

17 October 2017		ITEM: 7
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Housing Performance (April – August 2017)		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: No	
Report of: John Knight, Assistant Director of Housing		
Accountable Assistant Director: John Knight, Assistant Director of Housing		
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director Adults, Housing & Health		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

A summary of Housing performance for the 2017-18 year to date has been provided as well as details of work being carried out to improve the position for those indicators which are currently below target.

1. Recommendation

1.1 That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee comments on the report.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The performance dashboard for Housing has been designed to ensure that key objectives are identified for reporting and that every team has a role in delivering at least one of the high profile indicators included in the dashboard. Performance is reported at various levels on a monthly basis including locally within the Housing department, at Directorate level, to the Performance Board and to the corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2.2 The first section of the dashboard captures and records Housing's individual contribution to corporate indicators such as budget variance, the number of complaints received, the percentage of complaints upheld, sickness absence and staff turnover.

2.3 The second section of indicators includes the six corporate Key Performance Indicators which relate directly to Housing performance including the vital Housing management measures of voids, rents and repairs. This section also includes an indicator for improvements achieved for private tenants in the borough to reflect the growing strategic importance of the private rented

sector in Thurrock. Housing's performance for these Key Performance Indicators is reported to Performance Board on a monthly basis.

- 2.4 The third section includes a full set of Local Performance Indicators which have been designed to ensure all teams and individual members of staff are represented on the performance dashboard. These indicators measure the performance for key outputs for each team such as the time taken to provide a shortlist for a void property and tenant satisfaction with responsive repairs.
- 2.5 The final set of indicators comprises 'trackers', i.e. activity measures rather than performance measures with targets, to highlight trends or demands affecting the Housing service. These items include the number of individuals in each band on the housing register, and the numbers of households at risk of homelessness approaching the Council for assistance.
- 2.6 The dashboard now also includes two columns to clearly indicate the direction of travel and 'polarity' of Housing performance in comparison to previous months out turns, so that it is clear if the trend is improving or worsening for each indicator.

3. Housing Performance - Summary

- 3.1 As a result of the performance review which took place during July based on the full dataset for quarter 1 performance, Housing performance has improved in comparison with performance at the end of quarter 1.
- 3.2 In August 2017, 24 of the 37 (65%) targeted performance indicators with reported outturns were achieved with the remaining 13 below target. Of performance indicators which were below target, performance has improved in comparison with July for 9 of the 13 (69%) below target indicators.
- 3.3 Directly compared with performance at the end of quarter 1 where targets were achieved on 18 of the same 37 (48%) indicators, performance across the full suite of indicators in August has improved by 17% overall with 24 of the same 37 indicators achieved in August.

4. Corporate Performance Indicators

- 4.1 Performance relating to the Councils corporate performance indicators are on track in the main with a forecast budget variance of 0% for both the Housing Revenue Account and the General Fund.
- 4.2 In addition to this the number of Housing related complaints received remains low at 278 during the 2017-18 year to date and below the target threshold of 335. In August, only 4 complaints were received relating to responsive repairs, the lowest monthly figure for some years (the monthly average in 2016-17 was over 10). Of the complaints responded to, 29% have been upheld over the year to date in comparison with 41% during 2016-17.

- 4.3 Performance on all sickness absence and staff turnover indicators have improved or remained consistent in comparison with the position reported at the end of quarter 1.

5. Key Performance Indicators

- 5.1 Performance relating to Housing's Key Performance Indicators remains largely on track with targets achieved for 4 of the 6 indicators in August 2017. Consistent, above target performance has been recorded month on month for the number of homes transformed as part of the Transforming Homes programme, percentage of repairs completed on target and the percentage of rent collected. In addition to this, 326 private tenants' homes have been improved as a direct result of Housing intervention during the 2017-18 year to date against a profiled target of 220. Among many types of hazards removed or reduced, improvements made include fire hazards removed at 215 private properties, 32 properties made secure against intruders, damp and mould growth removed or reduced at 20 properties and excessive cold reduced at 16 properties.
- 5.2 General tenant satisfaction with services provided by Housing is currently below target. Performance has improved by 3% in comparison with July and 73% of respondents in August rated the services provided by Housing as good or excellent. It should be noted that the methodology for this indicator is to include only the excellent and good ratings from a 5-point rating in the overall percentage. Were fair ratings to be included the performance for August would be at 89%. We remain hopeful of maintaining current performance as there is increasingly positive feedback evident in other resident satisfaction collection exercises, including satisfaction with repairs and the Transforming Homes programme. Some examples of recent quotes from residents regarding works completed as part of the Transforming Homes Programme are below:

"You could not fault the kitchen and bathroom from how it was before. It is absolutely brilliant." – September 2017

"Beautiful choices, beautiful quality, very pleased" – September 2017

"We have no complaints the process was smooth. We couldn't wish for better" – September 2017

The recent response from some tenants regarding the extension of service charges is likely to have a negative impact which will offset the progress we would otherwise be confident of seeing in this indicator.

- 5.3 Performance for the average time to re-let voids is also currently below target. A full analysis of voids performance data has been completed with a view to streamlining the voids process and reducing the overall re-let time and a meeting has been held to discuss and agree improvements to the voids process. Re-let time has reduced by 6 days in comparison with July's

performance outturn and the changes made to streamline the void process are beginning to take effect. But for 2 outliers within the dataset, performance would have been on target at 30 days. In addition to this, at the time of reporting the provisional re-let time for September stands at 30 days on average, i.e. on target. Overall void numbers remain at a consistent level with 102 properties void at the end of July and 98 properties void at the end of August.

