



**Service Delivery  
Committee**

**Tuesday, 21 March  
2017**

**Matter for Information**

**Title: Community Services Update**

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## **1. Introduction**

This report is to provide an update to the Service Delivery Committee regarding the delivery of Landlord Services and related community activities.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. Members are asked to note the contents of the report.
- 2.2. To grant delegated authority to approve the award of the Borough Wide Cleaning Contract to the Community Services Manager in consultation with the Chair of the Service Delivery Committee and the Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer).

## **3. Information**

### **3.1. Current Tenant Arrears**

The target is to reduce the gross arrears to 2.5% of the annual rent debit by the end, of the current financial year. The table below shows the performance from December through to February 2017.

<b>December 2016</b>	<b>January 2017</b>	<b>February 2017</b>
£131,614	£136,947	£132,746
2.64%	2.75%	2.66%

The current arrears figure is on profile to meet the end of year target of 2.5%.

Arrears are being affected by the increase in Universal Credit cases which currently stand at 10. In all cases direct payments have been requested, however there is a built in minimum 6 week delay for payments.

As reported at the last meeting the introduction of Universal Credit is likely to have an increasingly adverse impact on arrears and feedback from other authorities who have fully rolled out UC shows a dramatic increase in arrears e.g. in Croydon collection levels have dropped from 98% to 72% in respect of Universal Credit. Customers. Universal Credit in OWBC is expected to be fully rolled for all new claimants from March 2018 and migration of all existing claimants by 2022 and we need to be fully prepared to mitigate the effects.

The suggested arrears target for 2017/18 will be brought to the next meeting of this Committee, once the outturn for the current financial year is known.

### **3.2. Former Tenant Arrears**

The target for 2016/17 is to reduce former tenant arrears to 1.5% as a percentage of

Annual Rent Debit – as agreed by this Committee in July 2016.

December 2016	January 2017	February 2017
£130,193	£123 319	£132.746
2.5%	2.49%	2.71%

To date £11 K has been collected and cases totalling £39K, have been referred to our appointed collection agents for tracing and further action. Cases that are deemed to be irrecoverable will be submitted for write off in accordance with the financial procedures.

### 3.3. Homeless Prevention Funding success

The Council working with Leicester City, Rutland County and the other Leicestershire district and Borough Councils have been successful in securing DCLG grant funding for 2 projects:

- £285k for Homeless Prevention Trailblazer project (Leicester City lead authority); and
- £398k for Rough Sleeping (Charnwood BC lead authority)

Communities staff took a lead with Leicester City Council in the Homeless Prevention Trailblazer bid and are currently working to deliver the project over the next 2 financial years. This project will see tailored advice being made available to a wider audience than at present and will provide an element of floating support for the most vulnerable and least able to cope homeless people.

The Rough Sleeping project effectively builds upon and extends the successful No Second Night Out project with the partnership expanding to include Leicester City Council.

### 3.4. Gas Safety

There are 2 outstanding cases from January where we have not been able to gain access and legal action is being pursued.

There are a further 2 cases outstanding at the end of February of which one has made an appointment in March to have the work carried out and the other is subject to legal action. A verbal update will be given at the meeting.

The overall performance figure is 99.7% compliant.

### 3.5. Void Performance

Empty Council Properties - excluding properties requiring major works		
Date	Number of normal voids	Average working days
Q3 2015/16	33	42
Q4 2015/16	18	23
Q1 2016/17	25	23
Q2 2016/17	22	20
Q3 2016/17	31	27

Q4 2016/17	25	17
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The target for voids requiring a normal amount of re-let works for 2016/17 was set at 20 working days and overall for the year to date the average is 21.75 days which is deemed to be top quartile performance and a major transformation from 2 years ago when it stood at 58 days. Performance would have been even better if it were not for difficult to let bed sit properties and sheltered housing which has adversely skewed performance.

**3.6. Chartwell House, Oadby - Expiry of Lease for rooftop Telecommunications Site**

Further to the report to the last meeting negotiations are still ongoing regarding the renewal of the lease and it is hoped that an agreement can be reached in the near future and a further report will be brought back to the next meeting.

