

Thurrock - An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The meeting will be held at 7.00 pm on 19 January 2021

Due to government guidance on social-distancing and COVID-19 virus the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 19 January 2021 will not be open to members of the public and press to physically attend. The press and public will be able to watch the meeting live online at the following link:

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Membership:

Councillors Luke Spillman (Chair), Chris Baker (Vice-Chair), Qaisar Abbas, Colin Churchman, Joycelyn Redsell and Lynn Worrall

Lynn Mansfield, Housing Tenant Representative

Substitutes:

Councillors Daniel Chukwu, Sara Muldowney and Terry Piccolo

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 17 November 2020.	
3 Urgent Items	
To receive additional items that the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.	

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Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

Please contact Wendy Le, Senior Democratic Services Officer by sending an email to Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

Agenda published on: **11 January 2021**

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DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Breaching those parts identified as a pecuniary interest is potentially a criminal offence

Helpful Reminders for Members

- *Is your register of interests up to date?*
- *In particular have you declared to the Monitoring Officer all disclosable pecuniary interests?*
- *Have you checked the register to ensure that they have been recorded correctly?*

When should you declare an interest *at a meeting*?

- **What matters are being discussed at the meeting?** (including Council, Cabinet, Committees, Subs, Joint Committees and Joint Subs); or
- If you are a Cabinet Member making decisions other than in Cabinet **what matter is before you for single member decision?**



Does the business to be transacted at the meeting

- relate to; or
- likely to affect

any of your registered interests and in particular any of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests?

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

- your spouse or civil partner's
- a person you are living with as husband/ wife
- a person you are living with as if you were civil partners

where you are aware that this other person has the interest.

A detailed description of a disclosable pecuniary interest is included in the Members Code of Conduct at Chapter 7 of the Constitution. **Please seek advice from the Monitoring Officer about disclosable pecuniary interests.**

What is a Non-Pecuniary interest? – this is an interest which is not pecuniary (as defined) but is nonetheless so significant that a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard to be so significant that it would materially impact upon your judgement of the public interest.

Pecuniary

If the interest is not already in the register you must (unless the interest has been agreed by the Monitoring Officer to be sensitive) disclose the existence and nature of the interest to the meeting

If the Interest is not entered in the register and is not the subject of a pending notification you must within 28 days notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest for inclusion in the register

Unless you have received dispensation upon previous application from the Monitoring Officer, you must:

- **Not participate or participate further in any discussion of the matter at a meeting;**
- **Not participate in any vote or further vote taken at the meeting; and**
- **leave the room while the item is being considered/voted upon**

If you are a Cabinet Member you may make arrangements for the matter to be dealt with by a third person but take no further steps

Non- pecuniary

Declare the nature and extent of your interest including enough detail to allow a member of the public to understand its nature



You may participate and vote in the usual way but you should seek advice on Predetermination and Bias from the Monitoring Officer.

Our Vision and Priorities for Thurrock

An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future.

1. **People** – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay
 - High quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time
 - Build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing
 - Communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together

2. **Place** – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future
 - Roads, houses and public spaces that connect people and places
 - Clean environments that everyone has reason to take pride in
 - Fewer public buildings with better services

3. **Prosperity** – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations
 - Attractive opportunities for businesses and investors to enhance the local economy
 - Vocational and academic education, skills and job opportunities for all
 - Commercial, entrepreneurial and connected public services

Minutes of the Meeting of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 November 2020 at 7.00 pm

- Present:** Councillors Luke Spillman (Chair), Chris Baker (Vice-Chair), Qaisar Abbas, Joycelyn Redsell and Lynn Worrall
- Lynn Mansfield, Housing Tenant Representative
- Apologies:** Councillor Colin Churchman
- In attendance:** Councillor Victoria Holloway, Ward Councillor for West Thurrock and South Stifford
Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health
Andrew Millard, Director of Place
Carol Hinvest, Assistant Director of Housing
David Moore, Interim Assistant Director of Place Delivery
Dulal Ahmed, Housing Enforcement Manager
Andrew Debnam, Housing Development Project Manager
Ryan Farmer, Housing Strategy and Quality Manager
Mike Jones, Management Accountant
Wendy Le, Democratic Services Officer
-

Before the start of the meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being live streamed and recorded, with the video recording to be made available on the Council's website.

18. Minutes

The minutes of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9 September 2020 were approved as a true and correct record.

19. Urgent Items

There were no items of urgent business.

The Committee gave praise to Heather Gunn, Strategic Lead for Housing Operations, who was retiring at the end of the month. Members and Officers commended Heather Gunn for her 38 years of hard work and efforts at Thurrock Council which had been a great help to Members, Officers and residents.

20. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

21. Licensing Houses of Multiple Occupation

The report on pages 17 – 28 was presented by Dulal Ahmed.

The Chair questioned the process of identifying the 2,738 Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) for investigation; the number of suitable and unsuitable HMOs in Thurrock; and whether there was a process in which extra powers could be given to the service similar to other Local Authorities (LAs) as outlined in paragraph 6.3. Dulal Ahmed explained that 2,738 HMOs were estimated through a Property Identification Exercise that looked at council tax records, parking permits and electoral registers which showed names of more than three people living within a property. East Tilbury and South Ockendon showed a lower number of licensed HMOs than Grays, Aveley and Purfleet-on-Thames. The service aimed to visit properties for investigation once lockdown restrictions eased. A selective licensing property identification exercise would also be undertaken for further checks on corporate ownership dwellings purchased in the Borough for shared housing and privately rented.

(Clerk's note – the Chair allowed other Committee Members to ask questions before the rest of his questions were answered.)

Councillor Redsell pointed out that not every person in a household registered on the electoral register and asked how often were HMOs visited to check the number of people living there. Dulal Ahmed answered that it was a legal requirement for anyone over the age of 18 to register on the electoral roll and a separate team in the Council managed this. He said that the electoral register had been reliable in identifying unlicensed HMOs.

Councillor Worrall questioned why the Council did not include the building of HMOs within the Local Plan as this would allow the Council to manage their HMOs. She also said that HMOs were needed for a wider age group that included middle aged people too. Dulal Ahmed explained that the service was working closely with the Children's Services Team on the Head Start Programme to procure HMOs in the Borough for young care leavers. Andrew Millard added that the consultation on the Local Plan would provide data and evidence to ensure that the right mix of housing was identified to meet the demands and needs within the Borough.

The Committee questioned why there were only 147 licensed HMOs and if a target, such as a KPI, had been set for the number of properties to be licensed to enable the assessment of the service. Dulal Ahmed answered that the law on HMOs had changed in October 2019 to include properties that had 5 unrelated people sharing an entire house/flat which would require a license. Since the change, the service had published the landlord's licensing requirement and the Private Housing Team was expanded to meet the level of this demand too. Over the last three years, the service had licensed 142 properties compared to five in 2017/18. Carol Hinvest said that a target could be set for the service at the start of the next financial year.

The Committee raised concerns on the lack of supervision over 16 year olds living in HMOs and that more information on HMOs should be provided to Ward Councillors. The Committee also questioned what the income from

licensing fees and fines were used for and the number of staff within the team to manage HMOs. Officers explained that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government awarded private housing funding to inspect young care leaver homes to ensure that these properties and children were safe. Other LAs were placing children in HMO care homes within Thurrock and the Private Housing Team wanted to ensure a better working partnership with LAs on this and also to improve housing conditions for young care leavers. The income from licensing fees and fines were ring fenced and invested back into the service to help maintain and improve the service's work and there were currently 12 staff members in the private housing team.

RESOLVED:

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted and commented on the report.

22. Fees and Charges Pricing Strategy 2021/22

The report on pages 29 – 40 was presented by Dulal Ahmed.

The Committee questioned why fees for travellers' sites had increased and sought clarification on selective licensing. The Committee requested detail on the mobile homes charges which would be provided by email. Officers explained that the 2.97% fee increase in travellers' sites was for the maintenance of the sites, repairs and engagement service with tenants. Selective licensing was a new scheme to be introduced by the Council that would apply to licensing all private rented properties in Thurrock and not just HMOs.

Councillor Worrall said that carbon monoxide alarms had to be installed in rented private homes by landlords and HMOs but questioned why this was not a requirement in social homes. Carol Hinvest explained that this was the law for the private housing sector but a recent White Paper Bill was proposing to equalise this in social homes as well. The Council had been installing carbon monoxide alarms in their tenants' homes since Councillor Worrall had raised this issue last year and would provide an update on this progress.

RESOLVED:

That Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the revised fees, including those no longer applicable, and that Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee comment on the proposals currently being considered within the remit of this committee.

23. Housing Development Programme Update

The report on pages 41 – 48 was presented by David Moore.

The Committee sought more detail on the Richmond Road site as it had recently been announced that the Thurrock Adult Community College (TACC)

would be closed and asked where the new site for the TACC would be. Officers were not involved with where the TACC would be situated following its closure on Richmond Road that had been decided after the report had been written. Options for the Richmond Road site was currently being explored with architects and capacity and types of housing were being considered. Officers would look into the designs of the site and email an update to Members. The planning application for the site was in its advanced stages and could potentially be submitted at the end of the year.

The Committee mentioned recent developments in Chadwell St Mary and Grays Riverside had made improvements to the areas and the designs were modern. The Chadwell St Mary site had a good open space design which should be considered in future developments.

RESOLVED:

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee were asked to note progress on the list of housing development sites to be taken forward for further detailed work, involving engagement with stakeholders and communities.

24. Housing Development Delivery Approach

The report on pages 49 – 56 was presented by Andrew Millard.

The Chair sought details on the current situation of Thurrock Regeneration Limited (TRL) and how confident the service was in achieving 32,000 homes by the end of the Local Plan period. Andrew Millard explained that TRL currently had no Board of Directors and there was a proposal to bring forward the appointment of new Directors and potential housing options. He said that the figure of 32,000 homes had been identified through the assessment of the Borough's housing needs. The Council's housing delivery rates have been an average of around 500 units per annum for the past 10 years. There were two factors that would significantly increase the Council's ability to deliver the 32,000 homes with one being the allocation new housing sites through the review of the Local Plan. The other factor was the market conditions, which had been strong prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was recognised that Thurrock was a great place to live and that its place-making ambitions led the way in defining what good quality place making could be through the work that the Council was already leading on.

The Committee highlighted the importance of infrastructure and the possibility of building another village or rebuilding parts of Thurrock. It was important that the service did not overbuild which could worsen the infrastructure of the Borough with too many people and vehicles. Andrew Millard answered that the service was not just focusing on the delivery of new homes but also building on great places that would enhance people's wellbeing. New developments had to be infrastructure led as well as high quality and infrastructure had to be able to accommodate new growth and address

existing issues. Transport was important in this as well and a new Transport Strategy was being progressed alongside the new Local Plan.

Councillor Worrall sought more details on what the conflict of interests were that caused the disbandment of the Board of Directors at TRL and questioned whether there were issues in TRL's accounts. She also asked how Belmont Road would be developed as there had been issues on the site previously and asked for clarification on recommendation 1.2. Andrew Millard explained that the previous TRL Directors were concerned about being Council Officers and TRL Directors at the same time but they had not thought that TRL was not viable. The report considered how TRL could be rejuvenated as part of the Housing Delivery Programme. Officers were not aware of any issues in the TRL accounts. With the Belmont Road site, this was owned by TRL and had been granted planning permission with conditions attached. On recommendation 1.2, Officers explained that some schemes would require a formal decision of the Council to be able to progress but the Committee would be kept engaged.

The Committee discussed the Culver Centre site and questioned why the Council was not developing the site; why the site was going through a planning application first as Members thought the Council was considering selling the land; and what the next step would be for the site after the planning application and whether further information would be brought back to the Committee. The Vice-Chair felt that the Council should develop the site for social housing for Thurrock's residents.

Officers explained that no formal decisions had been made on the Culver Centre site yet and a planning application would help to identify options for the site to enable a decision to be made. The site was going through a planning application first before going to Full Council because a planning application would provide a greater assessment of the value of the site. The Committee would continue to receive updates on the site as part of the Housing Development Programme Updates. The Housing Delivery Team did not have the capacity to develop the Culver Centre site as the team was already delivering an ambitious Housing Delivery Programme as highlighted in the previous Agenda item.

RESOLVED:

It was recommended that Members of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1.1 Noted and commented on the proposals to adopt a mixed approach to Housing Development Delivery, in order to improve the Council's capacity to increase its delivery rate.**
- 1.2 Noted that potential schemes will be brought forward for approval in line with the Council's constitution in due course.**

25. HRA Rent Setting Process

The report on pages 57 – 64 was presented by Mike Jones.

The Chair said that he had supported the rent freeze for the past few years but agreed that the rent increase now was necessary as there was a lack of funds in the Council and was incurring more expenses which had been the case even before the pandemic. Councillor Redsell agreed and went on to highlight issues in the rent increase for garages as nothing was being done to improve the conditions of garages. Carol Hinvest said that the service was spending more money on garages which was highlighted in the table in paragraph 6.3.

Referring to paragraph 3.4, Councillor Worrall raised concerns over the statement of 'The Council will try to ensure that it does not set the level of rent and service charge above the Local Housing Allowance level.' She was concerned that not all residents would be supported particularly those who fell into difficult situations. Mike Jones explained that the HRA was set within the local housing allowance but that any housing development programme in the HRA would have to meet the criteria of being affordable within the local housing allowance. The Chair commented that the statement referred to houses within the HRA that were not on social rents but was set at an affordable rent. He noted that the rent would always be affordable and said that Officers should consider service charges on HRA properties as most Councillors had issues with these. Councillor Worrall said that she wanted the service to ensure that Thurrock would never go down the route of not supporting a resident who fell on hard times.

The Committee questioned how residents engaged in the HRA process to which Officers explained that the service had undertaken an online engagement process which had seen over 400 people engaged online. The service had worked with other teams in the Council to ensure that the service were informed of any phone calls from residents in relation to rent and the service planned to put together a video to reach residents. The Committee felt phone calls to residents were needed as some residents could not go online to engage in the process.

Councillor Abbas opposed the rent increases especially for this year due to the pandemic. He sought clarification on why rent had increased for garages to which Carol Hinvest explained that there had been a large increase in the number of people renting garages.

RESOLVED:

That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented on the proposal for engagement on rent increases within the Housing Revenue Account.

26. Automatic Gates

The report on pages 65 – 74 was presented by Carol Hinvest.

The Chair invited Councillor Holloway to ask her questions.

Councillor Holloway asked her residents had been given the option to keep the gates (at Rookery Court) and not be charged to which Carol Hinvest confirmed that they had not.

Councillor Holloway said that the Portfolio Holder for Housing had announced at Full Council that no decision had been made on charging elderly residents for the gates (Rookery Court) but she had later received correspondence that the charge had been agreed and would be implemented in the new financial year. She sought clarification on this. Roger Harris explained that the full consultation on all the sites had not yet been completed. Once consultation was completed, this would be discussed with the Portfolio Holder and a decision would be made based on the consultation feedback and the balance of spend within the HRA but there would be a service charge for the Rookery. The charges would potentially be confirmed in the New Year and would not come into effect until 1 April 2021.

Councillor Holloway noted that the report highlighted no security issues (for Rookery Court) and questioned whether this had been looked at during the first lockdown. She said that there was a school opposite (to Rookery Court) and that there were additional security issues. Carol Hinvest explained that the service had looked at reported incidents over the whole of last year and part of the first lockdown.

Councillor Holloway sought clarification on the number of gates to be removed. She also noted that no consultation had taken place with residents of Alexandra Court and that the gates would be removed which would bring the total gates cost down to around £90,400. She felt that this was small amount to ask for in the HRA budget of £50 million to keep the gates in place to protect Thurrock's elderly residents.

Carol Hinvest explained that Alexandra Court would be decommissioned as a sheltered housing scheme and therefore the Council had not consulted residents as it would have been disingenuous to consult with them on a gate to a complex that would be decommissioned. She clarified that the number of gates to be removed, not including Alexandra Court, were five. Roger Harris explained that choices and priorities had to be made in the HRA in a number of areas and that residents in Rookery Court had been consulted who were prepared to pay the service charges for the gates to remain. The issue of the gates would be discussed with the Portfolio Holder. Councillor Holloway did not feel her residents were given a choice in the service charges for the gates (at Rookery Court) and that they were not given any options but to pay or have the gates removed.

The Chair questioned what the potential loss would be if money in the HRA was spent on the gates; if the gates were providing genuine security to residents; and if the service was satisfied that the consultation had received enough good quality responses to enable them to reach their decisions.

Officers explained that the £50 million budget was for all the assets within the HRA and recent spends on projects included a new communal and external decorating programme which was important to all residents and an assisted decorating programme for sheltered housing residents and for residents in general needs who could not do their own internal decorating. The service was also spending more money on door entry systems as this was a priority of residents. The service would not remove gates if there was a chance that it would seriously increase risks of crime to their residents. Officers felt enough responses to the consultation had been received as letters had been sent out, residents had been called and were generally called on a regular basis.

Councillor Worrall questioned whether the cost of the gates could have been made under another budget (she had noted in the earlier report that the budget for Sheltered Accommodation Improvements was zero). She also noted paragraph 5.2 and felt that the gates should be paid for within the HRA which residents would agree with. She was concerned that HRA money could be allocated for garages, which only a small percentage of people also used, but could not be allocated to the gates in sheltered housing complexes to protect Thurrock's elderly residents. She also raised concerns on the removal of gates from some sheltered complexes which would enable people to park inside the complexes and cause issues of security to elderly residents. The Chair said that the budget for garages differed to the gates for sheltered accommodation as garages were charged for people privately renting these.

