

# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### **Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel**

**Date**                    **07 March 2019**

**Report of:**           **Managing Director of Fareham Housing**

**Subject:**             **TENANCY MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE REPORT**

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#### **SUMMARY**

This report provides the Panel with information about the housing management and maintenance services provided by the Neighbourhood Team and the Repairs and Maintenance Team.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Housing Scrutiny Panel consider the contents of this report and make any comments or raise any questions for clarification.

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. The Council owns c.2380 homes comprising general purpose properties and sheltered properties. The stock figure is affected by right to buy sales, re-purchases, new builds, demolitions and other disposals such as sale on the open market or change of use.
2. A breakdown of our properties by size, type and area can be seen at Appendix A.
3. We also own 582 garages which are let to tenants and private residents.

## **NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES**

4. The Neighbourhood Team is responsible for the day to day management of council housing tenancies. The functions provided by the team include the following:
  - Tenancy Support, Rent Collection & Estate Management (General Purpose and Sheltered Housing)
  - Tenant Involvement
  - Right to Buy
  - Mutual Exchanges
  - Tenancy Fraud
5. The team also play a key role in the management of our empty properties and adaptations for disabled tenants.

### Rent Collection

6. Income due from rents for the current financial year is just under £12 million. For most of our tenants, we charge 'social rent' (set using a Government formula and typically 50% of market rent) but for those in new-build or newly acquired properties, an 'affordable rent' (80% of market rent) is set.
7. Housing rents and service charges are set and notified on an annual basis. Two thirds of our residents receive full or partial housing benefit which is paid directly into their rent account. We actively encourage tenants who have rent to pay, to set up direct debits and in recent months we have improved our direct debit service to better suit tenant's individual circumstances.
8. Unfortunately, some tenants fall into arrears with their rent and it is a key priority for the Neighbourhood Officers to intervene at the earliest opportunity to prevent these arrears accruing to unacceptable levels. This intervention could be by way of support to maximise income from benefits or provision of budgeting advice. The options for moving to smaller, cheaper accommodation may also be discussed. In most cases, tenants will agree to a mutually acceptable repayment arrangement and Neighbourhood Officers monitor these cases to ensure the arrangement is being kept to.
9. In cases where the tenant does not engage or does not repay rent arrears, legal action is taken through Portsmouth County Court for the recovery of the debt and in extreme cases, possession of the property.
10. The total value of the arrears owing is £369,530 which is 3.09% of the total rent due. This is slightly higher than for the same reporting period last year (2.84%) and in part

can be attributable to the full roll-out of Universal Credit in Fareham. The inherent delay in receiving Universal Credit when compared to a determination of Housing Benefit immediately puts tenants into arrears. Also, the majority of tenants claiming Universal Credit have their housing-cost support paid directly to themselves which can lead to arrears. We are currently recruiting a Welfare Support Officer to join the Neighbourhood Team, to provide additional and targeted support to tenants experiencing financial difficulties as a result of Universal Credit or other welfare reforms.

### Sheltered Housing

11. The sheltered housing service enables our older tenants to live independently with the security of help being available should it be required. We have 26 sheltered schemes located across the borough, of which 6 are 'core' schemes with designated Sheltered Housing Officers on hand throughout office hours. Tenants in the non-core schemes are supported by a team of Mobile Sheltered Housing Officers. All tenants have the added security of an alarm system which is linked to a central control centre which is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week throughout the year.
12. Many of our schemes have regular social activities, such as coffee mornings, bingo and raffle sessions and tea parties and they also welcome a variety of external speakers to give talks on a range of subjects. Work is currently underway for a special event on 4 April 2019 to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of Crofton Court in Stubbington.

### Tenant Involvement

13. We provide a range of involvement opportunities and consultation events enabling tenants to be involved in the services we provide and to play a key role in shaping and monitoring housing services. To ensure tenants are able to fulfil this vital role, we fund training and allocate resources where necessary.
14. Neighbourhood Officers carry out 16 estate inspections each year. The inspections are carried out of a defined local area and local tenants and leaseholders are invited to attend to discuss local issues of concern and identify action required to remedy these.
15. Tenant and leaseholder representatives assist in the monitoring of block cleaning, grounds maintenance and gas servicing. This information is used to discuss performance with the relevant service provider throughout the term of the contract. We also facilitate a Tenant & Leaseholder forum, which, chaired by a tenant representative, meets five times a year.
16. We provide support to a Tenant Editorial Panel who develop and produce regular tenant's newsletters throughout the year.

