



Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

Forward timetable of consultation and decision making

Finance and Performance Scrutiny 28 March 2022

Wards affected: All wards

Council Housing Services Update report

Report of Director (Community Services)

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To inform members of key activities and performance within the Council Housing Service including; Anti-Social Behaviour, Rents, Tenancy Management, Housing Repairs and Older Persons services.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That members note the report.

3. Background to the report

- 3.1 The Council Housing Service aims to provide affordable housing to local people and the service is responsible for managing and maintaining both the property and the tenancy of those residing in our homes. Currently there are 3,229 units of accommodation that are widely dispersed across the borough with particular concentrations in Hinckley, Burbage, Barwell and Earl Shilton. We provide 354 units of Sheltered Housing accommodation, across 11 schemes, providing accommodation to the over 60s or those who are over 55 with a support need. Additionally the service is responsible for a number of leasehold properties, garage sites and housing land.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) holds the budget for the service. The HRA Business Plan forecasts over the next 30 years the investment requirements for the service and this equates to total planned investment from 2021 to 2030 of £43.2 million.

Demand for council housing remains high and we have seen significant increases in people applying to join the housing register over recent years. To meet this need, our ambition is to increase our housing stock by pursuing development and investment opportunities. The table below shows the number of housing applications received each year.

Table 1- Number of housing applications received each year

Year	Number of housing applications received
2015	1344
2016	1692
2017	1970
2018	1678
2019	2428
2020	2604
2021	2704

There are a number of specialist teams within the Council Housing Service which include Anti-Social Behaviour and Tenancy Management, Housing Repairs and Older Persons` services, working alongside wider housing services that sit outside of the HRA, including Private Sector Housing and Housing Options. Our ethos across all of our housing teams is to put the customer at the heart of service delivery. The impacts of the pandemic continue to be felt for many of our residents and, as such, we continue to shape service delivery to try and support and respond to those who are most in need.

3.2 Recent achievements

2021 brought with it significant challenges for both our service and for many of our residents. Yet, despite this, there are a number of key achievements that we are proud to have progressed;

- We are now a Dementia-Friendly service- we have provided frontline training to our frontline officers.
- We remodelled and redeveloped Ambion Court in Market Bosworth. The scheme now provides 24 units of contemporary accommodation for the over 60s.
- We have continued to deliver our resident support service. We are currently able to provide a comprehensive welfare support offer to all residents within the borough, regardless of tenure, to assist them with accessing support in relation to hardship or other welfare concerns. During 2021 we provided direct support to 221 residents in relation to financial hardship concerns.
- We introduced a youth prevention officer post and have enhanced our collaborative approach to early intervention with schools within the borough.
- We installed 261 lifelines to vulnerable residents.
- We were successful in our bid for grant funding to improve the thermal efficiency of 48 of our council homes.

- We expanded our stock to include 34 new homes :

24 x 1 bed new build sheltered flats at Ambion Court Market Bosworth

1 x 1 bed bungalow (ex-Council) in Hinckley

1 x 2 bed bungalow (ex-Council) in Twycross

4 x 1 bed flats from a section 106 agreement in Burbage

4 x 2 bed houses from a section 106 agreement in Burbage

4. Key service delivery within the Council Housing Service

4.1 Sheltered and Supported Housing Services

The sheltered housing service provides 11 schemes across the borough offering independent living to older people. This support includes all sheltered properties having emergency pull cords and panic button pendants which connect, via an intercom, to an experienced member of staff 24 hours a day, who can raise the appropriate help. This may be simply offering reassurance; it may be requesting that a friend, neighbour or family member visit, a doctor, paramedic, the police or the fire service. The service is a safety net in effect, providing a comforting reassurance that someone is always there, which is particularly comforting to those who have no friends or family, or their loved ones live a distance away. Officers carry out needs and risk assessments, both for the tenant and their home, and are able to signpost concerns, risks and vulnerabilities to ensure each person is as supported as they can be to be able to remain safe and independent within their home.

Meeting the changing needs of our tenants is a key objective for us and in 2021 we realised the successful completion of the Ambion Court scheme which remodelled the previous scheme and now provides 24 units of contemporary and flexible accommodation for the over 60s. Further work is underway to scope out decarbonisation objectives and wider improvements across each of our sheltered housing schemes.

4.2 Control Centre Services

This service is responsible for the 24hr call control and monitoring centre, providing services to predominantly older residents via emergency pull cord alarms, lifeline alarms and assistive technology. The Control Centre also acts as the Council's out-of-hours service and deals with calls relating to Homelessness, Environmental Health calls, and Housing Repairs.

