

Bolsover District Council

Executive

Date of meeting

Housing and Community Safety – Quarterly Update

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Housing and IT

This report is public

Purpose of the Report

- To inform members of performance within Housing and Community Safety. This report should be read in conjunction with the statistical appendix attached.

1 Report Details

- 1.1 Rent Arrears. Throughout the year there has been a significant shift towards people paying rent by Direct Debit. Whilst this is welcome as it reduces the cost of administration it means that rent arrears can be more difficult to monitor. The main issue which arises is an increase in 'technical arrears' during the year as a result of payments arriving slightly later than the due date. This means that it is only possible to see a full picture of the rent arrears position at the year end. The year end figure saw rent arrears at a level of 2.2% of the rent debit. This was against a figure of 2.7% in April 2015. Whilst this timing issue may create some issues with in year monitoring against corporate targets, the service is still in a position to address rent arrears in a timely fashion. While the level during the year was higher than target partly as a result of this 'timing' issue it is pleasing to note that the outturn rent arrears of 2.2.% is in line with agreed targets and given the economic background which is making rents harder to collect this is an excellent outturn position.
- 1.2 New Build. Work at the seven properties at Rogers Avenue is nearing completion, and the handover date should be July 2016. Work on 6 homes on the site of the former Blackwell Hotel is due to start in June 2016.
- 1.3 New Bolsover. The work is currently out to tender, with the tender assessments due to take place at the end of June. Work is due to start on site before the end of Summer.
- 1.4 Wildlife. The department has been contacted by the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust who were concerned about the roofing and insulation work in Clowne disturbing nesting sites for swallows. We have purchased purpose made swift nesting boxes which have been offered to tenants who have had the work carried out. We have commissioned a specialist, as part of the New Bolsover Project, to carry out both swift and bat surveys on the properties at New Bolsover.

- 1.5 Allocations. The revised policy went live on 1 June 2016. At the same time there has been a review of the current waiting list which has reduced numbers from around 1800 applicants to around 750. During the process each applicant has had at least three opportunities to remain on the list (i.e. initial letter, reminder and notification on cancellation). Some applicants have been removed from the waiting list as they do not fit the new requirements, for example people who have not been council tenants for 5 years, and those who have not provided landlord references. Further analysis will be carried out on the applicants who have not reregistered.
- 1.6 Community Safety. 62 Fixed penalty notices have been issued under the PSPO at Shirebrook and 2 issued under the more recent order at Langwith Junction. Feedback from residents in both areas has been positive. It is planned to repeat an ASB survey in Shirebrook during the Summer to ensure the Council remains responsive to local concerns.
- 1.7 Safe and Warm Scheme. This is the project to replace and/or update heating systems. It has been decided to remove the communal heating system that serves 15 bungalows at Mill Lane, and to replace these with modern combination boilers. Tenders are due to be issued shortly for work at Victoria House and Parkfields.
- 1.8 Central Control. New Monitoring equipment has been installed in Central Control. This new equipment offers much more flexibility and options, for example it is now possible to be linked to the system using a mobile phone without the need for specialist equipment. Although DCC have extended the existing contracts for alarm monitoring and support for an additional 12 months, it is likely that this will be the final extension. Officers are currently looking at a marketing plan to increase the number of self funding clients, and at options to include others who are currently funded by DCC.
- 1.9 Housing Group. The member and officer group looking at sheltered housing has met to consider layout options for Valley View and Alder House. Detailed plans are currently being drawn up by architects and will be subject to a future, more detailed, report.
- 1.10 Satisfaction. The latest STAR survey report has been received from BMG research who were commissioned to carry out the survey on behalf of the Council. A summary of the main indicators is shown below and the outcome of the survey indicates that tenants view the housing service as operating to high standards. .

Table 1: Summary of STAR survey indicators 2013-2015 (General needs and Sheltered Tenants) Indicator	2013	2015	Significant difference
Percentage of respondents very or fairly satisfied with the service provided by their social housing provider	81%	83%	Yes
Percentage of respondents very or fairly satisfied with the overall quality of their home	85%	89%	Yes
Percentage of respondents very or fairly satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live	88%	90%	Yes
Percentage of respondents very or fairly satisfied that their rent provides value for money	80%	83%	Yes
Percentage of respondents very or fairly satisfied that their service charge provides value for money	78%	81%	Yes

Percentage of respondents very or fairly satisfied with the way their social housing provider deals with repairs and maintenance	76%	79%	Yes
Percentage of respondents very or fairly satisfied that their social housing provider listens to their views and acts upon them	60%	62%	No

In previous years the results of the Survey have been reported to members at Council. Cabinet is requested to determine the most appropriate forum to present the more detailed results of this tenant survey.

2 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation

2.1 That members note the contents of this report.

3 Consultation and Equality Impact

3.1 Not directly

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

4.1 Not applicable. This is an update report.

5 Implications

5.1 Finance and Risk Implications

Not directly from this report.

5.2 Legal Implications including Data Protection

Not directly

5.3 Human Resources Implications

Not directly.

6 Recommendations

6.1 That Executive note the progress on a wide range of significant projects led by the Housing Service.

6.2 That Executive note the very positive outcome of the recent STAR survey of Tenant satisfaction and agree the best route for the wider Member Group to consider this information .

7 Decision Information

Is the decision a Key Decision? (A Key Decision is one which results in income or expenditure to the Council of £50,000 or more or which has a significant impact on two or more District wards)	No
District Wards Affected	
Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework	

8 Document Information

Appendix No	Title
1	
Background Papers (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)	
Report Author	Contact Number

Report Reference –