### Providing safe and secure neighbourhoods

17. We want our tenants to feel safe and secure in their homes so tackling anti-social behaviour and the harm that it can cause, is a priority for us. Anti-social behaviour can be described as behaviour that has caused, or likely to cause, harassment, alarm, or distress to others. This includes hate crime, which is when the victim or another person thinks they are being targeted because of their difference or perceived difference.
18. We try and prevent anti-social behaviour through the following actions:

- Carry out checks before anyone is offered a home, such as previous history of anti-social behaviour. We will also look at what support may be needed to be put in place to help tenants meet the terms of their tenancy.
  - Allocate homes sensitively, especially where tenants are vulnerable or have been victims of anti-social behaviour before
  - Offer Introductory Tenancies to new tenants
  - Encourage tenants to resolve minor nuisance and lifestyle issues themselves
  - Carry out estate improvements to increase the level of safety and security
19. Generally, instances of anti-social behaviour are of a low level and will be dealt with easily and quickly. In more serious cases, the team work in partnership with colleagues from the Council's Environmental Health and Community Safety Teams, together with external agencies such as the Police and health services (mental health, drug and alcohol, etc). A range of enforcement options are available in the most extreme cases, such as the issuing of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts or ultimately repossession action through the court.
20. In the last 12 months, 1 tenant has been evicted from their home due to anti-social behaviour.

## **RESPONSIVE REPAIRS AND PLANNED MAINTENANCE SERVICE**

### Responsive Repairs

21. The Housing Responsive Repairs Service is primarily delivered by directly employed operatives, with supporting contractors where necessary. A van stock system and materials delivery service enable efficient delivery of the repairs. This has been working successfully and data is being collected on materials used on repairs to continuously improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the service and supporting 'what matters' to customers in doing the repair with the least visits as possible.
22. There are five key steps that are of value to the customer when they need a repair to their home. These are:
- i. Collect "Clean information" – Name, address, contact number, brief detail of the problem, date and time when it is convenient for us to attend
  - ii. Allocate the work – at the right time, allocate the job to an operative with the right skills
  - iii. Access – attend at the right time, be polite, courteous and presentable
  - iv. Diagnose – identify the root cause of the problem, understand the individual needs of the customer and tailor a solution that is necessary and proportionate
  - v. Repair – use the right skills and have access to the right materials to fix the problem
23. The service is currently attending an average of 50 appointments per day which has increased from 36 per day last reported in August 2018.
24. A measure to understand how long a job takes to be completed is taken from when a trade operative arrives on an agreed date to when it is finally completed. The average 'end to end' time for a job to be completed from the convenient appointment date for

the last 6 months Aug 18 – Jan 19 was 7.5 days. This trend has not significantly changed since data collection started in January 2017. The total number of appointments undertaken during this period was 6853, with 73.5% of all jobs being completed on the same day as the customer enquiry.

25. The team relies on outside contractors to carry out larger works and specialist work to our buildings. All the current contracts have now come to a natural end therefore we will shortly be tendering these works and hope to attract some local, small to medium companies to join us in maintaining and repairing our properties.

#### Planned Maintenance

26. Planned Maintenance is the collective term for all our major repairs and improvements to our properties. This includes improvements such as installation of central heating, fitted kitchens, bathrooms and double glazing when they reach the end of their useful life. It also includes any major repairs to the outside of properties such as roofs and balcony repairs as well as improvements to the general environment in hard landscaped areas.

27. Our Planned Maintenance Programme is planned over a period of many years. To assist us in doing this, we have independent stock condition surveys carried out regularly which provides us with the information to deliver the programme of work, review the viability of our housing stock and explore regeneration opportunities. A 20% sample survey of our stock (c. 480 dwellings and 230 blocks) is currently being undertaken by Rand Associates and at the time of writing, 204 dwellings and 92 blocks have been completed. It is anticipated that all surveys will be completed by the end of March 2019 with the full analytical reports delivered shortly thereafter.

28. We have a statutory responsibility to carry out fire risk assessments (FRAs) on all communal areas in our buildings (corridors, staircases, lobbies etc). These assessments are either carried out in-house or by an external independent consultancy and are undertaken at regular intervals as determined by previous assessments and risk rating of the building.