Carol Hinvest answered that the programme of works that Councillor Worrall raised was a specific programme of works which was under Ramps and Doors Entry projects where push buttons would be installed and ramps installed for elderly residents to enable them to continue their independent living. This would also ensure that all sheltered housing blocks in Thurrock would be brought up to standards and compliant with the Equality Act. Roger Harris added that residents on housing benefit or universal credit would not pay for the service charge introduced for Rookery Court. He went on to say that the Committee's comments would be fed back to the Portfolio Holder.

The Committee suggested that the service look into other options for maintaining the gates such as sponsorship from businesses and sought clarification on whether the gates would be electronic. The Committee commented that the maintenance of the gates should have been within the budget for repairs if these had been broken for a while. The Committee sought reassurance that removing the gates would not increase risk to the elderly residents and that they had been appropriately notified of the service charge to remaining gates.

Officers answered that the gates would be electronic as push gates were too heavy to be pushed by increasingly frail residents and would require a change in the complex layout for these type of gates. Residents had been consulted and notified on the service charges for the remaining gates with the exception of Alexandra Court which is being decommissioned and Benyon who would be consulted soon.

The Committee agreed to suspend standing orders at 9.24pm to enable all the items on the Agenda to be completed.

RESOLVED:

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the proposals to:

- 1.1 Consult with residents regarding the ongoing requirement of automated gates on applicable sites and, if the consensus is that the gates remain, the subsequent implementation of a service charge.**
- 1.2 Remove gates which are situated at several high rise sites where new parking restrictions no longer require gates to control parking.**
- 1.3 Remove gates at specified Sheltered Housing complexes which do not provide additional security or parking deterrent benefits due to style and location if residents do not support keeping them.**
- 1.4 The final decision to be made by the Corporate Director, Adults, Housing and Health in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Housing.**

27. Sheltered Housing Decommissioning - Alexandra Road and Dunlop Road

The report on pages 75 – 82 was presented by Ryan Farmer.

The Committee thought the report was good and that Alexandra Court had provided a good service to its elderly residents for a number of years. More details were sought on the local lettings plan; why Alexandra Court was chosen over Crown Court; if Alexandra Court would be used to house homeless residents; and whether two bed properties would be built on the site.

Carol Hinvest explained that Crown Court was more amenable to the refurbishment of accessibility works that was needed whereas Alexandra Court was not because of its design. With the local lettings plan, what would not be let to current residents in Alexandra Court would be the four two bedroom flats in the Calcutta Road development and needs would be assessed accordingly across the Borough. Most residents in Alexandra Court would move to Beaconsfield Place and some had expressed a preference to move to other parts of the Borough that was close to family members. Once a block was empty in Alexandra Court, homeless residents would be housed there. Sheltered and homeless residents would not be mixed in one block. There would be two bed properties built on the site and would be balanced

with a mix of housing types of properties which would be assessed and fed through the planning process.

RESOLVED:

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted and commented on:

- 1.1. the proposal to decommission the Sheltered Housing properties at Alexandra Road and Dunlop Road in Tilbury.**
- 1.2. the proposal to implement a local lettings plan for the new housing development for older people at Calcutta Road which gives priority to tenants affected by the above proposed decommissioning.**

28. Housing Service COVID-19 Financial Update

The report on pages 83 – 88 was presented by Carol Hinvest.

The Committee questioned what the areas of concern were for the service; the number of people in Bed and Breakfasts (B&Bs); and whether the government funding was enough for the Council to cover the homeless budget.

Officers said that the concerns were in regards to the furlough scheme that would not materialise until it ended in March 2021. There were concerns in the private rented sector with potential evictions that would not happen until 11 January 2021 which could potentially put a pressure on the service's temporary accommodation needs. Officers would provide the number of people in B&Bs through email. It was the service's aim to ensure that people were not placed in B&Bs for long periods of time and to help them find accommodation although it was difficult when there was a lack of availability in privately rented accommodations which had a low turnover. Some of the homeless residents placed there since the start of the pandemic had moved on and some had received housing offers, new homeless residents had been picked up during this time as well. Officers confirmed that the government funding was enough for the Council to cover the homeless budget.

RESOLVED:

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted and commented on the contents of this update report.

29. Work Programme

An update regarding the next steps of the Housing Delivery Approach and TRL would be incorporated into the Housing Development Programme Update due on 19 January 2021.

The meeting finished at 10.02 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**

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19 January 2021	ITEM: 5
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Tenant Satisfaction Survey Results and Initial Action Plan	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A
Report of: Chris Seman – Intelligence and Performance Manager	
Accountable Assistant Director: Carol Hinvest – Assistant Director of Housing	
Accountable Director: Roger Harris – Corporate Director Adults, Housing and Health.	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

An overview of the results of the tenant satisfaction survey results is provided in addition to a summary overview of the actions which have been identified so far from the results of the survey. The results and action plan for the leasehold version of the survey will be brought to the committee in March 2021.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Committee notes and comments on the report.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Starting at the end of July 2020 and ending at the beginning of October 2020, a full postal tenant satisfaction survey was undertaken by our service provider, KWEST Research Ltd, which was sent to every tenant. The project used a multi-mode approach, comprising a postal census survey targeting all of the Council's tenant households, accompanied by email invitations and an online version to broaden survey reach and accessibility.

2.2 The questionnaire was designed in accordance with HouseMark's STAR guidance and includes a selection of STAR questions, alongside additional question-sets that cover specific areas of interest to the Council.

2.3 At the end of the data collection period a total of 2,560 tenant responses had been received representing a response rate of 26%. 18% of responses were completed online with the remainder returned by post. 2,560 responses provides excellent overall data accuracy of $\pm 1.7\%$ for the overall tenant results, allowing findings to be used with confidence. An accuracy level of $\pm 1.7\%$ means that if 50% of respondents answer "yes" to a yes/no question,

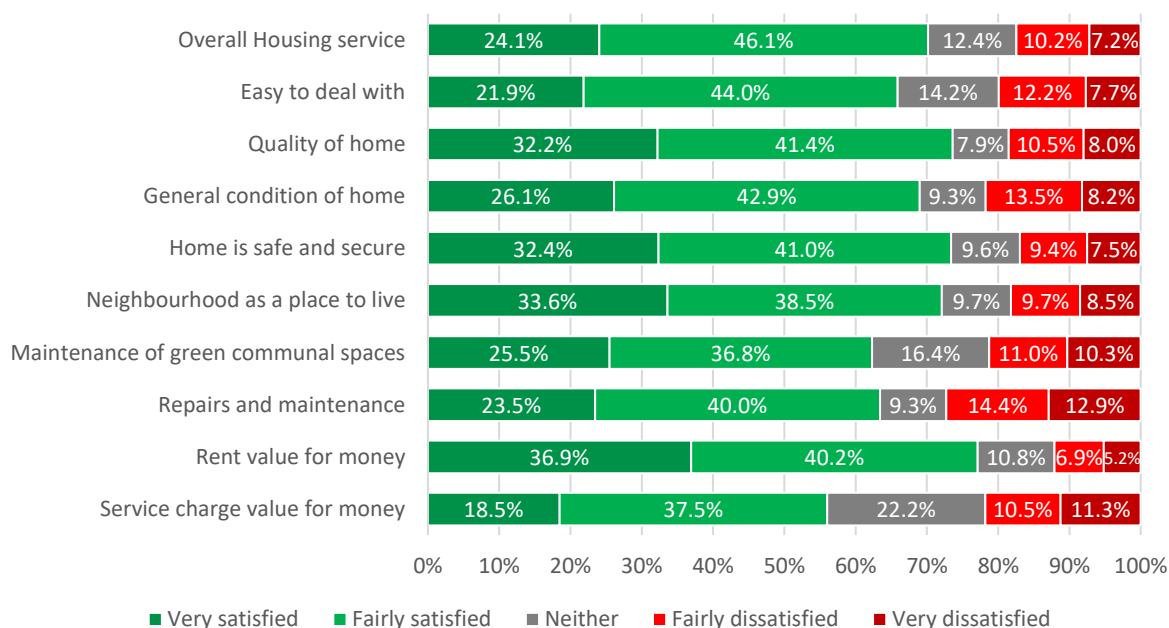
then we know that between 48.3% and 51.7% of all households would give the same response, including those who did not complete a survey questionnaire.

3. Results

3.1 As part of the survey, a series of satisfaction questions were included to ascertain tenants' views of the key service areas provided by Housing. It is important to note that the bulk of responses were received between August and September 2020, not long after the coronavirus lockdown which resulted in a reduction in services provided by the Council.

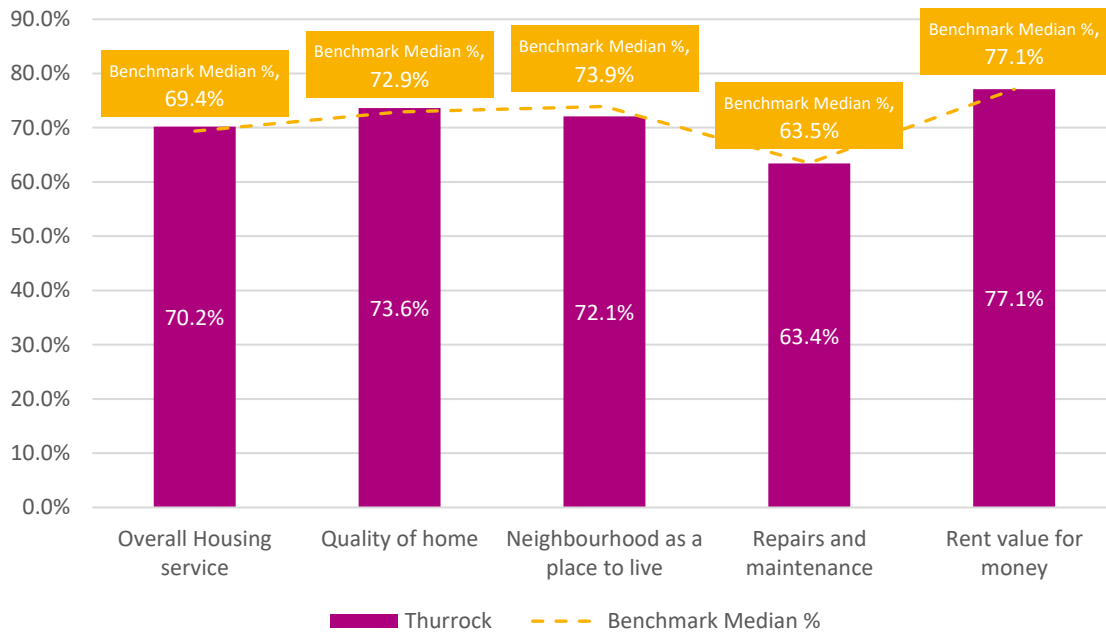
The survey results provide confirmation that the homes and services provided by the Council are meeting the needs of the majority of residents. This is demonstrated by high proportions of residents expressing satisfaction with many key service areas including rent value for money, quality of home, home is safe and secure, neighbourhoods as a place to live and the overall Housing service.

Satisfaction with Housing and services



Through Housemark, we are able to benchmark Thurrock's results against other comparable local authorities and ALMOs on the five core questions which are part of this section. The organisations within Thurrock's regional peer group include 40 organisations in Thurrock's geographical vicinity including Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point, Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Newham and Redbridge amongst 33 others. The below chart shows how Thurrock's results compare with this peer group.

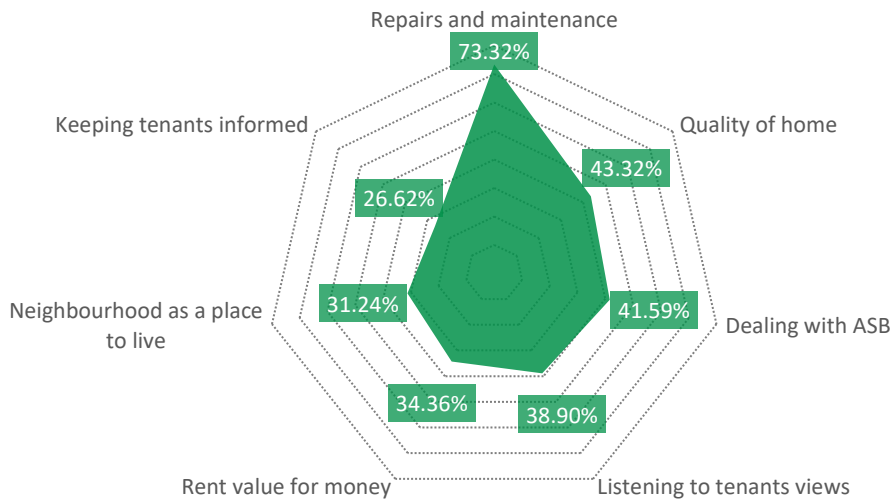
Core Questions - Benchmark Comparisons



The benchmarking results demonstrate that the Housing service is performing well across all core questions with satisfaction with the overall Housing service and quality of home exceeding the benchmark median, satisfaction with rent value for money equal to the benchmark median and satisfaction with repairs and maintenance and neighbourhood as a place to live slightly below the benchmark median.

- 3.2 An important objective when undertaking the survey was to obtain tenant feedback on the most important services delivered by the Council. When asked to identify which services were their top priority, residents' responses align with the top priorities reported by tenants in research throughout the social housing sector.

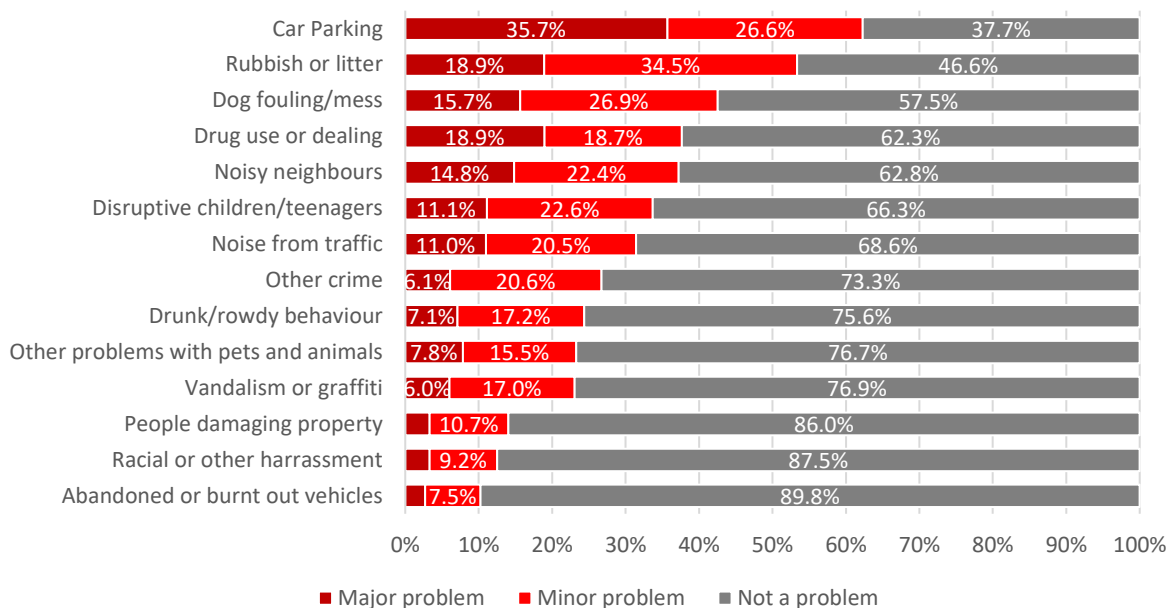
Tenant Service Priorities



The results from this question confirms that repairs and maintenance is the highest priority for tenants by a wide margin with 73.32% of tenants indicating this was one of their priorities, followed by quality of home at 43.32% and dealing with ASB at 41.59%.

3.3 The survey also asked residents about problems in their area which can have an impact on tenant’s perception of their neighbourhood as a place to live. Tenants were asked to indicate whether each problem in a list was a major problem, a minor problem or not a problem. Full details of the borough wide neighbourhood problems is shown in the chart below.

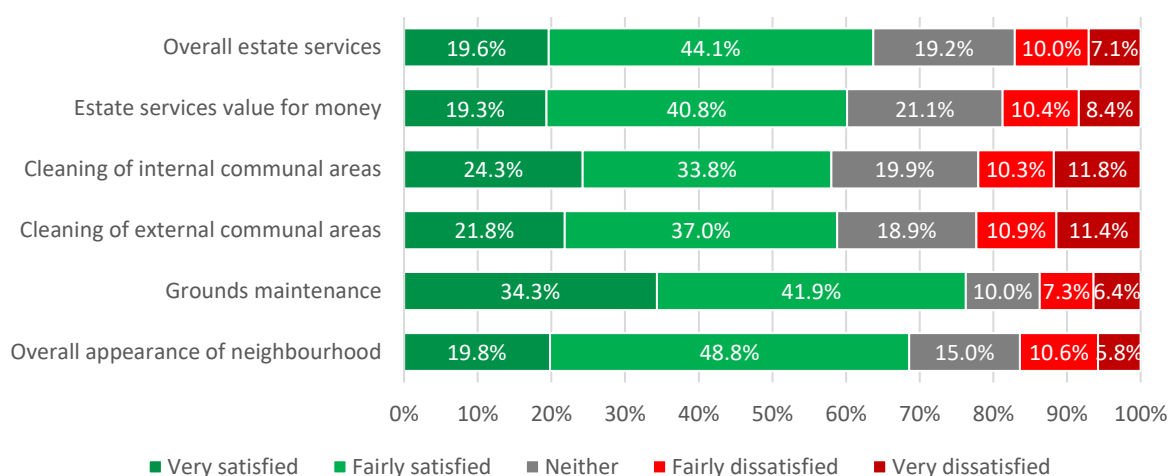
Neighbourhood Problems



The most common neighbourhood problems indicated by tenants as part of the survey are car parking, rubbish and litter and dog fouling and mess. The resulting data from this question enables us to identify specific neighbourhood problems down to area, neighbourhood or even street level.

