



**Service Delivery  
Committee**

**Tuesday, 23 January  
2018**

**Matter for  
Information and  
Decision**

**Title: Community Services Update**

**Author(s): Stephen Glazebrook (Interim Head of Communities)**

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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. Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1. Members are asked to note the contents of the report.
- 2.2. That authority is given to seek a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) in respect of 37 Newton Lane Wigston.
- 2.3. To approve the draft Capital Programme for 2018/19.

## **3. Information**

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

The target for 2017/18 is to reduce the gross arrears to 2% of the annual rent debit by the end of the financial year ending 31 March 2018. The table below shows the performance to the end of August.

<b>August 2017</b>	<b>September 2017</b>	<b>October 2017</b>	<b>November 2017</b>	<b>December 2017</b>
£168 906	£183 242	£160 376	£173, 902	£135,002
3.46%	3.76%	3.29%	3.57%	2.77 %

Whilst the arrears have increased since the start of the financial year we are broadly where we would expect to be at this time of the year following the 2 rent-free weeks at Christmas. The introduction of Universal Credit and the Benefit Cap is however starting to have an adverse impact on the arrears position.

We have been informed by DWP to expect the full rollout of Universal Credit by June 2018.

Members should be aware that due to the rent reduction of 1% over the last 2 years this has distorted the figures in percentage terms as the value of the annual rent debit has reduced. We remain confident that we will hit the year-end target by March 2018 but the situation is likely to be much more challenging in the future due to the increasing impact of Universal Credit.

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

The year-end target for 2017/18 is to reduce former tenant arrears to 2.25% as a

percentage of the annual rent debit. The table below shows the performance to date.

<b>August 2017</b>	<b>September 2017</b>	<b>October 2017</b>	<b>November 2017</b>	<b>December 2017</b>
£116,563	£117,103	£122,461	£105,983	£110,068
2.39%	2.40%	2.51%	2.17%	2.26%

The majority of the decrease has resulted from irrecoverable debts being written off after tracing and collection efforts have failed.

We are confident that the Former Tenant Arrears target of 2.25% will be achieved by the end of March 2018.

### **3.3. Voids (Empty Properties)**

Between April and the end of December 2017, 41 normal empty properties were re-let at an average turnaround time of 17½ working days against a target of 20 days.

There were another 13 void properties which required extensive refurbishment, modernisation and adaptations which took an average of 66 working days to return to lettings.

The performance for 'normal' voids is regarded as upper quartile performance and is a testament to the teamwork between Housing Options and the Maintenance team to turn around properties quickly and to reduce rent loss.

### **3.4. Housing Allocations Policy and Choice Based Lettings**

The new Choice Based Lettings system has been implemented and has been used to successfully advertise and let 5 properties by the end of December 2017. A further 5 properties including 2 from our Housing Association partners are in progress on the system.

All existing housing applicants had 6 weeks to register on the new system with 148 having completed the process by the middle of December 2017 with another 103 in progress. 22 further applicants were assessed as non-qualifying. These are typically applicants whom we had hosted on the old system but who did not have a local connection with Oadby & Wigston.

### **3.5. Homelessness Temporary Accommodation**

The new temporary accommodation on Daneshill Road in Leicester has been operational since October 2017, accommodating between 3 and 4 households at any time.

Work on the Council's own new hostel adjacent to the main Council Offices commences on 22 January 2018 and is anticipated to take 16 weeks to complete.

At the time of writing this report the Council had 13 households in temporary accommodation.

A full report on homelessness in the Borough is included elsewhere on the Agenda. The Member seminar in respect of Homelessness has been rearranged for Tuesday 30 January and it is hoped that as many Members as possible can attend.

### 3.6. **Gas Safety**

100% compliance has been achieved as at the end of December 2017 and good progress is being made on those due in January. Procedures have been amended to strengthen the Council's position should it at any point prove necessary to take legal action to gain access.

### 3.7. **Empty Homes – Private Sector**

#### **114 Uplands Road**

This property has been sold and it is expected that the property will now be brought up to an acceptable standard and occupied in the near future. No legal costs have been incurred in this case.

#### **37 Newton Lane**

An on-site meeting has been held with the owner to attempt to find a solution to this property standing empty for such a long period. The property is a small 2 bedroom bungalow and is in very poor structural condition. Ideally the owner would like to renovate the property with grant assistance from the Council. However it is not an economic proposition in view of the level of works required.

The owner was advised that the best option would be to demolish the bungalow and to sell the land as a building plot but he was reluctant to go down this route. It is unlikely that the owner will be proactive in moving things forward and it is recommended that the Council proceeds with a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO).

### 3.8. **Chartwell House, Oadby – Renewal of Lease for Rooftop Telecommunications Site**

Work is continuing with regard to renegotiation and renewal of this lease as reported previously, though has been more protracted than originally anticipated. We are seeking to conclude this as soon as possible and will provide a full update for the next meeting.

