

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

HOMES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 20 JUNE 2024 AT 14:00 HOURS
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 6, COUNCIL HOUSE, VICTORIA SQUARE,
BIRMINGHAM, B1 1BB

A G E N D A

1 **NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST**

The Chair to advise/meeting to note that this meeting will be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Public-I microsite ([please click this link](#)) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there are confidential or exempt items.

2 **APOLOGIES**

To receive any apologies.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

Members are reminded they must declare all relevant pecuniary and other registerable interests arising from any business to be discussed at this meeting.

If a disclosable pecuniary interest is declared a Member must not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless they have been granted a dispensation.

If other registerable interests are declared a Member may speak on the matter only if members of the public are allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless they have been granted a dispensation.

If it is a 'sensitive interest', Members do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, just that they have an interest.

Information on the Local Government Association's Model Councillor Code of Conduct is set out via <http://bit.ly/3WtGQnN>. This includes, at Appendix 1, an interests flowchart which provides a simple guide to declaring interests at meetings.

4 **MEMBERSHIP OF THE HOMES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

To note the resolution of the City Council meeting appointing the Committee, Chair and Members to service on the Committee to the period ending with the Annual Meeting of City Council 2025.

Labour (5):-

Councillors Jamie Tennant (Chair), Bushra Bi, Mohammed Idrees, Ziaul Islam and Hendrina Quinnen.

Conservative (2):-

Councillors Bruce Lines and Ron Storer.

Liberal Democrat (1):

Councillor Penny Wagg.

5 **ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIR**

To elect a Deputy Chair, for the purposes of substitution for the Chair, if absent, for the period ending with the Annual Meeting of the City Council in 2025.

5 - 32

6 **HOMES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25**

To note the Committee's terms of reference and agree issues for the Committee's work programme.

33 - 36

7 **MINUTES**

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2024.

37 - 40

8 **ACTION TRACKER**

To note that there are no outstanding actions from 2023/24.

41 - 76

9 **IMPROVING STANDARDS OF RE-LET PROPERTIES INQUIRY - EVIDENCE GATHERING**

To consider evidence from City Housing on the current position of voids standards and performance.

Dave Ashmore, Director, Housing Management; Mitchell Davis, Voids Team Manager; and Asha Patel, Head of Repairs, in attendance.

10 **SCHEDULE OF MEETING DATES FOR COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND SCRUTINY WORK**

To note the scheduled dates for 2024/25:

2024

18 July 2024
12 September 2024
24 October 2024
05 December 2024

2025

16 January 2025
27 February 2025
10 April 2025
08 May 2025

11 **REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS RECEIVED (IF ANY)**

To consider any request for call in/councillor call for action/petitions (if received).

12 **OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

To consider any items of business by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) that in the opinion of the Chair are matters of urgency.

Birmingham City Council

Report to Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee

20 June 2024



Title:	HOMES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND WORK PROGRAMME
Lead Cabinet Portfolio:	Councillor Rob Pocock, Cabinet Member for Transformation, Governance and HR
Relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee:	Not Applicable
Report Author:	Amelia Wiltshire, Overview and Scrutiny Manager Legal and Governance 0121 303 9844 amelia.wiltshire@birmingham.gov.uk
Authorised by:	Christian Scade, Head of Scrutiny and Committee Services Legal and Governance
Is this a Key Decision?	Not Applicable
If this is a Key Decision, is this decision listed on the Forward Plan?	Not Applicable
Reason(s) why not included on the Forward Plan:	Not Applicable
Is this a Late Report?	No
Reason(s) why Late:	Not Applicable
Is this decision eligible for 'call in?'	Not Applicable
If not eligible, please provide reason(s):	Not Applicable

Has this decision been included on the Notification of Intention to consider Matters in Private? Not Applicable

Reasons why not included on the Notification: Not Applicable

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to enable the Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) to agree key issues to be considered by the Committee during 2024/25 and the scrutiny methods that will be used to undertake this work.
- 1.2 A key aspect of the work of all Overview and Scrutiny Committees will be the continued focus on the delivery of savings agreed in the 2024/25 Council budget and the relevant programmes within the Council's Improvement and Recovery Plan (IRP) where the Committee can add value.

2 COMMISSIONERS' REVIEW

- 2.1 There were no comments from the Commissioners for this report.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

- 3.1 Notes the Committee's Terms of Reference as set out in Section 4.4.
- 3.2 Agrees the issues to be considered at a July Task and Finish Group meeting or subsequent meetings on the impact and implications of savings as set out in paragraphs 4.10 – 4.14.
- 3.3 Agrees the work programme outlined in Appendix A.
- 3.4 Appoints Cllr Jamie Tennant, Chair of the Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as Chair of the Improving Standards of Re-let Properties Inquiry and confirms the membership for the Inquiry Group.
- 3.5 Notes, subject to further input from the Chair and Deputy Chair outside of the meeting, its proposed work programme will be submitted to Corporate and Finance Overview and Scrutiny Committee to enable work to be planned and co-ordinated throughout the year.
- 3.6 Notes the establishment of the Task and Finish Group outlined in Section 4.6 that will enable members to have the information to further develop the work programme during 2024/25.

4 KEY INFORMATION

Context

- 4.1 The Statutory Guidance for Overview and Scrutiny Committees [Overview and scrutiny: statutory guidance for councils, combined authorities and combined county authorities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/121212/Overview_and_scrutiny_statutory_guidance_for_councils_combined_authorities_and_combined_county_authorities_-_GOV.UK_(www.gov.uk).pdf) was updated in April 2024 and re-affirms the role of overview and scrutiny in holding an authority's decision-makers to account remains fundamentally important to the functioning of local democracy.
- 4.2 Effective Overview and Scrutiny should:

- provide constructive ‘critical friend’ challenge
- amplify the voices and concerns of the public
- be led by independent people who take responsibility for their role
- drive improvement in public services and strategic decision-making

4.3 The Council’s Constitution Part B 11 sets out the procedures and functions of Overview and Scrutiny Committees:

[Constitution Part B Roles Functions and Rules of Procedure March 2024 AF \(1\).pdf](#)

4.4 The terms of reference for the Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee are:

4.4.1 To fulfil the functions of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee as they relate to any policies, services and activities concerning housing development and supply, Council Housing management, private rented sector licensing and regulation, tenant engagement, Housing Options, temporary accommodation, homelessness and rough sleeping. This includes:

4.4.2 Collection of rent/recovery of rents from Council tenants/former tenants and overpayments of Housing Benefit from Council tenants.

4.4.3 Housing development.

4.4.4 Council Housing management services, repairs and maintenance programmes.

4.4.5 Best use of housing stock across all housing providers.

4.4.6 Neighbourhood management initiatives and the housing growth agenda (Birmingham Social Housing Partnership).

4.4.7 Private rented sector – licensing and regulation.

4.4.8 Tenancy engagement in the management and development of social housing and Housing Liaison Boards.

4.4.9 Exempt accommodation.

4.4.10 Housing Options for vulnerable adults, children, young people and offenders.

4.4.11 Temporary accommodation provision.

4.4.12 Homelessness and rough sleeping.

4.5 The work programme of all Overview and Scrutiny Committees will align to the priorities within the Council’s Improvement and Recovery Plan (IRP).

Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2024/25

4.6 The work programme for 2024/25 will develop during the year and a Task and Finish Group has been established that will consider what information members will need to identify further issues.

4.7 An initial outline work programme is attached as Appendix A that includes:

- Programmes from the Council's Improvement and Recovery Plan within the Committee's terms of reference.
- Scrutiny of the implications of savings agreed in the Council's budget including equality and equity issues arising from the budget as set out in Paragraph 4.10 below.
- Safe and effective delivery of key services supporting vulnerable people.
- Monitoring recommendations from previous Scrutiny Inquiries and Task and Finish Group work.
- Critical performance issues emerging by exception (this will be defined through work with the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny).

4.8 The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny is providing support to the Council which includes developing a framework which will enable the work of Overview and Scrutiny Committees to add value to the Council's improvement journey.

4.9 When considering the issues to be included in the work programme members are also asked to agree the Scrutiny method that will be used. This can include:

- **Committee meeting single item**, or items, on a public committee agenda: this fits more closely the "overview" aspect of the Scrutiny function and has limited opportunity for effective scrutiny.
- **Committee meeting single theme** at a public committee meeting: This has the capacity to enhance the previous option by taking evidence from a number of witnesses.
- **Task and Finish Group in a day**: provided that these are properly focused, they ensure Councillors can swiftly reach conclusions and make recommendations and are effective even for complex topics. The work of a Task and Finish Group will be agreed by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Task and Finish Group meeting is not public. The outcome of the Task and Finish Group will be reported to a public committee meeting.
- **Multiple Task and Finish Group meetings**: to consider an issue in depth over four or six meetings spread over a limited number of months.
- **Site Visit**: Members visit services or organisations to inform the work of the Committee.
- **Inquiry Evidence Gathering**: Evidence for Scrutiny Inquiries may take place at public committee meetings, Task and Finish Groups or Site Visits.
- **Briefings**: for members to be updated on specific issues.

Scrutiny of the Impact of Savings

4.10 The Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group recommended that each OSC receives a report following the approval of the Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) on the implications of the budget and savings on the services within their terms of reference. This recommendation was accepted by

the Executive and agreed at City Council on 5 March 2024. The Council's Improvement and Recovery Plan (IRP) Governance Principles sets out that there should be clear oversight via forums including Overview and Scrutiny. It also highlights that Scrutiny and decision making is timely and informed, and there is proactive management of risks, actions, issues and dependencies.

4.11 Based on the work previously undertaken through the Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group (November 2023 – January 2024) and the Savings Delivery Task and Finish Group (April 2024) and together with discussion with the Committee Chair, it is recommended that the Committee considers the following issues in its July Task and Finish Group:

- Establishment Reduction (Saving 81)
- Property Acquisition – HRA (Saving 78)
- Shelforce Surplus (Saving 83)
- Service charge increases to full cost recovery (Saving 79)
- B&B Unit cost negotiation (Saving 176)
- TA Investment Strategy delays to capacity increases (Saving 82)
- Income collection and provision improvements (Saving 86)
- Homeless Centre financing (Saving 85)
- TA Investment Strategy delays to landlord incentives (Saving 84)
- Public Health grant funding (Saving 87)
- Property licensing – administrative overhead and absorption rate (Saving 21)

4.12 Cabinet Members and senior directorate officers will attend the July Task and Finish Group meeting.

4.13 The Corporate and Finance Overview and Scrutiny Committee will receive a report in July 2024 on the financial delivery of savings.

4.14 Recommendations and issues from the Savings Implications Task and Finish Group will be reported to the Corporate and Finance Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2024.

Inquiry – Improving Standards of Re-let Properties

4.15 In September 2023, the Committee agreed to undertake an inquiry into improving the standards of Council houses. In November 2023 and following reassurances about the progress achieved addressing the concerns of the Regulator for Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman, the inquiry was refocused to improving standards of void properties only. The Terms of Reference is attached as Appendix C.

- 4.16 Evidence gathering commenced for this inquiry in December 2023. The inquiry group has taken part in two site visits to Council properties, as well as an external visit to Pioneer Housing, another Birmingham based provider. Pioneer subsequently provided evidence to the Committee in March 2024. The inquiry is scheduled to conclude in the new municipal year. Further evidence is being provided at today's Committee from Birmingham City Council. It is intended that this will conclude the evidence gathering phase.
- 4.17 The Inquiry Group membership in 2023-24 was Councillor Ken Wood (Chair); Councillor Mohammed Idrees; Councillor Saqib Khan, Councillor Lauren Rainbow and Councillor Penny Wagg. New membership will need to be confirmed to finish the remainder of this Inquiry.

