing providers have generally increased rents by the maximum allowed due to CPI rates being relatively low resulting in rent increases of 2-4% in recent years.
6. In September 2022 CPI was 10.1% which would have allowed for a rent increase of up to 11.1%, causing significant concern due to the increasing costs of living more generally. Following consultation, the Government capped rent increases for 2023/24 at a maximum of 7%, and on 27th February 2023 Dudley Council approved a rent increase of 7% for 2023/24, equating to an additional £6m of income to the HRA. This represents an average weekly rent increase of £5.84 to tenants.

Impact of the 2023/24 rent increase

7. The decision to increase rents for 2023/24 was not taken lightly, recognising that many residents would also be experiencing the financial impact of the more general increase in the cost of living. For households claiming financial support towards their housing costs through housing benefit or universal credit some or all of the increase would be covered by an increase in welfare support in most cases. However it was recognised that low income households not entitled to claim financial support may struggle with the rent increase, and that provision of and signposting to additional advice and assistance should be made available through the council and other organisations.
8. Currently 40% of DMBC housing tenants are known to be in receipt of universal credit, with a further 19% receiving full housing benefit and 12% in receipt of partial housing benefit. Therefore 71% of DMBC tenants are receiving full or partial help with the cost of their rent, with the remaining 29% being responsible for meeting their rent payments without any known welfare support. Historically the split was closer to 60:40 for many years but the increasing number of households receiving support is not peculiar to Dudley and can be seen across social housing providers.
9. As at the end of Quarter 1 rent arrears stood at £2.2m, down on the previous year by 0.90%. However, the number of accounts in arrears is up on the same time last year by 2.72%, indicating that there are more accounts in arrears but not necessarily larger debts.

However the average debt owed by DMBC tenants is one of the lowest in the region, as detailed in the table below:

Org	Stock Size	Debt	Average
Birmingham City Council	56,828	£19,884,962	£349.91
Walsall Housing Group	21,466	£3,078,499	£143.41
Sandwell MBC	29,000	£5,109,805	£176.20
Wolverhampton	20,149	£2,176,266	£108.00
Dudley MBC	20,469	£2,213,878	£108.16
Stoke	18,200	£2,421,315	£133.04

10. There has been no increase in the number of court cases being listed to date during 2023/24, with only 36 new cases listed for court action in Quarter 1, compared to 48 cases for the same Quarter in 2022/23. This reduction in the number of cases being presented is a direct result of the additional support that has been put into place for customers.
11. Five evictions took place in Quarter 1 – four of these were to legally take back possession of abandoned properties and the fifth was the recovery of a property due to the tenant receiving a prison sentence.

Support for tenants

12. The Income Team, whilst collecting rent due, provide advice and support to tenants to assist in maintaining their tenancies. Support can be in the form of applications to housing support funds to reduce rent arrears, prevent evictions and provide essential items like white goods.
13. Previously tenants would be expected to pay their rent within the financial year. However, this year we have given options for our customers to spread their payments over a longer period when paying via Direct debit, which helps with affordability, the cost-of-living crisis and tenancy sustainability.
14. The government has made an extra £242 million available nationally to assist the most vulnerable in the country, providing support to low income households including families, pensioners and people with disabilities. The Housing Assistance Fund in Dudley is targeted at customers who may be just outside the limits for support via the usual means i.e. universal credit. The scheme has been set up so that customers who have an income of less than £45k per year and savings of less than £6k can apply for payments of £150.00 (this will increase over the winter period).
15. Cost of living payments have also been issued to residents of Dudley in the spring of 2023 and a further payment will be issued in the Autumn of this year.

16. Where appropriate the Income Team will challenge decisions made by both the housing benefit team and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) which has resulted in us gaining £7,550 of additional financial support for tenants in the first quarter of the year. Cases were also submitted to the council's Homelessness Housing Support Fund which resulted in £32,103 being granted to secure and maintain tenancies.

Conclusion

17. Although there has been an increase in the number of customers with rent arrears the level of arrears currently remains low and manageable, and has not resulted in any increase in customers at risk of losing their home due to non payment of rent.
18. Less than a third of DMBC tenants receive no financial support for their rent by way of housing benefit or universal credit, but these households can access a range of alternative support options as detailed in paragraphs 12 – 16 of this report.
19. At present the benefits of increased rental income to the HRA to fund essential works to improve property conditions and efficiency outweighs the impact of the 2023/24 rent increase on customers, who have been supported through other means to keep up with their rent payments and sustain their tenancy. However this will continue to be monitored closely to allow for early identification of and response to any increasing concerns around affordability and tenancy sustainment.

Finance

20. There are no additional finance considerations or implications over and above those contained within the body of this report.

Law

21. Registered providers must set rents in accordance with the Government's Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing 2022.

Risk Management

22. Risks associated with income collection and HRA budgets are recorded and managed through the Directorate Risk Register.

