



Title: **Community Service Update relating to HRA**

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1. Introduction

This report is to provide an update to the Service Delivery Committee on the delivery of Landlord Services and related Community services. In addition, the report provides a commentary on activities and performance for the first quarter of this financial year (April 2015 to June 2015)

2. Recommendation

Members are asked to agree the proposed target for rent arrears be set at 3%

3. Information

Rent Collection

Members have been receiving reports throughout the year that show that the targets for both rent arrears and rent collections are falling short due to the introduction of Welfare Reforms in 2012 and it was agreed to monitor these targets before considering the revision of them.

The targets for rent collection and arrears were last set over 5 years ago. In view of the current economic climate and reductions in housing benefits these targets need reviewing to ensure that they remain ambitious but achievable.

The current target for rent collection is set at 99% and the arrears at 2.5% but this is not being currently achieved. It is proposed that the rent collection target remains at 99%, however, the rent arrears target for the current tenants is set at 3%. Current performance is set out below;

	Target	April 2015	May 2015	June 2014
% Rent Collected	99%	97.26%	96.49%	97%
Total current Net Arrears		£142,126.20	£181,668.56	£160,000.83

Steps are being taken to try and ensure that arrears levels continue to improve, these include:

- Regular meetings involving all areas of the Council with a role in ensuring prompt processing of Housing Benefit claims and suitable Discretionary Housing Payments.
- 3 intensive campaigns on outstanding current tenant debt to be carried out between now and the end of the financial year. Two will be targeting the Non Collectable weeks that occur during December 2015 (Christmas) and at the last two weeks of the financial year in March 2016. The third will be targeted at Monthly and Fortnightly payers during October and early November.

Tenants Charter

All Service Charters including performance charters are now being placed on the Council's website.

Gas Safety

Members have requested that they continue to receive regular updates on gas safety compliance.

The table sets out the latest position in relation to gas safety certificates.

GAS SERVICE COMPLIANCE AS AT	30 September 2015
OLDEST CASE CP12 - EXPIRED (CP12 = gas safety certificate)	None at present as 100% compliant
% CP 12's COMPLIANT	100%

The new gas safety contract commenced in October 2014 following a procurement exercise and Officers are paying particular attention to performance during the early months of the contract. The Company responded both promptly and decisively, when a customer complaint was received from a tenant who was unable to contact the gas safety contractor direct on their out of hours line.

Update on Capital Programme 2014/15 and Decent Homes

A separate report is being provided within this Committee to look at the wider refurbishment and new build projects.

Boulter Crescent Community House

The Community Development Officer continues to develop the activities being held at the Community House and the surrounding areas, namely, Marrome Square, Junction Road, and Elizabeth Court.

Detailed newsletters of activities held and what events are coming up are posted on the Council web site and all Ward Councillors are notified

The Community House is being refurbished works and consequently the activities have been displaced to temporary accommodation. This has been somewhat disruptive to general day to day operations, however many of the valued projects continue. The Community Development Officer has worked very hard to ensure that the good work continues and her efforts have been noted.

The Community Flat is being redesigned and works have started. The aim is to complete in readiness for an opening for Christmas celebrations.

Supporting Leicestershire Families (SLF) and Early Help

This committee has been receiving information on the new County model of operational services for the Children and Young People's services being amalgamated in to Supporting Leicestershire Families.

The new teams will be working in localities as part of an expanded Supporting Leicestershire Families Service. This countywide service will address the needs of children and their families from 0 -19 years and up to 25 years for young people with Special Educational Needs. The service will be targeted at vulnerable children, young people and families with additional and/or complex needs which cannot be met by community and universal services working in the locality.

The SLF annual summary of activity for 2014/15 is as follows;

- 552 families supported made up of 2417 individuals
- Average length of involvement for families is 42.2 weeks
- Average number of issues at start of involvement is 10.9
- Most frequent issues at start of involvement:
 - Parenting issues
 - Negative lifestyles factors
 - Family solely reliant on benefits
 - Unstable and disruptive relationships within household
 - Family has financial difficulties
- Progress against most frequent issues at latest review
 - Parenting issues reduced by 7% across the county
 - Negative lifestyles factors reduced by 0.8%
 - Family solely reliant on benefits- No change at county level
 - Unstable and disruptive relationships reduced by 11.9%
 - Family has financial difficulties reduced by 5.9%

A total of 552 families have been supported by the service, with 273 cases opening and 284 cases closing during the year. Of these 35 families were in Oadby and Wigston, which shows the lowest percentage demand of any Leicestershire District.

The Council's SLF working group are meeting on 29 September 2015 and a verbal update will be given at the meeting.

Community Payback Schemes

Community Housing officers have worked closely with the Probation Officers to engage a team of community payback offenders in clearing up sites and assisting elderly or people with disabilities to tidy up their private garden areas.

Some 30 lamp posts which had graffiti on them have been painted through this scheme.

The Community Safety Team are now supporting the Operational team to pilot the painting of 3 bus shelters and members will receive a separate report from the Operation Team in due course.

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Implications	
Financial (PL)	The levels of arrears will affect the Council's net current assets position on its balance sheet and needs intensive management Progress on the Capital schemes will affect the projected out-turn position and regular meetings are ensuring tht this is monitored
Risk (APM)	CR5 – Effective utilisation of assets CR7 - Business continuity
Equalities (AC)	No Significant Implications
Legal (AC)	No Significant Implications