Forward Plan

- 4.18 The Council's latest Forward Plan: [June 2024](#) may assist Members in identifying future topics. The following reports are of particular relevance to this Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness			
Reference Item	Title	Date Proposed	First Published
012205/2024	Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2024-2029	23 Jul 24	20 Nov 23
012620/2024	Implementation of Updated Conditions of Tenancy	23 Jul 24	26 Feb 24
012651/2024	City Housing CCTV Strategy	25 Jun 24	11 Mar 24
012759/2024	Perry Barr Stock Appropriation for Social Housing	23 Jul 24	01 Apr 24
012808/2024	Energy Company Obligations 4 (EC04) Scaling Up Retrofit Proposals	25 Jun 24	16 Apr 24
012859/2024	Contract Award for Security Measures Provision for Victims of Domestic Abuse	25 Jun 24	29 Apr 24
012890/2024	Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3	23 Jul 24	03 May 24

5 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 The Council's Governance and Stabilisation Plan identified the need to strengthen the working relationships between the Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Chair of the Audit Committee to lead and direct the function. This will include the development of a Memorandum of Understanding that will include the respective roles of Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Audit in relation to the Council's management of risk.

6 IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS

Finance

- 6.1 There are no immediate financial implications from this report as the Committee has been asked to review the implications and impact of the budget savings on the services within the terms of reference, not to challenge or change the financial delivery of the savings themselves. An update report on the performance of the council in delivering the financial savings will instead be taken to the Corporate and Finance Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2024.

Legal

- 6.2 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in the report.

Equalities

- 6.3 The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 6.4 The protected characteristics and groups outlined in the Equality Act are: Age; Disability; Gender Reassignment; Marriage and Civil Partnership; Pregnancy and Maternity; Race; Religion and Belief; Sex, and Sexual Orientation.
- 6.5 The Committee should ensure that it addresses these duties by considering them during work programme development, the scoping of work, evidence gathering and making recommendations. This should include considering: How policy issues impact on different groups within the community, particularly those that share a relevant protected characteristic; Whether the impact on particular groups is fair and proportionate; Whether there is equality of access to services and fair representation of all groups within Birmingham; Whether any positive opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and/or good relations between people are being realised.
- 6.6 The Committee should ensure that equalities comments, and any recommendations, are based on evidence. This should include demographic and service level data and evidence of residents/service-users views gathered through consultation.

People Services

- 6.7 There are no staffing implications resulting from the recommendations in this report.

Climate Change, Nature and Net Zero

- 6.8 Overview and Scrutiny Committee's will consider the climate change, nature and Net Zero issues relevant to the work programme items.

Corporate Parenting

- 6.9 Overview and Scrutiny Committees will consider the corporate parenting responsibilities and opportunities relevant to the work programme.

7 APPENDICES

- 7.1 Appendix A: Homes OSC Work Programme June 2024
- 7.2 Appendix B: Summary of Savings within the Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee Terms of Reference
- 7.3 Appendix C: Improving Standards of Re-let Properties Inquiry Terms of Reference

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 [Governance Review of Birmingham City Council by Centre for Governance and Scrutiny: Cabinet 12 December 2023](#)
- 8.2 [Improvement and Recovery Plan: Cabinet 4 April 2024](#)

Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2024/25

Month	Item/Topic Link with Corporate Priorities	Aims and Objectives	Scrutiny Method	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer	Other Witnesses	Additional Information and Outcome*
June 24	Inquiry: Improving Standards of Re-let Properties	Evidence gathering – City Housing	Committee Meeting single item: Agenda item, 20 June 24 Deadline for reports: 4 June 24 Venue: Council House, Committee Room 6	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness, Councillor Jayne Francis Paul Langford, Strategic Director, City Housing	Dave Ashmore, Director, Housing Management Asha Patel, Head of Repairs	Evidence-gathering programme agreed by the Task & Finish Group. The inquiry directly responds to challenges outlined in the Regulatory Notice.
June 24	Work Programme Report IRP Programme: Deliver Savings and Balance the Budget Governance Stabilisation Plan Priority: Scrutiny will play an active part in the 24/25 Budget development process.	Agree the Committee’s work programme including identification of issues to consider at future meetings regarding impact of delivery of savings based on previous scrutiny of budget and savings delivery.	Committee Meeting single item: Agenda item, 20 June 24 Deadline for reports: 4 June 24 Venue: Council House, Committee Room 6	Christian Scade, Head of Scrutiny and Committee Services	Amelia Wiltshire, Overview and Scrutiny Manager	This is a standard item for all future Committee meetings.

July 24	Regulatory Compliance	Provide oversight, scrutiny and productive challenge to City Housing while moving towards compliance with the requirements under the Social Housing Regulation Bill and the recommendations from the Housing Ombudsman special report.	Committee Meeting single item: Agenda item, 18 July 24 Deadline for reports: 2 July 24 Venue: Council House, Committee Room 6	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness, Councillor Jayne Francis Paul Langford, Strategic Director, City Housing	Naomi Morris, Head of Strategic Enabling	Following agreement in September 2023 to hold quarterly landlord compliance meetings, this cycle will continue in 2024/25.
July 24	Overview of Savings within Committee's Terms of Reference IRP Programme: Deliver Savings and Balance the Budget Governance Stabilisation Plan Priority: Scrutiny will play an active part in the 24/25 Budget development process.	Consider the impact from delivery of savings.	Task and Finish Group	To be confirmed	To be confirmed	Savings to be considered at the July meeting will be agreed by the Committee in June. Future items on Budget Savings and Financial Recovery are to be scheduled.
September 24	Exempt Accommodation Inquiry: Tracking of Outstanding Recommendations	Provide update on progress of outstanding recommendations from Exempt Accommodation inquiry.	Committee Meeting single item: Agenda item, 12 September 24 Deadline for reports: 27 August 24	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness, Councillor Jayne Francis Guy Chaundy, Assistant Director,	To be confirmed	Exempt Accommodation Inquiry 2021 Previous Tracking Report February 2024

		Consider the impact of the recommendations from the Inquiry	Venue: Council House, Committee Room 6	Housing Strategy and Enabling		
September 24	Druids Heath Regeneration Scheme	Provide feedback on the interim community consultation as well as contribute to the consultation in its own right.	Committee Meeting single item: Agenda item, 12 September 24 Deadline for reports: 27 August 24 Venue: Council House, Committee Room 6	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness, Councillor Jayne Francis Philip Nell, Strategic Director Place, Prosperity and Sustainability	To be confirmed	
October 24	Regulatory Compliance	Provide oversight, scrutiny and productive challenge to City Housing while moving towards compliance with the requirements under the Social Housing Regulation Bill and the recommendations from the Housing Ombudsman special report.	Committee Meeting single item: Agenda item, 24 October 24 Deadline for reports: 8 October 24 Venue: Council House, Committee Room 3&4	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness, Councillor Jayne Francis Paul Langford, Strategic Director, City Housing	Naomi Morris, Head of Strategic Enabling	Following agreement in September 2023 to hold quarterly landlord compliance meetings, this cycle will continue tin 2024/25.
December 24						

January 25	Regulatory Compliance	Provide oversight, scrutiny and productive challenge to City Housing while moving towards compliance with the requirements under the Social Housing Regulation Bill and the recommendations from the Housing Ombudsman special report.	Committee Meeting single item: Agenda item, 16 January 25 Deadline for reports: 30 December 24 Venue: Council House, Committee Room 6	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness, Councillor Jayne Francis Paul Langford, Strategic Director, City Housing	Naomi Morris, Head of Strategic Enabling	Following agreement in September 2023 to hold quarterly landlord compliance meetings, this cycle will continue tin 2024/25.
February 25	Ladywood Regeneration Scheme	To enable O&S to contribute to the consultation.	Committee Meeting single item: Agenda item, 27 February 25 Deadline for reports: 11 February 25 Venue: Council House, Committee Room 6	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness, Councillor Jayne Francis Philip Nell, Strategic Director Place, Prosperity and Sustainability	To be confirmed	
April 25	Regulatory Compliance	Provide oversight, scrutiny and productive challenge to City Housing while moving towards compliance with the requirements under the Social Housing Regulation	Committee Meeting single item: Agenda item, 10 April 25	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness, Councillor Jayne Francis	Naomi Morris, Head of Strategic Enabling	Following agreement in September 2023 to hold quarterly landlord compliance meetings, this cycle will continue tin 2024/25.

		Bill and the recommendations from the Housing Ombudsman special report.	Deadline for reports: 25 March 25 Venue: Council House, Committee Room 6	Paul Langford, Strategic Director, City Housing		
May 25						

Menu of Issues for Consideration

The following items had been identified as potential topics for future consideration. This approach enables the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to remain flexible and respond in a timely manner to emerging issues.

This is a live work programme work programme. New items may be added, or items removed during the course of the year. Proposed aims and objectives as well as scrutiny methodology may also be subject to change.

Item/ Topic	Proposed Aims and Objectives	Proposed Scrutiny Method	Additional Information
Affordable Housing (to include Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust Review)	To be confirmed	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
Temporary Accommodation Strategy and B&B Reduction Plan	To be confirmed	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
Housing Management/Tenant Engagement/Tenant Satisfaction	To be confirmed	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
Repairs and Maintenance Procurement	Inform the development of the new contract	To be confirmed	To be confirmed

*Outcome: This will be populated once the item/topic has been completed. It will identify the added value and impact.

Scrutiny Method Options:

Committee meeting - single item

Committee meeting - single theme

Task and Finish Group

Inquiry Evidence Gathering

Site Visit

Briefing

Pre Decision Scrutiny

Corporate Priorities, Performance and Outcomes

Corporate Priorities 2022 – 26:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Support inclusive economic growth | 11 Increase affordable, safe, green housing |
| 2 Tackle unemployment | 12 Tackle homelessness |
| 3 Attract inward investment and infrastructure | 13 Tackle health inequalities |
| 4 Maximise the benefits of the Commonwealth Games | 14 Encourage and enable physical activity and healthy living |
| 5 Tackle poverty and inequalities | 15 Champion mental health |
| 6 Empower citizens and enable citizen voice | 16 Improve outcomes for adults with disabilities and older people |
| 7 Promote and champion diversity, civic pride and culture | 17 Improve street cleanliness |
| 8 Support and enable all children and young people to thrive | 18 Improve air quality |
| 9 Make the city safer | 19 Continue on the Route to Zero |
| 10 Protect and safeguard vulnerable citizens | 20 Be a City of Nature |
| | 21 Delivering a Bold Best in Class Council |

Appendix B: Homes Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 24/25 Savings Summary

Summary

The Council's 2024/25 budget was agreed by City Council on 5 March 2024. The budget included 166 specific savings proposals designed to deliver £149.765m during 2024/25 and a further £76.323m in 2025/26.

Below (see Table 2) is the list of savings that fall under the Homes Overview & Scrutiny Committee Portfolio. A summary description of each of the savings proposals has also been included below.

There are 15 proposals totalling £10.636m that fall under this Committee. £7.236m of this needs to be delivered in 24/25 and a further £3.400m in 25/26. 12 of these savings relate to services within City Housing (£9.536m) and 3 from within City Operations (£1.100m).

The delivery status of each of these proposals is currently being reviewed and further information on progress will be shared with the Committee at the next savings update session.

As part of the monitoring process each proposal will be risk rated using the RAG approach to indicate the level of confidence we currently have in achieving the full target in year. The RAG definitions and criteria are included below for reference (see Table 1). Savings of high value and those assessed as high risk will be subject to a more detailed monitoring and assurance process that will be overseen by the Council's Portfolio Management Office and Finance to ensure risks are identified early and appropriate actions are taken swiftly.

Relevant service delivery leads and finance business partners will be available at future meetings to talk through progress on the proposals and the action being taken to ensure successful delivery of the agreed savings targets.