3.4 Another section of the survey asked tenants to feed back their views on the estate services function of Housing. Tenants were asked to indicate their satisfaction levels with six measures, the results of which are shown in the chart below.

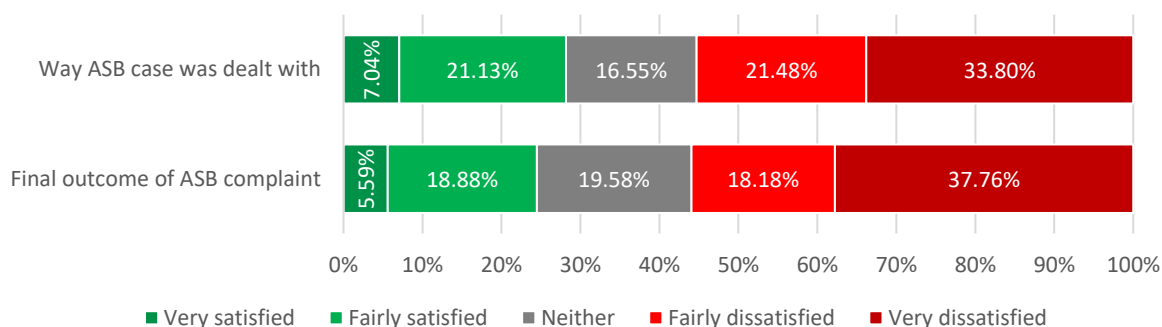
Satisfaction with estate services



The results show high levels of satisfaction with the grounds maintenance service and moderate levels of satisfaction with all other measures.

3.5 Tenants were asked to indicate whether they had reported an anti-social behaviour issue in the last 12 months and to provide their feedback on their experience if they had. Overall, 12% of tenants who responded to the survey said they have reported anti-social behaviour to Housing in the last year. The results for this section are shown in the chart below.

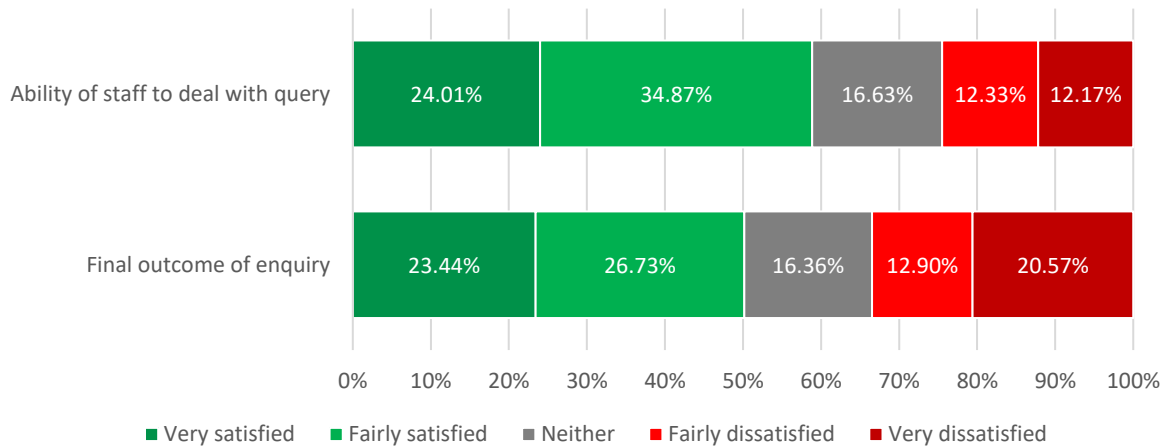
Satisfaction with ASB case handling



Tenants' responses to this question show low levels of satisfaction amongst the cohort of tenants who have reported anti-social behaviour in the last year with the way their case was dealt with and the final outcome of their complaint. As part of this section of the survey, 41% of tenants indicated that they found it difficult to report their ASB complaint and 62% of tenants indicated that they would be willing to report ASB issues in the future.

3.6 Similarly, tenants were also asked to indicate whether they had contacted the Housing department in the last 12 months and to provide feedback on their experience if they had. 50.7% of respondents indicated that they had contacted the Housing department in the last year. The results from this section are shown in the charts below.

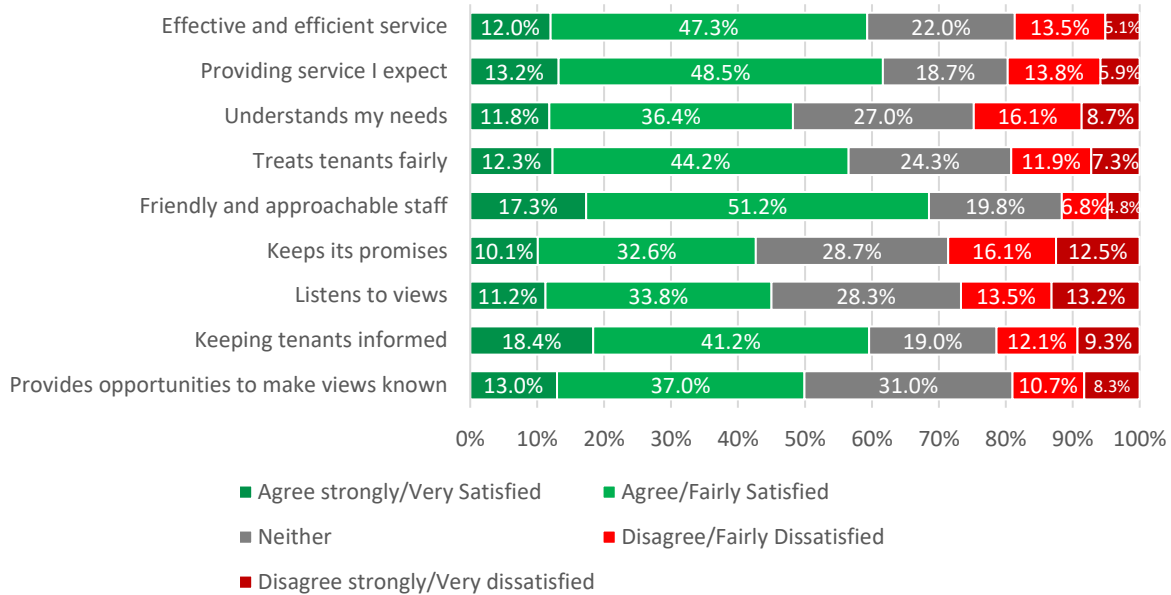
Contact and communications



The results from this section of the survey show moderate tenant satisfaction levels with the ability of staff to deal with enquiries and with the final outcome of the enquiries. 63% of tenants said that their query was answered in a reasonable timescale and 63% of tenants found the staff member they contacted helpful. However 39% of tenants said that they found it difficult to get in contact with the right person within the Housing service.

3.7 The survey also contained a list of landlord characteristics from Housemark's STAR question library. Tenants were asked to either indicate whether they agree or disagree with the measures included in the survey. The results of this section is shown in the chart below.

Satisfaction with landlord characteristics



The results from this section show moderate levels of tenant satisfaction with the majority of measures with large proportions of tenants giving the neutral rating of “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied”. The measures with the lowest ratings overall were keeps its promises, listens to views and understands my needs.

4. Initial actions identified

4.1 The Housing management team have reviewed and discussed the results and initial analysis of the data which has identified some initial actions to address some of the dissatisfaction expressed by tenants. This is an ongoing process and will evolve based on the results of further data analytics and intelligence and will be built on further over the coming months.

4.2 Satisfaction with Housing and services

Whilst the Housing service has performed well in comparison to its benchmarking peers and a high proportion of tenants expressed satisfaction with the majority of measures in this section, there was still a level of dissatisfaction amongst respondents across all measures. A small amount of free text feedback was collected as part of the survey but this was not specific to each measure which does not allow us to identify the exact reasons for dissatisfaction with each measure.

As part of the ongoing programme of monthly telephone satisfaction surveys, free text feedback is collected from respondents for the majority of measures shown in this section when respondents give a “fairly dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied rating”. An action has been identified to carry out a full analysis of this free text feedback we have collected during the year to date to identify the key issues for tenants which are driving dissatisfaction with each measure to further inform the action plan.

4.3 Neighbourhood Problems

The resulting data from this section enables us to pinpoint the neighbourhood issues in granular detail down to street or post code level and allow us to determine where certain neighbourhood problems may be more prevalent than others. An action has been identified to aggregate this data into the most appropriate level of granularity to be shared with neighbourhoods team, the tenancy management team, the estates services team and the anti-social behaviour team for discussion and to develop specific action plans for areas or neighbourhoods where it is necessary to do so.

Due to the fact that car parking has been identified as the most prevalent neighbourhood problem, an action has been identified to explore options in relation to introducing parking permit areas based on the data as well as exploring options in relation to increasing car parking spaces where possible.

4.4 Estate Services

Data analytics will be key to developing an action plan for estate services. An action has been identified to complete a location based analysis of the estate services responses to determine whether satisfaction with all measures differs between areas and sites to enable the service to pinpoint areas of high dissatisfaction and conduct an investigation to determine the reasons for dissatisfaction.

Another action has been identified to overlay the postal survey data with the data from the ongoing programme of monthly telephone satisfaction survey to determine the most common reasons for dissatisfaction with estates services through free text analysis.

4.5 Anti-social behaviour and contact and communication

In relation to anti-social behaviour, an action has been identified to explore the possibility of mystery shopping in order to identify areas and touchpoints during the process of reporting an anti-social behaviour complaint which could be improved to enhance tenants' experience during the entire process. This will further inform the action plan through the identification of specific actions.

For contact and communication, a number of actions have been identified. The Housing service aims to introduce cross-divisional working to ensure staff are able to answer tenant's queries even if the tenants query relates to another service area. This will be completed through the development of an internal directory to enable staff to find the information they require as well as enhancements to Housings web page on the Council's website.

Another action which has been identified to improve contact and communication is to deliver training to customer facing staff in the skills required to communicate with tenants effectively as well as including this

subject as part of new staff inductions.

A further and more wide ranging action has also been identified which will cut across both anti-social behaviour and contact. The Housing service will look to establish a wider project to identify issues in resident interaction across all Housing services with a view to improving and reducing customer effort to raise queries or issues and have them resolved.

4.6 Landlord characteristics

In order to understand dissatisfaction with the measures included within this section, the Housing service will look to deliver focus groups with tenants to explore the reasons for dissatisfaction in relation to each individual measure. This will enable the service to understand tenants' issues on each subject and what tenants feel the service needs to do to address their issues to further inform the action plan. The delivery of focus groups will also demonstrate the services willingness to listen to tenants' views and develop a better understanding of tenants needs.

In addition to this, the Housing service will also look to ascertain whether there are links or correlations between tenant's responses to the landlord characteristics questions to establish whether service delivery in certain areas have an impact on tenants views on landlord characteristic measures through data analysis.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- 5.1 The committee's comments are sought on the results of the full postal tenant satisfaction survey.

6. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 6.1 None.

7. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 7.1 None.

8. Implications

8.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Hannah Katakwe**
Housing Accountant, Finance and IT

None.

8.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**
Deputy Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer

Given the nature of this update report, there are no legal implications directly arising from it.

8.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer

There are no direct equality and diversity implications within this report. Tenant satisfaction monitoring will allow the Housing service to listen to tenant's views and build a far better understanding of tenant's needs including any issues around accessibility or any other negative impact on those with a protected characteristic.

8.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder.

Not applicable

9. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

None

10. **Appendices to the report**

None

Report Author:

Chris Seman
Intelligence and Performance Manager

19 January 2021	ITEM: 6
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Housing KPI Performance (April to November 2020/21)	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A
Report of: Carol Hinvest – Assistant Director of Housing	
Accountable Assistant Director: Carol Hinvest – Assistant Director of Housing	
Accountable Director: Roger Harris – Corporate Director Adults, Housing and Health.	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

A summary and narrative of KPI performance for the 2020/21 (April to November) reporting year is provided.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Committee notes and comments on the report.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The key performance indicator suite comprises of a number of service critical performance indicators that measure Housing’s performance against key service outputs, compliance with statutory regulations and tenant satisfaction with primary functions of the service.
- 2.2 Performance against the suite of key performance indicators is reported at Housing Management Team meetings and directorate Performance Management Meetings on a monthly basis. Performance is also reported at Performance Board and forms part of the quarterly performance report that is taken to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.3 An independent research contractor who specialise in telephone satisfaction surveys for the Housing sector conducts tenant satisfaction telephone surveys on behalf of the Housing department. Satisfaction levels were measured using a 5-point scale (very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, fairly dissatisfied and very dissatisfied) and only very satisfied and fairly satisfied ratings are included in the satisfaction rate as a percentage of all respondents.

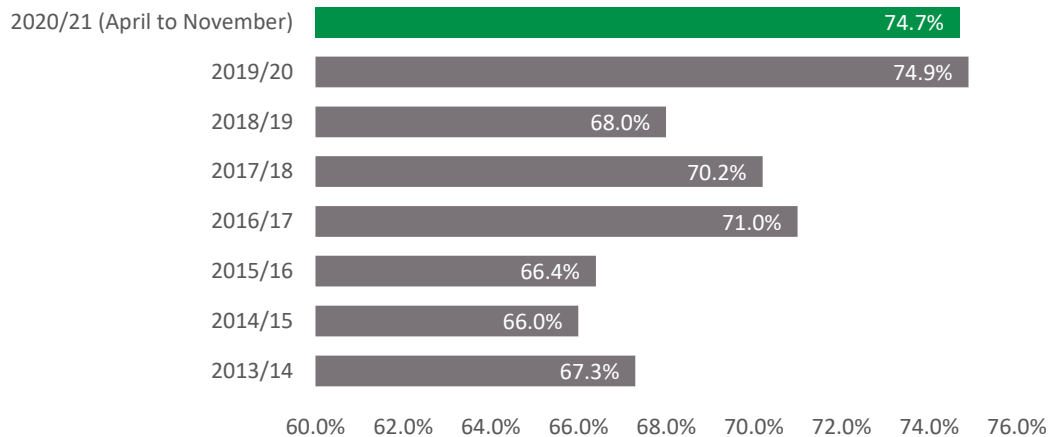
3. Housing Performance – Key Performance Indicators

KPI	Performance Indicators	Target	2019/20	YTD
KPI01	% General Satisfaction of Tenants With Neighbourhoods / Services Provided by Housing	75%	74.9%	74.7%
KPI02	% Satisfaction of Tenants With Transforming Homes (Contractor & Programme)	85%	86.9%	85.7%
KPI03	% of Repairs Completed Within Target	95%	98.3%	98.6%
KPI04	% Rent Collected	98%	98.5% November 95%	95.1%
KPI05	Average Time to Turnaround / Re-let Voids (in days)	28	25.6	51.6
KPI06	% of Gas Service Checks Carried out Within Statutory Timescale	100%	100%	99.9%
KPI07	Number of Applicants with Family Commitments in Bed & Breakfast for Six Weeks or More	0	3	0
KPI08	Number of Category 1 & 2 Hazards Removed as a Direct Result of Private Sector Housing Team Intervention	1000	1000 November 667	456

3.1 Despite the challenges which have been faced by Housing as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic including the suspension, alteration and reduction of a number of services and processes for a period of time in line with government guidance and legislation; tenant satisfaction with the overall service provided by Housing has remained consistent with 2019/20 performance at 74.7%.

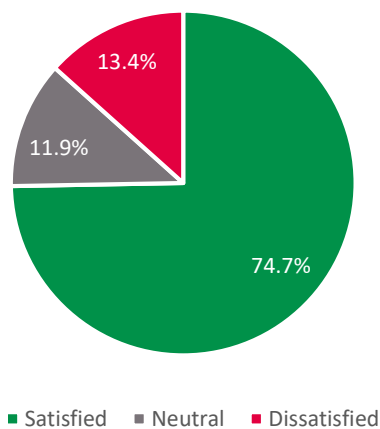
Although this indicator is currently under target and down by a small margin on 2019/20, the mid-year position in 2020/21 represents strong performance in comparison with previous years and is currently 6.1% up on 2018/19, 3.9% up on 2017/18, 3.1% up on 2016/17 and up by margins exceeding 6.8% on all years between and including 2013/14 and 2015/16. This demonstrates that the gains in tenant satisfaction reported in 2019/20 have been maintained so far this year.

Overall satisfaction with services provided by Housing by year



3.2 So far in 2020/21, 1335 tenants have completed a telephone satisfaction survey which represents more than 13% of all tenants. Whilst 74.7% of tenants have said they were satisfied with the service they receive, 11.9% of tenants gave a neutral rating and 13.4% of tenants said they were dissatisfied with the service they receive.

