

<b>7 March 2023</b>		<b>ITEM: 5</b>
<b>Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>		
<b>Estate and Tenancy Management – Roles and Responsibilities</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> N/A	
<b>Report of:</b> Peter Doherty – Strategic Lead – Housing Operations		
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> n/a		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Ewelina Sorbjan – Interim Director of Housing		
<b>This report is public</b>		

## **Executive Summary**

This report has been drafted to reflect the activities of the service during the year. The challenges facing the Council during 2022 are well publicised and this report should be read in that context. Future service activity will need to reflect the intervention the Council finds itself in. Particularly difficult decisions will need to be made on levels of service and methods of service delivery during 2023 and beyond.

This report is being presented to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee to explain how we currently deliver the estate and management services but also to highlight the future ambition for the roles and responsibilities relating to estate and tenancy management.

### **1. Recommendation(s)**

**1.1 The Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to note, comment and challenge the contents of this report which highlights the challenges in providing effective estate and tenancy management services and the ambition for addressing these through a person centred (tenancy management) and locality/place based (estates management) approach.**

### **2. Introduction and Background**

**2.1** The provision of estate and management services in Thurrock is undertaken by the Tenancy Management, Neighbourhood, Caretaking, ASB Teams with grounds maintenance being undertaken by the Clean and Green service under the terms of a service level agreement which is currently being reviewed/revised.

2.2 In December 2019 the role of the Tenancy Management Officer was created.

2.3 The main functions of the role are:

- Undertaking tenancy audits

A total number of 2581 out of 2634 audits have been undertaken for the high and low rise blocks for 2634 between 1/4/2022 to 31/12/2022.

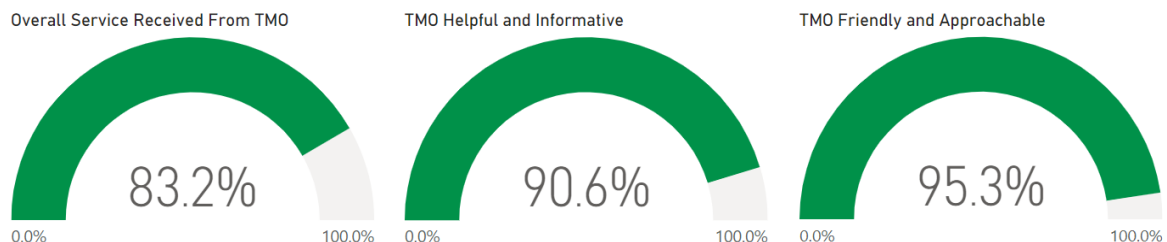
- Functions around starting and ending tenancies

429 secure and introductory tenancies have started and 433 secure and introductory tenancies have ended between 01/04/2022 and 31/12/2022. A satisfaction survey of new tenants whose tenancies started during the same period shows that 89% were satisfied with the overall lettings process, 89.3% were satisfied with the helpfulness of staff and 92.9% were satisfied with viewing arrangements. This is based on 275 satisfaction surveys.



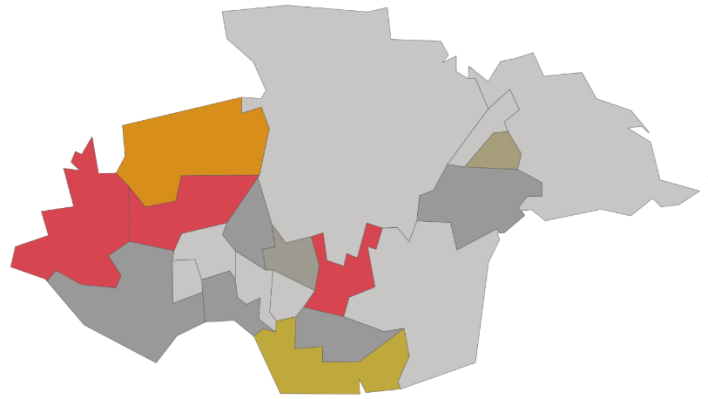
- Tenancy management and enforcement including managing the communal clear process.

A transactional satisfaction survey of tenants who have interacted with their Tenancy Management Officer between 01/04/2022 and 31/12/2022 shows that 83.2% are satisfied with the overall service they receive from their Tenancy Management Officer, 90.6% find their Tenancy Management Officer to be helpful and informative and 95.3% find their Tenancy Management Officer friendly and approachable. This is based on 948 satisfaction surveys.