Table 1: Criteria for determining the RAG status of savings

RAG Assessment Guidance				
Assessment Criteria	High Risk	Medium Risk	Low Risk	Delivered
Savings RAG	Saving / income delivery plan unclear and / or not specified at adequate granular level. - and / or - Inadequate plan / no plan agreed. - and / or - Major risk of not delivering saving / income within agreed timeframe, leading to slippage or non-delivery.	Saving or income delivery plan lacks some clarity and / or not detailed at an adequately granular level but agreed plan in place to resolve and being actively managed. - and / or - Some risk of not delivering full saving within agreed timeframe, leading to slippage.	Saving or income detail documented and robust plan in place to deliver agreed targets, showing when and who is responsible. - and / or - Saving / income will be delivered within agreed timeframes.	Saving or income realised and evidence provided that costs have been reduced or income achieved.
<i>Headcount Example</i>	<i>Headcount saving proposed, but specific post to be deleted or timescales not yet agreed. No work is currently progressing to resolve this.</i>	<i>Budget Manager has confirmed that posts (to agreed value and timing) will be vacated and deleted from budget but this has not happened yet or is delayed.</i>	<i>Timescales and the specific posts to be vacated / deleted have been agreed and on track.</i>	<i>Officer has departed, budget has been reduced and posts have been deleted from the approved establishment.</i>

Table 2: List of Savings that fall under Homes Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Directorate: City Housing

Ref	Service	Title	Savings Description	2024/25 Target (£m)	2025/26 Target (£m)	Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group Recommendation	Executive Response
81	Housing Solutions	Establishment reduction	Reduction of posts across all levels of Housing Solutions and Support Service, predominantly through vacancy deletion	1.650	1.650	N/A	N/A
78	Housing Solutions	Property Acquisition-HRA	Removal of the use of General Fund budget to finance capital costs of the Property Acquisition programme over the previous 1 and next 5 years. The existing purchases will be made and financed by the Housing Revenue Account, with properties becoming Social Housing with short term vacancies dispersed for Temporary Accommodation use.	1.400	3.600	N/A	N/A
83	Shelforce	Shelforce Surplus	Increased surplus from Shelforce greater production and sales of windows and fire doors to fulfil orders planned from the investment planned into HRA stock.	0.778	0.978	N/A	N/A
79	Housing Solutions	Service charge increases to full cost recovery	Service Charges in 23/24 have not kept pace with inflationary increases and will be increased in 24/25 to catch up with current costs to ensure the charges from April 2024 are in line with the existing policy of full cost recovery.	0.600	0.800	N/A	N/A

Ref	Service	Title	Savings Description	2024/25 Target (£m)	2025/26 Target (£m)	Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group Recommendation	Executive Response
176	Housing Solutions	B&B Unit cost negotiation	Emergency accommodation is currently provided at a night rate of between £50 and £90 per room per night for 800 units for families and individuals in bed and breakfast style accommodation. The project is seeking out providers of emergency accommodation and negotiating lower rates for guaranteed bookings over longer periods	0.420	0.420	N/A	N/A
82	Housing Solutions	TA investment strategy delays to capacity increases	Implementation of the TA Investment Strategy agreed at Cabinet in June 2023 involved £3.7m new budget to increase the capacity in teams working with people requiring Temporary Accommodation support. The plan and programme will continue, but with a reduced budget of £3.35m	0.350	0.350	N/A	N/A
86	Housing Solutions	Income collection and provision improvements	Increased income collection rates through joint working and best practice sharing with debt management teams across the Council	0.300	0.600	N/A	N/A
85	Housing Solutions	Homeless Centre financing	The service has a budget for annual financing and repayment of debt incurred to acquire and develop homeless centres. Repayment of two of these centres is complete, and the budget can be set from	0.288	0.288	N/A	N/A

Ref	Service	Title	Savings Description	2024/25 Target (£m)	2025/26 Target (£m)	Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group Recommendation	Executive Response
			2024/25 onwards without this commitment				
84	Housing Solutions	TA Investment Strategy delays to landlord incentives	Implementation of the TA Investment Strategy agreed at Cabinet in June 2023 involved £1.5m new budget to give as grants to landlords as an incentive to increase the number of PRS properties available to people looking to move out of Temporary Accommodation. The plan, and programme, will continue, but with a reduced budget of £1.25m	0.250	0.250	N/A	N/A
87	Housing Solutions	Public Health grant funding	Existing Public Health funding to be allocated to Homelessness interventions carried out in Housing Solutions but currently funded by base budget	0.200	0.200	N/A	N/A
220	Grounds Maintenance	HRA Review and joined up locality working between Housing and City Ops	Coming out of the comprehensive review of existing recharge arrangements between HRA and General Fund activity there are a number of opportunities internal BCC functions to deliver front line estate-based services, the cost recovery for which will include funds for a relevant portion of existing management and overhead		0.200	Consideration should be given to identifying further savings through efficiencies resulting from joined up working between Housing, Highways and Transport that would take out current duplication in service delivery. Members noted the risk rating of 10 which should be reduced as a result of effective working	Agreed. This work forms part of the 2025/26 savings proposal.

Ref	Service	Title	Savings Description	2024/25 Target (£m)	2025/26 Target (£m)	Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group Recommendation	Executive Response
						across the Corporate Leadership Team.	
226	Investment and Valuations Service	HRA and Investments and Valuations Team - Municipal Shops	The HRA is carrying out a review of its 400+ shops and commercial assets, which will involve the support from existing internal BCC services for which a recharge will be made to reflect the cost of using these resources		0.200	The suggested review was not considered as far-reaching as it could be, as numerous municipal shop precincts have a mixture of tenures and should be considered as opportunities for asset sale and redevelopment.	Agreed. Scope of proposed saving to be reviewed during 2024/25.
			TOTAL: CITY HOUSING	6.236	9.536		

Directorate: City Operations

Ref	Service	Title	Savings Description	2024/25 Target (£m)	2025/26 Target (£m)	Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group Recommendation	Executive Response
21	Regulation & Enforcement	Property licensing - administrative overhead and absorption rate	Overhead and absorption (central support charges and divisional overheads) for the delivery of property licensing schemes are to be activated as per original licence fee calculations. This includes Mandatory (House in Multiple Occupation) licensing and the new Selective and Additional Licensing	0.900	0.900	N/A	N/A

Ref	Service	Title	Savings Description	2024/25 Target (£m)	2025/26 Target (£m)	Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group Recommendation	Executive Response
			Schemes commenced on 5 June 2023. All schemes' fees include pre calculated overhead and absorption rates within them.				
22	Regulation & Enforcement	Property licensing - optimising council delivery of support, advice and administration activity of property licensing schemes	Optimising council knowledge in delivery of support, advice and administrative activity that fall within the remit of the schemes. To be delivered via internal services with costs to be recharged into the schemes. Actual costs will be transferred from the licensing schemes to the general fund at year end.	0.100	0.100	N/A	N/A
23	Regulation & Enforcement	Property licensing – any financial penalty resulting from enforcement to be invested into supporting further enforcement activities	Any financial penalty resulting from enforcement of the schemes is to be invested into carrying out any enforcement function in relation to the private rented sector.		0.100	N/A	N/A
			TOTAL: CITY OPERATIONS	1.000	1.100		

Table 3: Recommendations from the Budget Task and Finish Group Report to be Monitored by All Overview and Scrutiny Committees

Rec Number	Recommendation	Response
1	All savings must have clear Delivery Plans, with arrangements to hold budget holders across the organisation at different levels accountable to the delivery of savings and with a Cabinet Member assigned against each saving. Key milestones towards the delivery of the savings should be included, along with risk mitigation, and governance measures including consultation requirements, VR / CR requirements and service impact. Measures for monitoring and reporting to O&S Committees must be put in place.	Agreed. Delivery Plans have been created for each saving proposal. These include details of the Senior Accountable Officer, the Key Milestones and Risk Management Plan.
2	The Delivery Plans should also set out clearly where the saving type is identified as efficiency, what systems / processes will be put in place to deliver the efficiencies without reducing the level of services.	Agreed. Delivery Plans have been created for each saving proposal. These include details of the Key Milestones, the Objectives and Deliverables as well as the Dependencies and any potential consequential impacts.
3	The Budget report to Cabinet and City Council will identify the savings proposals that will be subject to statutory consultation and assurance is needed that these will comply with legal requirements. This needs to be reflected in the timescales for delivery of the savings.	Agreed. Delivery Plans include Timescales and Key Milestones that will indicate whether a public consultation is required. Accompanying the Budget Report will be access to the Equality Impact Assessments that have been produced for applicable savings proposals, these also confirm legal requirements.
9	Each OSC receives a report following the approval of the Budget and MTFP on the implications of the budget and savings on the services within their terms of reference. In future years, an impact assessment of proposals should be reported to scrutiny in advance of the approval of the budget.	Agreed. An OSC work programme is being developed to provide updates on the savings relevant to each Scrutiny committee throughout the 2024/25 financial year.
10	Each OSC to receive a report every two months during the 2024/2025 financial year to update the Committee on the delivery of savings and service implications.	Agreed. An OSC work programme is being developed to provide updates on the savings relevant to each Scrutiny committee throughout the 2024/25 financial year to align with updates to Cabinet.
13	A review of contracts and contract management is undertaken to ensure that the council achieves best value from contracts and that contracts are renegotiated where necessary, particularly where several contracts are held across different services / directorates with the same provider. This work needs to ensure a complete, transparent and accurate contract register is produced, including details relating to when re-procurements need to commence and with contract start and end dates. As required by the Local	Agreed. As part of the savings proposals all Directorates have been looking at their contracts to identify savings. There is also a cross-cutting savings proposal for procurement contract savings.

Rec Number	Recommendation	Response
	Government Transparency Code, the relevant information should be published.	
14	A multitude of income generation opportunities should be explored, e.g., dropped kerbs, lane rental, commercial events, Shelforce, debt collection, hotel tax, increase use of direct debits – if residents are already using Direct Debits for some services they are more likely to take up for other services.	Agreed. As part of the savings proposals all Directorates have been looking at their income opportunities to identify savings and where appropriate these have been included. Opportunities are also being looked at for 2025/26.



Work Outline / Terms of Reference

Improving Standards of Re-let Properties Inquiry

Reporting to Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee

<p>Our key question:</p>	<p>How can the Council improve the quality of its housing for Council tenants?</p>
<p>1. How is O&S adding value through this work?</p>	<p>Context</p> <p><i>In January 2023, the Council declared a ‘housing emergency’ in Birmingham. Shortly afterwards, the Housing Ombudsman published a special report into Birmingham which made recommendations into four key themes: repairs; record keeping; complaints handling, and compensation. A Regulatory Notice was also issued against the Council in May 2023. All Members receive daily complaints from tenants highlighting significant concerns about the quality of their council housing. Local media such as the Birmingham Evening Mail are also regularly featuring stories which also draw attention to real life cases. During the January 2023 debate in Council, it was reported that 29% of the proportion of Council homes in Birmingham do not meet the Decent Homes standard (compared with 7.8% nationally). This year, the Social Housing Regulation Bill has been introduced, which places new responsibilities on landlords such as Birmingham City Council.</i></p> <p><i>To respond to this urgent challenge in service delivery and to provide the standards that social housing providers should meet, the Council’s City Housing service is undertaking a broad transformation programme. This wide ranging programme is being delivered in the specific context of the significant Council’s budget gap and financial recovery programme. It will remain a priority, and the O&S Committee will play an important role in providing oversight and driving improvements in the service.</i></p> <p>Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Framework, 2021</p> <p><i>This framework outlines suggested criteria to ensure inquiries add value. This inquiry meets the criteria listed below:</i></p> <p><i>A high degree of public interest, political importance or sensitivity.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• Issue identified by members as a key issue for public.</i> <i>• Public interest issue covered in local media.</i> <p><i>Implications for the City Council’s wider governance role</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• New Government guidance or legislation.</i> <p><i>Service delivery and efficient management processes, where there is:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• Concern about service performance.</i> <i>• A high level of service user dissatisfaction with the service.</i> <i>• A high priority afforded to the service by customers/users.</i> <i>• High level of budgetary commitment to the service/ policy area.</i> <i>• Issues raised by external audit reports.</i>