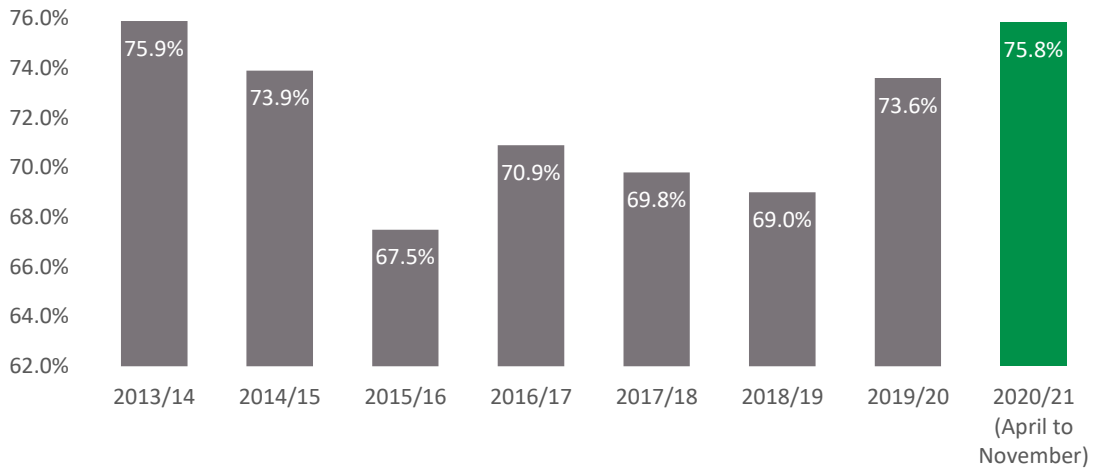
Satisfaction with overall service provided by Housing (2020/21)



3.3 It was reported to the committee in the 2018/19 performance report that one of the most prevalent drivers of tenant dissatisfaction with the overall service provided by Housing is issues with keeping tenants informed and communication. A number of measures have since been implemented to address dissatisfaction on this subject including a regular tenant’s e-newsletter, a formal communication plan, an annual tenant’s conference and enhancements to the Tenants Excellence Panels involvement in service delivery which have had a positive impact on satisfaction with keeping tenants informed as well as with the overall service provided by Housing. Satisfaction with keeping tenants informed has since increased year on year with a 4.6% increase in 2019/20 followed by a further 2.2% increase at the end of November in 2020/21 which amounts to a 6.8% net increase since 2018/19

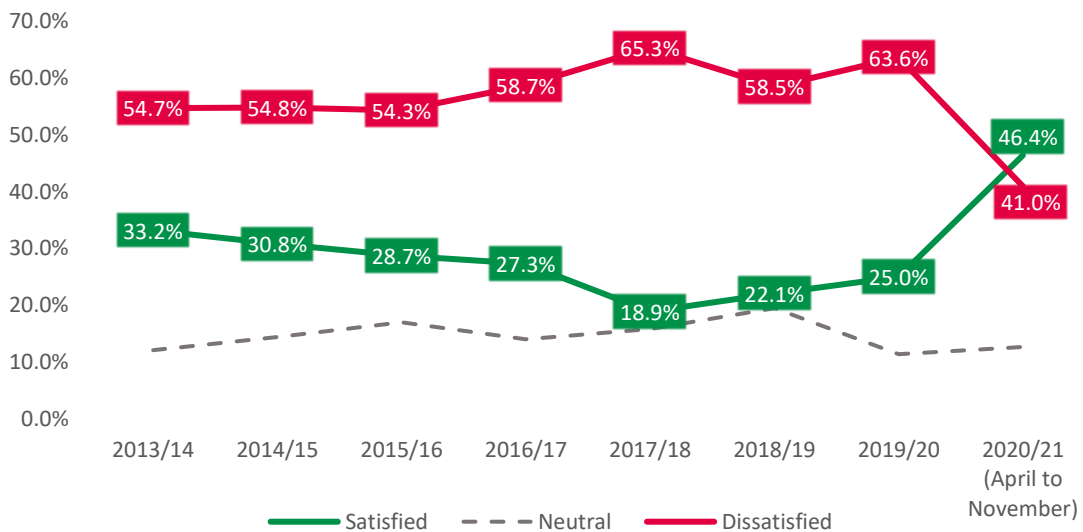
overall.

Satisfaction with keeping tenants informed by year



3.4 In addition to the increase in tenant satisfaction with keeping tenants informed, the data clearly shows a substantial reduction in negative sentiment and a significant increase in positive sentiment within the cohort of tenants dissatisfied with the overall service provided by Housing in 2020/21 to date in comparison with previous years. The below graph shows that of the tenants dissatisfied with the overall service provided by Housing, 46.4% are satisfied with keeping tenants informed (up 21.4% on 2019/20) and 41% are dissatisfied with keeping tenants informed (down 22.6% on 2019/20). For the first time a greater percentage of tenants who were dissatisfied with the overall service provided by Housing are satisfied with keeping tenants informed than those dissatisfied.

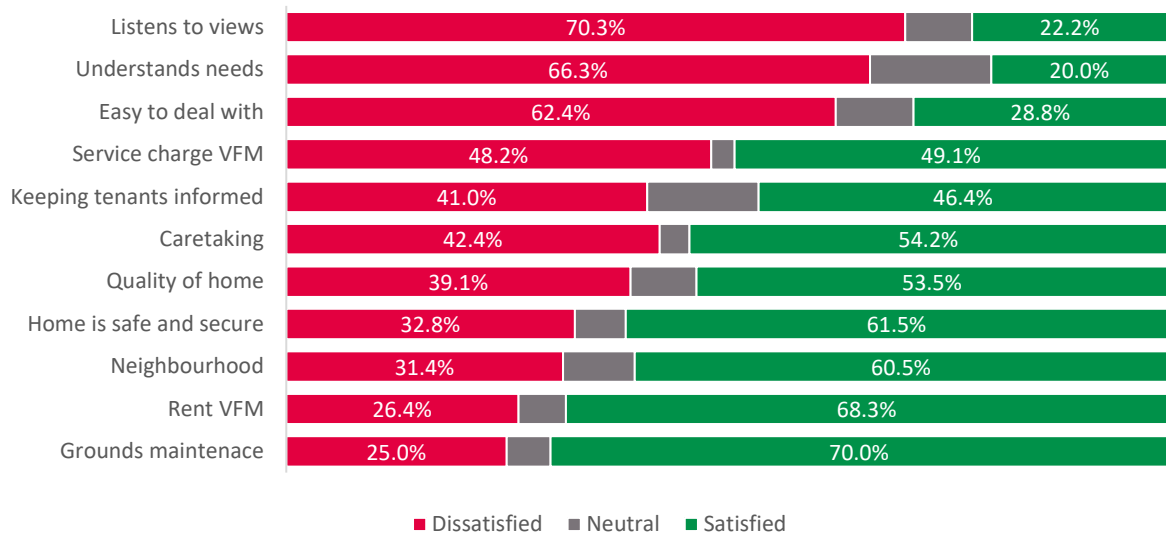
Satisfaction with keeping tenants informed (tenants dissatisfied with overall service only)



3.5 The below chart shows satisfaction and dissatisfaction rates with a range of perception measures of just the tenants dissatisfied with the overall service

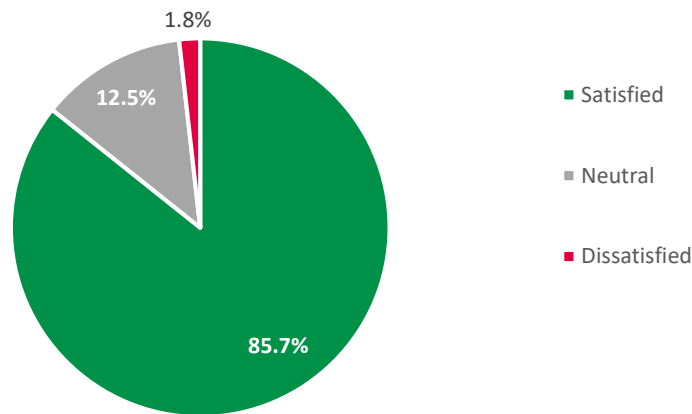
provided by Housing. This demonstrates that the most prevalent drivers of dissatisfaction with the overall Housing service are listening to tenants views, understanding tenants needs and the ease of dealing with Housing.

Overall service dissatisfaction drivers in 2020/21 (tenants dissatisfied with overall service only)



- 3.6 Listening to tenant’s views and understanding tenant’s needs was already identified as a clear priority for 2020/21 for which a new tenant satisfaction telephone survey has been implemented with specific questions on these subjects as well as a wide ranging postal satisfaction survey which was sent to all tenants which allows us to collect data on a much larger number of questions than the telephone satisfaction survey currently allows. This will result in broader insight through analysis, will demonstrate the Housing services willingness to listen to tenant’s views and will allow the Housing team to build a far better understanding of tenant’s needs.
- 3.7 In addition to this we have also begun measuring customer effort through the implementation of net ease scores across a number of our transactional satisfaction surveys with more planned for later in the year. This aims to measure how easy it was for the tenant to deal with us at each particular touchpoint or transaction such as getting a repair completed, having a boiler service or an interaction with a Tenancy Management Officer. The feedback collected from tenants as part of this will allow us to identify particular processes or touchpoints where tenants find interacting with Housing difficult in order to make improvements to make the service easier to use.
- 3.8 Tenant satisfaction with Transforming Homes in 2020/21 is on target at 85.7% based on a sample of 56 tenants who have provided feedback on the works carried out. However, only 1.8% of tenants who have provided feedback have been dissatisfied.

Satisfaction with Transforming Homes (2020/21)

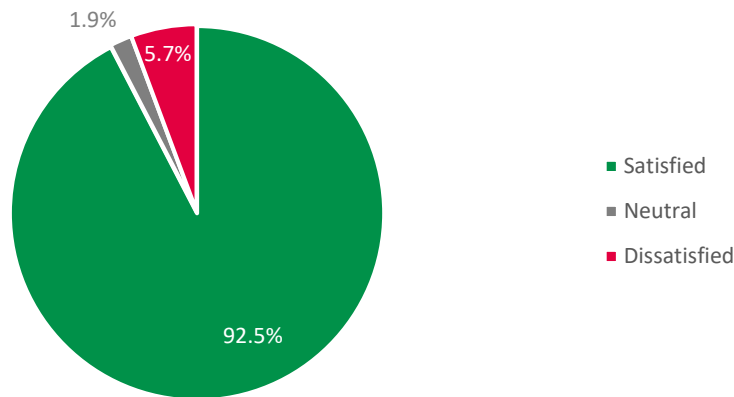


- 3.9 In addition to this 92.6% of tenants were satisfied with the courtesy and politeness of workers and 85.2% of tenants were satisfied with the quality of work.

The primary focus of the Transforming Homes programme has now moved onto external elements with the replacement of single glazed windows being the first priority. It is anticipated that dissatisfaction levels with external capital elements, in particular windows, will decrease gradually as the programme progresses. This is also expected to positively impact other satisfaction measures such as overall satisfaction with Housing services and quality of home.

- 3.10 At mid-year in 2019/20, 98.6% of responsive repairs have been completed within their priority target timeframes which represents strong performance. This has improved by 0.3% on 2019/20 and has improved by 0.9% on 2018/19 despite the issues the Coronavirus pandemic has posed to the service including a sustained increase repairs demand for a period of 12 weeks during the summer when unreported repairs which occurred at the beginning of the pandemic were reported in addition to normal repair demand.
- 3.11 Satisfaction with responsive repairs remains very high with 92.5% of tenants satisfied with the repairs service in 2020/20 from of a sample of 2372 tenants who have had responsive repairs completed.

Satisfaction with Repairs (2020/21)

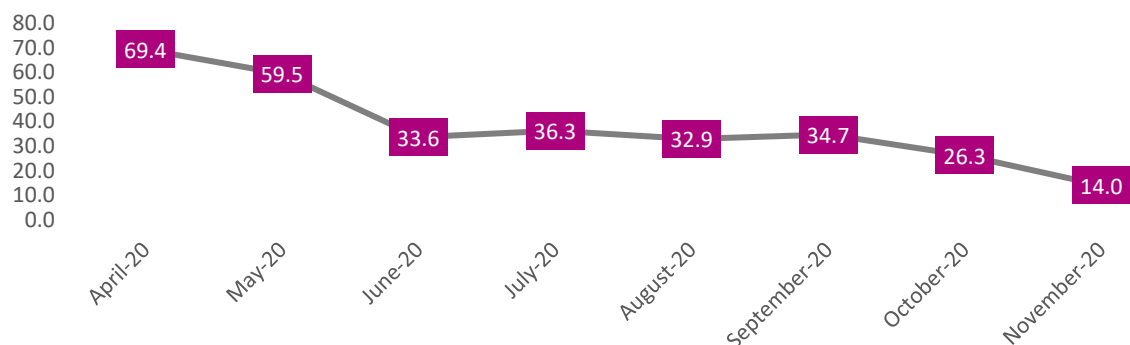


- 3.12 In addition to the overall satisfaction rate; 94.7% of tenants were satisfied with the quality of works carried out, 94.3% were satisfied with the speed of completion of the repair works, 92.1% were satisfied they were kept informed on the progress of their repair and 90.2% were satisfied the repair was completed right first time.
- 3.13 The Coronavirus pandemic has resulted in some significant challenges for the Rents Team in 2020/21. The Rents team have had to make all contact with tenants by telephone and letter as home visits have been suspended. They have also had to suspend all court hearings and evictions processes which has had a negative impact on rent collection.
- 3.14 So far in 2020/21 there has been a 26% increase in tenants claiming Universal Credit from 2317 at the end of March to 2910 at the end of November with rent arrears for tenants claiming Universal Credit increasing by a margin of 48% over the same period. There has also been a 9.54% (£1,117,677.54) reduction in income from Housing benefit on the same period last year.
- 3.15 However despite this the Rents Team have surpassed their profiled target for rent collection of 95% collecting 95.1% of rent and arrears carried forward from last year at the end of November as well as supporting a large number of tenants through financial inclusion.
- 3.16 Financial Inclusion Officers work has also been adversely affected due to the pandemic and have only been able to support tenants over the telephone as all outreach work in Hubs, Libraries and Children's Centres have been suspended due to closure. Over the first three months of the pandemic, Financial Inclusion Officers were mainly carrying out welfare calls offering advice to new Universal Credit claimants as well as tenants who were furloughed and experiencing financial hardship due to the pandemic. They also contacted tenants who were in rent arrears offering debt advice.

- 3.17 At the end of November, Financial Inclusion Officers have supported a total of 914 tenants, an increase of 38% on the same period last year, and have generated additional income of £265,295.91 which represents an increase of 43% on the same period last year.
- 3.18 Financial Inclusion Officers look to maximise tenants' income by advising and assisting tenants with any claims they are eligible for such as PIP, Council Tax support, Discretionary Housing Payments and any other grants they may be eligible for. They also offer food vouchers and assist with clothing, furniture and white goods.
- 3.19 Owing to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, the resulting period of national lockdown and the associated restrictions standard void re-let times have been critically affected. This was because choice based lettings were suspended for a number of months, coinciding with the national lockdown, which meant the properties which were void before or during the period of suspension could not be let and remained void for a much longer period of time than usual with only a very small number of lettings through direct offers taking place in May. As affected voids which were void for a long period of time as a result have been let following the re-instatement of choice based lettings in June, this has inflated the averages and void re-let times have been considerably higher than usual.

However there is evidence that void re-let time performance is now beginning to recover and properties which became void after choice based lettings were re-instated are now being let within usual timescales with average re-let times for properties which became void between June and September above target and October and November (4 lets) below target.

Standard void re-let times by month void



- 3.20 Voids data has also been analysed and areas of potential operational improvement have been identified which will be discussed and driven through operational voids meetings over the coming months.
- 3.21 Another key performance indicator which has been adversely affected by the Coronavirus pandemic, specifically due to tenants shielding or self-isolating and refusing access, is the percentage of gas service checks carried out within statutory timescales. Performance against this indicator currently stands at 99.9% at the end of November.

3.22 The predominant issue which has resulted in underperformance on this indicator has been access. At the beginning of the pandemic and in line with government guidelines, all necessary measures were taken in attempting to gain access to Council owned properties with a gas appliance to complete a service where one was due. However due to tenants either self-isolating, shielding or refusing access, there has been a small number of properties we have been unable to gain access to in order to service their appliances within their due date. Where this was the case, a carbon monoxide alarm was delivered to properties where a service could not take place and a live log has been maintained of properties affected as well as any communications with the resident with appointments being offered after the tenant's period of self-isolation ends.

3.23 In order to maintain the highest possible rate of compliance, the Housing service have continued to attend court on a monthly basis to obtain warrants of entry where there has been no communication with the tenant.

In order to mitigate the risk of further restrictions which may be implemented following the current rise in infection rates it has been agreed with the contractor that all properties due a service between October and December where a resident is registered on the shielding list would be brought forward and completed as soon as possible. This will mitigate any issues with access during this time if restrictions change during the winter months and affected residents are advised to re-commence shielding.

3.24 The Housing Solutions Team have worked to ensure that performance against this indicator remains on target with 0 applicants with "family commitments" in bed and breakfast accommodation for six weeks or more during 2020/21.

3.25 The Private Sector Housing Team has removed 456 category 1 and 2 Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) hazards from private sector properties in 2020/21 which is 211 below the profiled target of 667. Non-urgent property inspections and re-inspections ceased during the pandemic to identify category 1 and 2 health and safety hazards in dwellings following government guidelines of non-essential visits. Easing of government restrictions has allowed Environmental Health and Licensing Officers to carry out HHSRS inspections since August and this will continue subject to no further changes in government guidelines.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 The Committee's comments are sought on the performance of the Housing department so far in 2020/21.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 None.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community

impact

- 6.1 The Housing departments performance against key performance indicators reflects the service's commitment to the Council's corporate priorities.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Hannah Katakwe**
Housing Accountant, Finance and IT

Any increases in unrecoverable debts arising from former and current tenants to write off as bad debts, will have financial implications to the HRA.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**
Deputy Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer

Given the nature of this update report, there are no legal implications directly arising from it.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer

There are no direct equality and diversity implications within this report. Tenant satisfaction monitoring will allow the Housing service to listen to tenant's views and build a far better understanding of tenant's needs including any issues around accessibility or any other negative impact on those with a protected characteristic.

