

HOUSING AND ANTI-POVERTY SCRUTINY PANEL		DATE: 12.09.2017
TITLE Quarter 4 Performance Reporting – Housing		ITEM NO: 5
CHIEF OFFICER Assistant Director Housing (Housing and Safer Communities)	CABINET MEMBER Housing & Anti-Poverty	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report provides information on the performance indicators for Housing and presents data relating to the fourth quarter of 2016/17. Responsibility for these indicators is split between the Directorate of Community Services and DRES.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The Housing Service continues to provide excellent services and through partnership working, maintains an excellent track record of minimising homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation. The Service has placed fewer households in temporary accommodation than most London boroughs and has improved on its past success in preventing homelessness through specialist advice and casework. This has been achieved in the context of an unprecedented rise in homelessness demand and a difficult financial environment.
- 2.2 Through the dedicated Welfare Reform Team advice, information and assessment services are provided to households affected by the Total Benefit Cap, Under-Occupation Charge and other benefit changes. The team is prioritising the prevention of homelessness, the take-up of employment opportunities, debt advice and the rehousing of households to smaller properties where they are under-occupying.
- 2.3 Tenancy Services has achieved a rent collection rate of 99.15%, against the target of 98% despite the adverse impact of the Welfare Reforms. In addition, following benchmarking and extensive consultation with residents and stakeholders the Housing Service is making recommendations for the transformation of tenant participation and engagement. A key aspect of the revised approach is that the Housing Service will focus on maximising on-line and digital communications, in order to extend the demographic profile and diversity of the tenants who engage with the Housing Service.

- 2.4 The Housing Service is implementing a high level Service Improvement Plan for Asset Management & Repairs 2017/2018 which will set clear objectives for performance improvement across all service areas, including occupied repairs, voids turnaround times, damp properties, planned maintenance and the development of a 5 years' investment plan.
- 2.5 Performance indicators are developed with the intention of providing an accurate picture of housing services in Royal Greenwich. Performance information aims to:
- give an insight in to customer satisfaction
 - indicate the responsiveness and quality of the services
 - monitor finances and budget
 - Highlight external factors that influence housing within Royal Greenwich.

3. Background

- 3.1 All performance indicators are logged on Covalent, the Council's performance management reporting system and are circulated monthly to the Community Services Directorate Departmental Management Team and team managers.
- 3.2 This report aims to provide an overview of key performance indicators (Appendix A includes the full data set of 26 PIs). Where performance targets have not been met, some context and narrative is provided with a view to explaining and resolving areas of underperformance.

4. Customer Care and Communications

4.1 **The number of properties let to tenants under occupying (PI)**

The Allocations team assisted 105 council tenants affected by the under occupancy charge to move, a decrease of 26% on the previous year, when 142 moves were achieved. However, a further 54 households affected by the charge, were assisted to downsize via the mutual exchange scheme.

There are a number of factors that have affected performance in this area:

- As a result of a sustained targeted approach to assist those affected by the under occupancy charge over the last few years, we have already engaged with many of the households affected, who have no means of meeting the shortfall.

- Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) is being paid to 415 tenants - 33% (as at end of May 1236 council tenants are affected by the under occupancy charge) who are affected by the under occupancy charge and as a result there is little incentive for these households to downsize.
- There has been a decrease in the numbers registering to downsize with only 15 new applications from those affected in Q4.
- The numbers of available voids have been significantly lower than expected, in comparison with previous years, and this has impacted on the lettings to this and other groups in housing need.

4.2 Preventing homelessness

4.2.1 Number of households living in temporary accommodation, Homelessness Acceptances & Prevention Casework (PI)

4.2.2 At the end of Q4, 2016/17 Greenwich had accepted 546 households as homeless, despite the Housing Options and Support Service (HOSS) preventing it in 1764 cases, through housing advice, support and casework. Notwithstanding the consistent high levels of prevention activity, homelessness in the borough is still increasing.