	<p>Improvement Plan and Governance Review</p> <p><i>It is important that all future work carried out by Overview and Scrutiny Committees contributes towards the Council’s Improvement and Recovery Plan. This will incorporate the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny Governance (CfGS) Review, November 2023, which highlighted 13 recommendations for the Council to urgently undertake to improve the quality of its decision making.</i></p> <p><i>Recommendation 5 from this CfGS review is: ‘Reframe the scrutiny work programme to focus on the Council’s improvement and recovery priorities’ and outlines 4 specific areas O&S activity should focus on. This inquiry links in with: ‘Critical Performance Issues emerging by “exception”’.</i></p> <p>Focus</p> <p><i>Given the transformation programme in place and the new financial context the Council is operating on, the O&S Committee has considered with City Housing where its work could best add value for improving the conditions of housing stock. As a result, it has been agreed that the O&S Committee will focus how it can recommend service improvements in the Council’s standards for re-letting void properties. This will contribute towards addressing some of the concerns highlighted by the Regulator and Ombudsman, but also importantly also inform the new Housing Repairs and Maintenance contract.</i></p> <p>Adding Value</p> <p><i>Specifically, this inquiry will provide an opportunity to inform the development of a new standards for the reletting of properties and in turn, the future Housing Repairs and Maintenance contract. While City Housing would still have completed this work as part of ‘business as usual’, the work undertaken as part of this inquiry will ensure this is better informed and effective.</i></p> <p><i>Note the intention of this Inquiry is not to duplicate any existing work, but to complement and enhance it. The inquiry presents an opportunity for Members to use their unique insight to consider these challenges in a different way, and as a result make recommendations which can make a tangible difference to the housing for tenants in this city.</i></p>
<p>2. What needs to be done?</p>	<p><i>The Inquiry will receive evidence from a range of stakeholders to consider the following key issues:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What do we know about the condition of Council properties becoming void? What are our current standards for re-letting? How are we currently performing against these standards? What are tenants telling us about our service and the standard of the property (when they are letting a previously void property)? How are we responding to any complaints and what are the outcomes?</i> • <i>What should our standards for re-let properties be? What are the standards for other Registered Providers and Local Authorities in the region? How do we currently compare to this? How could we meet these standards, in particular given the financial context of the Council?</i> • <i>What are the specific concerns raised by the Housing Ombudsman and Regulator for Social Housing? How are City Housing</i>



	<p>responding to these concerns? What progress have they made, and what still needs to be done?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does this feature in City Housing’s transformation programme? What is the progress and impact of this programme to date? What are the challenges to overcome in the future? What other areas of the service does this link to? What is our proactive approach towards housing management and residents’ looking after their properties?
<p>3. What timescale do we propose to do this in?</p>	<p>As the original agreed scope of this inquiry has been reconsidered, the timescales have been reviewed and revised. The title has also changed to, more accurately, capture its focus.</p> <p>For clarity, the original Terms of Reference had been agreed by the Committee on 21 September 2023 with evidence gathering to commence in November 2023. On 23 November, the Committee verbally agreed to revise the Terms of Reference to better reflect where it could add value; its revised focus will be specifically on void properties. A revised Terms of Reference will be agreed at a later Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>Scoping: Revised outline Terms of Reference and delivery plan: to be agreed at O&S Committee on 22 February 2024.</p> <p>Evidence gathering to commence in December 2023 and conclude in April 2024.</p> <p>The Homes O&S Committee intends to report and make recommendations to Council. A date will be confirmed.</p>
<p>4. What outcomes are we looking to achieve?</p>	<p>This inquiry will make recommendations which will contribute towards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make Council homes safer for tenants and improve standards (Outcome 1) • Improve tenant satisfaction with their Council Homes and the services they receive (Outcome 2) • Inform the new Repairs and Maintenance contract for City Housing (Outcome 3) <p>Birmingham City Council’s Corporate Plan 2022-2026 Priority 11: Increase affordable, safe, green housing. Priority 12: Tackle homelessness Priority 13: Tackle health inequalities</p>
<p>5. What is the best way to achieve these outcomes and what routes will we use?</p>	<p>A Task and Finish Group is the recommended approach by the Committee to gather and review evidence for this inquiry. This Task and Finish group will comprise Committee Members and will be cross party.</p> <p>Stakeholders The following stakeholders will be requested to provide information to this inquiry:</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birmingham City Council's City Housing Directorate • Council's Housing contractors • Local Government Association (LGA) • Social Housing Providers in Birmingham and West Midlands • Tenants <p><i>Other stakeholders may be identified by the Task and Finish Group during the inquiry.</i></p> <p><i>The inquiry also welcomes suggestions for additional stakeholders to seek evidence from all stakeholders listed above and Members of the Council. All suggestions should be highlighted to the lead officer listed below.</i></p> <p><i>Stakeholders will be invited to provide evidence in a variety of formats. This will be finalised as part of the scoping stage. In general terms:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>For organisations, this may be information in writing and/or a face-to-face presentation. Organisations will be advised of the relevant format for their evidence individually when invited to provide information to the inquiry.</i> • <i>For tenants, the inquiry group is currently determining the best approach. This will be informed by the current type and nature of the information collected by City Housing.</i> <p><i>The inquiry group also intends to undertake site visits to empty (void) Council properties to support their inquiry.</i></p> <p>Members <i>All Members of the Council will also be invited to provide evidence. In addition to this, all members of the Council may request to attend evidence gathering sessions. If a Member is interested in this, they are invited to contact the lead officer for further information.</i></p>
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Member / Officer Leads

Lead Member:	<i>Chair: Cllr. Ken Wood</i>
Members of the Task and Finish Group:	<i>Councillors Saqib Khan; Mohammed Idrees; Lauren Rainbow; Penny Wagg</i>
Lead Officer and support:	<i>Lead Officer: Amelia Wiltshire</i> <i>Support Officer: Jayne Bowles</i> <i>City Housing are also providing expertise through their Asset Management, Housing Management and Strategic Enabling teams.</i>

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

HOMES O&S COMMITTEE – PUBLIC MEETING

1400 hours on Thursday 18 April 2024, Committee Room 6, Council House

Minutes**Present:**

Councillor Mohammed Idrees (Chair)

Councillors: Ziaul Islam, Saqib Khan, Rinkal Shergill, Penny Wagg and Ken Wood

Also Present:

Councillor Jayne Francis, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness

Wayne Davies, Director, Asset Management

John Jamieson, Head of Service, Housing Management

Paul Langford, Strategic Director, City Housing

Naomi Morris, Head of Strategic Enabling

Stephen Philpott, Director, Housing Solutions and Support Service

Jayne Bowles, Scrutiny Officer

Sarah Fradgley, Overview and Scrutiny Manager

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager informed the Committee that the Chair had been slightly delayed and therefore nominations were invited for a Chair to start the meeting. Following nomination and agreement by the Committee, Councillor Saqib Khan chaired the meeting for items 1 to 3.

1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

The Chair advised that this meeting would be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Public-I microsite and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there are confidential or exempt items.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Lauren Rainbow and Ron Storer, and an apology for lateness was received from Councillor Mohammed Idrees.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded that they must declare all relevant pecuniary and other registerable interests arising from any business to be discussed at this meeting.

No interests were declared.

At this point, Councillor Mohammed Idrees joined and chaired the remainder of the meeting.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2024 be confirmed as correct and signed by the Chair.

5. ACTION TRACKER

RESOLVED:

That the action tracker be noted.

6. COMMISSIONER'S REVIEW AND COMMENTS ON THE AGENDA

RESOLVED:

That the Committee noted the Commissioner's comments on agenda item 7.

7. REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

Councillor Jayne Francis, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness; Paul Langford, Strategic Director, City Housing; Wayne Davies, Director, Asset Management; John Jamieson, Head of Service, Housing Management; Stephen Philpott, Director, Housing Solutions and Support Service; and Naomi Morris, Head of Strategic Enabling, were in attendance for this item.

The Chair welcomed the Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness and Officers to the meeting.

The Cabinet Member introduced the report and informed the Committee that this area of work continued to be a priority with a focus on how the Council might respond to potential regulatory inspection.

The Director, Asset Management and Head of Strategic Enabling presented the latest update on the Council's position around landlord compliance, which included Landlord Health and Safety Compliance; Remedial Actions; Damp and Mould; Decent Homes Standard; Complaints; and Tenant Satisfaction Measures.

The Strategic Director, City Housing informed the Committee that by September all regulatory compliance issues will have been resolved, with the exception of the asbestos programme which now had a later target date.

During the discussion, and in response to Members' questions, the main points included:

Health and Safety Compliance

In response to a question regarding the installation of carbon monoxide detectors, the Committee was informed that carbon monoxide detectors would be provided when electrical testing was being undertaken. Also, smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors would be checked as part of the stock condition surveys and it would be raised as a category 1 hazard under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System if they were not compliant. In properties that had a gas supply, carbon monoxide detectors would be checked on an annual basis.

Damp and Mould Reports, Disrepair and Litigation

The correlation between the percentage of damp and mould repairs completed first time and the percentage of cases where damp and mould had been reported on more than five occasions was queried. The Director, Asset Management explained that this was due to repeat visits not being measured as they were classed as recalls.

In terms of outstanding claims, the delays were due to the nature and legalities, with some cases taking more than 12 months depending on the approach by the lawyer and the extent of the schedule of work.

Section 82 Housing Disrepair Proceedings

Reassurance was sought that adequate resources were being allocated to deal with proceedings brought against the Council by tenants. The Committee was assured that cases were robustly defended where it was appropriate to do so, and that the Ombudsman was clear in encouraging residents to use the complaints route.

Decent Homes Standard

The Committee was informed that it would be a while before all Council housing stock met the Decent Homes Standard, with many homes failing the test due to the poor condition of kitchens and bathrooms. Members noted there were now 7,000 homes a year benefitting from new kitchen and bathroom installations and there would be £1.4 billion of capital investment over the next seven to eight years.

The committee welcomed this investment, however the importance of having a planned preventative maintenance scheme was raised. Members were reassured that the Decent Homes Standard 2 would take into account the condition of a component, not just the life cycle.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

The Committee noted that the relationship between housing officers and tenants was important in dealing with issues, particularly in relation to disrepair and anti-social behaviour, to prevent the issues from escalating. The Cabinet Member informed the Committee that the intention was to ensure estate staff were equipped with the tools to be able to do that.

RESOLVED:

That:

- The report be noted.
- The next regulatory compliance session be programmed for July 2024.

8. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair confirmed that this was the last scheduled meeting of the municipal year and informed the Committee that evidence-gathering for the Inquiry on Improving the Standard of Re-let Properties would continue during May.

The Chair thanked committee members and officers for their contributions during the year.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted.

9. REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS RECEIVED (IF ANY)

None.

10. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

The meeting ended at 1459 hours.

**HOMES O&S COMMITTEE
ACTION TRACKER 2023/24**

Date	Agenda Item	Action	Notes
14 March 2024	Affordable Housing	Right to Buy legislation to be provided to the Committee.	Emailed to Members on 14 th March.
		Exact number of properties given to people on the housing register in the last year to be provided to the Committee.	Emailed to Members on 3 rd April.
22 February 2024	Exempt Accommodation Inquiry Recommendations Tracking Update	Response to be provided to Committee on the number of properties operated by the providers on the preferred provider list and how many properties were operated by providers who had not been assessed or had failed the assessment	Emailed to Members on 21 st March.
25 January 2024	Regulatory Compliance	Information on Contractor Performance to be circulated to the Committee.	Emailed to Members on 13 th March.
19 October 2023	Scrutiny of Delivery of 2023/24 Budget Savings and Update on Council's Response to Section 114 Notice and Financial Recovery Plan	HRA and Temporary Accommodation rent collection figures to be provided to the Committee.	Emailed to Members on 22 nd November.
	Exempt Accommodation Inquiry Recommendations Tracking Update	Next tracking report to be scheduled for three months' time.	Work Programme updated – report scheduled for February.
21 September 2023	Financial Challenges – Scrutiny Contribution to	Scrutiny of Delivery of 2023/24 Budget Savings to be a standing item on the Committee's agenda.	Work Programme updated.