- 7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder.

Not applicable

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

None

9. Appendices to the report

None

Report Author:

Carol Hinvest, Assistant Director of Housing

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19 January 2021	ITEM: 7
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Procurement Of Housing Capital Programme Delivery	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A
Report of: Alastair Wood, Technical Services Delivery Manager	
Accountable Assistant Director: Carol Hinvest, Assistant Director of Housing	
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director Adults, Housing and Health	
This report is Public	
Purpose of Report: To outline the proposals for the procurement of two programmes of work to further improve the Council’s housing stock as part of the Housing Capital Investment Programme	

Executive Summary

The Housing Capital Programme invests to secure the long-term integrity of the Council’s asset and brings significant improvements to the health and wellbeing of our local residents through improvement to their living conditions, reducing fuel poverty through improved energy efficiency.

This report sets out the proposals for the procurement of two contract packages that will further improve the quality of homes for Council Housing tenants.

The first contract package will upgrade the heating provision for three tower blocks in Chadwell St Mary. The second contract package will refurbish properties of a non-traditional construction in the housing stock.

This report details options for the procurement of these contract packages using pre-approved public sector frameworks in order to generate cost efficiency and resource time savings.

1. Recommendation(s)

Housing Overview and Scrutiny members are requested to:

1.1 Comment on the proposal to procure two new contracts for major works delivery programmes

1.2 Comment on the proposal to delegate authority for award of the above contracts to the Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 There is an ongoing need to invest in our existing council stock to ensure the integrity of the asset is maintained and that the Council fulfils its duty to provide residents with affordable warmth in homes and future proofed facilities.

We want everyone in Thurrock to have a warm home, with heating systems that are reliable and affordable. We are committed to make Thurrock Carbon neutral by 2030. One of the largest emitters of carbon in Thurrock is domestic heating and hot water. We need to ensure the heat sources that supply homes in our borough are increasingly low and zero carbon.

Heating Upgrade for Three Tower Blocks in Chadwell St Mary Ward

2.2 This programme of work will replace the current end of life heating systems in place in George Tilbury House, Gooderham House and Poole House in Chadwell St. Mary with a new renewable heating solution that will ensure the resident has the cheapest running cost which will lift our residents out of fuel poverty.

2.3 The 273 properties in these blocks currently are heated with electric storage heaters the majority of which are over 30 years old. These storage radiators are now at the end of their technical life expectancy due to their age, this means they are less efficient and have limited controls for the residents to operate meaning they are inefficient for both running costs and sustainability.

2.4 Different options for their replacement have been considered and we are now presenting this option for a new ground source heat pump solution to be installed. This preferred option has been fully informed by detailed site investigations and geological surveys.

2.5 Residents in the blocks have also been consulted about the cost and effectiveness of their current heating system. This has demonstrated that currently residents in these blocks are experiencing varying levels of fuel poverty across the three tower blocks. Fuel poverty has many negative impacts on physical and mental health. Fuel poverty creates a harsh choice for our residents to choose between a warm home or food. It is our priority to install a system that addresses this financial exclusion by delivering a reduction in annual costs for residents on their heating bills. The data collected up until the week ending 18th December 2020 is set out in the following table. At this stage 67 residents across the three Chadwell Tower Blocks had engaged with the Council to undertake a fuel poverty assessment.

Number of Properties Assessed	Estimated Annual Fuel Costs per household	Percentage of Households in Fuel Poverty.
67	£1,429.00	50.7%

Out of the 67 participants of the fuel poverty assessment just over 50% of the residents met the threshold of fuel poverty based on the Low Income High Cost (LIHC) Indicator.

- 2.6 The average running costs of the proposed ground source heating systems for the two bed Chadwell tower blocks have been calculated to be in the region of £477.00 per annum depending on individual usage. Therefore, when considered against the figures above it is clear this would deliver a significant savings to our residents living in these properties. This would in turn remove a majority of residents from fuel poverty.
- 2.7 The system that is proposed to be installed in a low carbon heating system which utilises renewable heat which is freely available underground. This can be accessed by using Ground Source Heat Pumps (GSHP) connected to a network underground of pipes extracting ambient heat from the ground. This system provides 300% efficiency and is powered by electricity from the resident's own meter. The GSHP system that is proposed will provide a separate hot water cylinder in each dwelling and radiators. Residents will remain free to choose which energy provider they engage for provision of electricity, however the cheaper their electricity tariff the more they will save on their heating cost. We will ensure this is communicated to our resident through our resident liaison teams to make sure the residents on this estate achieve the maximum benefit possible. Over the life cycle of this install based on 40 years, the lifetime saving of heat pump and ground array is estimated save 7,080 tons of CO2 emission this is the equivalent of taking 1540 cars off the road, this based on carbon factor obtained from SAP 10.1, published 8/11/19.
- 2.8 Ground source heat pumps are able to deliver heating and hot water in the same way as a conventional heating system via radiators and hot water tanks which are controlled using a simple time clock and central thermostat. Individual room control will be provided by the Thermostatic Radiator Valve (TRV) fitted to the radiators so each tenant has the ability to control temperature on a room-by-room basis. The simplicity of this set-up means control is straightforward and the heat can be delivered as required throughout the day ensuring tenant comfort.
- 2.9 It is estimated the cost of this installation will be approximately 5.4m. The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan as reported to Cabinet in February 2020 included £23.18m for Tower Block Refurbishment between 2021/22 and 2022/23 and this sum includes provision for this work.

3. Non-Traditional Property Refurbishment

- 3.1 The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and Budget Report of 12 February 2020 outlined a budget of £7.3m to invest in the refurbishment of the properties of Non-Traditional construction in the housing stock between the years of 2021/22 and 2023/24
- 3.2 The term non-traditional generally refers to prefabricated building systems, frames and construction methods that known as Prefabricated Reinforced Concrete (PRC) properties. They were mostly constructed post-war up between 1945 and 1951 and were only envisaged to last 10 years but such was the durability that many are still standing today. Within the Thurrock housing stock we have over 200 of these non-traditionally constructed properties all of which are tenanted family sized homes. These properties are designated defective within the meaning of the [Housing Defects Act 1984](#), now part of the [Housing Act 1985](#), because they have the potential for corrosion of the embedded steel reinforcements and are generally considered by lending institutions not to be mortgageable.
- 3.3 If left in their original state these non-traditional properties offer extremely poor thermal efficiency make them expensive for the tenants to heat. This poor thermal insulation can leading to problems with condensation and mould and impact on the internal fixtures and fittings.
- 3.4 The Council have now having carried out extensive surveying of these properties and have planned a programme of refurbishment based on property condition that will prioritise those in urgent need of improvements.
- 3.5 The works to the properties will aim to make them both structurally safe and achieve improved standards of thermal comfort. Improvements will be tailored to the different build types and will incorporate measures such as new external wall insulation, new windows and doors, sustainable heating systems and sustainable energy sources. These will both improve the energy efficiency ratings of the properties providing more comfortable and economical homes for our residents and will be in line with the Councils climate change agenda.

4. **Possible Grant Funding**

- 4.1 It is also the Council's intention to apply for grant funding to support these projects under one of the following schemes. The funding landscape is changing rapidly and projects will be appraised individually at the time of investment decisions. There have been many funding announcements to support green jobs and the COVID-19 economic recovery plan and we will engage a contractor that can help us to identify the best funding routes.
- 4.2 **Non-Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (NDRHI)** policy. This supports residential district heating installations. The Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) has confirmed that an individual ground source heat pump at each property, linked to a communal ground array, qualifies as a district heating system.

However the current NDRHI scheme closes on 31st March 2021 and to apply installations would need to be completed and commissioned with as built EPC's provided as part of the application. For projects that cannot complete prior to this deadline, there are currently options set out in the consultations launched by BEIS in April 2020 to apply for a Tariff Guarantee by the end of March 2021. It is unlikely that it will be possible to access this funding for this project due to limited time frames imposed.

4.3 Clean Heat Grant

Scheduled for commencement in 2022 the CHG is the government's successor scheme to the RHI. Under recent consultations the government have indicated the possibility of an upfront capital grant of up to £4,000 per property installed with a new heat pump. We await detailed outline of eligibility and funding application process in due course.

4.4 Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund

A total of £3.8 billion has been allocated to this fund over the next 10 years to support social landlords to retrofit social housing at scale. Individual projects will need to be appraised for eligibility and potential collaborations will be required. We will look to identify opportunities to maximise the use of this fund where possible.

4.5 Energy Company Obligations Round 3

ECO3 is the latest stream of ECO. It mainly focuses on low income and vulnerable households, helping to meet the Government's fuel poverty commitments. This grant is intended to fund renewable technology and replace expensive, broken, inefficient fossil fuelled systems or non-centrally heated systems. As a funding stream, ECO3 is based on the cost savings between the old and new heating and hot water systems. This grant applies to district heating schemes and social housing installations, however the properties must have a registered Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of E, F or G to be eligible.

4.6 It is important to note that full provision has been made within the HRA Business Plan to cover the delivery of these two projects. If successful in applications for any of the above schemes, the grant received would be offset against the overall cost which would then release investment for further improvements to other properties within the housing stock.

5. Procurement Route Recommendation

5.1 This report is submitted to Cabinet to request the approval to proceed with the procurement for two contracts for the major works delivery packages outlined in this report. These procurements are each valued above the Corporate Directors threshold of £750k.

5.2 Due to the size and scale of service provision, the Council is required to procure these contracts through the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and to also comply with the Council’s Contract Procurement Rules. Officers have considered a number of options for re-procurement via either a full OJEU process or using purchasing consortium frameworks.

5.3 Given the likely level of interest in the work packages and the limitations of the market, the recommended option for the procurement routes is a mini competition through a purchasing consortium framework. This will enable the selection from a list of providers who have already demonstrated their suitability to provide the type and quality of services required. It will enable the evaluation of the mini competition tenders on the basis of key criteria on quality, price and added social value.

6. Timetable for Procurement and Award

6.1 Tower Block Heating Replacement

Action	Date
Leaseholder and Tenant Consultation	35 days April 2021
Issue Tender	Mid May 2021
Tender Return	End June 2021
Evaluation Period Ends	End July 2021
2 nd stage Leasehold consultation	August 2021 - 35 days
Standstill Period Concludes	Mid-August 2020 Should this be Mid-September
Award of Contract	September 2021
Contract Commencement	End September 2020

6.2 Non-Traditional Property Refurbishment

Note: No leaseholders are affected by this programme so statutory consultation periods are not applicable.

Action	Date
Issue Tender	April 2021
Tender Return	Mid May 2021
Evaluation Period Ends	June 2021
Standstill Period Concludes	June 2021

Award of Contract	July 2021
Contract Commencement	August 2021

7. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

Design Specifications

- 7.1 The Council has invested in detailed feasibility and design for both refurbishment projects which have fully appraised the different options and product specifications applicable to these types of works. All works will be delivered to meet the applicable regulatory standards.

8. Reasons for the report

- 8.1 This report is submitted to Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee provide an overview of these programmes of work and invite comments on the recommendations to procure these work packages.
- 8.2 Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee are invited to comment on the proposal to move forward with these two packages of work as part of the Housing Capital Programme which are designed to bring substantial improvements to the quality and comfort for residents living in these homes.

9. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 9.1 This proposal for the refurbishment of the heating systems in the Chadwell St Mary Tower blocks will be subject to Section 20 Leaseholder Consultation at all stages.
- 9.2 Once approval to proceed is in place the refurbishment proposals will be consulted on with the local residents affected.
- 9.3 Members of the Resident Excellence Panel will be invited to participate in the tender evaluation process. Members of the Resident Excellence Panel have been trained in the evaluation process and have provided positive contributions when previously involved in evaluation processes.

10. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 10.1 The improvement of the Council's housing assets supports the Council's key priorities through the provision of quality housing and estates people are proud to live on.
- 10.2 The Council's strategic priorities have been and will continue to be an integral part of the social value tender documents and bidders will be required

demonstrate how they will generate added value for local communities, support the local economy through opportunities for local businesses and provide local job opportunities.

10.3 **Clean Growth Strategy**

This UK government strategy sets out a comprehensive set of policies and proposals that aim to accelerate the pace of 'clean growth', decreased GHG emissions and a commitment to phasing out fossil fuels off the gas grid in the 2020s. The roll out of low carbon heating is an essential part of this strategy and heat pumps have a pivotal role to play in helping social housing providers to decarbonise their housing stock.

10.4 **Electrification of Heat**

Electrification of heat is a key part of the government's strategy for achieving net zero carbon by 2050. Heating homes and businesses makes up a significant proportion of the UK's emissions and therefore has to be tackled, moving the country away from burning gas is a significant part of the challenge. The pace of increased supply of renewable energy to the UK power grid provides an opportunity to decarbonise heat in the next 30 years and rapid installation of heat pumps can support mass decarbonisation across our Thurrock homes.

10.5 **The Future Homes Standard**

The Future Homes Standard will require new build homes to be future-proofed with low carbon heating and world-leading levels of energy efficiency; it will be introduced by 2025. Whilst these standards are for new homes to be substantially improved in order to future-proof new builds with low carbon heating, existing buildings will have to undergo significant improvements/ deep retrofitting to meet the challenge of decarbonisation.

10.6 **Carbon Reduction and Climate Emergency**

Many local authorities have declared climate emergencies committing them to net zero carbon by 2030. Whilst the declaration is only a first step in acknowledging the problem, robust and deliverable action plans are starting to emerge. Over 34% of all emissions in the UK are attributed to the provision of heat. Ground source or Air source heat pumps provide local authorities with a solution to fully decarbonise heating in social housing assets couple with the provision of clean energy.

11. **Implications**

11.1 **Financial**

Implications verified by: **Mike Jones**
Strategic Lead – Corporate Finance

The procurement of these works is in line with the budget investment profile for years 2020/21 to 2023/24. The estimated spend shown in this report is in line with the HRA Business Plan provision for the contract period.

11.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Courage Emovon**
Principal Lawyer / Manager – Contracts & Procurement Team

The Council have a statutory duty to provide for the Health and Wellbeing of its residents through improvement to their living conditions and this could be by way of improving the Council's housing stock via procurement of programmes of works as proposed in this report with the ultimate outcome of improving the Wellbeing of its local residents. Legal Services will be on hand to advise on any issues arising from the proposed procurement of the works programme.

11.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Becky Lee**
Team Manager - Community Development and Equalities

A full community equality impact assessment has been undertaken of the implementation of the Housing delivery of the investment programmes.

Residents in these homes are experiencing high levels of fuel poverty. Fuel poverty has many negative impacts on physical and mental health. Fuel poverty creates a harsh choice for our residents to choose between a warm home or food. The installation of energy efficiency measures and heating systems is intended to address this financial exclusion by delivering a reduction in annual costs for these residents on their heating bills.

The significant investment made through these improvements in the housing stock represents a real opportunity to provide additional social value to the local communities in the borough. It is therefore important that the commissioning and contract management approach continues to support a framework for social value delivery to support training and employment opportunities for our communities and maximise spend in the local economy.

11.4 Other implications - Sustainability

The installation of the low carbon heating systems are expected to provide 70%+ reduction in carbon emissions. The system being proposed for the Chadwell Towers has been verified by BEIS studies and the Energy Saving Trust to be the cheapest to run and the lowest carbon heating system. It is

expected that the infrastructure to be installed underground will have a life of 100 years. This creates a sustainable supply of heating to be supplied to those residents for the foreseeable future.

- 12. Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright): -

Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and Budgets 2020/21 - report to Cabinet February 2020

- 13. Appendices to the report**

None

Report Author:

Alastair Wood

Technical Services Delivery Manager

19 January 2021	ITEM: 8
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Annual Allocations Report – 2019/20	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: No
Report of: Ryan Farmer – Housing Strategy and Quality Manager	
Accountable Assistant Director: Carol Hinvest – Assistant Director of Housing	
Accountable Director: Roger Harris – Corporate Director, Adults, Housing and Health	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

This report provides an update on the allocation of properties through the Housing Allocation Scheme in the 2019/2020 financial year. It sets out the information in three main sections – an introduction and background which contains a snapshot of the Housing Register at the end of the 2019/2020 financial year, an overview of the supply and demand of social housing properties, and details of activity surrounding property adverts, bids and offers throughout the year.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1. Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note and comment on the contents of this annual housing allocations report.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1. Thurrock Council has a legal obligation to allocate properties in line with a housing allocations scheme formally adopted by the Council, and the scheme has to comply with current legislation, regulation and case law. The current scheme was implemented in 2013 after the enactment of the Localism Act 2011, which gave increased powers to determine local priorities when defining how properties should be allocated. Since 2013 the policy and procedure have been regularly reviewed, most recently with a revised policy which came into effect in April 2019.

2.2. In Thurrock, as with many boroughs, the demand for housing exceeds availability. There are increasing numbers of people in Thurrock who require a home and many existing tenants with a priority need to move. With a limited amount of properties available from the Council and increasing house prices

in the private rental and owner-occupied sectors, the reality is that many households face long waits for suitable and affordable settled accommodation that is fit for purpose. The shortage in the supply of affordable homes is becoming an acute problem across the region, and these pressures are expected to intensify over future years to come.

- 2.3.** The below snapshot shows the number of active applications on the Housing Register as of 31 March 2020. The Housing Register is comprised of two lists, known as the 'Housing Waiting List' (formed of Bands 1 to 5) and the 'Transfer List'.