- Management of low level ASB.

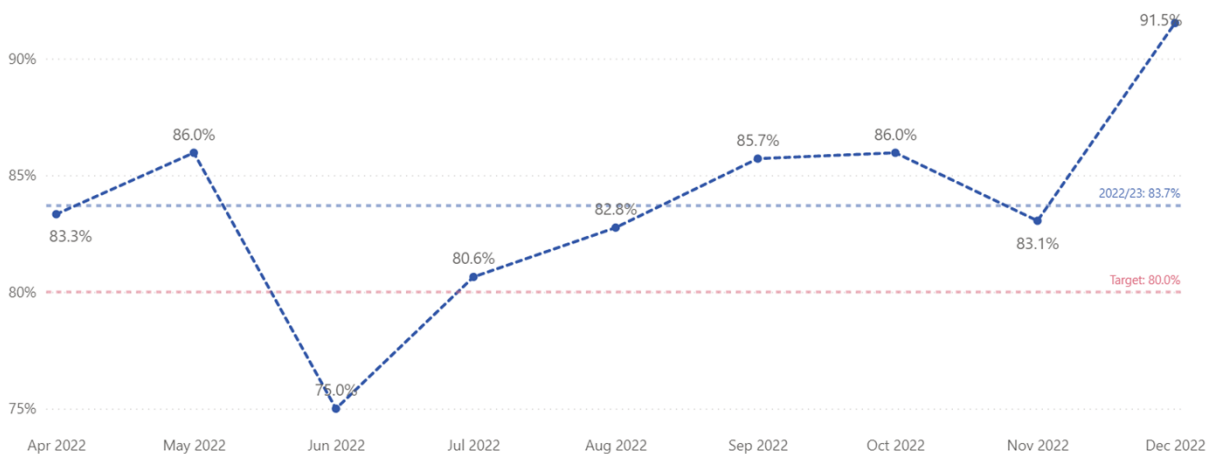
A total of 156 low level ASB cases have been dealt with by Tenancy Management Officers between 01/04/2022 and 31/12/2022 with the highest saturation of cases in Aveley and Uplands, Belhus and Chadwell St. Mary.



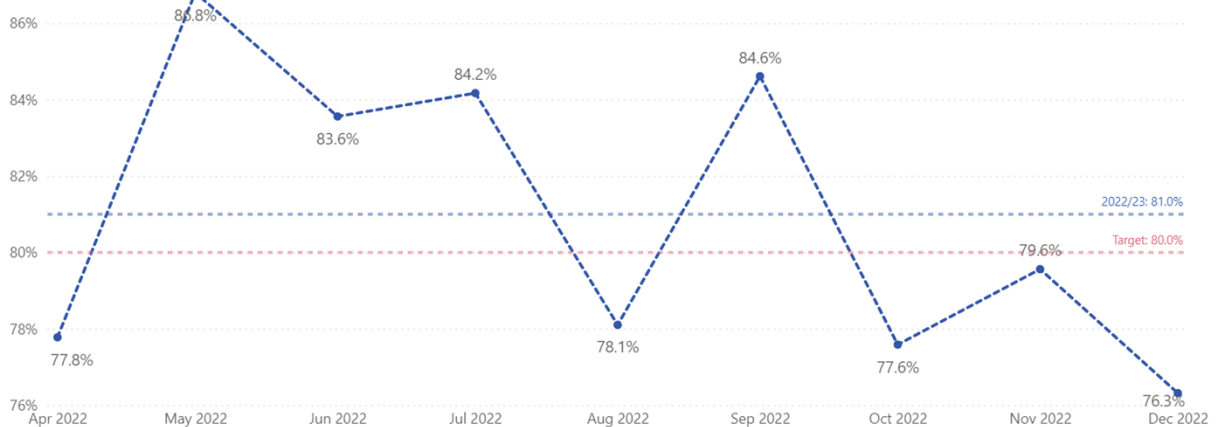
- Tenancy sustainment - referrals and signposting to appropriate agencies  
See Appendix 1 for case studies
- Caretaking and grounds maintenance.

Tenant satisfaction with caretaking and grounds maintenance are measures as part of our rolling perception tenant satisfaction survey. Between 01/04/2022 and 31/12/2022, 83.7% of tenants were satisfied with the caretaking service they receive and 81% of tenants were satisfied with the grounds maintenance service they receive. Over the course of 2022-23 to date, monthly satisfaction rates have not fallen below 75% for either measure. This is based on 1503 completed satisfaction surveys.