### 3.9. **Update on Capital Programme**

Good progress has been made with the completion of major contracts at Elizabeth Court and Malham Way just before Christmas. A full schedule of 2017/18 projects with updates is attached at **Appendix A**. A further schedule of the projects planned for 2018/19 is included for information at **Appendix B**.

### 3.10. **Borough Wide Cleaning Contract**

The Borough wide cleaning contract commenced on Monday 11 September 2017.

Regular monthly monitoring meetings are being held with the contractor. Members of the Committee previously requested a progress update after 6 months and this will be reported to the next meeting in March 2018. In the meantime, Members can report any concerns to the Customer Service Centre by telephoning 0116 288 8961 or by email to [csc@oadby-wigston.gov.uk](mailto:csc@oadby-wigston.gov.uk). All calls are recorded and passed on to the Contract Monitoring Officer / Premises Officer for action.

### 3.11. **Local Housing Company**

The first meeting of the Partnership Board which oversees the local housing company was held in December and for Members' information the notes of the meeting will be reported to the next Full Council meeting.

### **3.12. Lightbulb Update**

The Lightbulb project went live on 2 October 2017. A small number of existing DFG applications, where works were nearing completion, were retained and seen through to conclusion by OWBC.

A joint meeting of the Lightbulb Programme Board and Steering Group is scheduled to take place on 26 January 2018 at which the first progress and quarterly performance report will be received.

We understand Members have some concerns over what would happen to the remaining allocated funds if underspend occurred at the end of the financial year. Lightbulb have committed to applying funds on the usual spent and committed basis, but also by making an estimated provision for all referrals received. This is intended to ensure there is no year-end carry over of new cases without funding if still available.

At this point it is unclear what would happen if there were still unallocated funds. We are therefore raising this question so this can be clarified at the Programme Board and Steering Group meeting referred to above.

### **3.13. Pest Control**

The plan for commercialisation of the Pest Control Service is now in place, and as well as advertising the new service on the Council's website and in the Letterbox magazine, all food and non-food businesses in the Borough have been written to making them aware of the Council's services. So far there has been a limited response and it is likely to take some time to realise its full potential.

Blaby District Council are utilising the Oadby and Wigston Pest Control Service to undertake the Severn Trent Sewer Baiting Contract 2017/18 which will generate some additional income.

The OWBC Pest Control Service is advertised on the Council's website as being available to Blaby residents and it is planned to advertise the service in the local press in both local authority areas.

### **3.15. Corporate Enforcement Report**

Members are asked to note that in future the Corporate Enforcement report will be submitted to the Licensing and Regulatory Committee only, to avoid duplication from substantially the same report going to both Committees.

### **3.16 Asbestos Update on Marstown Avenue**

The Council has undertaken the remedial works to the gardens which remained contaminated following the service of notice on the owners and perpetrators of the illegal deposition of controlled waste in the gardens of Marstown Avenue and Kenilworth Drive. The laboratory clearance reports are awaited to enable final notification to the residents of the conclusion of the issue.

The Council is preparing legal papers to recover costs from the owners of the site for breach of the enforcement notice served on 21 August 2017 and the costs of the investigation and subsequent clean-up operation.

**Background Documents:**

None.

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<b>Implications</b>   Community Services Update	
<b>Finance</b>	Efficient housing and void management is essential in maintaining income streams.
<b>Chris Raymakers</b> (Head of Finance, Revenues & Benefits)	The proposed capital programme for 2018/19 is in accordance with the Business Plan.
<b>Legal</b>	The Council has the legal powers to seek a Compulsory Purchase order.
<b>Dave Gill</b> (Head of Law & Governance / Monitoring Officer)	The report is satisfactory.
<b>Corporate Risk(s) (CR)</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Other Corporate Risk(s)</b>
<b>Stephen Glazebrook</b> (Interim Head of Communities)	There are no significant corporate risks.
<b>Corporate Priorities (CP)</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>An Inclusive and Engaged Borough (CP1)</b>
<b>Stephen Glazebrook</b> (Interim Head of Communities)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Effective Service Provision (CP2)</b> The monitoring of service contracts is key to the efficient delivery of services.
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Balanced Economic Development (CP3)</b>
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Green &amp; Safe Places (CP4)</b>
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Wellbeing for All (CP5)</b>
<b>Vision &amp; Values (V)</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>"A Strong Borough Together" (Vision)</b>
<b>Stephen Glazebrook</b> (Interim Head of Communities)	All Council priorities are underpinned by a commitment to providing efficient and effective services to our residents.
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Accountability (V1)</b>
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Respect (V2)</b>
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Teamwork (V3)</b>
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Innovation (V4)</b>
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Customer Focus (V5)</b>
<b>Equalities &amp; Equality Assessment(s) (EA)</b>	There are no significant equalities implications.
<b>Stephen Glazebrook</b> (Interim Head of Communities)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Not Applicable (EA)</b>