**HOMES O&S COMMITTEE
ACTION TRACKER 2023/24**

Date	Agenda Item	Action	Notes
	the Budget Savings and Recovery Plan		
	Regulatory Compliance	Committee agreed to engage in quarterly meetings specifically on the subject of Landlord Compliance.	Work Programme updated.
20 July 2023	Work Programme	Task & Finish Group to re-visit the Voids Terms of Reference	Task & Finish group established. Outline Terms of Reference for an inquiry on Improving Standards of Council Homes agreed at the September meeting.
		Scrutiny Officers to seek clarification on the following matters raised on behalf of Cllr Wood: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backlog of inspections • Contractor Performance 	Backlog of inspections to be picked up as part of the Regulatory Compliance agenda item at the September meeting. The quarterly HLB performance reports will be shared with committee members – the Q1 2023/24 report was emailed on 13 th September.

**HOMES O&S COMMITTEE
ACTION TRACKER 2023/24**

Date	Agenda Item	Action	Notes
22 June 2023	Developing the Homes O&S Committee's Work Programme 2023/24	City Housing management structure chart and responsibilities to be shared with Members.	Emailed to Members on 27 th June.

Birmingham City Council



Report to Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee

20 June 2024

Title:	IMPROVING STANDARDS OF RE-LET PROPERTIES INQUIRY
Lead Cabinet Portfolio:	Councillor Jayne Francis, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness
Relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee:	Not Applicable
Report Author:	Natalie Smith Head of Housing Management and Asha Patel Head of Repairs Housing Directorate 07904 967579 Natalie.P.Smith@birmingham.gov.uk ; Asha.X.Patel@birmingham.gv.uk
Authorised by:	Dave Ashmore, Director of Housing Management, Wayne Davies, Director of Asset Management Housing Directorate
Is this a Key Decision?	No
If this is a Key Decision, is this decision listed on the Forward Plan?	Not Applicable
Reason(s) why not included on the Forward Plan:	Not Applicable
Is this a Late Report?	No
Reason(s) why Late:	Not Applicable
Is this decision eligible for 'call in?'	No

If not eligible, please provide reason(s): Not Applicable

Wards: All

Does this report contain exempt or confidential information? No

Has this decision been included on the Notification of Intention to consider Matters in Private? No

Reasons why not included on the Notification: Not Applicable

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 In line with the Terms of Reference, the O&S Committee Voids Inquiry Task and Finish Group has considered with City Housing where its work could best add value for improving the conditions of housing stock. As a result, it was agreed that the O&S Committee will focus how it can recommend service improvements in the Council's standards for re-letting void properties. The report and appendix provide a review of the evidence gathered including void standards, turnaround timescales, benchmarking and customer experience to outline the challenges and opportunities for improvement.

2 COMMISSIONERS' REVIEW

- 2.1 Improvements in voids management and the reletting process is a vital component of Housing's transformation programme. This will improve quality, standards and tenant satisfaction and deliver efficiencies by reducing relet times in short and long-term voids and ensuring that the housing stock is managed as efficiently as possible and available to tenants waiting to be rehoused.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

- 3.1 Note the contents of the report and appendices and consider if there are any further issues for scrutiny to address in relation to voids.

4 KEY INFORMATION

Context

- 4.1 Responds to the Terms of Reference that have been provided as part of the inquiry.
- 4.2 Provides an overview of the position of void standards and performance within Birmingham.
- 4.3 Outlines the transformation plan for voids and its objectives, including what the transformation involves, the progress that has been made to date and impact, future activities and challenges faced.

IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS

Finance

There are no implications from this report itself, which is an update to O&S Committee. However, the work being done around Void process improvements is aimed at improving turnaround time, improving the efficiency of the decency investment programme and reducing the reactive repairs requirement, all three of which are creating a positive impact on the HRAs financial position over the

coming years from less rent loss and council tax commitment, and less capital and revenue spend on repairs and maintenance.

Legal

- 4.4 There are no legal implications directly relating to this report which is an update to O&S Committee.

Equalities

- 4.5 There are no equalities implications directly relating to this report.

People Services

- 4.6 There are no staffing implications directly relating to this report which is an update to O&S Committee. However, Housing Management is currently engaging with staff on proposals for a service redesign and whilst there are no implications for voids management it would see the responsibility for new lettings support transfer to a generic Housing Officer role.

Corporate Parenting

- 4.7 There are no corporate parenting implications directly relating to this report.

5 APPENDICES

- 5.1 Appendix A - Voids O and S Final Report.

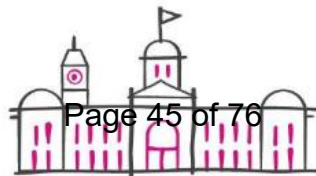
6 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 Terms of Reference.

City Housing Voids Overview and Scrutiny

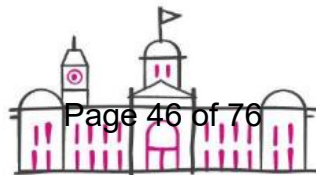
Natalie Smith – Head of Housing Management South

Asha Patel – Head of Repairs



Content

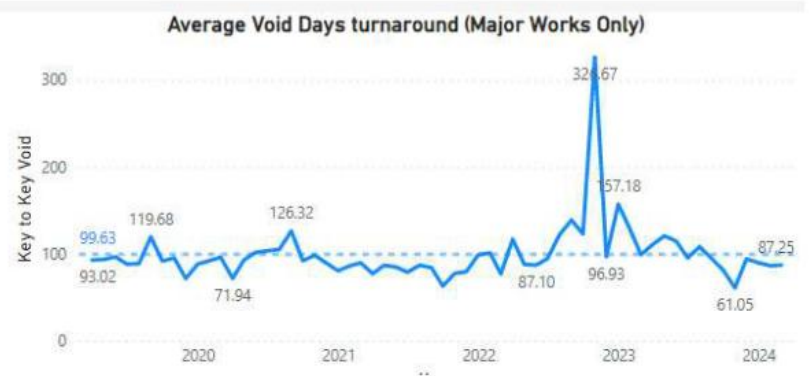
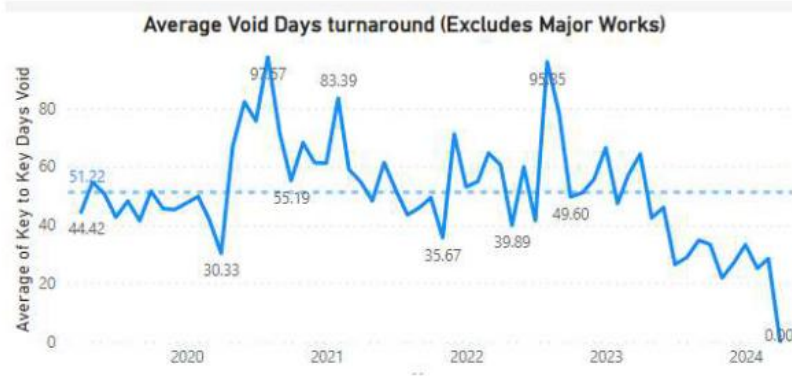
- Response to the Terms of Reference provided as part of the inquiry
- Overview of void standards and performance in Birmingham
- Outline of transformation proposals for voids and objectives including progress, impact, future activities and challenges faced



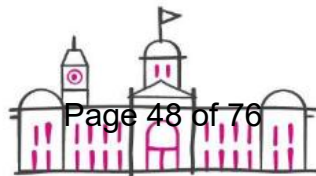
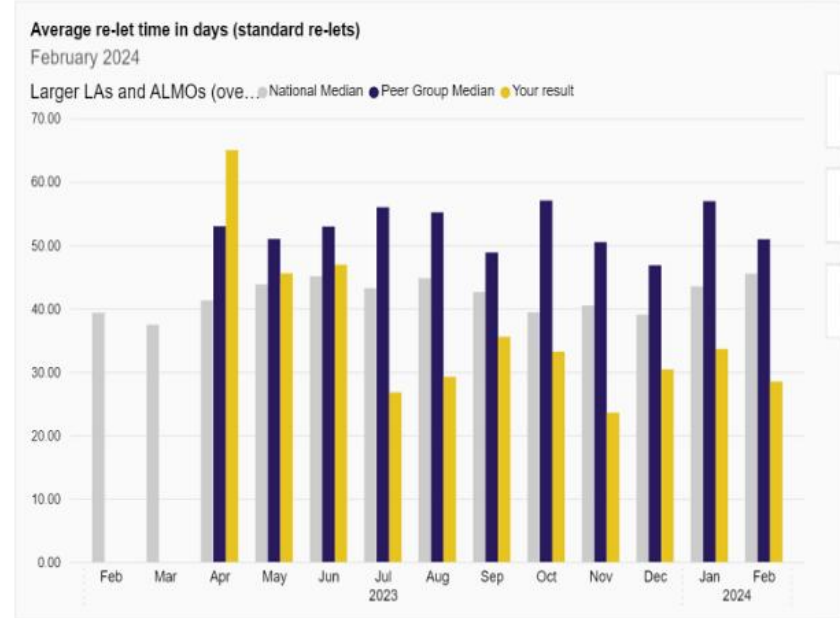
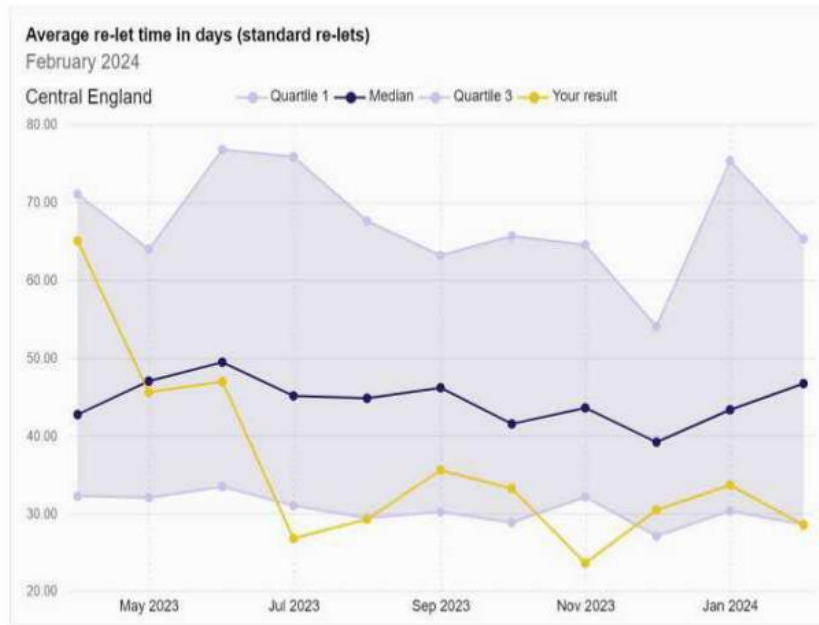
Void Performance

Average days 28 March 2024

Major works 87 March 2024



Benchmarking Performance



Void Rent Loss

- April 2023 £66,762
- March 2024 £38,625

- Total reduction £28,137 per week
- Yearly Total Voids – 2697



What do we know about the conditions of properties becoming void?