Satisfaction With Caretaking Timeline



Satisfaction With Grounds Maintenance Timeline



- 2.4 The operating environment has substantially changed over the last two to three years driven by the covid response, the fallout from Grenfell and cost-of-living issues. As a result the TMO role has become more resident focused, with estate monitoring functions being picked up by other teams e.g. Neighbourhood Officers and Caretakers.
- 2.5 An example of the role becoming more resident focused is in relation to the delivery of tenancy audits. When tenancy audits were introduced some years ago their focus was on combatting tenancy fraud and illegal subletting. When the programme was started, the focus was very much on enforcement and the gathering of information for the Fraud Team. However, over the last couple of years the audits have taken on a more tenant supportive focus.
- 2.6 The current role comes with a number of challenges:
- The current operational environment is often fragmented into specific areas that each focus on resolving single problems. Thresholds and eligibility criteria exist across the sector and housing support and services are no exception. Support may only be provided to those identified as eligible and that support is often standardised and focussed solely on the one single need, determined on a borough wide level.
  - The restructure failed to make adequate provision for the delivery of estate management services which led to an increase in complaints and insurance claims.
- 2.7 In December 2019 the role of the Neighbourhood Officer was created to address the gap in the provision of estate management services and inspections in particular.

- 2.8 The main functions of the Neighbourhood Officer role are:
- Undertaking estate inspections and taking ownership and responsibility for issues and outcomes.
  - Identifying environmental improvements to address key target outcomes e.g. reducing crime and fly tipping.
  - Liaison and partnership working with other services and agencies providing services to the estate / HRA public realm, for example Environmental Services in actioning fly tips
- 2.9 The current role comes with a number of challenges:
- The team's capacity is limited. They have to cover the whole of the borough (HRA land) and as a result they are working to a 12-week rolling programme which makes it challenging to prioritise risk.
  - The team have limited access to digital systems and processes which impacts on their effectiveness and efficiency. For example it is difficult for the team to get high level data on the performance of the services to whom they raise any actions.
- 2.10 The main functions of the Caretaker role in relation to the provision of estate management services are:
- Sweeping and mopping all internal entrances, corridors, staircases and lifts
  - Carrying out visual checks on communal areas to make sure there are no health and safety issues, including trip hazards, broken windows
  - Liaising with Tenancy Management regarding the enforcement of the communal clear process
  - Reporting any communal repairs / ASB or criminal activity to appropriate teams
  - Checking and cleaning the communal bin area and removing any excess rubbish
  - Removing bulk rubbish from communal spaces
  - Removing/reporting any graffiti
- 2.11 The main functions of the Anti-Social Behaviour Officer are:
- Leading on medium and high level ASB cases
  - Preparing and presenting cases for court
  - Working in collaboration with key partner agencies to address individual and group ASB
  - Attending and contributing to regular panels with local police teams in order to action plan high profile cases or estates with ASB 'hotspot' areas.

### **3. Our ambitions for estate and tenancy management**

3.1 The Housing Strategy 2022 -2027 sets the basis for a new way of working for housing services in Thurrock. This strategy and the new way of working follow eight principles:

- We work in partnership with residents to understand the things that matter to them in the context of their lives and the neighbourhoods in which they live.
- We work to provide people with services that are high quality, easy to access, and offer appropriate support
- We will relentlessly focus on reducing health inequality. We will ensure that resources are distributed in a way that accounts for variation in need at neighbourhood level
- The amount of resource we spend on bureaucracy is kept to a minimum ensuring maximum resources are available to provide people with the solutions they require.
- Our solutions look to use the assets within neighbourhoods and do not consist only of the services we provide.
- We empower resident facing staff to make decisions in the context of each resident they serve rather than being constrained by thresholds and one size fits all service specifications.
- We are flexible enough to respond and adapt delivery to changes in individual, neighbourhood and place circumstances
- Responsibility for housing is shared between individuals, neighbourhoods, our workforce and partners. We do 'with', not 'to'. We constantly co-design and coproduce.

3.2 This year we are developing housing support and services which will embed the housing core principles and a person-centred approach in order to provide tailored and bespoke support to residents. This strength-based 'whole person' approach will for example, enable officers to better challenge current delays, bureaucracy, thresholds, barriers and inefficiencies which might arise in delivering services to residents including those provided by other council services and partners.