4.2.3 Due to our success and the success of our funded partners, Citizens Advice Bureau and Greenwich Housing Rights in preventing homelessness, the Housing Service has increased the annual target for the prevention of homelessness from 1300 to 1500. Officers have analysed the data for the period 1 April - 31 March 2017, in relation to the 1764 cases, where the Housing Service has prevented homelessness and found:

- 60.7% (782) of prevention activity allowed households to remain in their own homes
- 37.2% (506) of households were provided with help and support to access alternative housing solutions such as private rented sector housing, supported housing or accommodated by friends and relatives
- 237 households had their Housing Benefit issues resolved mostly through casework provided by the HOSS, Welfare Reform Team
- Debt advice provided by the CAB accounted for 194 (15.6%) of all preventions.

4.2.4 The number of households to whom the Royal Borough has to accept a statutory duty is rising sharply. As a result, we have had a huge increase in the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation.

4.2.5 The targets for 2016/17 were to:

- accept a maximum of 550 households as statutorily homeless
- have a maximum of 550 households placed in temporary accommodation.

The targets were met. At the end of Q4, 546 households were accepted as statutorily homeless and 520 households were residing in temporary accommodation. This number has reduced from the previous quarter. The HOSS are working proactively with private sector landlords to negotiate and prevent homelessness for households. The HOSS is developing a private sector toolkit and is due to roll out training to up-skill our staff in landlord negotiations, in tenancy sustainment and homelessness prevention.

5. Developments

5.1 **The Acquisition Programme**

A key priority for the Housing Service is to improve the quality and affordability of temporary accommodation, and to reduce the Royal Borough's reliance on high cost, private sector placements, a significant proportion of which are out of the borough. The Housing Service, in partnership with DRES, have carried out the first stage of a Property Acquisitions Programme and have purchased 45 properties from the open market to be used for temporary accommodation. This will assist in reducing the budget pressures, whilst increasing the supply of good quality temporary accommodation located in the borough.

5.2 **YMCA Housing Projects**

The Housing Service continues to work in partnership to develop housing projects for specific client groups; The YMCA housing scheme opened in November 2016 and caters for single people who are under 35 and young parents.

5.3 **Rough Sleeping Grant Projects**

In the context of the increased prevalence of rough sleeping, RBG has successfully applied for and secured additional funding of £345K from the DCLG to develop our new enhanced rough sleepers' supported housing scheme. This will be available from October 2017. This project builds upon our existing provision for single vulnerable adults with a history of substance

misuse and/or offenders. The Housing Service estimates that it will support 78 rough sleepers over the course of the 2-year funding. This scheme will also provide 24-hour staff presence and safe seats in the form of short-term assessment beds for up to 5 days.

In addition, the South East London Partnership (SELHP) also secured funding of £340K from DCLG to develop a South East London No First Night Out (NFNO) Scheme that is projected to work with 324 people over two years in order to prevent people in SE London from spending even a single night out on the streets.

6. Landlord Accreditation scheme

6.1 Local Authorities have to look to the private sector to help prevent homelessness. In addition, welfare reforms have made it more difficult for households on benefits to secure and sustain private sector rented accommodation. Given the increased level of demand for private sector housing and rising rent levels, the Royal Borough has to look at incentives in order to procure good quality, affordable private sector accommodation for households in housing need.

6.2 In 2016/17, 103 units of accommodation have been procured from private sector landlords, providing affordable rented properties for people threatened with homelessness. We continue to work with landlords to improve the quality of their accommodation and have improved 26 dwellings / units of accommodation. In return the authority has access to these properties for a period of up to three years on either a leased basis for use as temporary accommodation or assured short hold tenancies to house vulnerable people threatened with homelessness. A further 25 properties have been approved and will be made available upon the completion of works.

7. Improve Communications with customers

7.1 **Percentage of Stage I Complaints responded to in 15 working days**

Performance improved this quarter with performance now at 94.38% with 141 out of 161 complaints responded to on-time a slight increase on the last quarter.

