



<b>Service Delivery Committee</b>	<b>Tuesday, 29 January 2019</b>	<b>Matter for Information</b>
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**Report Title:** **Community Services Update (Q3 2018/19)**

**Report Author(s):** **Steve Nash (Housing Services Manager)**  
**John Stemp (Property Manager)**

<b>Purpose of Report:</b>	This report is to provide an update to the Committee regarding the delivery of community services for Quarter 3 of 2018-19.
<b>Report Summary:</b>	This report includes standing items on voids, homelessness, gas safety, capital projects and disabled facilities grants.
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	<b>That the contents of the report and appendix be noted.</b>
<b>Responsible Strategic Director, Head of Service and Officer Contact(s):</b>	<p>Stephen Hinds (Director of Finance &amp; Transformation)  (0116) 257 2681  <a href="mailto:stephen.hinds@oadby-wigston.gov.uk">stephen.hinds@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Adrian Thorpe (Head of Planning, Development and Regeneration)  (0116) 257 2645  <a href="mailto:adrian.thorpe@oadby-wigston.gov.uk">adrian.thorpe@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Steve Nash (Housing Services Manager)  (0116) 257 2662  <a href="mailto:steve.nash@oadby-wigston.gov.uk">steve.nash@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</a></p> <p>John Stemp (Property Manager)  (0116) 257 2726  <a href="mailto:john.stemp@oadby-wigston.gov.uk">john.stemp@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</a></p>
<b>Corporate Priorities:</b>	An Inclusive and Engaged Borough (CP1) Effective Service Provision (CP2) Green & Safe Places (CP4)
<b>Vision and Values:</b>	"A Strong Borough Together" (Vision) Accountability (V1) Customer Focus (V5)
<b>Report Implications:-</b>	
Legal:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Financial:	The financial implications are set out in the report.
Corporate Risk Management:	Decreasing Financial Resources (CR1) Effective Utilisation of Assets/Buildings (CR5) Regulatory Governance (CR6)
Equalities and Equalities Assessment (EA):	There are no implications arising from this report. EA not applicable.

Human Rights:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Health and Safety:	There are no implications arising from this report.
<b>Statutory Officers' Comments:-</b>	
Head of Paid Service:	The report is satisfactory.
Chief Finance Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
Monitoring Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
<b>Consultees:</b>	None.
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None.
<b>Appendices:</b>	<b>1.</b> HRA Capital Programme Q3 2018-19 Update

## **1. Voids**

- 1.1 This section reports on properties that have become empty (void) and which were brought back into use with a new tenant during October - December 2018. The target is to re-let the majority of properties within 20 working days (normal voids). Certain properties requiring major works and those being used as temporary accommodation for the homeless are not included within this target, although they are mentioned in the narrative below.
- 1.2 Quarter 3 performance was an average of 27 working days for the 7 normal voids. During this period, there was 1 major void (71 days) and 6 homeless re-lets. This decrease in performance was due in part to the letting of a hard-to-let sheltered bedsit in October 2018. If this property is removed from the figurework, the average drops to 21.5 days.

## **2. New Tenancy Agreement**

- 2.1 The preliminary notice has now been delivered to all Introductory and Secure Tenants in the Borough and a period of consultation closed on 25 January 2019. The notice included a copy of the existing tenancy agreement, the new proposed agreement and a table summarising the changes. Results of the consultation are now being considered by Officers with a final report due to be brought before this Committee on 19 March 2019. If approved, the resulting agreed tenancy agreement would come into force during May 2019.

## **3. Homelessness**

- 3.1 In 2017, the Council procured a replacement IT system for Choice-Based Lettings and Homelessness. The Choice-Based Lettings module has operated with few issues since November 2017. The Homelessness module called 'HOPE' has developed since the Council initially activated the product in December 2017. The Government's changing data return requirements called 'H-CLIC' and the Council's changing needs and improvements implemented by the IT supplier have brought with them considerable challenges for staff.
- 3.2 However, the Council now has a stable product and Officers have re-assessed data previously reported to Committee. In particular, the numbers of homeless applications received have been revised downwards and are as follows:

Quarter 1 (2018/19)	46 applications
Quarter 2 (2018/19)	63 applications

Quarter 3 (2018/19)	39 applications
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3.3 Officers remain concerned at the high numbers of households in all forms of temporary accommodation and are working on the preparation of a Strategy to identify the most appropriate mechanisms for the Council to secure appropriate property to meet its needs and how this can be achieved moving forward.

3.4 There are currently 24 households in temporary accommodation comprising:

13	The Council's own stock (note: use of the Council's own housing stock is considered to be a temporary measure pending securing alternative options for providing temporary accommodation).
1	A property on a long-lease from Paragon Asra (PA) Housing.
5	Bed & Breakfast (B&B).
4	Council-owned Belmont House Hostel (134 Station Road, Wigston)
1	Privately leased property.