Address		Void Ref		Quadrant			
Search		Search		All			
Void Ref	Property Ref	Status Start	Address	Void Status	Decent Home Status	Quad	Void Status
339060	12244000704	11/03/2024	[REDACTED]	Fit For Let	Fail	North	Fit For Let
335715	12212000709	08/03/2024	[REDACTED]	Fit For Let	Pass	South	
338022	18505000988	01/13/2023	[REDACTED]	Fit For Let	Pass	South	
322202	16223000664	26/06/2022	[REDACTED]	Fit For Let	Fail	South	

Investment Plan					Works Orders							
Attributes	Attribute	Age Now	Installation Date	Replacement 1 Year	Cost	Repairs Reference	Raised Date	Pri Code	Work Programme	Status	SOR Code	SOR Descr
Wall Finish	WALL FINISH TILE HANGING	41	01/04/1982	2017	8783	8994281	14/04/2022	CW	Capital Works Programme	COM	ELECTEST	ELECTRIC
Boiler	BOILER GAS CONDENSING COMBI	16	01/04/2005	2020	8783	91335171	07/07/2022	CW	Capital Works Programme	COM	REMIPTC05	Minor Rem
Door	DOOR FRNT PVCU	23	01/04/2000	2022	2850	92717701	17/10/2022	AAD	Aids And Adaptations	COM	AASCOPE	A and A SC
Wall Finish	WALL FINISH POINTED BRICKWORK	41	01/04/1982	2027	8783	94104451	09/01/2023	16	1 Day Rtr Fixed Price (Emergency)	COM	REPLIFT	REPAIR ST
Electrics	ELECTRIC WIRE SYSTEM	12	30/03/2011	2027	8783	94202091	10/01/2023	16	1 Day Rtr Fixed Price (Emergency)	COM	REPLIFT	REPAIR ST
Electrics	ELECTRIC WIRE TEST	1	06/05/2022	2027	8783	94203121	11/01/2023	AAD	Aids And Adaptations	COM	AAPHYSICAL	A and A PH
Kitchen	KITCHEN FITS	13	22/03/2010	2028	8783	94203121	11/01/2023	AAD	Aids And Adaptations	COM	CHOTHER	INSTALL CI
Roof	ROOF PITCHED CONCRETE	41	01/04/1982	2032	11850	94203121	11/01/2023	AAD	Aids And Adaptations	COM	INSLASHOVR	INSTALL LE
Windows	WINDOW DOUBLE PVCU	16	01/04/2005	2033	7000	94203121	11/01/2023	AAD	Aids And Adaptations	COM	KITLOWTOP	CARRY DU
Bathroom	BATHROOM FITS	13	22/03/2010	2038	4850	94280871	13/01/2023	16	1 Day Rtr Fixed Price (Emergency)	COM	REPLIFT	REPAIR ST
						94310761	17/01/2023	16	1 Day Rtr Fixed Price (Emergency)	COM	REPLIFT	REPAIR ST
						95238231	10/03/2023	45	Gas Servicing	COM	01800	Service all
						95238231	10/03/2023	45	Gas Servicing	COM	01802C	Supply and
						95701301	04/04/2023	55	Gas 24 Hours From Issue	COM	GASWTRLEAK	Water Leak
						95701471	04/04/2023	55	Gas 24 Hours From Issue	CAN	GASWTRLEAK	Water Leak
						96812341	02/09/2023	68	Sundry Servicing	COM	SSAR/LIFT	Sundry Ser
						97506211	11/07/2023	16	1 Day Rtr Fixed Price (Emergency)	COM	REPLIFT	REPAIR ST
						97758901	25/07/2023	16	1 Day Rtr Fixed Price (Emergency)	COM	REPLIFT	REPAIR ST

Pre vacation Checks

- Pre vacation visits are completed once notice is received 70% provide notice
- We contact all Customers giving Notice to End their Tenancies. Contacts will be by phone then visit and key collection
- During any visits there is an extensive series of questions / information which we obtain which is used to inform AM and Repairs Partners
- Following Para 49 report an automatic report is produced to provide all investment information and repairs history for new voids. This enables contractor to have full repairs history of property.
- Accelerated Stock condition programme

What are our current standard for re letting?

- Our current standard is the empty property standard that it is safe warm, secure and free from hazards / damp and mould.
- There has been changes made to the capital items and current items provided within Bathrooms and Kitchens have been amended.
- Bathrooms will now be fitted with wall panelling rather than tiles, and will have a combined toilet system, new bathspec and shower fitted over bath, upgrade on taps and sink pedestal, a heated towel rail has also been added.
- Kitchens will now include upstands rather than tiles, with matching coloured carcasses and doors being fitted and work tops (several colour choices available). All will receive décor on new capital items.
- A property is being prepared to demonstrate the new products and will be available for o and s to view
- It should be noted that the approach is to repair if possible, to ensure that a wider asset management approach can be taken across the scheme or block



Example of Items



What are our tenants telling us about the service and standard at reletting ?

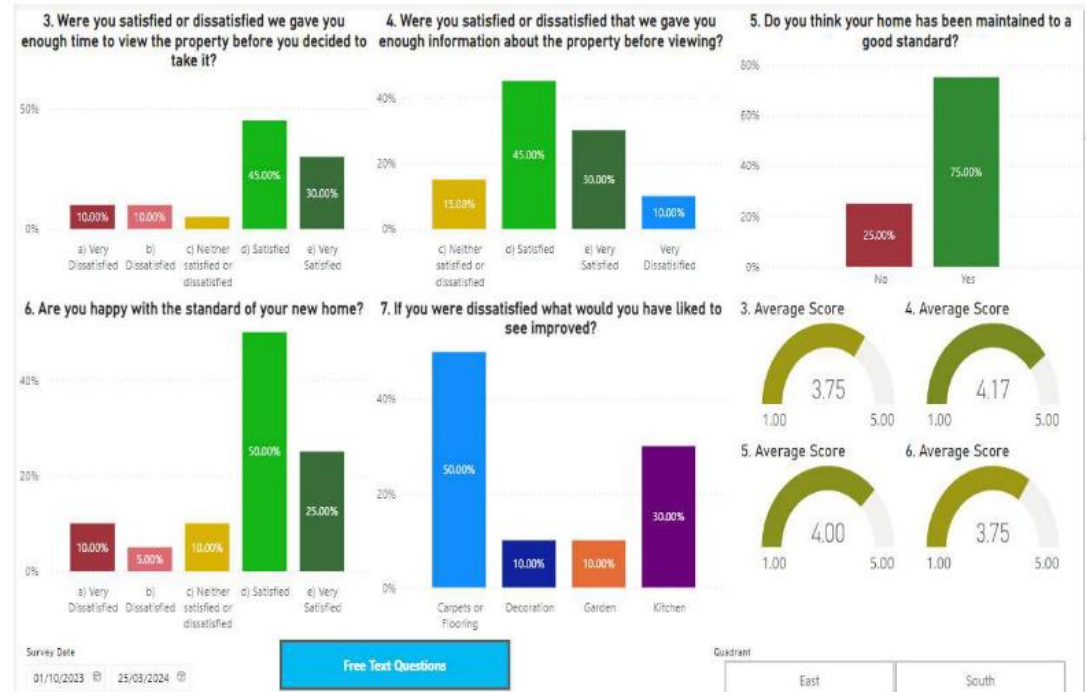
Surveys are completed at all lettings

This was introduced in October 2023 to capture feedback and understand concerns

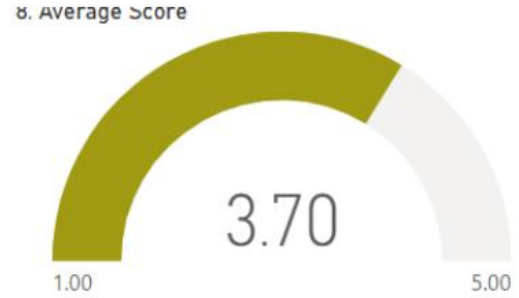
Feedback on standard of property overall is good at 90% satisfied with their new home

Overall satisfaction with new home achieves the highest average score

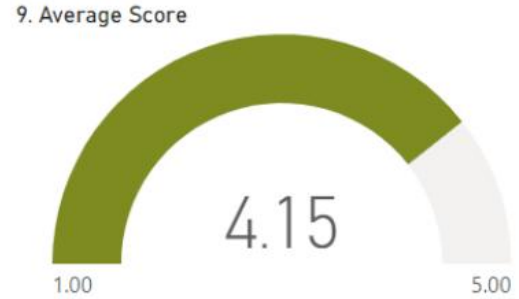
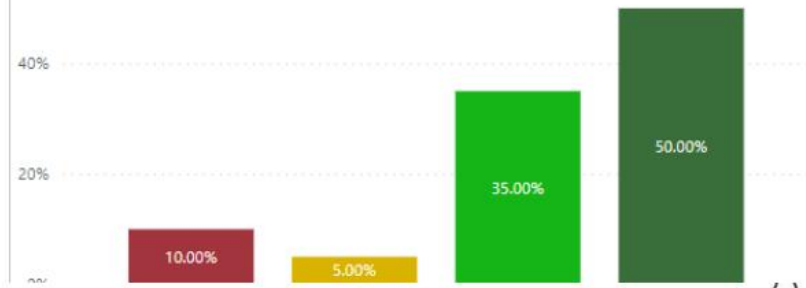
Request for Flooring and Kitchen has come up as a main area they would like to see an improvement on



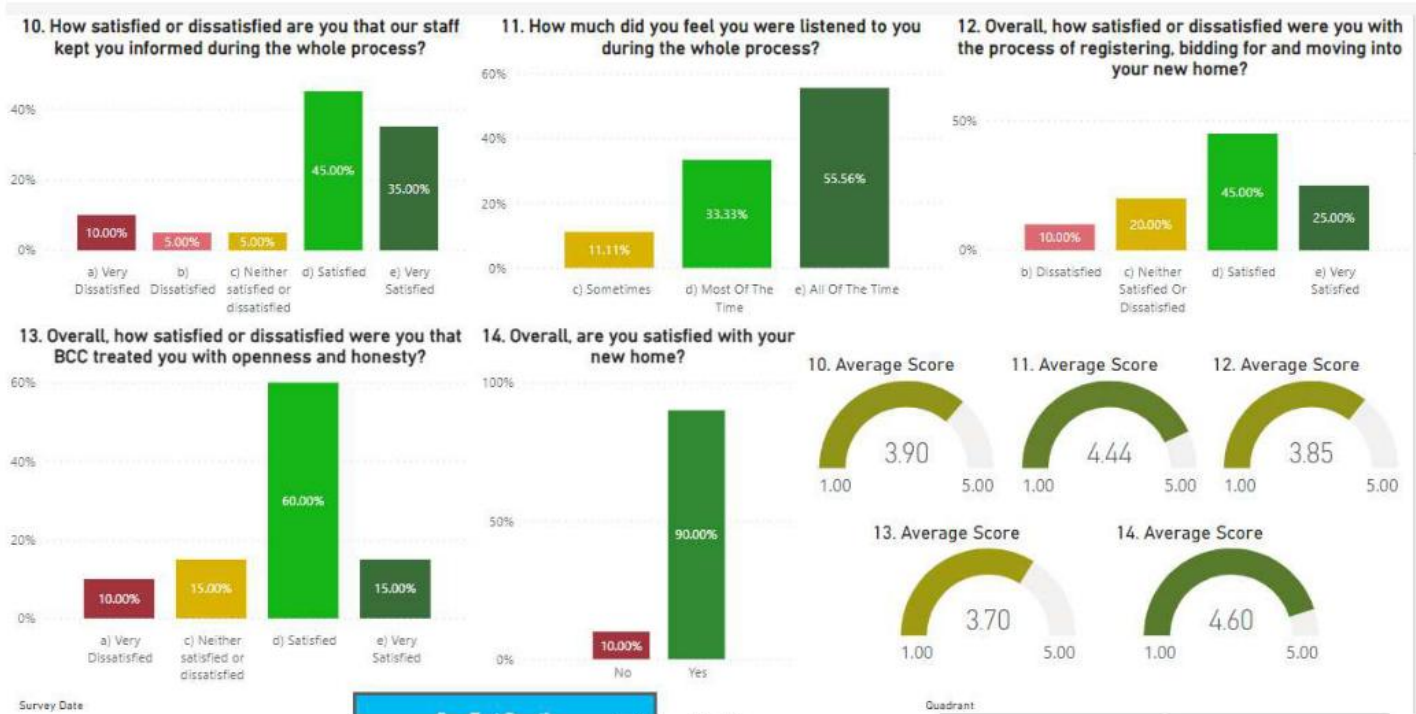
What are our tenants telling us about the service and standard at reletting ?



