



**Service Delivery
Committee**

**Tuesday, 20 March
2018**

**Matter for
Information and
Decision**

Title: Community Services Update

Author(s): Martin Hone (Interim Director of Services)

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. Members are asked to approve the clarification to the Housing Allocations Policy (at paragraph 3.1 of the report) which will provide Officers with a clearer working definition when dealing with housing applicants not relying on residence criteria.
- 2.3. Members are asked to approve the process for updating and the amendment of the Council's Tenancy Agreement (as set out at paragraph 3.4. of the report).

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 middle of February.

October 2017	November 2017	December 2017	January 2018	February 2018
£160,376	£173,902	£135,002	£139,442	£155,822
3.29%	3.57%	2.77 %	2.86%	3.20%

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.

October 2017	November 2017	December 2017	January 2018	February 2018
£122,461	£105,983	£110,068	£105,911.40	£105,743.37
2.51%	2.17%	2.26%	2.17%	2.17%

The tie up with Medina Credit Management has resulted in an additional £1,054 of former tenancy debt recovered (after charges) which we might not have otherwise have received.

3.3. **Voids (Empty Properties)**

Between April and the end of January 2018, 43 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. **Tenancy Agreement**

Officers intend to start the process required to amend the Council's Tenancy Agreement during 2018.

The main additions proposed include:

1. Introductory Tenancy; consequences if you breach the tenancy and discussion regarding extending tenancy/ending the tenancy;
2. Rent; to pay rent monthly in advance if paying by standing order or Direct Debit;
3. Use of occupation of property; the permission required and details needed for any potential lodger/s;
4. Fire safety concerns; to support work being carried to keep tenants safe in the flat and communal areas including issues around blocking and not restricting access and not removing doors i.e. kitchen doors;
5. Environment; not to dump rubbish in communal areas. This supports our efforts to keep areas clear of rubbish;
6. Environment; more details on ensuring gardens are maintained and dealing with any health and safety concerns;
7. Pets; permission for pets required in flats and bungalows and the limit on how many pets allowed generally; and
8. Clarifying obligations in relation to repairs; permission to alter or improve the property; the principle of recharging for tenant damage, gaining access etc.; becoming responsible for non-standard items such as previous tenants improvements.

The process should also see the re-wording of sections dealing with anti-social behaviour to assist with enforcement.

A draft Tenancy Agreement for use in the consultation is attached at **Appendix 1**. After the consultation is complete a further report with recommendations will be brought before this Committee.

3.5. **Homelessness Temporary Accommodation**

Work on the Council's own new hostel adjacent to the main Council Offices has commenced and is progressing well. This will provide 5 bedrooms in a shared environment aimed at smaller homeless families, such as households expecting a child, households with one child or perhaps a single parent with as many as 2 younger children. Once the building phase is completed a short period of fitting out will be required before Belmont House welcomes its first residents.

At the time of writing the Council has 18 households in temporary accommodation.

Of those in the Borough, 8 households are in Council flats on non-secure tenancies, 1 household is in a privately leased property and another is in a property leased from PA Housing. Unfortunately 8 households are being accommodated in Leicester City including 3 single people in Bed & Breakfast hotels, 4 families in shared housing (similar to hostels but termed 'houses in multiple occupation') and 1 in a self-contained flat paid for on a nightly spot purchase arrangement.

A Member seminar on the subject of homelessness was held in January 2018 with 12 Members in attendance. This was an opportunity for Members to better understand the key overarching themes relating to homelessness in the Borough.

3.6. **Gas Safety**

100% compliance to the end of February 2018 was achieved on 9th February 2018. Work is progressing well on Service / Safety checks due in March 2018.

The current four year contract with Liberty expires on 30 September 2018. The replacement contract has to be procured under EU regulations. It is proposed to procure the next contract through a pre-procured framework. The same approach was used four years ago when NHC (Northern Housing Consortium) were used.

Initial interviews were held with NHC and EEM (Efficiency East Midlands) on 14th and 15th February 2018 to commence the process of deciding which framework to use. At the time of writing, documentation setting out the services offered by NHC and EEM and details of the contracts / contractors already procured are being analysed.

In practice (whichever framework we decide to go with) a mini-competition usually takes place to tailor the service priorities, schedule of rates for additional works and contract to our specific needs, although technically a direct award is possible. The six month lead-in provides us adequate time to complete this work.

It is understood new regulations are about to be introduced amending existing gas safety legislation. Under these regulations the anniversary date for the annual gas safety check and service will be preserved when the service is carried out in months 10 and 11 following the previous service.

Under current regulations, services regularly carried out early result in an additional safety check and service being carried out somewhere after year six as the due date is brought forward each year. The new rules will therefore bring some reduction in the cost of this work in the long term.

3.7. **Empty Homes - Private Sector**

37 Newton Lane

Following the Committee's decision to seek a Compulsory Purchase Order in respect of this property the necessary steps have now been started in the process and a further report will be brought back to this Committee in due course

A full report regarding private sector homes will also be brought back to a future meeting of this Committee.

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

There is unfortunately nothing further to report on this matter. This is due to an unexpected reduction in resources in the Property Services Team from the beginning of January following sickness and subsequent resignation of an Officer engaged on a temporary contract that was not expected to expire until mid-May. This has impacted on the work programmes of other Officers in the team. The continued negotiations relate to a request to locate a back-up generator on site and delays are not impacting on rental income or other conditions of lease.