7.2 **Percentage of Full – Ombudsman enquiries responded to in 15 working days**

Housing Services received 1 Ombudsman complaints this quarter which was responded to on-time, however due to only 8 out of 11 responses being on time in the previous quarters, meeting the annual target will not be possible.

The number Ombudsman complaints are small, the inconsistent and often very short turn around times requested by the Ombudsman make the deadlines hard to achieve.

8. Improving the Standard of homes

8.1 **Improving Repairs Quality and Response Rates**

Descriptions of Repair Types:

Urgent repairs have either a 1, 3 or 5 working day response time depending on the time of issue. **1 working day repairs** include, total loss or unsafe electricity or loss of gas or water supply; or loss of heating in certain circumstances and insecure external window, door or lock. We may however just make the property safe and to return later to complete the work.

3 working day repairs include partial loss of water or electricity supply or loss of heating in certain circumstances, blocked bath, basin or sink, unsafe stairs and banisters.

5 working day repairs – include a leaking roof, door entry phones not working or mechanical extractor fans not working.

Non urgent repairs have a 20 working day response time.

Out of hours'/emergency repairs should be responded to within 2 hours, depending on the type of emergency. Out of hours' emergency repairs are 'make safe' only. A full repair will usually be ordered on the next working day, depending on how urgent it is. Examples of emergency repairs include: no drinking water supply, burst pipes and you cannot stop the water leak, blocked drains and toilets causing flooding, dangerous structures, such as ceilings, walls and chimneys and fire or storm damage.

8.1.1 Voids Turnaround Time – Key to Key

Overall Re-let Times for General Needs Stock (Voids Turnaround Time – Key to Key) has increased to 73 days for the 4th quarter, giving us an average of 61 days for the year. Improvements made during quarters 2 & 3, with turnaround times falling to 51 days in October 2016, were not sustained into quarter 4.

AM&RS has identified a number of improvements, some of which have already been implemented, and it is anticipated that re-let times will begin to fall again over the course of 2017-18. The poorer re-let void performance in the second half of the year is attributable to delays in starting repair works. A significant part of this delay in undertaking void repairs can be attributed to capacity issues within Environmental Health Pollution Control, who must conduct asbestos surveys and laboratory testing of suspected asbestos-containing materials, *prior to the commencement of any remedial works* in our void properties. These capacity issues were causing considerable delay in the execution of void repairs for most of the second half of 2016-17. A revised service level agreement is now in place between AM&RS and Environmental Health Pollution Control.

Void Re-let Times (Key to Key and BV212)

The AM&RS' Quality & Monitoring Team have identified the need to develop a new suite of voids monitoring arrangements, designed to more accurately represent the type of works required, in order to present information in an easy to understand manner. The proposal is to categorise voids as follows:

- a) Minor void (a property requiring a small or moderate amount of repairs that can be completed inside 10 working days)
- b) Routine void (a property requiring a larger amount of repair and/or some modernisation; work to be completed inside 20 working days)
- c) Major void (a property requiring significant Capital investment before being re-let; work to be completed in 8-12 weeks, depending on costs/scope of works)

The new voids monitoring arrangements will be reported from the end of the first quarter 2017-18 and will include detail for key stages in the process. This reporting of key stages is designed so as to enable managers to better target

their efforts at specific fail or pinch points in the process, and so assist the service in delivering the desired performance improvement.

New Lettings Team and pre-vacation inspections

The Housing Service is assessing the feasibility and costing of creating a Lettings Team. The team would inspect properties before transferring tenants vacate and could refuse transfer requests (potentially suspending applicants from the Housing List) until any damage or unauthorised alterations to their home has been rectified (work that AM&RS would undertake and seek to recover the costs of *after their move* under current policy).

The Lettings Team will undertake multiple viewing on void properties to maximise the proportion of our properties that are re-let at the first time of asking.

The Team would build an end-to-end relationship with our tenants from the point of tenancy sign-up, resulting in a fuller understanding of the tenant's needs, right from the start of tenancy, enabling appropriate advice and support to be provided as early as possible. This would strengthen and support our Anti-Poverty work.