3.5 Since 1 April 2018, a total of 45 households have been rehoused through the Housing Register which include 31 to Council properties and 14 to Housing Association homes. Of the Council's properties, 18 were vacancies for older people. As such the number of 'general needs' homes which are in greatest demand for homeless households have been just 27.

3.6 In 2016/17, due to the addition of 40 new affordable homes at the Wright Place development in South Wigston, there were 147 general needs vacancies. The number of general vacancies was 53 in 2017/18, with the total for 2018/19 at 27 to date.

3.7 In future years, the Council's new Local Plan sets out to add significantly to the number of new affordable homes in the Borough. During the 12 years from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2031, a minimum of 500 additional affordable homes will be provided. 420 of these homes will be provided on the larger 'Direction for Growth' sites. This equates to an average of 40 additional affordable homes per year, although fewer are likely to come forward in the earlier years with the majority expected to come forward from 2022 onwards.

#### **4. Gas Safety**

4.1 In terms of servicing, 100% compliance was achieved to 31 December 2018.

#### **5. Repairs Service**

5.1 The budget outturn for responsive repairs for the nine-months until 31 December 2018 was £206,815 against a budget of £221,250.

#### **6. Capital Programme Update**

6.1 As reported at the last Committee meeting, progress with the Capital Programme has fallen behind during the first three quarters of 2018/19. This was in part attributed to the team responsible for delivering the capital programme running with one less member of staff leading to resource having to be focused on responsive repairs. The team is now back to full capacity and, in addition, extra staff resource has been brought in to focus specifically on delivering the capital programme. Neil Barks started in this role during December 2018.

6.2 An update report detailed progress made by the end of quarter 3 and progress planned

during quarter 4 and beyond is attached at **Appendix 1**. This includes reference to work already undertaken by Neil Barks showing that the Capital Programme is now on track with the vast majority of the budget to be spent or committed by the end of quarter 4, although delivery of some of the schemes is projected to run into 2019/20.

## **7. Lightbulb Update (Disabled Facilities Grants and Related Services)**

7.1 As Members are aware from when Lightbulb colleagues presented to Full Council last year, Lightbulb has committed to providing all partners with a 'performance dashboard' containing key performance information that can regularly be reported to Members. Unfortunately, Lightbulb has experienced consistent problems in being able to extract this information from their electronic records. However, it is now expected that a full performance dashboard will be available in quarter 4.

7.2 In the interim, Lightbulb has provided the following statistics relevant to the Borough:

- In terms of processing times for DFG's, end-to-end times have reduced from approximately 34-days pre-Lightbulb to 26 days post-Lightbulb
- The total Disability Facilities Grant for 2018/19 is £376,000. As of the end of December 2018, the project has spent £251,000 on completed and work in progress DFGs, with an additional £202,000 worth of work scheduled. Central Government has allocated additional funding to the Borough Council to meet the cost of the additional works.

## **8. Empty Property and Problem Sites Working Group**

8.1 Council Tax records indicate that there are 101 properties (ignoring exclusions) that have been vacant for more than six-months, which represents 0.43% of the total housing stock in the Borough. Whilst the level of vacancy compares favourably to the East Midlands and England averages (0.9% and 0.85% respectively), 101 vacant properties are clearly wasted assets. Focussing on very long-term vacant property, there are 53 properties which have been vacant for more than 1-year (ignoring exclusions). Of those, 21 have been empty for more than 3-years and 11 for more than 5-years. The figure of 53 houses is over one-third of our annual housing delivery target (148) so this is an area which needs to be tackled.

8.2 Non-Domestic Rates records reveal that there are 87 non-domestic properties which are vacant: of those, 75 have been vacant for more than 6-months. Some of these will have economic development value, some may well be problem sites and others may present opportunities for regeneration or development.

8.3 In addition to the sites noted above, there are other problem buildings which may not appear on Council records as the condition of them means that they have been taken out of Rating or Council Tax and also long-term problem sites such as 37 Newton Lane.

8.4 Whilst work has previously been undertaken around the Council to consider and resolve vacant property and problem sites, this was largely uncoordinated which has led to matters being progressed up to a point of the individual Officer's influence or expertise and then moved no further forward.

8.5 A cross-service working group has now been established to gather intelligence and prepare and deliver on property action plans with the aim of bringing individual buildings and sites back into beneficial use, whether residential or non-residential. The group's remit is set out below and the first meeting took place on 15 January 2019.

- Gather intelligence about vacant buildings, sites and their owners;
- To agree action plans for each problem site and as far as possible deliver the individual aspects of the plan (n.b. noting that funding will be key here);

- To review the Empty Homes Strategy and processes and update as necessary;
- To consider a mirror strategy for vacant non-domestic buildings and sites;
- Look at funding opportunities to support required actions, including Compulsory Purchase Order, Council acquisition, Council funding to support owners (i.e. grant/loan), bringing property into housing stock; and
- To provide update reports to Committee, as necessary.