Of the approximately 2,780 people receiving support from the Control centre service, over 1,993 are over 60. There are currently 1,527 private lifeline customers and a further 1,253 council tenants utilising this service. Further breakdown of the demography is below:

Age Range	60-69	70-79	80-89	90-99	100+
No. Of Clients	478	612	631	269	3
% Of Clients	23.0%	31.7%	31.6%	13.5%	0.15%

4.3 Lifeline and Assistive Technology Services

Assistive technology provided by the service offers a peace of mind service to private customers in their own home, again promoting safety and independence. A Lifeline, which is a small intercom installed in a client's home, is activated via a small panic button pendant. This can be worn all around the home and in the garden, and should a person have a trip or fall, a medical emergency, or any concern, they can activate the Lifeline from wherever they are, and speak to an operator in our 24-hour control centre. Additional monitors and sensors are also available which link to the Lifeline which can monitor customers with a variety of support needs safety in their home and provide immediate alerts when required. Our Assistive Technology Officer is able to assess customers' needs and provide advice on appropriate packages of support.

4.4 Tenancy Management and Rent

The Tenancy Management team is responsible for collection and arrears management, ensuring that tenancy conditions are complied with, supporting people to live independently and working in partnership with the Housing Repairs team to ensure that council properties and housing land are well maintained.

For many of our tenants, the financial impacts of the pandemic have been particularly significant. This is further evidenced by collection rent month by month over the last two years. Government advanced specific directives to protect those in rent arrears from eviction at the beginning of the pandemic. Whilst the council is now able to pursue legal proceedings against those tenants in rent arrears, we recognise that this should always be a last resort and is now a measure we will only pursue when there is no alternative, preferring informal arrangements with the majority of those tenants in rent arrears with us. We also recognise that supporting people to maximise their benefit entitlement and income, or access other grant opportunities is essential, especially given that many of our tenants continue to be affected by other economic impacts such as rising fuel costs.

Table 2 provides key performance information in relation to rent collection.

Month	Percentage of rent collected in 2019	Percentage of rent collected in 2020	Percentage of rent collected in 2021
January	96.76%	97.20%	91.69%
February	97.17%	97.44%	94.55%
March	96.59%	97.28%	97.64%
April	95.07%	95.65%	59.60%
May	91.74%	66.27%	71.53%
June	94.53%	76.28%	75.39%
July	98.84%	76.39%	87.56%
August	96.64%	81.41%	79.98%
September	98.30%	84.50%	83.11%
October	97.72%	85.70%	84.21%
November	97.45%	90.76%	88.36%
December	98.11%	90.92%	89.20%

4.5 Resident support - welfare offer

To support people with all aspects of financial hardship, we have continued to resource our resident support team. Initially the service was created to help vulnerable residents during the heart of the pandemic, particularly those who were identified as being clinically vulnerable and needed to shield as a result. The service has evolved and the main element of support provided by the service is in relation to financial hardship. The service is currently available to all residents across the borough regardless of tenure. This service is funded by temporary covid funding (contain funding). To continue the service beyond this year additional financial provision would need to be secured.

Table 3 provides information regarding the number of cases received since January 2021.

Total Cases	
Jan-21	4
Feb-21	13
Mar-21	31
Apr-21	24
May-21	20
Jun-21	15
Jul-21	9
Aug-21	20
Sep-21	17
Oct-21	15
Nov-21	10
Dec-21	43
Jan-22	48

4.6 Anti-Social Behaviour

The Anti-Social Behaviour team works in partnership with other agencies to serve the public and promote community safety.

Both Anti-Social Behaviour and Housing officers, throughout the service, are integral to the successful operation and delivery of the Endeavour Partnership. The Endeavour Partnership? comprises numerous partner agencies and internal departments working collaboratively to address and resolve issues relating to anti-social behaviour, environmental nuisance, wider community safety and vulnerability concerns. Since its formation, the Endeavour team has successfully responded to many community protection concerns; perhaps, most notably the collaborative approach between the police and the Borough Council has seen an increase in the number of anti-social behaviour sanctions sought to prevent those committing anti-social behaviour from continuing.

Last year we assisted the police in a number of police-led operations that sought to disrupt crime and drug supply routes within our communities.

Over the last three years the number of anti-social behaviour cases dealt with by the ASB team continues to remain high, as detailed below.

Year	Total ASB reports across the borough	HBBC only
01/4/17-31/03/18	1305	706
01/04/18-31/03/19	1237	683
01/04/20 to 31/03/21	1216	827
01/04/21 to Date	997	584

The ASB team apply an incremental approach to managing cases and sanctions range from informal interventions such as advice or warning letters to legal action that could ultimately result in eviction or closing a property for a specified period of time. Cases that are not resolved using the tiered approach can progress to legal sanctions. The number of legal and non-legal sanctions used by the ASB team are detailed below

Intervention	2017/18	2018/19	2020/21	2021/22
Advice letter	136	136	138	92
Warning letter	133	133	172	70
Injunction	3	4	2	0
Acceptable Behaviour Contract (signed)	9	20	12	9
Closure Order	6	5	6	6
Community Protection Warning	57	62	30	13
Community Protection Notice	14	12	9	5
Notice seeking possession (for ASB ground)	13	21	17	6
Eviction	3	2	0	0

4.7 Housing Repairs and Investment

The Housing Repairs and Investment Team is responsible for the repairs, maintenance and investment for the council's housing stock. The service has a number of work streams which include responsive and void repairs, cyclical contracts, aids and adaptations, investment works and asset management.