3.3 As teams and services operate within this broader system, every interaction with a resident or household will present an opportunity for continuous engagement, learning, and improvement. This can be in the context of supporting those individuals by learning about the barriers preventing positive outcomes and designing ways to overcome them, or by identifying systemic issues through shared experience and practice that would require wider resolution.

3.4 For instance, as things currently stand if a TMO visits a resident and identifies a need for a grab rail - the process would require the TMO to refer the matter to Thurrock First who would then assess whether an Occupational Therapist assessment is required but only after the resident has completed a nine-page

self-assessment document. That process might take weeks/months depending on the capacity of the services and resident involved. There is no update provided so the TMO is not made aware of the outcomes.

- 3.5 The new way working would enable the officer to undertake an assessment with the resident using the OT guidelines and to order the works directly without the need for an onward referral thus reducing bureaucracy, time and resources and ultimately bringing services closer to residents.
- 3.6 The new Locality Officer will continue to deliver the core functions and responsibilities of the Tenancy Management Officer including tenancy audits, but these will be delivered within a more person-centred approach tailored to the individual needs of residents.
- 3.7 The Locality Officer role will be underpinned by a locality and neighbourhood model of integrated housing services at a systems and place level which adopts these eight principles.
- 3.8 This will start by way of experiment delivered from the Corringham Integrated Medical and Wellbeing Centre (CIMWC) and which we hope will then progress across the whole borough to the other three localities. We have chosen this particular location because it is the first of the four localities Integrated Medical and Wellbeing Centres to have been built and opened. What's more a number of teams have already started to provide services from it.
- 3.9 The basis of this experiment will be to enable officers to explore better ways of working alongside others such as adult social care, children's services, public health, NHS partners and the wider community to deliver the best possible outcomes for residents and their neighbourhoods.
- 3.10 It is our ambition that through this integrated working officers will develop new skills which will lead to blended roles across services.
- 3.11 At a place level officers will be expected to take greater responsibility for their estates/neighbourhoods. To this end officers will undertake regular diarised estate inspections which councillors and residents will be invited to attend. The inspections will be moved to a digital platform which will enable officers to better record and track repairs and make referrals and will therefore provide greater transparency and accountability.

#### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 The OSC has requested that the Housing Service provides a report to confirm the approach that is being taken to manage estate and tenancy management.
- 4.2 The move to a person centred / place-based approach to service delivery is a key deliverable arising from the Housing Strategy 2022 to 2027 and is a matter the OSC should have sight on.

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

5.1 This report is for information only.

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

6.1 There is no request for any changes to take place to any of the above

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Financial**

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

There are no direct financial implications arising from the report

Any expenditure arising as a result of the changes, or new ways of working will be contained within the existing housing revenue account budget, and contained within the relevant budgeted resource allocations

### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Deirdre Collins**  
**Principal Barrister, Housing, Litigation and Prosecutions**

**Simon Scrowther**  
**Litigation and housing**

As set out in this report the Council has a responsibility under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 as amended by the Housing (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act and the Housing Health and Safety Rating System to ensure that its properties are managed and maintained as fit for habitation, suitable and free from damp and mould. Under the Anti-Social Behavior, Crime and Policing Act the Council has powers and obligations to combat anti-social behavior in its borough.

The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 section 4 (2) require that:

*“The relevant body shall be responsible for ensuring that the financial management of the body is adequate and effective and that the body has a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of that body’s functions and which includes the arrangements for the management of risk.”*

As this report is an information item there are no direct legal implications.



### 7.3 Diversity and Equality

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

The proposed experiment has the potential to support greater integration of housing, health and care services across council and other agencies. The pilot builds on commitments to a whole-systems, human learning approach set out in the Housing Strategy, Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Better Care Together Thurrock – Further Case for Change.

The creation of blended roles, whereby TMOs are able to follow guidelines to commission works suited to individual needs of residents compliments other projects within Adult Social Care with the aim to increase the provision of services that achieve better outcomes for individuals where the right solutions are found first time and in the right place with residents empowered to achieve their version of a good life.

The proposal has the potential to benefit all protected groups and increase access to services tailored to the needs of individuals and households. There are no specific negative implications identified.

### 7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, and Impact on Looked After Children

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 Strategy 2022-2027  
[Thurrock Council - Housing Strategy, 2022-2027](#)

### 9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 - Case Study

### **Report Author:**

Peter Doherty

Strategic Lead – Housing Operations

Housing