29. There are 56 buildings within our stock that require FRAs and at the time of writing, 53 have been undertaken, with the final 3 to be completed by the end of March 2019. Each assessment generates a list of actions or recommendations with appropriate priority and timescales to improve the fire safety of the building. The progress against these are monitored at our Fire Safety Meetings, chaired by the Managing Director of Fareham Housing and attended by key officers from the Neighbourhood and Maintenance Teams. A breakdown of the current actions is as follows:

- **Immediate (Priority A)** - 8 actions which are being actioned and in progress. For example, 4 relate to impeded stairwells.
- **Short term (Priority B)** - 157 actions which are being actioned and in progress. For example, a broken door closer to a front entrance door.
- **Medium term (Priority C)** - 78 actions which are being actioned and in progress. For example, upgrading of fire alarm systems in sheltered common areas.
- **Long term (Priority D)** - 50 actions which should be considered at the time of refurbishment. For example, improvements in the level of smoke detection within sheltered accommodation flats.

30. We also carry out annual smoke detection testing in all our properties; 99% have been completed.
31. In accordance with legislation, the Council has a statutory obligation to ensure all gas heating appliances are inspected and have an annual Landlord Gas Safety Record (LGSR). The current aim is to service all gas heating appliances every 10 months, allowing for any access difficulties. Liberty Group were appointed the gas heating servicing and repairs contractor from June 2018. The current compliance figures as of 18 February 2019 are shown below:

Properties with a current LGSR	1755
Properties capped at the gas meter	3
Properties without a LGSR - expired within 0 to 3 months	1
Properties without a LGSR - expired within 3 to 6 months	0
Properties without a LGSR - expired within 6 to 12 months	0
Properties without a LGSR - expired over 12 months	0

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

32. There are no significant risk considerations in relation to this report

## **CONCLUSION**

33. This report provides panel members with an update about the work of the Neighbourhood and Maintenance services in recent months.

**Appendices:** Appendix A – Council owned homes by size, type and area

## **Enquiries:**

For further information on this report please contact Caroline Newman. (Ext 4645)

General Purpose	Fareham North	Fareham South	Locks Heath	Park Gate	Portchester	Salisbury Green	Stubbington	Titchfield	Warsash	Totals
Ground Floor Bedsit Flat	11	12						2		25
Upper Floor Bedsit Flat	27	25						8		60
1-Bedroom Bungalow		33		9	4		18	30	2	96
1-Bedroom Ground Floor Flat	27	41	15		19		10	2		114
1-Bedroom Upper Floor Flat	54	57	10		20		11	2		154
1-Bedroom House								1		1
2-Bedroom Bungalow	3	1			9		2	1		16
2-Bedroom Ground Floor Flat	49			12	53		4	8	6	132
2-Bedroom Upper Floor Flat	51	5		5	58		5	8	5	137
2-Bedroom Ground Floor Maisonette	9	62								71
2-Bedroom Upper Floor Maisonette	48	75			1					124
2-Bedroom House	9	1	2	9	17	6	24	1		69
3-Bedroom Bungalow					1					1
3-Bedroom Ground Floor Flat					1		1			2
3-Bedroom Upper Floor Flat							1			1
3-Bedroom Ground Floor Maisonette							1			1
3-Bedroom House	162	125	19	55	114		54	92	29	650
4-Bedroom House	6	7	1	4	6		2	7	2	35
5-Bedroom House		1								1
Totals	456	445	47	94	303	6	133	162	44	1690

# Sheltered

	Fareham North	Fareham South	Locks Heath	Park Gate	Portchester	Salisbury Green	Stubbington	Titchfield	Warsash	Totals
Bedsit Flat					14	2	12	2		30
1-Bedroom Bungalow	18	3			14	1	4	9		49
1-Bedroom Ground Floor Flat	53	55	18	5	27	4	49	50	10	271
1-Bedroom Upper Floor Flat	36	69	18	20	33	7	47	56	10	296
2-Bedroom Bungalow	3									3
2-Bedroom Ground Floor Flat	7			3						10
2-Bedroom Upper Floor Flat	12			8	2				1	23
Totals	129	127	36	36	90	14	112	117	21	682