Band/List	Number of Applicants	% of total Housing Register	% of Applicants in with at least one bid in 2019/20
Band 1	3	<0.1%	0%
Band 2	149	1.6%	23.5%
Band 3	504	5.4%	46.0%
Band 4	4433	47.3%	36.7%
Band 5	2654	28.2%	22.2%
Total Waiting List	7734	82.5%	32.1%
Transfer List	1635	17.5%	21.9%
Total Housing Register	9369	100%	30.3%

- 2.4.** Those placed in Band 1 are considered to have the highest priority to be rehoused. These include those who are experiencing violence or threats of violence, including domestic and sexual abuse, as well as the Council's tenants whose properties require demolition or significant refurbishment where the tenant would no longer be able to remain at the property.
- 2.5.** Applicants awarded a Band 2 priority include those with an urgent medical or care need to be rehoused, tenants who are under-occupying by more than one bedroom or succeeding to an under-occupied tenancy.
- 2.6.** Those awarded a Band 3 priority include homeless applicants who are owed a homeless duty, those who have a medical or care need to move, those moving on from care or supported housing, those who are overcrowded by two or more bedrooms and those who are under-occupying by one bedroom.
- 2.7.** The Band 4 priority is awarded to applicants who are not adequately housed but do not meet any of the other priority criteria. It is also awarded to

applicants who are adequately accommodated with a valid notice to quit and non-statutory homeless applicants.

- 2.8.** Lastly, applicants placed in Band 5 in the 'Housing Waiting List' are considered to be adequately housed and have no priority need to be accommodated. As a result of changes to the housing allocations policy which were approved by Cabinet in January 2019, since April 2019 there have been no new applications accepted into Band 5, except for those who are eligible for Sheltered Housing.
- 2.9.** Other changes to qualifying criteria within the housing allocations policy saw the length of time required to establish a local connection increase from 5 years to 6 years. Since April 2019, applications have not been accepted where the length of time for a local connection is less than six years. The family local connection was amended to only include parents, siblings, children and those who have previously acquired parental responsibility for the applicant; however, the Council reserves the right to use discretion to award a family local connection in exceptional circumstances outside the defined criteria. Finally, local connection is no longer awarded solely based on employment within the borough.
- 2.10.** The 'Transfer List' is specifically for current Council and Registered Provider tenants in the borough with no priority need but who wish to move to a different property.

3. Supply and Demand

- 3.1.** The table below provides a snapshot of the Council's housing stock by property type and size as of 31 March 2020. At this point, it can be seen that almost half of the properties in the Council's stock were houses, and over a third of the overall stock were three-bedroom houses specifically.

Band/List	0/1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed+	Total
Bungalow	488	16	20	1	525 (5.4%)
Flat	2542	1363	204	0	4109 (42.0%)
House	22	824	3612	238	4696 (48.0%)
Maisonette	0	74	371	4	449 (4.6%)
HMO Rooms	8	0	0	0	8 (<0.1%)
Total	3060 (31.2%)	2277 (23.3%)	4207 (43.0%)	243 (2.5%)	9787 (100%)

- 3.2.** The next table gives an indication of demand based on the identified number of bedrooms required by applicants and subsequently breaks this down by

priority banding. It can be seen that 0/1 bedroom properties were in highest demand based on household need for the Housing Waiting List overall, however the table does provide a breakdown between applicants who would be eligible for Sheltered Housing and those who would be applying for only general needs properties. The percentage of Transfer Lists applicants seeking a property with three or more bedrooms were far higher than those on the Housing Waiting List, who instead needed properties with two or fewer bedrooms.

Band/List	0/1 bed (General Needs)	1 bed (Sheltered Housing)	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed+
Band 1	1	1	0	1	0
Band 2	52	76	18	3	0
Band 3	135	121	158	61	29
Band 4	2169	184	1431	511	138
Band 5	811	479	821	449	85
Total Waiting List	3168 (41.0%)	861 (11.1%)	2428 (31.4%)	1025 (13.2%)	252 (3.3%)
	4092 (52.1%)				
Transfer List	281 (17.2%)	459 (28.1%)	470 (28.7%)	344 (21.0%)	81 (5.0%)
	740 (45.3%)				
Total Housing Register	3449 (36.8%)	1320 (14.1%)	2898 (30.9%)	1369 (14.6%)	333 (3.6%)
	4769 (50.9%)				

- 3.3.** Finally, taking the data from both of the above tables, it is possible to identify the demand from those with Housing Register applications in relation to the total levels of stock held by the Council. At the end of the 2019/20 financial year, it can be seen that for every one hundred 0/1 bed properties in the Council's stock there were 156 applicants on the Housing Register. Conversely, there were only 33 applicants for every one hundred three-bed properties due to the prevalence of this property type in the Council's stock.

Band/List	0/1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed+	Total
Application Bedroom Need	4769	2898	1369	333	9369
Properties in Stock	3060	2277	4207	243	9787
Application to Stock Ratio	1.56:1	1.27:1	0.33:1	1.37:1	0.96:1

3.4. It should be noted that these ratios do not indicate the number of applicants per available or advertised property, and instead use the overall number of Council-owned properties.

4. Adverts, Bidding and Offers

4.1. General Needs Property Adverts

4.1.1 The Council's housing allocations policy sets out the aim that 25% of all available properties are to be allocated to applicants on the Transfer List. These properties are only advertised exclusively for Transfer list applicants for one bidding cycle. If no Transfer List applicants place any bids on a given property, that property will then be advertised to applicants on the Housing Waiting List in the next bidding cycle.

4.1.2 The below table provides an overview of the number of general needs properties which were advertised through the Council's choice based lettings system (excluding those for the accessible housing register) and identifies the percentage of properties which were made available for Transfer List applicants' bids. These figures also include adverts for properties owned or managed by other social housing providers in the borough.

Band/List	0/1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed+	Total
Advertised to Housing Waiting List Only	99	85	76	15	275
Advertised to Transfer List only	9	17	23	1	50
Advertised to Transfer List, then Housing Waiting List	2	1	1	0	4
Total advertised	110	103	100	16	329

Band/List	0/1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed+	Total
Of which, advertised to Transfer List	11	18	24	1	54
% advertised to Transfer List	10%	17%	24%	6%	16%

- 4.2. Across the year, it can be seen that a total of 54 general needs properties were advertised to applicants on the Transfer List, which equates to 16% of all advertised general needs properties. Of these, 4 properties were subsequently to Housing Waiting List applicants.
- 4.3. The Housing Allocations team work to ensure that the properties allocated to transfer applicants represents a fair mix of property types and areas. In order to ensure that this can be achieved, a review of methodology and reporting will be undertaken to best meet the needs of those on the Transfer List.
- 4.4. Through its allocations policy, the Council sets aside 20% of advertised properties for applicants with a working household member. The 20% includes properties advertised for the Waiting List and the Transfer List, and only those deemed eligible can bid for these properties. In 2019/20, 53 general needs properties were advertised to working households on the Housing Waiting List out of a total of 287, and 18 general needs properties were advertised to working households on the Transfer List out of 67.

Overall, 71 properties were advertised to working households out of a total of 354, which represents 20.1% of advertised properties.

4.5. Bidding

- 4.5.1 Approximately 55,000 bids were submitted across the 451 properties which were advertised through the choice based lettings system in the 2019/20 financial year, which means that each property attracted 122 bids on average. This average, however, does not allow for the differing levels of demand between general needs properties and sheltered housing properties.
- 4.5.2 The first table below shows the ten general needs properties with the highest number of bids in 2019/20. It can be seen that all ten of the general needs properties advertised for the Housing Waiting List with the highest bids received over 400 bids each. The most bids received for a general needs Transfer List property was 126.

	General Needs Housing Waiting List	General Needs Transfer List
1	460 bids - 2 bedroom council owned house in Grays advertised in July 2019	126 bids - 2 bedroom council owned house in Grays advertised in May 2019

	General Needs Housing Waiting List	General Needs Transfer List
2	460 bids - 2 bedroom council owned house in South Ockendon advertised in December 2019	87 bids - 2 bedroom council owned house in South Ockendon advertised in September 2019
3	455 bids - 2 bedroom council owned house in Tilbury advertised in August 2019	85 bids - 3 bedroom council owned house in Stanford Le Hope advertised in February 2020
4	444 bids - 2 bedroom council owned house in South Ockendon advertised in August 2019	79 bids - 2 bedroom council owned house in Tilbury advertised in September 2019
5	434 bids - 2 bedroom council owned house in South Ockendon advertised in January 2020	75 bids - 2 bedroom council owned house in Tilbury advertised in March 2020
6	433 bids - 2 bedroom council owned flat in South Ockendon advertised in June 2019	74 bids - 3 bedroom council owned house in Stifford Clays advertised in August 2019
7	428 bids - 2 bedroom council owned house in Orsett advertised in October 2019	71 bids - 3 bedroom council owned house in Chadwell St Mary advertised in September 2019
8	425 bids - 2 bedroom council owned house in Grays advertised in January 2020	66 bids - 3 bedroom council owned house in Chadwell St Mary advertised in August 2019
9	413 bids - 2 bedroom council owned house in South Ockendon advertised in November 2019	65 bids - 3 bedroom council owned house in Corringham advertised in May 2019
10	412 bids - 2 bedroom housing association owned flat in Grays advertised in July 2019	62 bids - 3 bedroom council owned house in Chadwell St Mary advertised in January 2020

4.5.3 In contrast, out of the ten sheltered housing properties which received the highest number of bids which were advertised for the Housing Waiting List, only one attracted more than 40 bids, with the Transfer List properties receiving 12 bids or fewer.

	Sheltered Housing Housing Waiting List	Sheltered Housing Transfer List
1	45 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Grays advertised in June 2019	12 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Stanford Le Hope advertised in January 2020
2	36 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Grays advertised in October 2019	10 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Grays advertised in May 2019
3	35 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Grays advertised in April 2019	9 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Grays advertised in November 2019
4	34 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Stanford Le Hope advertised in May 2019	8 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Stanford Le Hope advertised in February 2020

	Sheltered Housing Housing Waiting List	Sheltered Housing Transfer List
5	34 bids - 1 bedroom council owned bungalow in Chadwell St Mary advertised in August 2019	7 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Aveley advertised in June 2019
6	34 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Grays advertised in October 2019	5 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in South Ockendon advertised in November 2019
7	31 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Stanford Le Hope advertised in September 2019	5 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Corringham advertised in December 2019
8	30 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Stanford Le Hope advertised in July 2019	4 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Corringham advertised in October 2019
9	30 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Corringham advertised in October 2019	3 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Grays advertised in March 2020
10	29 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Stanford Le Hope advertised in July 2019	3 bids - 1 bedroom council owned flat in Grays advertised in March 2020

4.6. Offers

4.6.1 The below table provides the average length of time for successful applicants in 2019/20 between being awarded a priority banding and being made an offer of general needs accommodation as a result of bidding through the choice based lettings system.

Band/List	0/1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed+	Average
Band 1	0y 1m 11d	N/A	N/A	N/A	0y 1m 11d
Band 2	1y 5m 4d	0y 6m 18d	0y 4m 22d	0y 5m 21d	0y 11m 12d
Band 3	0y 7m 11d	0y 6m 19d	0y 3m 24d	0y 11m 10d	0y 6m 13d
Band 4	3y 9m 15d	5y 11m 22d	4y 1m 14d	N/A	4y 1m 19d
Band 5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Housing Waiting List	1y 6m 7d	0y 10m 14d	1y 3m 21d	0y 10m 14d	1y 2m 23d
Transfer List	4y 7m 7d	5y 0m 26d	4y 2m 14d	1y 8m 17d	4y 5m 13d
Housing Register	1y 8m 16d	1y 5m 4d	1y 11m 26d	0y 10m 29d	1y 8m 2d

4.6.2 It can be seen that, on average, applicants in Band 3 were successfully offered a property quicker than applicants in Band 2, despite Band 2

applicants having a higher priority, which can be explained in part due to the qualifications for a Band 2 priority. A Band 2 priority can be awarded to a tenant who is seeking to downsize by two or more bedrooms. As there is no time restriction for this priority to be removed from the housing register application, in this case, applicants will often wait for specific property types or locations to become available before bidding.

4.6.3 In addition to the above, a Band 2 priority can be awarded following a referral to the Housing Adaptation Panel. Applicants who are awarded this priority are only able to bid for properties which meet, or can be adapted to meet their needs, as assessed by the Housing Occupational Therapist, and all bids must be within the bedroom requirement for the size of the household. Due to these stipulations, it often takes applicants longer to secure a property which is suitable for their needs when compared to applicants in other, lower priority bands.

4.7. Within sheltered housing, the average length of time between being awarded a priority banding and subsequently being offered a property in 2019/20 remained fairly consistent across all bands. This information can be seen in the table below.

Band/List	1 bed
Band 2	1y 0m 29d
Band 3	1y 1m 3d
Band 4	1y 4m 20d
Band 5	2y 10m 8d
Housing Waiting List	1y 5m 3d
Transfer List	2y 0m 29d
Housing Register	1y 5m 24d

4.8. Finally, the below table indicates the average length of time between a priority banding being awarded to an actively bidding application and the end of the 2019/20 financial year. To be considered to be actively bidding for this report, the applicant would have had to have placed at least one bid during the 2019/20 financial year. As demonstrated in an earlier table, only 30.3% of the Housing Register could be considered to have been actively bidding.

Band/List	0/1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed+	Average
Band 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Band 2	1y 8m 6d	1y 9m 7d	0y 6m 5d	N/A	1y 7m 28d
Band 3	1y 2m 11d	0y 10m 4d	0y 7m 26d	0y 10m 14d	0y 11m 20d
Band 4	2y 9m 28d	3y 0m 19d	2y 7m 15d	2y 8m 21d	2y 10m 16d
Band 5	4y 0m 16d	3y 11m 7d	4y 3m 2d	4y 5m 24d	4y 0m 24d
Housing Waiting List	2y 10m 19d	3y 1m 6d	2y 11m 11d	2y 6m 14d	2y 11m 17d
Transfer List	2y 6m 22d	2y 10m 14d	2y 11m 10d	4y 9m 20d	2y 10m 15d
Housing Register	2y 10m 11d	3y 0m 25d	2y 11m 11d	2y 8m 4d	2y 11m 13d

4.9. Direct Offers

4.9.1 At times it is necessary to make a direct offer of a property outside of the choice based lettings scheme. For example, a property will be identified for a specific applicant and offered to them without being advertised through the bidding process. The number of such moves is a minority of the total available properties; however, this is dependent on the number of cases being identified and may vary from year to year.

4.9.2 Properties let through direct offers are not advertised, and results are not published due to the nature of the cases requiring such moves and the need for confidentiality in many instances.

4.9.3 Direct offers are used in, but are not limited to, the following circumstances:

- Priority cases with a risk of harm or delayed discharge from hospital
- Management moves and temporary decants
- Extra Care properties
- Court Orders
- Multi-agency public protection agreements (MAPPA)
- Some homeless households
- Applicants living in housing with severe hazards
- Properties identified as suitable for supported housing.

4.9.4 A review of records indicates that 33 applicants accepted a direct offer of accommodation in the 2019/20 financial year.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

5.1. The Council's housing allocations policy sets out that regular reports will be provided to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee to outline how properties have been advertised and who has been successful. These reports should also include details regarding who is on the waiting lists, the number of priorities awarded, average waiting times and other statistical information as deemed necessary.

6. **Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact**

6.1. There is no impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance or to wider communities as a result of this update paper.

7. **Implications**

7.1. **Financial**

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**
Assistant Director - Finance

As an update report on action taken, there are no finance implications directly arising from this report.

7.2. **Legal**

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**
Deputy Head of Law and Deputy Monitoring Officer

Given that this is an update report, there are no legal implications directly arising from it.

The allocation of housing by local housing authorities is regulated by Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 (HA 1996). A local housing authority (LHA) must comply with the provisions of Part VI when allocating housing accommodation (section 159(1), HA 1996). However, subject to this compliance, authorities may otherwise allocate housing in any manner they consider appropriate (section 159(7), HA 1996).

7.3. **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer

This report presents the outcomes of the activity undertaken to allocate social housing in the 2019/20 financial year. The Council follows its housing allocations policy in advertising and offering properties, and this work is

carried out in line with the identified housing need of each individual household.

As such, there are no diversity and equality implications directly arising from this report.

7.4. Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

Not applicable

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

9. Appendices to the report

- N/A

Report Author:

Ryan Farmer

Housing Strategy and Quality Manager

Business Improvement - Housing

19 January 2021	ITEM: 9
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Housing Service COVID-19 Update	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A
Report of: Ryan Farmer – Housing Strategy and Quality Manager	
Accountable Assistant Director: Carol Hinvest – Assistant Director of Housing	
Accountable Director: Roger Harris – Corporate Director, Adults, Housing and Health	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

This report provides an update regarding the impact of COVID-19 on the Housing department, primarily with regards to the Housing Solutions service.

1. Recommendation

- 1.1. **Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note and comment on the contents of this update report.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1. The Government’s ‘Stay at Home’ guidance on 23 March 2020, introduced as a result of the COVID-10 pandemic, has had a significant impact on the delivery of services as well as on the lives of citizens who use the Council’s Housing services.

The Housing service of Thurrock Council, much like the wider organisation, has worked to mitigate and manage the operational and financial challenges brought by COVID-19.

- 2.2. Temporary suspensions, alterations and reductions in service provision have been implemented throughout the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This report provides further details and also outlines the efforts which have been made to address these challenges.