9. What did you think of the advice and guidance we gave you before you moved in?



What are our tenants telling us about the service and standard at reletting ?



Customer Feedback

- Focus Group Session Held 8 August 2023
- Pre-Tenancy Workshops
- Staff Helpful
- Challenges Turn on and Test
- Information at Viewing
- Customer Survey sent to all new tenants July 2023 10% return rate
- High Percentage Satisfied with Property
- Difficulties Gas Turn on and Test
- Gas Debts
- Utility Bills

26. How satisfied are you with standard of your new home?

[More Details](#)

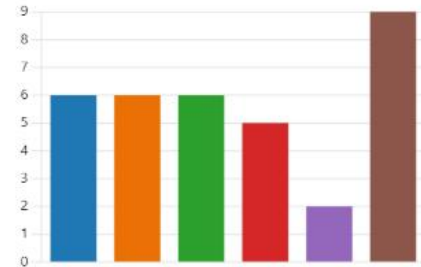
Very satisfied	13
Somewhat satisfied	8
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	1
Somewhat dissatisfied	0
Very dissatisfied	1



27. Were there any difficulties you encountered when moving into your new home? Select those that apply.

[More Details](#)

Sorting out debts on gas and el...	6
Gas turn on test	6
Setting up utility bills	6
Agreed repairs not completed	5
Unable to contact someone to r...	2
None	9

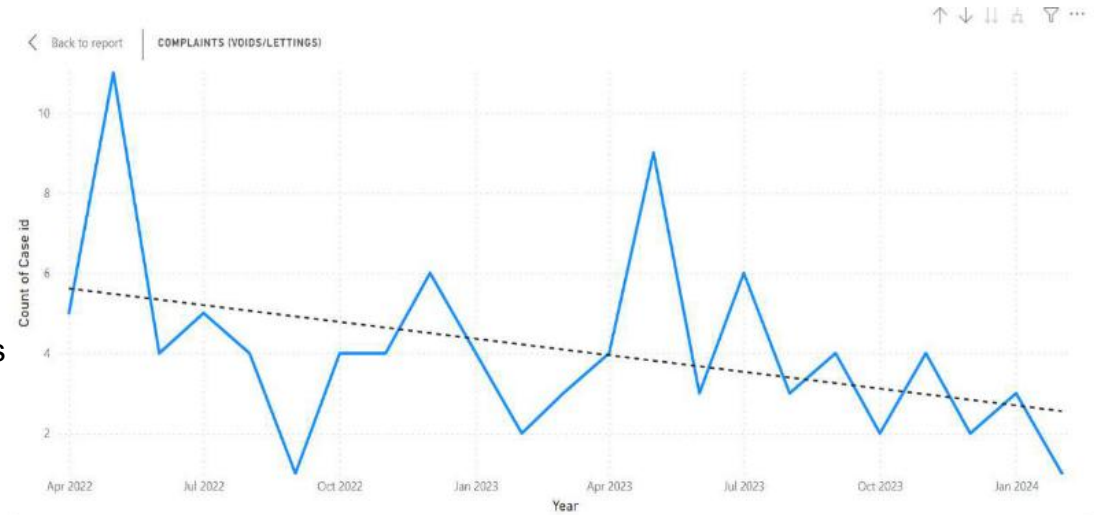


How are we responding to complaints and what have been the outcomes?

Levels of complaints have significantly reduced

Receiving on average 2 per month vs 190 new lettings less than 2%

Root cause analysis is completed, and issues addressed, built into transformation work if longer term



What are the concerns raised by the Housing Ombudsmen and regulator for social housing? How are the city responding to these concerns ? What progress has been made?

2 Ombudsmen since July 2023

Case	Issues
Case 1	<p>Heating failed at TOAT; 1 week to repair heating (in December/Jan) – evidence that heating was working when property was void so HO did not find against in that regard (other than time to repair).</p> <p>Two void repair jobs were outstanding at time of letting – kitchen window and garden cut-back. Cut-back took over 40 days to resolve and kitchen window took 9 months.</p>

Case 2	<p>Rubbish/rubble/cut-back not completed until after tenant had moved in; mice infestation as a result (in opinion of Housing Ombudsman).</p> <p>Delays due to waiting for contractor quote to clear rubbish and officer absence which the HO criticised.</p> <p>Contractors caused damage to carpets walking through property as unable to access rear due to refuse.</p> <p>No clarity on when refuse was removed however likely this took over a year from tenant moving in.</p> <p>Property was not compliant with void standard when tenancy started; tenant could not move in for 2 weeks whilst repairs were carried out.</p>
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Further Actions in place following Para 49 report

Recommendation by HO

Take a pro-active to repairs, making best use of void periods and intelligence to tackle problems before they arise.

Short Term	Long Term
Repairs History auto generated at point of void for analysis Review multiple repairs by property for possible inclusion in capital programme/improvements	Void standard review, comparison with other landlords
Using post void period to identify and improve repairs in occupation post tenancy	Revise and improve current void standard and incorporate feedback from Housing Ombudsman
Repairs raised following capital improvements link to stock condition and asset data, to help inform intelligence led analysis	Regular update meetings between HM and Assets on stock analysis, condition, investment, tenancy issues
Feedback from customers on void standard and lettings experience	Voids Improvement Project across HM and Assets, including data, agile working, standards, streamlining processes
Value based approach to void works through SOR which will enable analysis of works required	
Capture pre vac data, property condition , contractor intelligence	

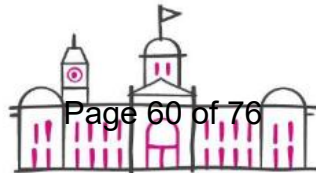
Residents Feedback

You said

- Repairs not completed in occupation
- Gardens not cleared to appropriate standard and ownership unclear
- Viewing rushed and large amount of information received
- Debt issues , meters complex
- Standard of void
- Positive Pre tenancy workshops

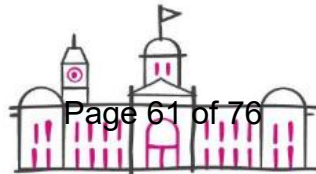
We did

- 100 percent audits being completed
- Scheduling upfront will support with repairs not being completed
- Information after viewing refreshed for tenant so clear log on repairs completed in occupation, and garden ownership and standard- Power Bi- Targeted
- Information pack updated
- Developing pictures for web update
- Interim contract Resident Centric relaunch
- Toat completed in void period
- Ovo smart meter installation
- Flexibility in décor but into contract
- Review all negative feedback, recorded and responded to, built into future plans
- Recharge process reviewed
- Expanded Pre Vacs
- Tenancy conditions review
- Expanded Pre tenancy workshops



Housemark

- Independent review being completed
- “ To review current business processes, data and offer for customers, to identify any gaps in recommendations and service improvement, new structure”
- Recommendations to be shared once received



Voids Contract Changes & Wider

Known costs

Agreed schedules of work to sensibly meet the re-let standard

Reduced disagreements regarding works required as agreed 'up front'

Timescales based on value of works required



What should our standards for re let properties be?

- Homes are currently warm, safe and secure
- Homes currently meet Asset Management Strategy objectives
- Increase in specification could include full decorations and all modern updated facilities
- Cost is a consideration when increasing specification
- Timescale significantly increases (tripled in some cases) with increased specification
- Customer feedback and choice should be key factor
- Benchmarking visit was completed to Dudley main gaps schedule voids up front – new change noted and implemented
- Includes decoration in void spec- flexibility built into contract
- Bathroom and Kitchen similar standard on capital items with new changes
- No flooring

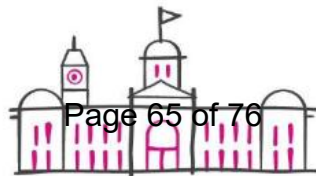
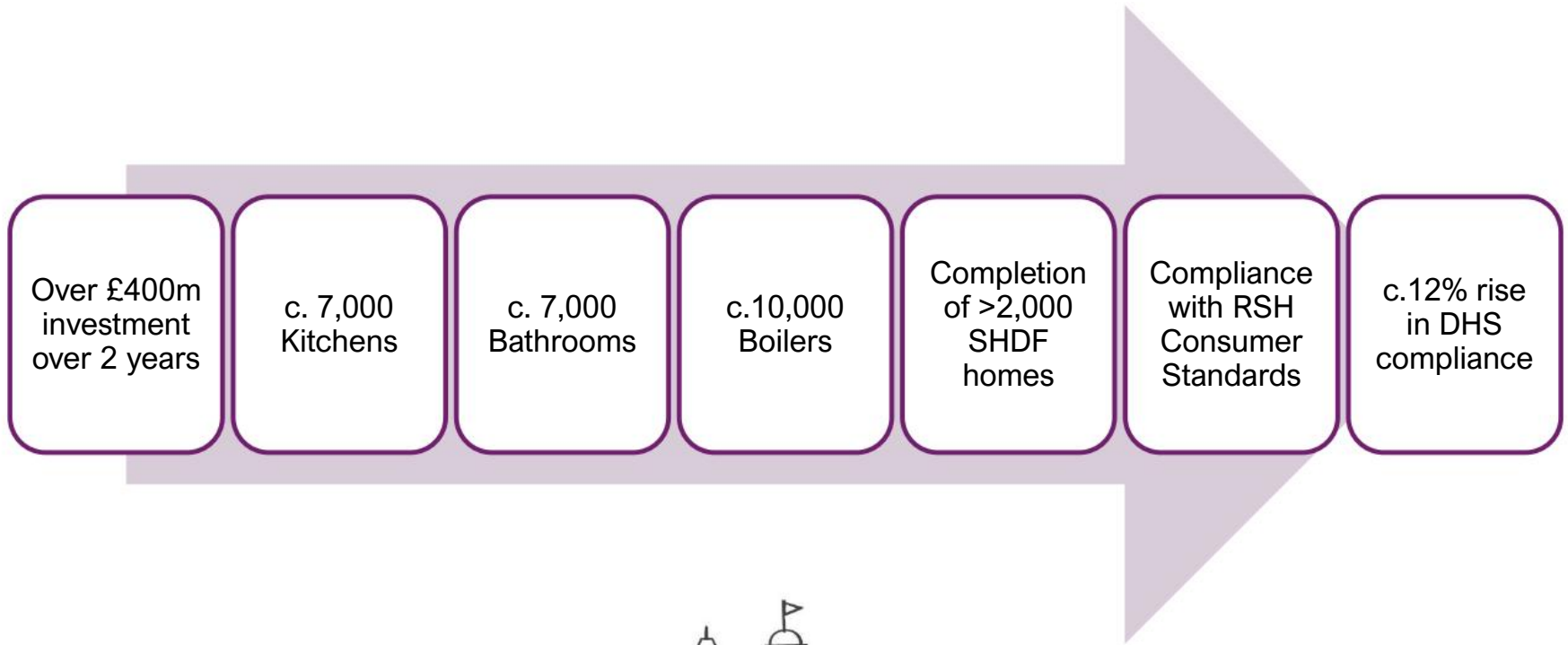


How could we meet these standards given the current financial context of the council?