4.8 Responsive Repairs and Void Work

Responsive repairs are primarily completed by the Council's 'In-house Repairs Team' (IRT) working primarily to four targets:

1. Emergency repairs within 24 hours (including Out of Hours repairs within 4 hours)
2. Urgent repairs within 5 working days
3. Routine repairs within 20 working days
4. Programmed routine repairs 60 working days

Other external contractors support where specialised work is required, eg drainage. We also have a contractor supporting the in-house team to complete work to bring our empty homes up to our lettable standard, ready for the next tenant to move in.

During 2020/21 we completed 11,599 general repairs reported by tenants including repairs such as leaking taps and gutters, roof leaks, electrical faults,

plastering repairs etc. We also brought 146 empty properties up to our agreed standard to get them ready for re-letting. The number of general repairs carried out was approximately 3,000 less than in 2018/19. Prior to the pandemic, repairs had been increasing by approximately 1,000 year on year. Reasons for the increase in requests include the age of the properties, increasing the likelihood of disrepair and subsequent tenant expectation.

Lockdowns and restrictions during the pandemic impeded our ability to work in people's homes which reduced the number of repairs completed in 2020/21. This was further compounded by staff absences in relation to Covid 19. There are currently approximately 230 jobs that are out of target.

Performance from April 2020 to March 2021

Priority	Number of jobs	Target %	Performance %
1	1107	100	99.73
2	3469	100	99.77
3	2038	91.5	76.40
4	2011	91.5	86.18

4.9 Cyclical maintenance

This is work of a recurrent nature that is undertaken at regular intervals and includes:

- Annual Gas and solid fuel servicing - HBBC currently has a 3-star agreement with PH Jones to deliver the servicing and repairs to commercial and general dwelling gas, solid fuel, oil, heating appliances, together with Air Source Heat Pump, renewable heating installations. Our obligation under the Gas safety and Use Regulations is to ensure that all of our stock gas installations are serviced and checked for safe operation every 12 months. Compliance as of 31/3/21 was 99.52%.
- Undertaking monthly inspections and repair of fire prevention equipment within the sheltered schemes and blocks of flats.
- 6 Year Painting programme - This work is completed by the In-house Repair Team (IRT) who last year painted the outside of 524 properties and 1 Sheltered accommodation complex
- 5 year Electrical testing programme - This work is currently completed by Aaron Services Ltd, who completed 790 tests in 2020/21 as well as emergency lighting in sheltered schemes and communal areas.

4.10 Aids and Adaptations

The council undertakes work to enable its tenants to live independently in their homes for as long as possible. This could be by way of installing grab rails, ramps or level access shower rooms. Or, in extreme cases, extending

properties. The IRT complete smaller works whilst our contractor completes larger jobs. For extensions we would look to tender the work.
In 2020/21:

- we converted 14 bathrooms in to level access shower rooms
- we installed 3 over bath showers
- Improved the access to 5 properties for tenants with reduced mobility
- Adapted 1 kitchen to be accessible for wheelchair uses
- Fitted stair lifts to 4 properties
- Installed 1 Through floor lift
- Installed 3 Clos-O-Mat Toilet
- 1 hardstandings / dropped kerbs
- 2 Internal alterations to include widening of doors and wall removal
- 2 Level threshold doors
- 157 Minor adaptations such as grab rails, key safes, handrails, half step

4.11 Planned investment works

These works are completed to enable the council to reach and remain at the Decent Home Standard for its housing stock. The works are completed as planned programmes, ensuring value for money by replacing components just before the end of their predicted life span. They are also completed in groups of properties requiring work of the same type and by specialist contractors.
Last year we delivered:

- 108 upgrades to electrical installations
- Upgrades to electrical installations at Clarendon House, Hinckley and the proposed new hostel at 73 John Nicholls St, Hinckley.
- 278 Boilers/heating system renewals with A Rated boilers
- Replacement of Communal Boilers at two of our sheltered schemes.
- Renewal of windows to 20 properties & doors to 56 homes
- Replacement of 82 roofs.
- 101 kitchen replacements and 93 bathrooms renewals.

4.12 Asset Management

A Council Housing Asset Management Strategy is currently being developed which will underpin our strategic response to the management of all housing stock and housing land over the next 5 years.