3.9. **Update on Capital Programme**

Details of the 2017/18 Capital Programme's progress is attached at **Appendix 2**.

At the last meeting of the Committee, Members asked for financial information related to these projects and a table showing outturn against budgets which is attached at **Appendix 3**.

Good progress is being made with the Programme and estimates upon which budgets have been set have generally proved accurate. The Draft Capital Programme for 2018/19 is attached at **Appendix 4**.

3.10. **Lightbulb and Disabled Facility Grants Update**

At the January meeting of the Committee, Members requested that a report be brought to the next Committee meeting to confirm the legal position in respect of the statutory duties inherited and ring-fencing of allocations regarding Disabled Facility Grants (DFG's).

DFG's are provided under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. An easy-to-read summary of the provisions of the Act - prepared by 'Foundations', a government funded body overseeing 200 Home Improvement Agencies and Handy Person providers - is attached at **Appendix 5**. This document helpfully summarises the statutory responsibility and service that Members will be familiar with the Council delivering for over 20 years.

These responsibilities remain unchanged but following an announcement in June 2013, the 2014 Care Act and the Better Care Fund (BCF) was set up and first operated during the 2015-16 and 2016-17 financial years. This brought together funding for health, social care, housing and other public services with a view to working together to deliver better quality care and more efficient use of available resources.

Appendix 6 is a Department of Health and Department for Communities and Local Government Policy Framework document '2017-19 Integration and Better Care Fund' which sets out the aims and expectations over this period. A copy of the full document is available on the Council's website at goo.gl/EW6aBb or in the Members' Room.

Whilst Members are invited to read the document in full, the key points for a District Council are that its statutory responsibility continues to be the delivery of adaptations to homes through DFG's. Funding, however, has been increased to enable this service to be joined up more effectively with other services. Page 5 of the document has a table showing DFG's as a specific funding stream and page 17, under the heading 'Disabled Facilities Grants', refers specifically to two-tier areas where DFG funding should be passed down (in full unless jointly agreed to do otherwise) to the District to enable it

to continue to deliver its statutory responsibilities.

There is reference in the same paragraph to the 'DFG Grant Determination Letter due to be issued by DCLG in April 2017' which is attached at **Appendix 7**.

In Leicestershire, DFG's are now being provided via Lightbulb and this has already met objectives of the BCF by providing a single point of access for a range of services and assessing these at the same time with the service user, through the housing MOT. With regard to the scope to fund other activities, it has been rather complicated as Lightbulb only went live on 01 October 2017 but at the end of January 2018 (just after the previous Committee meeting) a balancing up of likely expenditure was carried out and recommendations made as to how any available funds County-wide should be used. At that time, confirmation was also received of additional DFG funding that had to be spent by March 2018.

Appendix 8 is a report from Lightbulb showing forecast spending and additional funding by Authority together with recommendations as to what projects could be supported over and above DFG commitments. There is no option to retain underspend as this would have to be paid back. This report was considered by the Lightbulb Programme Board resulting in a documented final position that is attached at **Appendix 9**. Any commitment made is in terms of DFG's being funded first and the services only being able to continue while funding is available i.e. no top-up.

It is anticipated that over the 2018/19 cycle, there will be more scope to report on these initiatives in advance of decisions being taken as Lightbulb completes its first full year and the BCF goes into the second year of its two year policy framework.

3.11. **Housing Allocations Policy**

The Council's Housing Allocations Policy considers part-time work less than 16 hours a week as marginal and not sufficiently meaningful to create a local connection for the purposes of appearing on the Housing Register (known as the 'waiting list').

Officers are seeking consent to change the qualification around local connection to make particular reference to the 16 hour limit.

The revised wording would be as shown below at point 3. underlined:

The same policy also admits people to the Housing Register where they have a close relative who lives in the Borough and has done so for at least the past 5 years, where a meaningful relationship exists.

Officers are seeking consent to clarify 'meaningful relationship' to mean that significant support is given or received.

The proposed revised wording is shown below at point 4. underlined:

5.4.2. OWBC has decided to treat only those people with a local connection to the Borough as 'qualifying persons', a local connection is defined as:

1. Having lived in the Borough for the past 2 years;
2. Having lived in the Borough for a total of 3 or more years out of the past 5 years;
3. Currently working in the Borough either on a permanent or temporary contract running for a minimum of 12 months. Usually those working less than 16

- hours a week will be treated as non-qualifying;
4. Having parents, brothers, sisters or adult children (those aged 18 years or older) who are living in the Borough now and have done so for at least the past 5 years and where a meaningful relationship exists. Those applicants not providing significant support to the qualifying relative or receiving significant support from the qualifying relative will be treated as non-qualifying; or
 5. Other special circumstances (these will be exceptional).

Home-seekers without a local connection will be treated as non-qualifying.

Background Documents:

Appendix 1 - Draft Tenancy Agreement (March 2018)

Appendix 2 - Capital Programme Update 2017-18

Appendix 3 - Capital Programme - Outturn Against Budget (28-02-2018)

Appendix 4 - Draft Capital Programme 2018-19 (05-03-2018)

Appendix 5 - Foundations DFG Legislation Summary

Appendix 6 - Integration and BCF Policy Framework (2017-19) (accessible at goo.gl/EW6aBb)

Appendix 7 - DCLG Disabled Facilities Grant Determination Letter

Appendix 8 - Lightbulb Programme Board DFG Funding (February 2018)

Appendix 9 - Additional DFG Funding Options Paper (February 2018)

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