- Not possible to meet all the needs
- We need £1.4 bn to improve stock to required standard
- Decent Homes will take up to 8 years
- Need to model a long term financial plan based on improved standard from current budget levels
- Review and analyse by archetype
- Option to consider policy change on customer responsibilities



Investing in the future- Regulator Focus Decency



Capital Works

Kitchen & Bathroom
refurbs by default
(modification or
extensions by
exception)

Kitchen and Bathroom
specifications
improved

Improved materials
quality at a 'BCC Price'

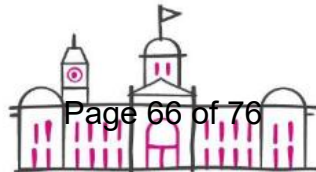
Nominated suppliers

Reduced target
timescales for
Kitchens (10 working
days)

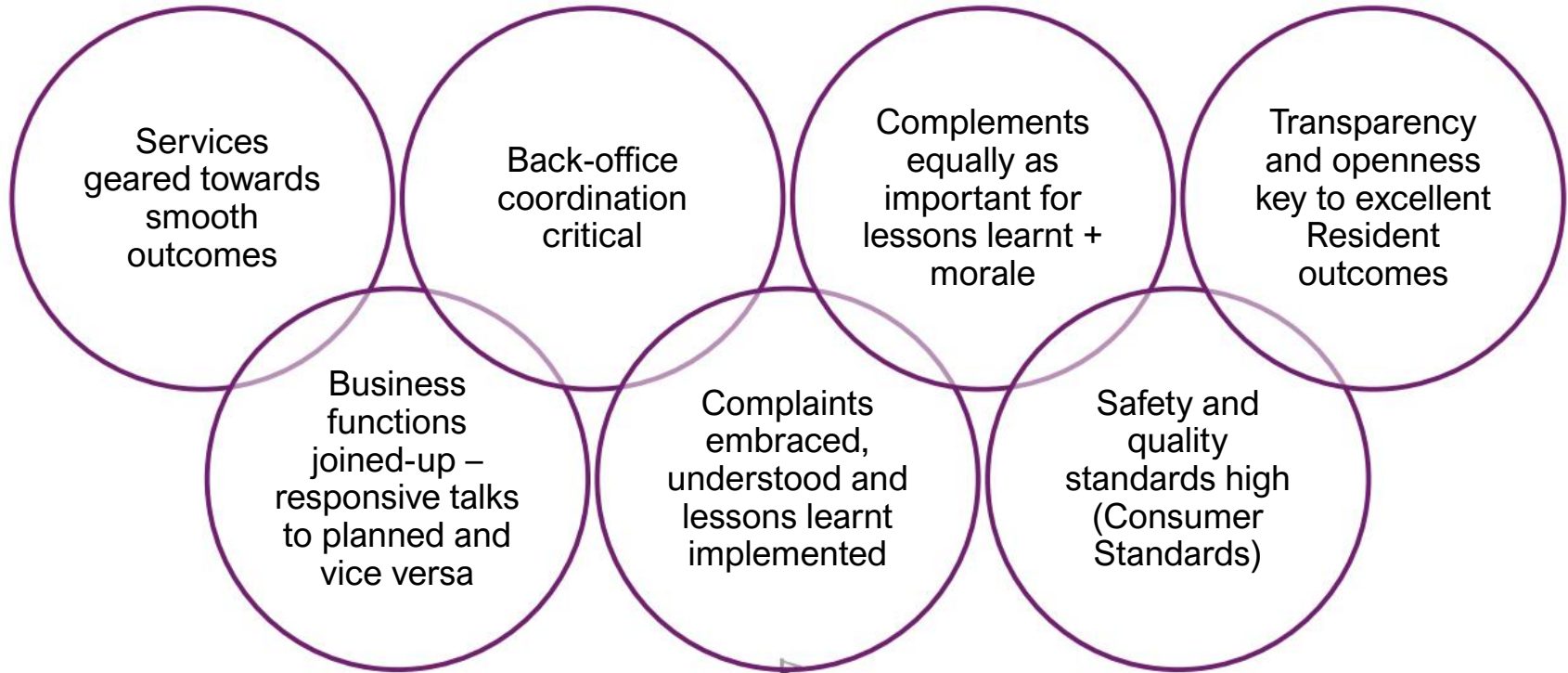
Reduced target
timescales for
Bathrooms (5 working
days)

Resident colour and
handle choice on
Kitchens

Resident colour choice
on flooring and
wallboards in
Bathrooms



Resident Centricity



Project aim, purpose and anticipated benefits

Aim

The overall aim of the project is to improve quality and standards and to identify areas of efficiencies and enhanced ways of working for customers, Voids Management staff and other related stakeholders.

Purpose

- To review processes which have not been reviewed for a number of years.
- Identify the opportunity to reduce void loss and ensure an integrated offer.
- Analysing trends to identify gaps.
- Developing the agile offer
- Increase HRA revenue by improving turnaround times.
- Include recommendations from the Root and Branch Service Review and Customer Service Programme to improve the customer journey.
- To ensure alignment with Corporate strategy and priorities.

Project aim, purpose and anticipated benefits (2 of 2)

Anticipated benefits

- Improve the customer journey / experience, delivering the right information at the right time.
- Reduce void turnaround time.
- Set and manage realistic customer expectations.
- Capture data to analyse trends and contribute to service change.
- Create efficiencies within the process, optimising effective communication across all services.
- Improve void standard
- Ensure Value for money

High-level project roadmap

Jan – April '23

- Project Team set up
- Enhanced Voids Standard approved
- As Is and To Be processes and procedures validated
- Options Paper re 'any tenancy start date' presented to DMT

*Feb – August 2024

- Commence implementation of new ways of working, including IT changes

*Jan – Mar '25

- Continue to embed and monitor new ways of working

Apr – October '23

- BRD developed and requirements prioritised
- Commence review of structures
- Commence IT and Field Worker App development
- First drafts of Lettings Policy and Tenancy Standard developed

*Sept – Dec '24

- Go-live with new ways of working

March 25

- Project End

* These are **indicative dates only** as they will be influenced primarily by resource availability and IT development timeframes.

Progress to date

Customers

- Letting Policy updated and live
- Customer feedback captured
- Pre tenancy Pre let work expanded
- Ovo Smart Meters
- Information updated to support Journey
- Interim Contract
- Furniture Project

Performance

- New Performance reports to monitor gaps
- Complaints reduction improved turnaround
- Contractor Performance improvement
- Aligned to Housemark benchmarking standard

Process

- Online Information updated
- IT requirements gather commencing build
- Mobilised New contract changes
- Data cleanse
- End to end review completed
- Independent Housemark Review
- Mapped support needs and customer data

Staff

- Re design consultation underway
- Co designed updated processes
- Pro active visits
- Training new contract



What is our proactive approach towards housing management and residents looking after their properties?

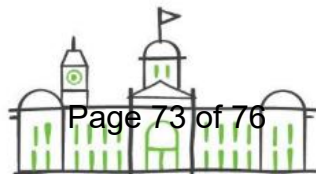
- Targeting new tenants in Temporary accommodation
- New format and increased attendance
- 2022 200
- 2023- 2024 1200 confirm
- Bespoke to BMHT, Careleavers

- 2200 Lettings so far this year (2023/2024) with 100% receiving a full benefit assessment during the Letting process. £8 million benefit enhancement to date .

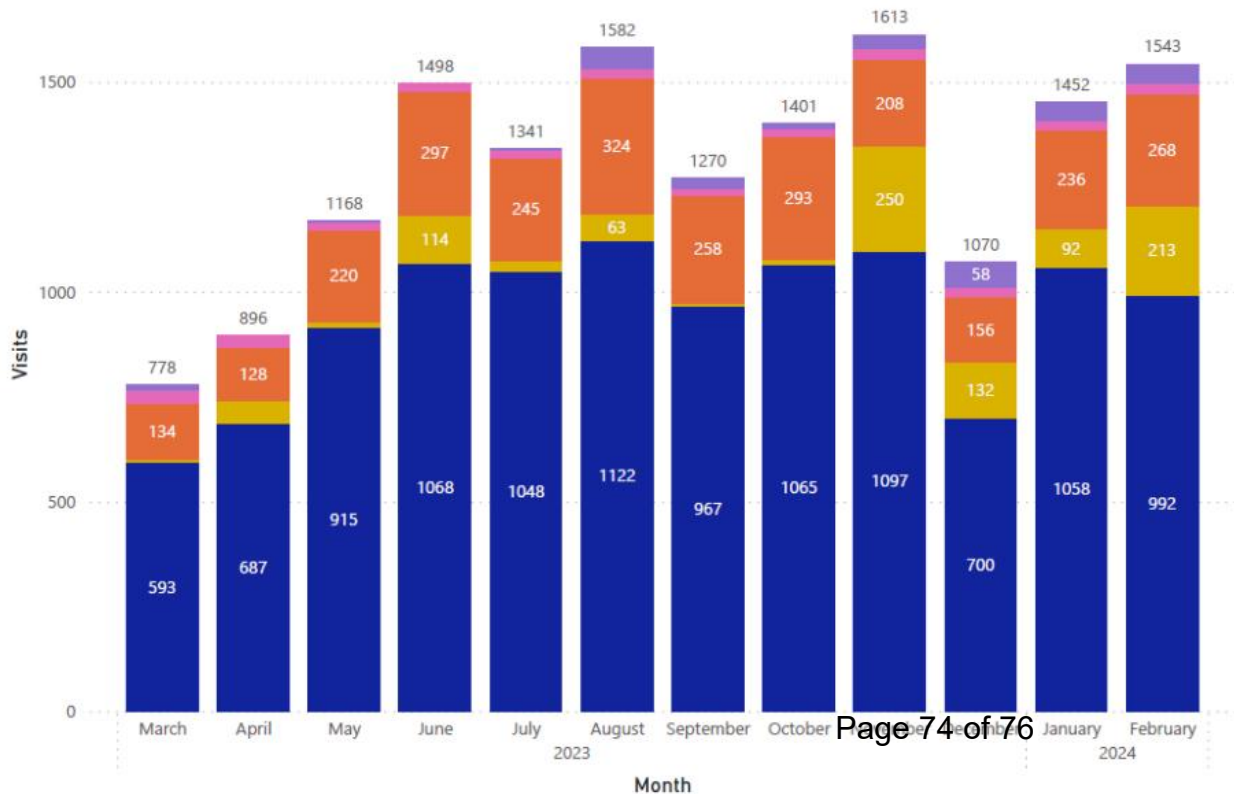


Housing Management

- Targeting Intro tenants 6 months visits 85%
- 12 week visits completed at move in
- Pro active visits taking place tenants not seen 3 to 5 years
- Vulnerability Policy updated
- Tailored support for Domestic abuse, Care leavers, and Families
- Wisemove to support Downsizing
- New Anti Social Behaviour Policy
- Implementing new Housing Management Structure minimum requirement to visit tenants every 2 years
- Tenancy conditions review underway



● BAs ● Surveys ● ASB ● DA ● Lettings



Team

All

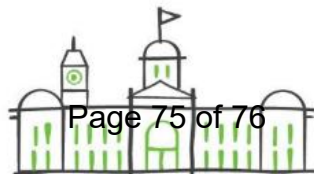
Year	Month	BAs	Surveys	ASB	DA	Lettings	Total
2023	March	593	8	134	31	12	778
2023	April	687	52	128	29	0	896
2023	May	915	13	220	19	1	1168
2023	June	1068	114	297	19	0	1498
2023	July	1048	27	245	18	3	1341
2023	August	1122	63	324	23	50	1582
2023	September	967	6	258	14	25	1270
2023	October	1065	11	293	21	11	1401
2023	November	1097	250	208	26	32	1613
2023	December	700	132	156	24	58	1070
2024	January	1058	92	236	22	44	1452
2024	February	992	213	268	25	45	1543
Total		11312	981	2767	271	281	15612

Future Challenges

- Cost of living
- Complex needs of customers
- Ensuring consumer standards compliance
- Financial Impacts across council
- Demand for stock

Partners Required

- Social Care and Health
- Rent Service Dwp
- Regeneration
- Housing Management Service
- Grounds Maintenance
- Childrens Trust
- Commissioned Services



- **QUESTIONS**