6. Local Performance Indicators

- 6.1 In addition to the improvements in void re-let times reported above, performance has improved in several areas where under performance was previously reported to the Committee. The number of households assisted to downsize over the year to date is currently 18, improving from 1 during July to 6 during August. An officer in the Allocations Team is specialising in actively promoting this option to under occupying residents. In addition to this, the number of homelessness preventions has also improved from 14 in July to 41 in August. The 41 homelessness preventions include 27 single adults, 12 families or single parents with children and 2 couples over 60. The number of households in temporary accommodation has also improved and was 10 below the target threshold of 125 at the end of August.
- 6.2 One area of notably improved performance is the average days taken to provide a shortlist for a void property has been managed down from 15 days in April to 3 days in August. Performance has improved as staffing has become stabilised on the Allocations Team and we are confident of maintaining performance. This indicator is crucial to the overall average void re-let time.
- 6.3 Consistent performance has been reported month on month for the percentage of statutory gas checks carried out within timescale (100%), submissions of statutory returns within deadlines (100%) and the number of projects due, delivered on time and on budget (96% year to date).
- 6.4 Performance relating to tenant satisfaction is generally positive with satisfaction with the sign up process (76.4%), responsive repairs (91.3%) and Transforming Homes (87.7%) all above target over the 2017-18 year to date based on good and excellent ratings. Satisfaction for responsive repairs is particularly high and in August, 97.8% of all repairs were completed within their target timeframe. Satisfaction with grounds maintenance, although below target at 72.8% over the year to date, represents an improvement on the 2016-17 outturn of 70.2% and remains relatively consistent month on month.

Tenant satisfaction is measured by telephone surveys carried out by an independent market research company (KWEST Research) with experience in conducting Housing satisfaction surveys. KWEST Research call a varied sample of residents on a monthly basis to measure satisfaction with various services provided by the Housing department.

- 6.5 Tenant satisfaction with the ASB service is currently below target at 58.2% year to date. Tenants who were contacted expressed dissatisfaction with low level anti-social behaviour in their neighbourhood such as noise, nuisance parking and were concerned that not enough was being done to tackle ASB. A robust approach to tackle low level offending anti-social behaviours is being adopted. This will be proportionate and transparent to improve satisfaction with the response to low-level anti-social behaviour such as graffiti, noise and fly tipping. The ASB Enforcement Team has power to serve Community Protection Warnings, Notices and Fixed Penalty Notices under the ASB Crime and Policing Act 2014 similar to Essex Police. These are more effective powers to deal with low level behaviours that are persistent in nature and unreasonable spoiling the quality of life of those in the locality. Officers have been trained in this area during quarter 2 and will support the Tenancy Management Team enforcing low level breaches more quickly to stop. The Housing service review is also looking at centralising all ASB reports in one place with the purpose to improve ASB record keeping, case management accountability and tenant satisfaction.
- 6.6 Areas of concern include properties recovered as a result of detecting fraud. The number of CCTV incidents resulting in enforcement action is also relatively low (58 year to date), and there are few properties sourced in the private sector as preventions/PRSO discharge for homeless households (16 year to date). There are clear action plans in place to improve performance in each of these areas.
- 6.7 Performance for the number of council properties taken back has decreased. There is a remedial plan increasing tenancy verification checks in order to improve performance output in quarter 3 and 4, with a greatly enhanced programme of visits. This joint operation between the Counter Fraud & Investigations and the Housing Team aims to increase housing investigations and also the public reporting of suspected fraud.
- 6.8 The CCTV Service is reviewing the use of public images to increase the reporting of persons responsible for spoiling our community so that the Council can take action against them. This measure aims to reduce the opportunity for crime and anti-social behaviour. For unreasonable and repeat offences our use of Community Protection Warnings and Notices will be adopted by the Housing Teams to increase their enforcement outputs in line with the Council's ASB policy and procedure.
- 6.9 In order to improve performance on properties sourced in the private sector as preventions/PRSO discharge we will engage with landlords to encourage them to make properties available to those in receipt of housing benefit and to sustain tenancies for those in receipt of housing benefit. We will also work with landlords to clearly set out behavioural expectations within tenancy agreements and encourage them to proactively mediate, contacting the Housing Solutions Service where there is a risk of breakdown. In addition to this we will re-market the PRS incentive scheme to landlords, agents and applicants approaching the Housing Solutions Service. The new flexible

homelessness fund, replacing the previous notional management fee for temporary accommodation, is partly intended to ensure that councils focus on 'front-end' preventions of this kind rather than on the provision of temporary accommodation, and it should be possible to utilise some of this grant for preventions in the second half of the financial year.

- 6.10 Garage void loss as a measure of foregone income remains relatively high. Intensive work on garages this year has led to the elimination of the backlog of applications for the waiting list and the compilation of a full data-set for these assets. A total of 60 lettings have been completed since April, and another 65 are now ready to let. More work is needed to bring all the void units back into use, as a number of them need to be cleaned, repaired and/or made secure. For those which are available the Northgate Allocations module which goes live in November will enable the matching process to be automated and speed up the process., More widely, data from the Stock Condition Survey will inform the review of these assets which is already underway and lead to a clear set of options for the future.

7. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 7.1 The Housing performance dashboard reflects the service's commitment to the Council's corporate priorities.

8. Implications

8.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Julie Curtis**
HRA and Development Accountant

No direct financial implications arising from this report.

8.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Martin Hall**
Principal Solicitor

No direct legal implications arising from this report.

8.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**
Community Development Officer

No direct diversity or equalities implications arising from this report.

8.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

- Not applicable.

9. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None.

10. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 - Housing Performance Scorecard (August 2017)

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