4.13 Right to Buy and Leasehold Management

The Council has statutory responsibilities to administer a Right-to-Buy scheme, this entitles some tenants with a minimum of 3 years tenancy to buy their council property at a discounted rate of up to 70% off the market value.

The rate of RTB sales over the last 4 years is as follows:

Year	Number of completions
2017/18	41
2018/19	26
2019/20	33
2020/21	19
Total number of sales	119

The Council manages 135 leasehold properties these are former council flats sold under the Right-to-Buy scheme. The council is responsible for repairs to the building and external cyclical repairs, the buildings are also insured by the council. Charges for repairs and insurance are recharged proportionately to Leaseholders annually.

5. Future challenges and opportunities for the Housing Service

5.1 Implications following the pandemic

The impacts of the pandemic continue to be felt by many of our tenants and increasingly our officers are trying to support our tenants with all aspects of their welfare, in order to ensure that they are successful and able to manage their tenancy agreement with us. Rising energy costs will inevitably compound the experience of hardship for many of our tenants. As such, we are continuing to build on a collaborative approach to supporting our tenants with key partners such as the DWP, Adult Social Care, Mental Health Services and Citizens Advice.

The increasingly complexity of cases that officers are attempting to manage, coupled with the decline in wider support services being readily available or accessible ultimately means that the housing service is trying to manage cases and concerns that are perhaps beyond what would be considered to be traditional housing functions. Unmet safeguarding and wellbeing concerns continue to be a large element of work that all departments within the housings service are trying to manage.

The succession of lockdowns during the pandemic has meant that there are backlogs of work across many of our housing services. Addressing the backlog of work will be a key challenge for us over the next 12 months, and wider staffing impacts such as absence through covid continue to affect progress.

Prior to the pandemic the Social Housing White Paper was introduced, the White paper has since been revised to update wider considerations for many tenants during the pandemic, and whilst the detail is not yet confirmed revisions to the Decent Homes standard are likely and may well include other lifestyle elements such as access to open space, an emphasis on wellbeing and more transparent interventions to tackle anti-social behaviour within our communities. It is anticipated that any such revisions are likely to require additional investment requirements.

5.2 Decarbonisation and energy efficiency improvements

A key priority for the Housing Service is to improve the energy efficiency of our housing stock and work is already underway to ensure that we have a robust approach to meeting this objective. Last year we were successful in a funding bid of £540,000 to improve the thermal efficiency of 48 of our council properties and work is expected to commence shortly.

The Clean Growth Strategy introduces a target for social housing providers to attain the minimum rating of Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) for tenanted properties by 2035 (2030 for fuel poor households). By adopting a fabric-first approach to improve the performance of our stock we will be able to meet the highest possible levels of energy efficiencies in the fabric of our homes so that we can progressively minimise the use of fossil fuel consumption by our tenants and the associated financial costs whilst meeting wider carbon neutral targets.

6. Exemptions in accordance with the Access to Information procedure rules

6.1 Open session

7. Financial implications IB

7.1 Although there are no direct implications arising from the report, implications arising from future challenges will require approval in accordance with financial procedure rules.

8 Legal implications MR

8.1 None

9. Corporate Plan implications

This report aligns to the following corporate objectives;

People

- Enable and inspire older people to make the most of later life
- Support vulnerable people and those who are most in need
- Help people to stay healthy, be active and feel well

Place

- Improve the quality of existing homes and enable the delivery of affordable housing.

10. Consultation

10.1 None

11. Risk implications

- 11.1 It is the council's policy to proactively identify and manage significant risks which may prevent delivery of business objectives.
- 11.2 It is not possible to eliminate or manage all risks all of the time and risks will remain which have not been identified. However, it is the officer's opinion based on the information available, that the significant risks associated with this decision / project have been identified, assessed and that controls are in place to manage them effectively.
- 11.3 The following significant risks associated with this report / decisions were identified from this assessment:

Management of significant (Net Red) risks		
Risk description	Mitigating actions	Owner
Failure to introduce sufficient energy efficiency improvements will have financial and wider wellbeing impacts for out tenants	Energy efficiency improvements to be progressed.	MS
Increased financial hardship likely for many residents in relation to rising living costs	Welfare support offer extended Key partnership work progressing	MS

12. Knowing your community – equality and rural implications

- 12.1 Housing services are delivered borough wide. Services developments continue to ensure that our services are accessible to all.

13. Climate implications

- 13.1 The Housing service continues to work towards key climate change targets.

14. Corporate implications

- 14.1 By submitting this report, the report author has taken the following into account:

- Community safety implications
- Environmental implications
- ICT implications
- Asset management implications
- Procurement implications
- Human resources implications
- Planning implications
- Data protection implications
- Voluntary sector

Background papers: None

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