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The Chair and Members of Scrutiny
Select Committee – Economic
Growth and Communities

Dear Councillor,

AGENDA SUPPLEMENT

Please see attached the documents for the agenda item(s) listed below for the meeting of the SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE – ECONOMIC GROWTH AND COMMUNITIES to be held on THURSDAY, 13 JULY 2023, the agenda for which has already been published.

3. Housing Update (Pages 3 - 18)
 - 5.10pm (Report to follow)

Yours sincerely,

Head of Regulatory Law and Monitoring Officer

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Housing update: Decent homes, voids and repairs

Economic Growth and Communities Scrutiny
Select Committee, 13th July 2023

Jane Davies, Service Director – Housing

Vanessa Watson, Interim Head of Investment, Assets and Property
Operations

This presentation will cover:

- Overview of successes and challenges
- Decent homes
- Voids
- Responsive repairs
- Next steps

Overview - Successes

- Strong performance on landlord compliance – 100% performance on gas servicing and all of the ‘big 6’
- Positive customer feedback on repairs service – 93% satisfaction
- Significant investment in homes and neighbourhoods
- HRA Capital Programme approved by Cabinet in Feb 23
- Stock condition survey completed and investment plan in development
- Thorough review of all underlying issues to be addressed through housing transformation programme
- New Board, directorate plan and performance monitoring regime
- Better joined up working across the housing service to focus on individual customer outcomes
- Strengthened tenant engagement

Overview - Challenges

- Rents capped and affordability of HRA business plan under significant pressure
- Shortage of staff resources in key areas
- Increasing disrepair claims and damp / mould issues
- IT system challenges
- Customer complaints increasing
- Still dealing with the impact of the pandemic on repairs and voids
- Additional requirements to prepare for inspection by Social Housing Regulator

Decent Homes - Background

- Decent Homes Standard (DHS) was a target set by Government in 2004
- CBC met the target by the deadline of 2010, while retaining services in house
- Ongoing investment – generally good quality housing stock
- The target for ‘decency’ for our stock is 100%
- Currently, performance stands at 99.7% and on track to hit 100% during 2023 (built into HRA capital programme)
- Still awaiting new standard and definitions from government

Decent Homes – Next steps

- Latest Housing Capital Programme includes re-roofing, re-pointing to help reduce mould and damp issues, improving insulation where required (wall and loft), replacement of PVC-U Windows, and ongoing kitchen and bathroom replacements
- All of these contracts have started apart from the window programme which starts in July 2023
- Currently considering the further inclusion of cavity insulation renewal, floor insulation and the introduction of alternative energy sources
- Overall decarbonisation plan being developed this year to ensure we can achieve the Council's Climate Change Strategy objectives

Voids - Challenges

- Performance on void turnaround times is weak
- Concerns expressed by customer, Members and employees – one of our top priorities for improvement
- Current resource insufficient to deal with backlog alongside new voids
- Significant transformation required to overall process (housing management, void repairs and allocations)

Voids – Current position

Currently 349 voids, including 36 as part of the Lowgates refurbishment programme and 28 ready to let

Of the 285 'management voids' requiring remediation activity:

- 198 currently with Void Repairs Team at various stages of inspection and work in progress
- 9 need major structural work
- 33 new voids, not yet received by Void Repairs Team
- 29 awaiting rewire, heating upgrade, major clearance or other work outside Void Repairs Team
- 16 waiting for cleaning and / or gas recommissioning

Voids – Action taken

- Head of Housing Management and Careline implementing new processes with housing officers to improve overall 'pre-void' efficiency
- Voids Management Group established to identify and drive improvements
- Staff engagement sessions held in June to discuss potential solutions
- Outsourced 10 voids to an external contractor with a view to increasing this depending on cost / performance outcomes
- Improved communication between Void Repairs Team and Gas and Electrical teams which has removed the previous 'bottleneck' issue

Voids – Further action to be taken

- Review outcomes from 10 outsourced voids and consider increasing this to achieve 'quick wins'
- Further housing management activity i.e. pre-tenancy visits
- Improve process / confirm accountable officers to keep customers, Members and employees informed on the status of individual properties
- Review the void relet standard in liaison with tenant scrutiny members
- Produce monthly progress report to Strategic Housing Board
- Recruit dedicated transformation project manager to lead on all improvement activity work

Repairs – Current position/challenges

- In November 2022, the total number of repairs in progress, including the backlog, was 2,139
- By June 2023 the IT system suggested this had increased significantly to 3,940 in total, including 1,866 overdue repairs
- However there are system issues - many of these will have been completed but not closed off, and the number includes duplicated jobs and no access cases
- Currently working to reconcile / cleanse data to obtain a more accurate picture



Increasing number of repairs

Irrespective of system problems, the number of repairs *has* increased, with contributing factors including:

- Rising disrepair claims
- Damp and mould awareness
- Stock condition survey findings
- Tenancy visits have identified more repairs

Repairs – Action taken

- Focused our resources in the areas of highest need and identified additional staff requirements
- Implementing a new performance management framework to ensure clear, monthly reporting arrangements and to help identify where changes are needed to drive up improvement
- Increased employee engagement to give clear messages and updates with regards performance, areas of high priority and budgets constraints
- Amalgamated Call Centre Staff with the Responsive Repairs team at the depot, to improve communication and increase efficiencies

Repairs – Further action to be taken

- Recruit additional staff
- Review service delivery arrangements including customer contact and ICT systems
- Review materials and supply chain arrangements, in order to improve efficiencies and the overall service
- Clarify repair standards to tenants to manage expectations about which repairs we are responsible for carrying out / timescales
- Produce monthly progress report to Strategic Housing Board

Key priorities for the coming year

- Deliver actions described above for voids and repairs
- Progress wider housing transformation activity
- Further tenant scrutiny activity to co-design service improvements
- Preparing for inspection
- Developing a new 30 year HRA business plan and Housing Strategy

Thank you

Q&A