3. Housing Solutions

- 3.1. Following Government guidance on 26 March 2020 to bring 'everyone in', the Council worked to identify and provide accommodation to all known rough sleepers. By the end of December 2020, accommodation had been provided to 58 individuals (55 'households' comprised of 52 single people and three couples) who were rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping.
- 3.2. Temporary accommodation for 26 households has been provided locally, with 29 households provided with temporary accommodation in nearby areas. Support services and voluntary organisations have worked alongside the Council to provide food and supplies to those who have been provided with bed and breakfast accommodation.
- 3.3. Each of the 14 individuals with identified mental health needs accommodated by the Council has received an assessment by the Senior Mental Health Practitioner in the Housing Solutions team, as well as being offered a robust care, housing and support assessment undertaken by the Council's support provider Sanctuary Housing to ensure that there was a clear picture of each individual's support needs.
- 3.4. Tailored offers of support have been provided to individuals, and the team are continuing to work to ensure that no-one accommodated returns to the street. The Council aims to provide settled accommodation for long-term housing for these individuals, to help to support them to make positive transitions into independent living.
- 3.5. At the time of writing, a total of 25 households had moved on from the temporary accommodation which had been provided by the Council. 20 of these households have been assisted to find and secure accommodation in the private rental sector, of which nine are located within Thurrock. Twelve households have moved on from the temporary accommodation of their own accord, and nine individuals have returned to prison. Regular contact continues to be made to all those who the Council continues to accommodate as part of this work.
- 3.6. One of the most common causes of homelessness in Thurrock is as a result of landlords imposing eviction measures in the private rental sector. A national moratorium on eviction proceedings which was implemented by the Government in March 2020 expired in September 2020.

There is concern that court proceedings recommencing will lead to an increase in the number of households presenting as homeless throughout winter. However, the Government has taken mitigating action by extending the eviction notice period which landlords must give to tenants to six months in all but the most serious cases, such as where anti-social behaviour or domestic abuse is a factor.

As the wider economic impacts of the pandemic are felt, such as at the conclusion of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme at the end of April 2021, there may be an increase in pressure on the Housing Solutions service.

3.7. Grants and Funding

- 3.7.1 At the time of writing, there were no further updates to the amounts of grants or additional funding for Housing services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic compared to the figures reported to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2020. For ease of reference, these tables are provided again in this report.

Funding	Amount
Overall Council Allocation of COVID-19 Support Fund	£14,257,000
Allocation to Housing General Fund	£ 2,041,000

Income Loss Compensation Scheme	Amount
Private Sector Housing	£ 97,000

Central Grant Funding	Amount
Cold Weather Fund	£ TBC
Flexible Homelessness Support Grant	£ 512,504
Homelessness Reduction Grant	£ 195,794
Rough Sleeping Funding	£ 258,674
COVID-19 Response Funding	£ 6,000
Next Steps Accommodation Payment	£ 75,000

4. Ongoing Response and Impact on Service Delivery

- 4.1. The COVID-19 pandemic presents an ever-changing challenge for the Housing service to manage. The Housing service actively reviews public health and government guidance to ensure that services continue to be delivered safely wherever possible, in line with any changing legislation. This activity also means that appropriate action can be taken to alter or reduce services if necessary due to local restrictions.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- 5.1. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to test the resilience of the Housing service, and this report continues to detail the action taken in response to maintain the provision of critical services in the most challenging of times. This document can be referred to in any upcoming exercises to identify and review the 'lessons learned'.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1. There is no impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance or to wider communities as a result of this update paper.

7. Implications

7.1. Financial

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**
Assistant Director - Finance

COVID-19 has had a financial impact on service delivery across the Housing service. Where relevant, namely in relation to financial demands relating to homelessness and rough sleeping, additional costs are being recorded against the central government funding allocations.

In relation to rent loss, this will continue to be monitored as part of the Housing Revenue Account's forecast budget outturn position, and reported corporately.

A continued increase in the number of existing tenants claiming Universal Credit poses a significant financial risk to the stability of the Housing Revenue Account.

7.2. Legal

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**
Deputy Head of Law and Deputy Monitoring Officer

As an update report on action taken, there are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

7.3. Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer

As an update report on action taken, there are no diversity and equality implications directly arising from this report.

7.4. **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

Not applicable

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

9. **Appendices to the report**

- N/A

Report Author:

Ryan Farmer

Housing Strategy and Quality Manager

Business Improvement - Housing

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19 January 2021	ITEM: 10
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Housing Revenue Account - Business Plan and Budgets 2021/22	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key
Report of: Cllr Barry Johnson – Portfolio Holder for Housing	
Accountable Assistant Directors: Carol Hinvest – Assistant Director for Housing, Jonathan Wilson – Assistant Director for Finance	
Accountable Directors: Roger Harris – Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health, Sean Clark – Corporate Director of Finance, Governance and Property	
This report is public	

Executive Summary

This report sets out the high level base budget position for 2021/22 following the review and update of the 30 year Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan. The Business Plan is a statutory requirement used to assess the ongoing financial viability of the HRA and its ability to deliver the Council's Housing priorities.

The Business Plan considers whether the revenue streams from all sources (principally rents and service charges) are sufficient to finance anticipated expenditure on housing stock (both revenue and capital), service delivery, debt management cost and recharges.

Local authorities and registered providers have the ability to increase social and affordable rents in line with the Governments policy statement on Rents for Social Housing 2018. This report sets out the proposed rent increases for 2021/22 and the impact on the HRA. In brief, this uses the formula of the September 2020 CPI rate of inflation (0.5 per cent) plus 1 per cent. This equates to a maximum level of increase applicable to a dwelling of 1.5 per cent. This provides the resources to meet the projected increase in cost demands in order maintain the current level of service. For the 2021/22 rent setting process, there has been no changes to the government rent policy issued in 2020.

The transforming homes programme, which is intrinsically linked to the stock condition survey has identified that significant investment is required annually across the life of the 30 year Business Plan. Delivery of these works will ensure properties reach and maintain a decent homes standard. Specific capital investment in certain types of dwellings is also needed, namely non-traditional properties. This

encompasses internal and external features of residential units (general needs and sheltered) as well as other assets such as communal hallways, parking areas, and garages (Table 6).

The Housing service is focussed on ensuring that the HRA remains financially viable, and that the right priorities are set for capital expenditure to ensure residents have safe and secure accommodation maintained to a good standard of repair.

The proposed changes to rents and service charges are essential to ensure the level of investment identified in the business plan can be fulfilled and the HRA property is provided to a standard that primarily meets the needs of residents, whilst also delivering the statutory responsibilities of the Council.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the committee consider the base budget for 2021/22

1.2 That the Committee consider and comment on an increase in domestic rent of 1.50%, in line with the 30-year HRA business plan from 5 April 2021

1.3 That the Committee consider and comment on an increase in service charges to reflect the costs of running each service in line with the 30-year HRA business plan from 5 April 2021 (detailed in Tables 4 & 5)

1.4 That the Committee consider and comment on the changes to garage rents detailed in para 3.10

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The proposed Housing Revenue Account budget for 2021/22 is summarised below, and has been set in accordance with the revised 30 Year HRA Business Plan. This takes into account the long term strategy and financial viability of the service. The Business Plan, in its full detail sets out how the Council will finance the delivery of services within HRA over the next 30 years.

Table 1: Provisional 2021/22 budget summary

	2020/21 Revised Budget - Starting Point	Budget Realignment	Inflationary Cost Pressures	Rent and Service Charge Income	Bad Debt Provision	2021/22 Base Budget	Budget Movement
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Development	219.53	0.00	17.19	0.00	0.00	236.72	17.19
Financing and Recharges	24,405.39	(307.98)	0.00	0.00	0.00	24,097.40	(307.98)
Rent and Income	(49,978.31)	0.00	0.00	(461.81)	167.80	(50,272.33)	(294.02)
Repairs and Maintenance	12,021.19	0.00	89.68	0.00	0.00	12,110.86	89.68
Operational Activities	13,332.21	0.00	495.14	0.00	0.00	13,827.34	495.14

Grand Total	0.00	(307.98)	602.00	(461.81)	167.80	-	-
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- 2.2 Income raised through tenant's rents and service charges is ring-fenced, and cannot be used to fund expenditure outside of the HRA.
- 2.3 By applying a 1.5% rent increase, the HRA will generate additional revenue of £0.462m. These additional resources are used to cover increases in costs in the existing level of services, and to provide further mitigation against bad debt and tenants rent arrears in light of the Covid pandemic. This will also allow the service to maintain its investment commitments into the Capital programme and comply with all of its statutory duties.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

Rent and Service Charges

- 3.1 As detailed in the Housing O&S report on 17 November 2020, the Council has the ability to increase rent charges in 2021/22 by up to 1.5%.
- 3.2 The rent increase has been carefully considered as the business plans seeks to recover its level of resources following the rent reductions between 2016/17 and 2019/20. In order to be financially viable, the maximum level of rent increase will need to be applied. After the application of an increase in 2021/22, tenants, on average, will be paying £10.69 per week less than those levels which would have been placed by following the current rent legislation.
- 3.3 The majority of properties within the HRA are charged at a social rent. However, there are also a small proportion of newly developed units which are based on an affordable rent level (meaning it cannot exceed 80% of the equivalent market rent). This ensures these properties generate sufficient revenue to offset their ongoing associated costs without a wider impact on the HRA.
- 3.4 Based on the overall average of the stock, the impact on properties based on the average rent per number of bedrooms this is shown in **Table 2** below:

Table 2: Social Rent properties

Number of Dwellings by Bedroom	Number of Properties	Average 2020/21 Actual Rent	Average CPI +1% uplift 2021/22	Average 2021/22 Actual Rent	2021/22 Annual Rent Yield
0	245	£ 62.20	£ 0.93	£ 63.13	£ 773,369
1	2,788	£ 75.65	£ 1.13	£ 76.78	£ 10,703,446
2	2,208	£ 82.50	£ 1.24	£ 83.74	£ 9,244,643
3	4,184	£ 103.08	£ 1.55	£104.62	£ 21,886,899
4	222	£ 115.82	£ 1.74	£117.56	£ 1,304,921
5	8	£ 116.86	£ 1.75	£118.62	£ 47,447
6	2	£ 126.16	£ 1.89	£128.05	£ 12,805
Total / Average	9,657	£ 89.72	£ 1.35	£ 91.07	£ 43,973,530

Affordable Rents

- 3.5 The rent setting process for the existing affordable rent properties will follow the same guidance as applied to the properties within the HRA that are charged a social rent. In addition, the Council will ensure that no rent exceeds the Local Housing Allowance level. The impact of a CPI + 1% rent increase is shown in **Table 3** below:

Table 3: Affordable Rent properties

Number of Dwellings by Bedroom	Number of Properties	Average 2020/21 Actual Rent	Average CPI +1% uplift 2021/22	Average 2021/22 Actual Rent	2021/22 Annual Rent Yield
1	49	£ 137.88	£ 2.07	£139.95	£ 342,877
2	182	£ 163.22	£ 2.45	£165.67	£ 753,808
3	93	£ 199.01	£ 2.99	£201.99	£ 313,088
Total / Average	324	£ 162.45	£ 2.44	£164.89	£ 1,409,772

- 3.6 The rent for affordable rent housing (inclusive of service charges) must not exceed 80% of gross market rent. Gross market rent means the rent (inclusive of any applicable service charges) for which the accommodation might reasonably be expected to be let in the private rented sector. Property size, location type and service provision must be taken into account when determining what gross market rent a property might achieve if let in the private rented sector.

Service Charges

- 3.7 In order to ensure that the HRA recovers the cost of providing services to tenants which are specific to their tenancies, an increase to the current charge will need to be applied in accordance with **Table 4** below.

Table 4: Increase to service charges in line with increased costs

	2021/22 Proposed Budget	2020/21 Revised Budget	Increase in Cost	%age increase	Revised Income	Under Recovery
	£000's	£000's	£000's		£000's	£000's
Sheltered Housing	1,359.77	1,313.42	46.35	3.53%	(653.35)	706.42
CCTV/Concierge	1,000.62	966.99	33.63	3.48%	(879.66)	120.96
Estate Services	2,362.96	2,274.16	88.80	3.90%	(1,842.49)	520.47
	4,723.35	4,554.56	168.79		(3,375.51)	1,347.84

- 3.8 Service charges are not subject to the rental increase of 1.5%, but are based on cost recovery. For 2021/22, service charge costs will increase in line with cost pressures. The estimates are based on the projected budgeted costs for

2021/22. Furthermore, following a review of the charges, there is a disparity between the level of the current charge and the cost of the service provision. This will need to be taken into account in future service charge setting considerations in order to ensure that the cost are fully recovered. The charge for 2021/22 will ensure that the increase in costs for the next financial year are addressed, but does not apply the action required in order to make the services cost neutral. The full list and levels of proposed weekly service charges are detailed in **Table 5** below:

Table 5 – List of service charges

Service	2020/21 Weekly Charge	% Increase	2021/22 Weekly Charge
	£		£
Lift Maintenance	3.16	1.70%	3.21
Door Entry	3.34	1.70%	3.4
Communal Electricity	1.48	1.70%	1.51
Bruyns Court Electricity	3.34	1.70%	3.4
Caretaking	0.58	3.90%	0.6
Caretaking	7.59	3.90%	7.89
Caretaking	8.92	3.90%	9.27
Caretaking	12.66	3.90%	13.15
Caretaking	13.8	3.90%	14.34
Caretaking	13.98	3.90%	14.53
Concierge	32.23	3.48%	33.35
Concierge - Piggs Corner	34.75	3.48%	35.96
Sheltered Housing Service	10	3.50%	10.35
Heating - Sheltered Complex	5.78	1.70%	5.88
Heating - Helford Court	9.22	1.70%	9.38

Tenants Consultation

- 3.9 An online engagement platform was provided for tenants to illustrate what any rent increase may mean for each tenant, and the impact for the Housing service overall. The platform also provided an opportunity for tenants to highlight their priorities for service delivery for the 2021-22 financial year.

A total of 457 visits were made to the online portal. Of those which completed the survey, 68% agreed with the Council increasing rent levels in 2021-22, and within this group 58% most agreed with an increase of 1% or more.

When asked to prioritise the areas which tenants feel the Housing department should focus on providing in the 2021/22 financial year, the highest priority areas were delivering planned maintenance and responsive repairs to properties, followed by delivering major works to homes through new kitchens, bathrooms and windows. These priorities were also addressed in the additional comments which were left by respondents. This will be address through the additional resources generated by a rent increase which will allow

the service to continue with investment in both the revenue repairs and maintenance contracts, as well as the delivery of the 5 year capital programme set out in **Table 6**.

Garage Rents

- 3.10 The current weekly charges for garage rents are £10.50 per week for council tenants and £15.00 per week for non-Council tenants. It is recommended that these charges are increased by 2% in order to cover inflationary cost pressures which would be a proposed charge for 2021/22 of £10.70 for a Council tenant, and £15.30 per week for a non-Council tenant.

Capital programme and priorities

- 3.11 The medium term (next 5 years) findings of the HRA business plan has highlighted a need for significant capital investment in existing the stock. These were also documented in the 2020/21 HRA rent setting report, and the key areas of focus remain as:

- Continuation of the transforming homes programme
- Fire safety works
- Tower block refurbishment
- Non-traditional property refurbishment
- Large scale replacements of maintained items i.e. boilers, door entry and water mains
- Refurbishment of lifts
- Additional resources to manage the maintenance and safety of the stock
- Decarbonisation agenda to meet the net zero target

- 3.12 With a view to works required towards the latter part of the medium term, a project is being undertaken to look at the long term sustainable heating source solutions. Presently, the preferred option would be ground source heat pumps. This would address the Carbon neutrality requirements, as well as over the long term providing a much more efficient and cost effective heating source. This would be financed through a combination of government grant funding and prudential borrowing. For the purposes of the business plan, an indicative net cost of £10m has been included in 2025/26.

- 3.13 The medium term financial implication of these works are set out in **Table 6** below:

Table 6: HRA Capital Programme

Capital Programme	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	£m's	£m's	£m's	£m's	£m's
Transforming Homes	10.30	10.30	10.30	10.30	10.30

Major Adaptations	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	
Fire Safety Works	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	
Tower Block Refurbishment	14.42	2.58			
Non-Traditional Refurb	1.72	2.34	3.03		
Garage Works	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	
Boilers	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60	
Lifts	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	
Door Entry Installations	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	
Water Mains	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	
Staffing Costs Capital Programme	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	
Capital financing requirement	29.50	18.28	16.39	13.36	10.30
Carbon Reduction Requirements					10.00
Financing of Capital Programme					
Revenue Contribution to Capital	(10.54)	(10.54)	(10.54)	(10.54)	(10.54)
Borrowing requirement	(18.96)	(7.74)	(5.85)	(2.82)	(9.76)
Revenue Capital financing cost	0.57	0.23	0.18	0.08	0.29
Cumulative budget requirement	0.90	1.13	1.31	1.39	1.68

3.14 Through the use of prudential borrowing and revenue contributions, the HRA is able to finance the cost of the proposed five year capital programme. This will ensure that the Council is able meet the cost of existing statutory compliance works, continue with the transforming homes programme as well as implementing the regulations set out in the Building Safety bill. .

3.15 It is essential that these works are completed within the medium term, and the funding identified within the existing budget to finance the prudential borrowing costs remains and is not used to mitigate cost pressures or bad debt provision. The maximum number of tenants receive a tangible benefit from investment to the existing HRA dwellings, as well there being a financial benefit to the business plan by reducing the level of voids, re-let times, and increased long term sustainability.

4 HRA New Build – Continuing to Build

4.1 The housing developments at Tops Club and Claudian Way have now been completed. This has provided essential additional dwelling capacity to the HRA. In 2021/22, the Calcutta Road development will be fully constructed, and the first phase of the HRA new build programme will be completed.