Equality Impact

23. The content of this report has no direct equality impact.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

24. There are no human resources or organisational development implications arising directly from this report.

Commercial/Procurement

25. There are no commercial or procurement implications arising directly from this report.

Environment/Climate Change

26. There are no environmental implications arising directly from this report. However consideration will be given to reaching the councils net-zero targets, improvements to housing stock will reduce energy demand and fuel bills, this action will support the cost of living initiative.

Council Priorities and Projects

27. This report relates to our statutory functions as a social housing landlord and will contribute to the health, wellbeing, and safety of our tenants.

The report supports our aims for Housing summarised in the Council Plan:

- the provision of excellent services for tenants
- offering high quality housing
- supporting vulnerable people



Director of Housing and Communities

Report Author: Yvonne Steele/Ian Cartmell
Telephone: 01384 811686/817277
Email: yvonne.steele@dudley.gov.uk
ian.cartmell@dudley.gov.uk

Appendices

None

Meeting of the Housing and Safer Communities Select Committee – 13th September 2023

Report of the Director of Housing and Communities

Update on Property Condition and Compliance

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on Property Condition and Regulatory Compliance in Council owned homes.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the content of the report is noted.

Background

3. Within housing services a number of potential issues with data quality and performance reporting were identified relating to property checks and efficiency data, in late 2022. These issues indicated that the reported position on areas such as Decent Homes and energy efficiency needed further validation, along with further validation of Building Safety and Compliance data and records.
4. The issues identified did not indicate that homes are inherently unsafe, but that improvements were required in the quality of our data evidence – such as documents not being readily available on document management systems.
5. Between November 2022 and February 2023, the data inconsistencies were investigated and in March 2023 the position was validated, identifying that the Council could not fully validate its position in relation to several key Health and Safety elements of the Decent Homes Standard.

6. As a result of the concerns identified we felt it right to proactively refer ourselves to the Regulator of Social Housing (RoSH) to determine whether there had been a breach of one of the RoSH Regulatory Standards, and this referral was made on 10th March 2023.
7. On 27th April 2023 RoSH published a Regulatory Notice concluding that:
 - a) Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (Dudley MBC) has breached the Home Standard; and
 - b) As a consequence of this breach, there was the potential for serious detriment to Dudley MBC's tenants.

The test that RoSH has to apply when considering a referral is two-fold – firstly whether one of the regulatory standards has been breached and, if so, whether the breach has caused (or has the potential to cause) serious detriment to Council tenants, hence the wording of the Regulatory Notice.

8. Following the self-referral in March 2023 a recovery plan to rectify the potential breach commenced, with significant progress being made in advance of the Regulatory Determination in April. This recovery plan continues, with progress reported through monthly meetings with RoSH.

Property Condition

9. In November 2022 the Secretary of State wrote to all providers of social housing following the tragic and avoidable death of Awaab Ishak, which has subsequently led to the introduction of Awaab's Law. The Secretary of State asked all social housing providers to set out what action they would be taking to ensure a robust understanding and plan for damp and mould in homes. As part of its response the Council set out its intention to undertake a Stock Condition Survey (SCS) of 100% of homes to verify information on damp and mould captured by staff and reported by customers, and to identify any unknown or potential future damp and mould issues in a housing stock with an average age of >60 years. Savills, an industry expert, were subsequently appointed to undertake the SCS through the Places for People Procurement Hub "Strategic Asset Management Services Framework".
10. Due to the data concerns identified the scope of the SCS work has been widened to give us a complete, up to date and robust picture of every home. This will include stock condition, a damp and mould assessment, new EPC certificate and an assessment against the current Decent Homes Standard. Aside from providing assurance as to property condition and the data we hold about that home, it will also enable us to review and reset our 5, 10 and 30 year investment priorities.

11. A robust and up to date understanding of the actual condition across DMBC's housing portfolio will inform four key elements:
 1. Impact on customers
 2. Meeting Decent Homes and regulatory standards
 3. Planning for future investment
 4. Understanding long term housing needs and property viability
12. The SCS exercise has been broken into three separate programmes each consisting of circa 7,000 properties which will allow Savills to manage the access process and allow DMBC resources to respond to any immediate Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) or Decent Homes works that may be immediately required. The no access properties will be addressed as the 3 phases progress, and the team will engage with these customers through legal access routes where required to ensure access.
13. The findings from the circa 5,700 properties that have been accessed during the first phase has identified that the current position on Decent Homes is closer to 90.7% compliance, and it is anticipated that following completion of the 100% SCS exercise is in the region of 80% Decent Homes compliance.
14. The potential volume of works, cost and the necessary contract supply chain required to recover the decent homes position will not be fully realised until the beginning of Q4 2023/24 when the results of the second phase are delivered. At this point there will be sufficient robust data to develop the necessary programmes for the coming 5-year recovery phase and the following 10-year and 15-year investment phase.
15. The SCS exercise will support all future stock viability and decisions including investment and retention programme decisions. A further update will be provided to the Select Committee at the end of Electrical Installation Condition Report the next quarter and will include validated volumes of works and the potential resources and timelines for delivery.

Building Safety and Compliance (BS&C)

16. The recovery programme for the Building Safety and Compliance project has moved at pace since it commenced in March 2023. This has included the establishment of a dedicated recovery team to deliver and oversee all strategic, operational and governance arrangements associated with the recovery of the Decent Homes and BS&C position across Asset Management and Housing Maintenance.