8.1.2 Percentage of non-urgent repairs completed in target time – overall and Average days taken to complete non-urgent repairs

83.92% of non-urgent repairs (6,011 repairs out of 7,163) were completed on time against a target of 96%, which represents a slight improvement on the previous quarter. The average number of days for the quarter is 12.37 days a slight decline in service from the previous quarter.

AM&RS has made significant headway in investigating the orders that previously had been identified as 'complete' on Housing v5 (the repairs ordering system) that may or may not have been completed. The data-cleansing exercise identified more than 4,000 orders that were potentially an issue and over half of them have been resolved. The Housing Service is developing a project plan within the overall Transformation Plan for Asset Management, in order to set clear objectives and milestones for improvements to the repairs' performance.

8.1.3 Percentage of urgent repairs completed in target time – overall

Performance improved by 5% in quarter 4 to 75% (3,634 repairs out of 4,869). This is against a target of 98%. AM&RS managed to improve performance this quarter even though there were an additional 478 repairs requested compared to quarter 3.

AM&RS cannot attain the desired target due to 'out of time' appointments being made. These are appointments that are agreed with the resident but fall beyond our target completion timescales. The Royal Borough made this change to improve the service delivered to its residents, allowing appointments to be made to suit their availability to be at home. In consequence, appointments are made which are outside the performance timescale, and this means that AM are completing a proportion of repairs, after the target date, but at the tenant's request. As making customer-friendly appointments remains the service model, AM&RS will be revising the target accordingly for 2017-18, to more accurately reflect the level of performance that is deliverable by the current, customer-focussed, service.

9. Increase Investment and Value for Money

9.1 Maximise the collection of rent and service charges

9.1.1 Percentage of Former Tenants Arrears Collected against current FTA balance

At the end of quarter 4 we exceeded the annual target of 18% by achieving 19.93%.

9.1.2 Service Charges collected from leaseholders compared to amount due (Capital)

Performance dropped slightly in the last quarter of 2015/16, however, following a team restructure and the recruitment of key posts, the service expects that performance and efficiencies will be achieved.

9.1.3 Percentage of rent loss due to void properties

Unfortunately, the annual target of 1.10% was not met, the figure for the quarter was 1.91%. The work currently being undertaken by the Void Improvement programme should improve the performance by reducing overall letting time, reducing the time lost at works specification stage and the

new Service Level Agreement with Pollution Control will reduce the turnaround times for asbestos inspections.

10. Regeneration & Delivering New Homes

10.1 **Delivery of new homes**

10.1.1 **HRA land/property disposals**

Due to the high level of demand for housing, the Housing Service does not seek to dispose of properties, as we need to maintain stock levels in order to meet housing needs.

Housing Services do not proactively look for land to dispose of, land is only sold when we are approached by a resident requesting to buy the land; we only sell, if it is not of value to our tenants. Properties are very rarely disposed of, unless it is not cost effective for us to refurbish them or impossible for us to fund.

In addition to the officer time spent on professional services (i.e. valuations and legal work), the task is resource-intensive in terms of officer time spent co-ordinating the process and dealing with enquiries from people interested in purchasing land. This, naturally, is at the expense of and the detriment to time spent on other key tasks and priorities, which are part of the Council's overall service provision. At a time of cuts in staffing resources, due to reductions in funding from central government, it is hard to defend providing this service.

The income each year is variable. For the financial year 2016-17 the total income received was £35K. No income has been received for the current quarter of 2017-18.

There was no mention of the high value property tax in the government's manifesto and we have received no further information from the DCLG, so we are still unsure if this will need to be funded in the future. Any such requests will be for the Council to decide as a whole how this debt will be funded

Report authors: Louise Morris – Policy and Performance Manager
(Housing and Safer Communities)

Tel No.: 020 8921 5318

Email: louise.morris@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Reporting to: John O'Malley - Assistant Director Housing
(Housing and Safer Communities)

Tel: 020 8921 6017

Email: John.O'Malley@royalgreenwich.gov.uk