4.2 In addition, the HRA will have acquired 67 additional properties through the utilisation of its retained right to buy receipts. This allows the Council to avoid having to return these funds to central government and incur associated

interest premiums. This was a targeted project, working to extremely tight deadlines in order to maximise the resources available to the HRA and the Council.

- 4.3 The Council also has up to 22 further properties currently under review or in the process of purchasing. The will further utilise the RTB receipts, and add additional dwellings to the HRA stock.
- 4.4 The Council has a clear ambition to deliver new, quality social housing. Through a combination of prudential borrowing and the application of Right to Buy one for one capital receipts, construction of new housing is financially viable and achievable while also capping rents at an upper limit equal to the Local Housing allowance. Further development sites continue to be identified, and will come forward to Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee through the Housing Development Update reports in due course.

One for One Right to Buy Receipts (RTB)

- 4.5 At the start of the financial year, the Council has RTB unallocated receipts in the region of £8m. Under current legislation, these receipts remain time limited and must be returned, with a compound interest of 4% per annum within three years. The utilisation of the receipts which were approaching their expiration period in March 2021 was through a programme of strategic property acquisition comprising of the following:
- Purchase of 5 and 6 bedroom properties to combat the overcrowding problems some families are experiencing with their current housing allocation
 - Purchase of open market properties
- 4.6 This programme is fully funded through a combination of prudential borrowing, finance leasing and the utilisation of right to buy receipts where 30% of the cost can be offset by utilising one for one right to buy receipts.
- 4.7 The Government has allowed some increased flexibilities in the use of right to buy receipts by extending first, second and third quarters until the end of the financial year without incurring penalties, which was in response to the impact of the COVID pandemic, and the subsequent delay on development schemes.

5 Reserves

- 5.1 The estimated level of useable reserve for 2021/22 are detailed in the table below. Funding within the development reserve is earmarked against the cost of the HRA new building programme, and the housing zones funding supports the development of identified sites.
- 5.2 The HRA is required to maintain a level of general balances, which currently amounts to £2.175m. This balance will be maintained in the current financial

year, and will be assessed on an annual basis to ensure that it remains sufficient.

Table 7: Reserves

Reserve	Estimated Balance
	£'000
HRA General Balances	2,175
Development Reserve	1,659
Regeneration Reserve	1,000
Capital Reserve - Existing Stock	744
RTB Attributable Debt	-
RTB Buy Backs	102
Grand Total	5,679

6. Reasons for Recommendation

- 6.1 The report sets out the 2021/22 HRA budget implications following the update of the HRA business plan. The proposals put forward have been calculated and assessed in terms of affordability. It is a legal and operational requirement that a balanced budget is set for the HRA.

7. Consultation

- 7.1 This is set out in section 3.9.

8. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 8.1 The management and operation of the HRA strives to support vulnerable residents. The 30 year business plan sets out to ensure there is value for money within the Housing Service. The service is committed to the delivery of decent homes for its tenants, and compliance with legislation.

9. Implications

9.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**
Assistant Director - Corporate Finance

Financial implications are set out in the body of the report.

9.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Martin Hall**

Housing Solicitor / Team Leader

Section 76 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 imposes a duty on local housing authorities to prevent debit balances arising in their Housing Revenue Account (“the HRA”). The HRA is a record of revenue expenditure and income in relation to an authority’s own housing stock.

The principal statutory provision governing the fixing of rent for Council property is contained in section 24 of the Housing Act 1985, which provides that authorities may “make such reasonable charges...as they may determine.” Further, it requires the local authority, from time to time, to review rents and other charges and make such changes, as circumstances may require.

9.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
**Community Engagement and Project
Monitoring Officer**

The Councils Housing Revenue Account works to reflect the Council’s policy in relation to the provision of social housing with particular regard to the use of its own stock. In addition to the provision of general housing, it incorporates a number of budgetary provisions aimed at providing assistance to disadvantaged groups. This included adaptations to the stock for residents with disabilities.

10. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council’s website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

None

Report Author:

Mike Jones – Strategic Lead, Corporate Finance

19 January 2021	ITEM: 11
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Housing Development Programme Update	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A
Report of: Keith Andrews, Housing Development Manager	
Accountable Assistant Director: David Moore, Interim Assistant Director of Place Delivery	
Accountable Director: Andy Millard, Director of Place	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

On 11th February 2020, Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee were asked to comment on a list of Council owned site options which had been selected as being potentially suitable for redevelopment for residential purposes. An update report was last given to Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17th November 2020 and this report updates Committee further on progress of that Housing Delivery Programme.

1. Recommendation(s)

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to:

- 1.1 Note progress on the list of housing development sites to be taken forward for further detailed work, involving engagement with stakeholders and communities.**
- 1.2 Note the amendment to the proposed development area at Broxburn Drive.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 During 2020, reports have been presented regularly to Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet, which have established and updated a list of Council-owned housing development option sites to be taken forward for further detailed work, involving engagement with stakeholders and communities. It has been previously resolved that additional sites or amendments to the existing programme would be reported back to Housing

Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a regular basis.

- 2.2 The aim of the Sites Options List is to provide greater transparency on the sites being considered for potential housing development, to address the Council's growth aspirations and housing development targets.
- 2.3 The list of development sites also provides a focus for Housing Development activity, leading to greater efficiencies and improved delivery.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

Broxburn Drive

- 3.1 Following due consideration, the Portfolio Holder for Housing has now agreed that the project footprint at Broxburn Drive be expanded as set out at Appendix A (the area edged in blue highlights the additional area).
- 3.2 This change is to enable public realm enhancements such as parking and landscaping and to enable higher quality new housing designs by ensuring better integration with the existing homes and residents. No demolition of existing homes is proposed. It is anticipated at the time of writing that resident and Councillor consultation will commence early in 2021, with enhanced consideration of the residents that live within the area highlighted.

The Sites Options List

- 3.3 The Sites Options List currently remains at 15 locations. In total, they could deliver up to 699 new homes. It should however be emphasised that these figures remain largely indicative until schemes have progressed to detailed assessment and community engagement.
- 3.4 Progress on these sites is set out in Appendix B. For many of them, community engagement on initial proposals is the next step once the necessary preparatory work is complete. A detailed consultation process was reviewed by Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2020 and will be used on all future consultations for housing development projects.

Claudian Way

- 3.5 The final units at Claudian Way are anticipated to have been completed by the date of this Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee. All 53 homes are to be let within the Housing Revenue Account. Along with the recently completed Alma Court project, all new tenants will be asked to complete a short telephone survey soon after occupation with the aim of ensuring continuous improvement in the housing development process. Outcomes from these surveys are very positive so far and a summary will be presented at a future meeting of this Committee.

Calcutta Road

- 3.6 The 35 unit Calcutta Road project in Tilbury for older people has been designed to the HAPPI standard which provides generous internal space, plenty of natural light in the home and circulation spaces, avoids single aspect design apartments and promotes the use of balconies and provision of outdoor space for the residents. Work is progressing well with an anticipated completion date in summer 2021.

Loewen Road

- 3.7 A planning application was submitted on 30th November for the redevelopment of this existing Council property that is no longer fit for purpose. The site is proposed to incorporate five 3 bedroom family houses for rent together with associated parking to be let in line with the Council's Housing Allocation policy. The scheme has been designed to a high quality and seeks to achieve targets for renewable and low carbon technologies by being a zero gas development. Formal consultation will be carried out during the planning process in line with planning legislation. Subject to Cabinet approval the process to procure a building contractor will commence in January 2021.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The recommendation is informed by previous reports and the agreed Housing Delivery process.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 This paper provides opportunity for Members of this Committee to review progress on the delivery of the Housing Development Programme.
- 5.2 Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee has previously considered the Housing Development Options List on 11th February 2020 and 16th June 2020, 9th September 2020 and 17th November 2020.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 The list of housing development sites aligns closely with the Council's Vision and Priorities adopted in 2018. In particular it resonates with the "Place" theme which focuses on houses, places and environments in which residents can take pride.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**
Assistant Director, Finance

There are no financial implications to this update report.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**
Deputy Head of Law and Deputy Monitoring Officer

There are no legal implications to this update report.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer

There are no equalities implications to this update report.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

None

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 18 June 2019, New Council HRA Home Building Programme.
- Extraordinary Meeting, Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 29th October 2019, Housing Development Process
- Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee 11th February 2020, Housing Development Options List
- Cabinet, 15 January 2020, Housing Development Process
- Cabinet, 12th February 2020, Housing Development Options List.
- Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 16th June 2020, Housing Development Programme Update and Housing Development Consultation Process.
- Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee 9th September 2020, Housing Development Programme Update
- Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee 17th November 2020, Housing Development Programme Update

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix A – Plan showing revision to Broxburn Drive site footprint.
- Appendix B – Progress report on the list of proposed residential development sites

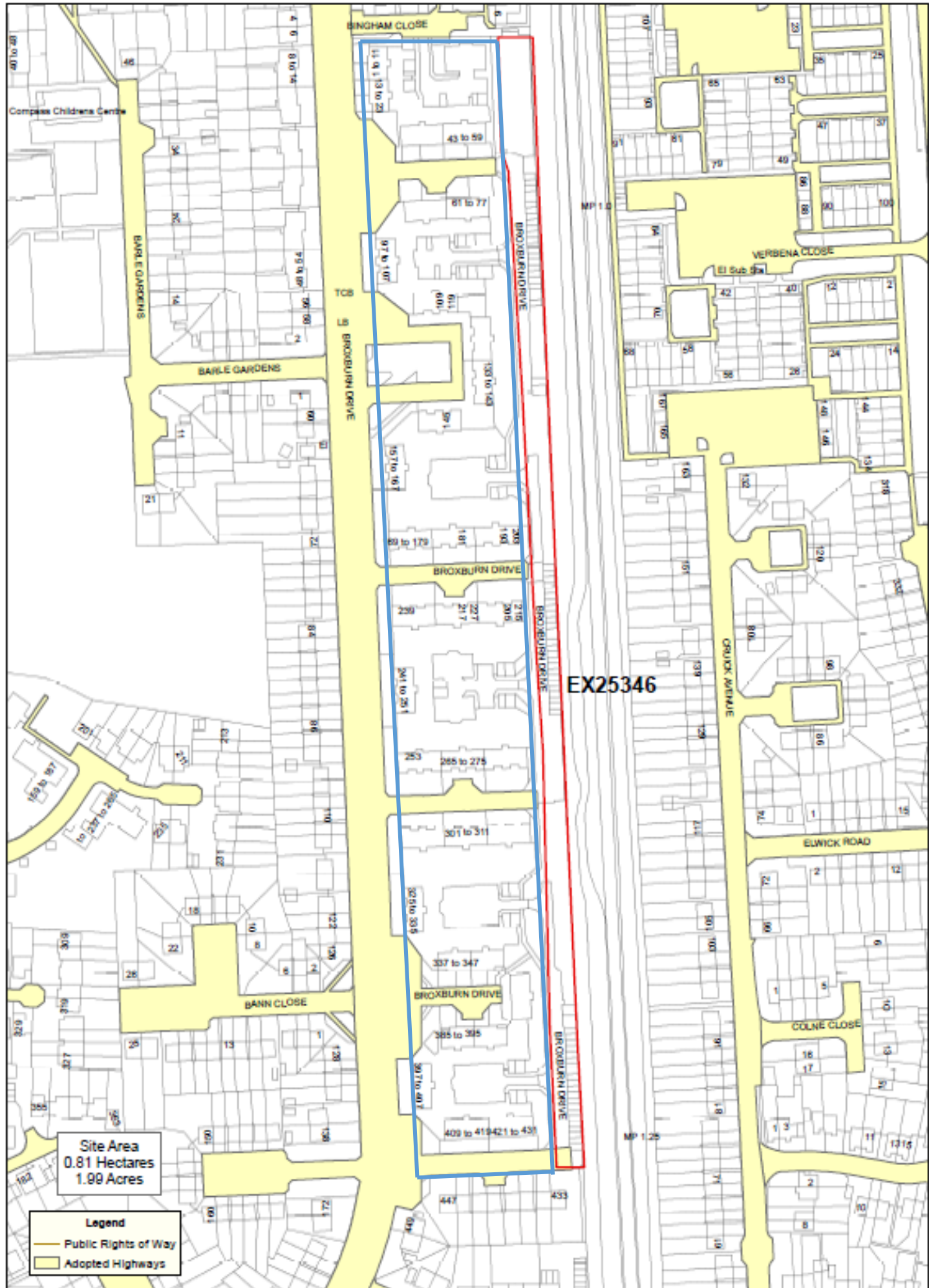
Report Author:

Keith Andrews

Housing Development Manager

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Appendix A



Site Area
0.81 Hectares
1.99 Acres

- Legend**
- Public Rights of Way
 - Adopted Highways

— = Highlights the increased area

— = Original agreed area

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APPENDIX B - SITES OPTION LIST - JANUARY 2021

New Site Number	SCHEME NAME	Potential Capacity	Ward	Update
1	Aveley Library/Hall/Car Park	9	Aveley & Uplands	Library re-provided. The future of this together with the adjoining hall remains under discussion but could provide a minimum of 9 homes if released for HRA development.
2	Culver Centre & Field	176	Belhus	Planning application due to have been submitted in December 2020.
3	Whiteacre	47	Belhus	RIBA stage 2 completed and early Design Council review held. Funding discussion commenced with Homes England. Further design work currently on pause to explore potential linkage to the NHS redevelopment of South Ockendon Health Centre.
4	Prince of Wales Public House	10	South Ockendon	Former public house. Planning application being prepared for demolition.
5	Broxburn Drive	60	Belhus	Employers Agent/Cost consultant, architect and Health and Safety advisor (CDMC) appointed. Site footprint expanded to improve integration with existing. Resident consultation to be carried out early 2021.
6	Crammervill Street/Fleethall Grove	6	Stifford Clays	Capacity Study completed and pre-planning advice taken. Congratriconed access creating difficulties in design and costing. Decision on progress due December 2020.
7	Darnley & Crown Road	90	Grays Riverside	Capacity Study completed and pre-planning advice taken. Initial cost plans being prepared. Next step is to conclude feasibility study prior any decision to progress to public consultation.
8	CO1(Civic Offices).	82	Grays Riverside	Architects appointed and Design at RIBA stage 1 (Capacity study)
9	Argent Street	32	Grays Riverside	Capacity Study completed and pre-planning advice taken. Cost plans being prepared. Next step is to conclude feasibility study prior any decision to progress to public consultation.
10	Thames Road	89	Grays Riverside	Capacity Study completed and pre-planning advice taken. Cost plans being prepared. Next step is to conclude feasibility study prior any decision to progress to public consultation.
11	Elm Road Park	60	Grays Thurrock	Potential development with adjoining private sector led development. No progress proposed at this point as site is land locked
12	Richmond Road	20	Grays Thurrock	Appointment of architects completed. Capacity Study completed and build cost plan awaited. Future of the adjoining Thurrock Adult Community College remains under review and may offer scope for expanded development red line to accommodate approximately 50 dwellings.
13	13 Loewen Road	5	Chadwell St Mary	Resident consultation completed. Planning application submitted November 2020.
14	Vigerons Way	8	Chadwell St Mary	Architects appointed and work progressed. Capacity study complete and cost plans prepared. Surveys ongoing. Financial review and required prior any decision to progress to public consultation.
15	River View	5	Chadwell St Mary	Architects, Employers Agent/Cost consultant appointed and work progressed. Capacity study complete and cost plans prepared. Financial review required prior any decision to progress to public consultation.

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**Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Work Programme 2020/21**

Dates of Meetings: 16 June 2020, 9 September 2020, 17 November 2020, 19 January 2021 and 16 March 2021

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member
16 June 2020		
Housing KPI Performance (2019/2020)	Roger Harris/Carol Hinvest	Officers
Tenant & Leaseholder Satisfaction Monitoring	Chris Seman	Officers
Housing Development Programme Update	David Moore	Members
Housing Development Consultation Process	Keith Andrews	Officers
Housing Social Value Framework	Susan Cardozo	Members
Housing Service COVID-19 Response	Ryan Farmer	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
9 September 2020		
Housing Development Programme Update	David Moore	Members
Housing Service COVID-19 Response - Update	Ryan Farmer	Officer
Garage Project Update	Carol Hinvest	Members
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item

17 November 2020		
HRA Rent Setting Process	Roger Harris	Officers
Housing Development Programme Update	David Moore	Officers
Licensing Houses of Multiple Occupation	Carol Hinvest	Members
Automatic Gates	Carol Hinvest	Members
Fees and Charges Pricing Strategy 2021/22	Kelly McMillan	Officers
Sheltered Housing Decommissioning - Alexandra Road and Dunlop Road	Ryan Farmer	Officers
Housing Service COVID-19 Financial Update	Ryan Farmer	Chair
Housing Development Delivery Approaches	Andy Millard	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
19 January 2021		
Tenant Satisfaction Survey Results and Initial Action Plan Report	Chris Seman	Officers
Housing KPI Performance Report (April to November 2020-21)	Carol Hinvest	Officers
Procurement Of Housing Capital Programme Delivery	Sue Cardozo	Officers
Annual Allocations Report - 2019-20	Ryan Farmer	Officers
Housing Service COVID-19 Update	Ryan Farmer/Mike Jones	Chair

Housing Revenue Account - Business Plan and Budgets 2021-22	Mike Jones	Officers
Housing Development Programme Update	David Moore	Members
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
16 March 2021		
Housing Development Update	David Moore	Officers
Homelessness Prevention & Rough Sleeping Strategy - Action Plan	Ryan Farmer	Members
Housing Strategy Update	Carol Hinvest	Members
Private Sector Stock Condition Survey	Carol Hinvest	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item

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