17. The recovery programme is split into two distinct streams:
 1. Delivering a recovery programme that will satisfy RoSH requirements surrounding data, physical compliance delivery and demonstrating that the Authority can sustain this for a minimum of 6 months from March 2024 (which is the 12-month deadline for recovery from the non-compliant position)
 2. Designing and embedding a strategic BS&C function with associated policies and procedures that is linked to the strategic asset management plan and provides a fully assured and system-based process for monitoring, reporting and delivering BS&C activities.
18. The work to recover from the non-compliant position continues to deliver positive results at pace, this has been supported greatly by the open dialogue and regular monthly meetings which the working group and RoSH have been having since March 2023, which include the Deputy Chief Executive and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Communities.
19. Robust framework and governance arrangements have been put in place to validate the current recovery phase, and to ensure that the authority has arrangements and measures in place to remove the risk of another breach in the future. These include:
 1. A full data cleanse and reconfiguration of all housing related asset data which exists across all authority databases.
 2. The development of a revised BS&C Policy Framework and processes in conjunction with Savills to ensure that we embrace best practice from across the sector and embed the appropriate mechanisms and culture in the teams to support change.
 3. A review of the current supply-chain which will see a supportive contract supply-chain being procured, allowing services to track, monitor and challenge any underperformance prior to failures in delivery.
 4. Evaluation of the current staffing resources to ensure the Authority has the appropriate level of technical and strategic capability in place to deliver its future requirements.
 5. A review of existing systems to ensure appropriate technological solutions to capture and report upon data and to wrap both governance and assurance around the new ways of working.
20. While the programme management and future arrangements are being embedded the BS&C team are working with the Housing Management and Communications team to ensure we maintain open and up to date communications with our customers, tenant groups and Housing Board.

Finance

21. The cost of the SCS programme will cost £3.25m and the outcome of the programme will inform the short, medium and long term investment needed in our homes. A further report on future investment will be presented as the SCS data is gathered.

Law

22. There are no direct legal implications associated with this report, although the SCS programme will help ensure the Council's compliance with statutory duties associated with property condition and compliance and will help to demonstrate compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing's regulatory standards.

The objectives of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) are set out in the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 (as amended). The RSH Board is accountable to Parliament for the discharge of an economic regulation objective and a consumer regulation objective. Within these two objectives are a number of Regulatory Standards which apply to local authorities and against which RSH will assess our compliance. The RSH Standards which apply to local authorities are:

- Rent Standard (economic standard)
- Home Standard (consumer standard)
- Tenancy Standard (consumer standard)
- Neighbourhood and Community Standard (consumer standard)
- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard (consumer standard)
- Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) Standard (consumer standard)

As well as the RSH Regulatory Standards there are a number of other regulatory and legislative obligations which apply to the provision of social housing, including:

- The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- The Decent Homes Standard
- The Housing Act 1988
- The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022
- The Building Safety Act 2022
- The Control of Asbestos Regulation 2012
- The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health
- Lift Operating and Lifting Equipment regulations 1998
- Gas Safety and (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998

Risk Management

23. Risks associated with property condition and compliance are recorded and managed through both the Corporate Risk Register and the Directorate Risk Register.

Equality Impact

24. There are no equality impact implications arising directly from this report. However, there may be differential impacts on individuals, families, and communities in respect of any issues identified through the SCS programme, and these will be managed on an individual basis as required.
25. Any works completed on our homes as a result of the SCS programme will have a positive effect on children and young people living in our homes.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

26. Whilst this report does not have any immediate organisational development/HR or transformational implications, the RoSH recovery programme includes a theme around our future target operating model and associated structure. As work on the recovery programme progresses, all HR implications will be managed in accordance with our policies and procedures with support from the HR department.

Commercial/Procurement

27. The final commercial impact will not be fully understood until the beginning of Q4 2023/24. It is envisaged that a procurement exercise will be necessary to engage future partnering contractors and a framework of SMEs to support the 10-year delivery plan that will be developed for 2025 to 2035 programmes. This will be undertaken in coordination with procurement and finance teams.

Environment/Climate Change

28. Any environmental implications will only be fully understood in 2024/25 when the performance of our stock is fully understood and when the programmes for recovery and the impact on sustainability as well as the supply-chains CNZ impacts, and DMBC's offsets are realised.

Consideration will be given to reaching the council's commitments on climate change and meeting net-zero targets.

Council Priorities and Projects

29. The SCS programme and data validation plan will support the following key priority areas with the Council Plan:

- Dudley the Safe and Healthy Borough - Residents live in safe communities where safeguarding of vulnerable people of all ages protects them from harm and supports the prevention of crime and exploitation.
- Dudley Borough the Destination of Choice - A place of healthy, resilient, safe communities where people have high aspirations and the ability to shape their own future.

K. Jones

Director of Housing and Communities

Report Author: Michael Lyons
Telephone: 01384 815420
Email: michael.lyons@dudley.gov.uk