**3.7. Empty Homes - Private Sector**

**a. 114 Uplands Road, Oadby**

Following the approval by full Council on 31 January 2017, the Compulsory Purchase Order in respect of 114 Uplands is being pursued through our legal advisors and Members will be kept informed of progress by a further report to the next meeting of this Committee.

**b. 37 Newton Lane, Wigston**

A meeting has been arranged with the owners of this property to discuss the options for bringing this property back into use and a further report will be brought back to the next meeting of this Committee.

Generally we are continuing to monitor empty homes by close liaison with Council Tax and taking follow up action to minimise the number of empty homes in the Borough.

It is worth noting that Oadby and Wigston is one of the best performing authorities in respect of empty homes in Leicestershire and the East Midlands.

**3.8. Update on Capital Programme**

A progress report regarding the 2016/17 Capital Programme is attached at **Appendix 1**.

Members should be aware of two current issues in respect of major works:

The external wall insulation programme to solid wall properties is on target to finish on time by the end of March after which the contractors will move on to the Elizabeth Court remedial works scheme and letters have gone out to the residents informing them of the impending works.

The concrete repairs and redecoration works to Chartwell House have been completed however, during the contract it was discovered that water either from rainwater or overflows was getting behind the metal balcony edge covers (that were fitted some years ago) and had been a major cause of paintwork flaking on the undersides of the balconies. These have all been sealed on their upper edge and are currently being monitored. The painters are due to return to carry out defects work at some time between April and June providing the sealing up of the gap has proved

effective.

We will shortly be entering into negotiations with the contractor for the next phase of the works to the remaining blocks during the next financial year.

### 3.9. Choice Based Lettings

At a previous meeting of this Committee a discussion was held around the provision of a replacement Choice Based Lettings system. Following continued delays within the partnership it has been decided to pursue an independent solution. Quotations based on a detailed specification have been received and follow up with the successful contractor has commenced. Implementation will depend upon staff resources but should be before the end of 2017.

It is hoped that some level of continued co-operation with the Leicestershire District and Borough Councils will continue around policy development and emerging trends.

### 3.10. Borough Wide Cleaning Contract

The cleaning of Council buildings and the communal areas of its housing stock is mainly carried by external contractors and a small number of directly employed staff. In order to comply with standing orders, to test the market, and to ensure best value for money it was decided to go out to tender for a Borough Wide Cleaning Contract,

Due to the monetary value a contract for the cleaning of all Council owned buildings has been advertised through the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU). Initial expressions of interest were received on 2 January 2017 and a shortlist of 6 suitable companies were invited to tender.

The deadline for the receipt of tenders is 24 March and the submissions will be assessed in terms of price and quality. Alongside this, the feasibility of an in-house bid is also being considered.

A detailed specification of works for each building has been prepared and effective monitoring of the contract would be incorporated into the new arrangements to ensure that the contract is delivered to a high standard and in accordance with the specification.

Due to the timing issue in that tenders will not be assessed until after 24 March and not to delay the award of the contract Members are asked to give delegated authority to the Head of Communities in consultation with the Chair of the Service Delivery Committee and the Chief Financial Officer to approve the successful tender. This will include the option of the in-house bid.

A further report will be brought back to the next Committee.

#### **Background Documents:-**

Appendix 1 – Capital Programme

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Implications	
<b>Financial (CR)</b>	CR1: Decreasing Financial Resources - Efficient housing void and debt management is essential to keeping income streams in this service on target. The tendering of the Borough wide cleaning contract

	will ensure best value for money.
<b>Legal (AC)</b>	CR 5: Effective Utilisation of Assets/Buildings - Tackling the issue of empty homes in the Borough and the relevant enforcement action.
<b>Risk (SG)</b>	CR1: Decreasing Financial Resources - The level of arrears and void turnaround times will affect both the Council's income streams and its net current assets position on its balance sheet. Both these areas need intensive management. CR4: Reputation Damage - Failure to progress the capital programme may affect the Council's reputation.
<b>Equalities (SG)</b>	No significant implications.
	Equality Assessment:-
	<input type="checkbox"/> Initial Screening <input type="checkbox"/> Full Assessment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable