



## Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

Forward timetable of consultation and decision making

Finance and Performance Scrutiny      3 July 2023

Wards affected:                              All wards

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### **Council Housing Services Update report**

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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 and endorse 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 3206 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 housing 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 2023 to 2032 of £50 million.

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.

### 3.2 Housing Demand

Demand for council housing remains high and we have seen significant increases in people applying to join the housing register over recent years. The table below shows the number of housing applications received each year and the number of confirmed applications on the housing register.

**Table 1- Number of housing applications received each year/confirmed applications on the housing register**

Year	Total number of housing applications initiated (NB the majority of these are not completed by the applicant)	Number of successful housing applications per year	Number of applicants on the housing register
2018	1678	636	1095
2019	2428	606	1108
2020	2604	780	369 (re-registration due to new system)
2021	2704	576	717
2022	2693	582	895
2023	1064 up to 14.05.2023	176 as of 12/05/23	946

To meet this continuing demand, our ambition is to increase our housing stock by pursuing development and investment opportunities. In 2022/23 we expanded our stock to include;

- 3 new build bungalows at Ambion Court Market Bosworth
- 2 houses formerly right to buy in Barwell
- 1 flat formerly right to buy in Desford
- 1 flat in Groby from Orbit Housing

- 1 bungalow in Hinckley from Orbit housing
- 2 new build houses in Earl Shilton

Work is underway to identify future opportunities to increase our housing supply whilst ensuring investment in existing accommodation remains a priority.

#### **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 providing independent living to older people. Support provided 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, or it may involve requesting that a doctor, paramedic, the police or the fire service attend. 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 if their loved ones live a distance away. Officers carry out needs and risk assessments, both for the tenant and their home, and can 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.

Reducing social isolation is a key priority for this service and various social activities are facilitated across the schemes to enable all residents to connect with others. Appendix A provides a recent newsletter distributed across our schemes and shows the kind of activities on offer.

##### **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, Building Control, Environmental Health, and Housing Repairs.

Of the approximately 2,924 people receiving support from the Control centre service, over 1,993 are over 60. There are currently 1,671 private lifeline customers and a further 1,250 council tenants utilising this service. Further breakdown of the demography is below:

##### **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. These include fall detectors, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and flood sensors. Our Assistive Technology Officer can assess customers` needs and provide advice on appropriate packages of support. Following a 6-week trial, customers pay a small weekly charge for a lifeline package, including monitoring and response service. During 2022 and due to increased pressures on the NHS our staff have supported and offered reassurance to an increasing number of older vulnerable people who have experienced lengthy waiting times for ambulance attendance.

#### 4.4 Tenancy Management and Rent

The Tenancy Management team provide the landlord function for the housing service and 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 monthly rent collection. At the beginning of the Covid-19 Pandemic Government advanced specific directives to protect those in rent arrears from eviction. 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	Percentage of rent collected in 2022
January	96.76%	97.20%	91.69%	93.47%
February	97.17%	97.44%	94.55%	96.31%
March	96.59%	97.28%	97.64%	97.83%
April	95.07%	95.65%	59.60%	58.64%

May	91.74%	66.27%	71.53%	70.29%
June	94.53%	76.28%	75.39%	75.47%
July	98.84%	76.39%	87.56%	75.10%
August	96.64%	81.41%	79.98%	80.23%
September	98.30%	84.50%	83.11%	81.10%
October	97.72%	85.70%	84.21%	85.63%
November	97.45%	90.76%	88.36%	88.22%
December	98.11%	90.92%	89.20%	88.44%

#### 4.5 Welfare Support Service – Cost of Living Support

The Welfare Support service continues to support people with all aspects of financial hardship, the team now consists of two full time officers. The teams' core business is to provide support and advice to those financially affected by the current and deepening cost of living crisis. The service is available to all residents across the borough regardless of tenure. This service is currently funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund until April 2025. Since the service was established in 2021 support has been advanced for over 1000 customers or households within the borough. Table 3 provides information regarding the number of cases received since January 2022. Appendix B provides information regarding the range of supportive interventions progressed by the Welfare Support team since it was established.

**Table 3- Number of cases**

Total Cases	
Jan-22	58
Feb-22	64
Mar-22	97
Apr-22	40
May-22	31
Jun-22	45
Jul-22	104
Aug-22	20
Sep-22	33
Oct-22	12
Nov-22	78
Dec-22	133
Jan-23	46
Feb-23	52
Mar-23	60
Apr-23	133

#### 4.6 Endeavour/Anti-Social Behaviour

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.

**Table 5- Total number of reports of ASB**

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	<b>1216</b>	<b>827</b>
01/04/21 31/03/22	<b>1123</b>	<b>672</b>
01/04/22 31/03/23	<b>1088</b>	<b>579</b>

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.

**Table 6 sanctions progressed**

Intervention	2018/19	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Advice letter	136	<b>138</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>55</b>
Warning letter	133	<b>172</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>69</b>
Injunction	4	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
Acceptable Behaviour	20	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>

Contract (signed)				
Closure Order	5	6	6	8
Community Protection Warning	57	62	30	21
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 service 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 2022/23 we completed 13,098 general repairs reported by tenants including repairs such as leaking taps and gutters, roof leaks, electrical faults, plastering repairs etc. We also brought 181 empty properties up to our agreed standard to get them ready for re-letting. The number of general repairs carried out was approximately 1500 more than in 2020/21. Since the pandemic, repairs have been increasing year on year. Reasons for the increase in requests include recently a greater focus on damp and mould issues, the age of the properties which increases the likelihood of disrepair and subsequent tenant expectation.

The authority's ability to recruit and retain staff is a current challenge for our service, this has also impacted on the number of repairs being carried out. The

IRT currently have 3 vacant posts. Approximately 380 jobs are currently out of target.

**Table 6 Performance from April 2022 to March 2023**

Priority	Number of jobs	Target %	Performance %
1	759	100	100
2	3693	100	98
3	3674	75	66
4	938	85	69

#### **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 31/3/23 was 100%.
- 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 461 properties, 1 Sheltered accommodation complex & 1 Community Centre
- 5 year Electrical testing programme - This work is currently completed by Aaron Services Ltd, who completed 557 tests in 2022/23 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. For extensions we would look to tender the work.

In 2022/23:

- we converted 48 bathrooms in to level access shower rooms
- we installed 3 over bath showers
- Improved the access to 16 properties for tenants with reduced mobility
- Fitted stair lifts to 15 properties
- Installed 1 Through floor lift
- Installed 1 Clos-O-Mat Toilet
- 5 Internal alterations to include widening of doors and wall removal
- 6 Level threshold doors



- 1 Automated door entry system
- 145 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:

- 109 upgrades to electrical installations
- 161 Boilers/heating distribution system renewals with A Rated boilers
- 45 distribution system only renewals
- Renewal of windows to 86 properties & doors to 84 homes
- Replacement of 67 roofs.
- 120 kitchen refurbishments
- 37 bathroom refurbishments

#### 4.12 Right to Buy and Leasehold Management

The Council has a statutory responsibility 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
2019/20	33
2020/21	19
2021/22	24
2022/23	26
Total number of sales	102

The Council manages 141 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.

#### 4.13 Performance and Service development

The Performance and Service Development teams seek to work with both managers and staff, across the housing service, to ensure that the service continues to develop and meet the needs of its customers. The team also leads on performance, resident involvement, and systems administration. The team is currently leading on work to ensure that the housing services meet the consumer standards set out by the Social Housing Regulator. These standards cover a range of issues including, the quality of housing, the management of housing and the way tenants are treated.

## **5. Future challenges and opportunities for the Housing Service**

### **5.1 Cost of living**

The cost of living crisis continues to impact 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. To best support our tenants we work collaboratively with key partners such as the DWP, Citizens Advice, Adult Social Care, Mental Health Services and Citizens Advice. We have recently formed a new partnership with Beam, a social enterprise, who over the next 2 years will assist up to 60 of our customers into employment and skills.

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 exceed 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.

### **5.2 Social Housing Regulation Bill**

The Social Housing Regulation Bill is currently passing through parliament. The Bill is intended to provide a stronger and more proactive regulatory regime to drive up standards in the sector and hold landlords to account for the service they provide to their tenants. There are further revisions to the Bill which include a requirement for housing managers to have appropriate housing qualifications and a requirement that social landlords respond to reports of damp and mould in an expedient and effective way. In response to legislative change, we have recently revised our processes in relation to damp and mould, to ensure that cases are prioritised within our overall response times. Alongside the Social Housing Regulation Bill 22 new tenant satisfaction measures were introduced in April 2023 which social landlords are now required to collate responses to from a representative sample of their tenants. As such, the housing service is looking to collaborative with Housemark to help us ensure compliance with this new regulation.

### **5.3 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 progressing to ensure that we have a robust approach to meeting this objective. We continue to maximise opportunities to access grant funding to enable us to make improvements to our stock. We have recently been successful in confirming £1.4m of grant funding via the Social Housing Decarbonisation fund which will enable us to improve the thermal efficiency off 100 of our council properties. The funding secured required match funding by the authority. Last year we improved the energy efficiency of 34 of our properties under the LAD2 scheme

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. We now have confirmed the EPC information for all our housing stock, and through our Asset Management Strategy will be prioritising a programme to ensure compliance with EPC C, starting with properties below this certification. Currently 1770 of our stock meet EPC C or above (55%).

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

6.1 Open session

## **7. Financial implications (CS)**

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 (ST)**

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. Decarbonisation of all HRA assets is a priority for our service whilst insuring that fuel poverty is minimised.

## 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

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Background papers: None  
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