

Committee:	Executive	Agenda Item No.:	9.
Date:	4 th April 2011	Category	
Subject:	Rent Arrears Quarterly Report	Status	Open
Report by:	Head of Housing		
Other Officers involved:	Housing Enforcement Manager, Housing Needs Manager, Housing Innovation Officer, Asset Management Officer, Planned and Responsive Repairs Manager, Voids and Welfare Manager.		
Director	Director of Neighbourhoods		
Relevant Portfolio Holder	Council K. Bowman, Portfolio Holder for Housing		

RELEVANT CORPORATE AIMS

CUSTOMER FOCUSED SERVICES – Providing excellent customer focused services.

REGENERATION – Developing healthy, prosperous and sustainable communities.

STRATEGIC ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT – Continually improving our organisation.

TARGETS

There are specific targets of which is reported within this report.

VALUE FOR MONEY

Not specifically from this report.

THE REPORT

This report is an update on the performance of the Housing Department for January to February 2011. This is a development from the previous reports which focussed just on rent arrears issues.

a. Current Rent Arrears

There has been a further fall in rent arrears between January and February. The percentage rate fell from 3.1% to 3.0% of debt. This represents a reduction of around £22k over the two month period.

January 2011 – February 2011

Rent arrears action undertaken

116 visits
104 interviews
53 arrangements made
71 notices seeking possession served
13 court appearances
1 adjournment made by court
7 suspended/postponed possession orders obtained in court
4 full possession orders obtained in court
2 money judgement orders – the tenant has cleared the arrears before court but we apply for the judge to allow us to charge the tenant the court costs.
8 warrants for eviction applied for – the tenant can appeal this
5 appeals to court by tenants in arrears
5 evictions carried out to the value of £14123.10

Examples of action taken on specific cases

Following the receipt of the court date the tenant paid £1600

Following the tenant receiving paperwork from court to confirm that there is a 28 Day possession order on the property tenant paid £1333.48

Tenant paid £310.18 to clear his arrears which have been in existence for several months, also thanked us for our help in obtaining information to enable him to obtain assistance around the home to make life easier for him.

Tenant paid £480.24 to bring rent account up to date, she had been to court and was on a court order but payments had lapsed, when she was advised of further action she did not wish to lose her home so paid the arrears in full.

Notice of seeking possession delivered January 2011 and then court warning letter, Tenants then paid £754.56 in full to clear the account as they did not want legal action to commence against their tenancy

Tenant cleared rent account by paying £1189.66 the week before case due in court.

Possession order gained in court but tenant paid £1043.36 to clear the account and the court costs as he did not want the warrant to be applied for nor did he want to lose his tenancy.

b. Former Tenants Arrears.

The Former Tenants Arrears Administrator successfully applied for the part-time permanent role of Housing Assistant. But is temporarily working additional hours to keep FTA ticking over until a decision is made on the future of the role.

FTAs from previous years have been reduced by over £70,000 this calendar year. Moreover, the role of the FTA administrator has been able to be more pro-active in recovering debt from tenancies that have recently ended – it is estimated that this has prevented an additional £40,000 being added to 2011 FTA balances. This is illustrated on the graph in the enclosed appendix.

There is, of course, a correlation between action to recover current debt and FTAs. When the Housing Department first took over the role of rent recovery there were a number of evictions of people with very high levels of debt, and other people who absconded rather than face action to recover their debt. This explains the high level of debt from 2008 and 2009. Cases from this time are now progressing through the process which attempt to trace and arrange payments.

c. Credit Union

The Tenancy Management Officers have recently held 4 days where they invited selected tenants in arrears to meet with an agency who can offer support with their debts.

During these days over 14 people were interviewed by the agency whilst tenancy management officers and the Credit Union were available to answer any other questions

d. Housing Needs.

The Housing Needs Team have now completed the review of the Housing Waiting list and the waiting list has dropped significantly from 5004 to 1462. All applicants received the initial letter enclosing the application form and a further reminder four weeks later. Letters to all current applicants advising them of their new points allocation will be issued at the beginning of April.

The implementation of the new points did take longer than planned. However, this has now been implemented and allocations have been made from the

system from the week of 14th March (i.e. sign ups from 21st March). However, there were still properties let during the time when the system was not available, albeit a reduced number. From the 1 January to 21 March 2011 45 properties were allocated. This compares to 71 properties for the same period in 2010.

The next stage for the introduction of Choice Based Lettings scheme is the creation of an interface between Capita Housing and Abris the software provider. The specification has now been received and this will be passed back to Capita at the end of March so they can begin working on this.

The interface is the functionality to enable both systems to talk to each other.

The Sub Regional scheme is due to go live in the middle of May. However because of the problems encountered with the review and shortlisting issues it is unlikely that we will be ready to go live at that time so we will join the scheme at a later date.

d. Mortgage Rescue Scheme

The Housing Needs Team have successfully applied for and gained four mortgage rescue applications. Two in the Clowne Contact Centre Area, one in the Shirebrook Contact Centre area and one in the Bolsover Contact Centre area.

e. Tarran Redevelopment

During December 15 people were rehoused from the Tarran bungalows. Work has now started on the site with all the bungalows being demolished.

Repairs Issues.

There has been deterioration in the performance of repairs completions over the months of January and February. This is largely attributable to the poor weather in December (i.e. this relates to jobs that could not be completed in time in December being completed late in January). The Council have written to tenants where there were delays to explain to situation.

This has also meant that the year to date performance is now behind target. For all repairs 94.7% of repairs were completed on time compared to a target of 96%.

However, there has been a focus in ensuring that emergency repairs continue to be treated as a priority. Over 99.5% of emergencies have been completed in time. Only 19 jobs out of over 4000 emergencies have been completed late.

The introduction of mobile working is also having an impact on the quality of the service. Customers are asked to determine if the repair was resolved on

the first visit – there has been an increase from around 90% to 95% of tenants who agree.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

The contents of the report and the performance of the Housing Department

IMPLICATIONS

Financial : Not specifically from this report.

Legal : Not specifically from this report.

Human Resources : Not specifically from this report.

RECOMMENDATION

That members note the content of this report.

ATTACHMENT: Appendix

FILE REFERENCE:

SOURCE DOCUMENT: