

# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel

**Date:** 07 November 2019

**Report of:** Head of Housing and Benefits

**Subject:** TENANCY MANAGEMENT, REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE OF  
COUNCIL-OWNED PROPERTIES

#### 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:
  - i. Tenancy Support, Rent Collection & Estate Management (General Purpose and Sheltered Housing)
  - ii. Tenant Involvement
  - iii. Right to Buy
  - iv. Mutual Exchanges
  - v. Tenancy Fraud
5. The team also play a key role in the management of our empty properties and adaptations for disabled tenants.
6. As Members will be aware, funding was withdrawn from Citizens Advice Fareham earlier this year and a new post of Welfare Support Officer was created within our team. The primary role of the post is to engage with our difficult to reach tenants, who are at risk of losing their home due to their rent arrears or other breaches of their tenancy.
7. Once contact has been established, the Welfare Support Officer will assist tenants access benefits they are entitled to and help them to budget, save money and manage debts. Where necessary, the Welfare Support Officer will signpost the tenant to other agencies or organisations for additional support.
8. To date, 52 referrals have been made to the Welfare Support Officer and the two anonymised cases below give examples of the type of work being undertaken:

### **Case 1**

'Hannah' was referred to the Welfare Support Officer on 24 May 2019 due to the level of rent arrears on her rent account. She had been a victim of domestic abuse and she was struggling to cope with her debts. After initial failed contacts, the Welfare Support Officer is now in regular contact with Hannah and is providing her with the support she needs to manage her finances and debts. Hannah's rent arrears are now reducing as she is keeping to a repayment arrangement. Additionally, her home is looking much cleaner and tidier and overall Hannah's life appears to be back on track. There is a clear relationship of trust between Hannah and the Welfare Support Officer which will continue until such time Hannah is able to live independently and maintain her tenancy.

## **Case 2**

'Stephen' was referred to the Welfare Support Officer in June 2019 due to the level of rent arrears on his rent account. He is living in a 4 bedroomed house and sleeping on the ground floor, which he moved into whilst caring for his wife who is now in residential care. He is subject to the 'bedroom tax' and Housing Benefit is therefore paid at a reduced rate. The Welfare Support Officer has supported him in contacting all his debtors and has assisted in making claims for additional benefits. Subsequently he is now making payments to reduce his rent arrears. Stephen has finally agreed to move to smaller property which will further improve his financial situation.

9. In both cases above, the Welfare Support Officer was able to regularly meet or liaise with the tenant, at their pace and choosing, thus tailoring the support required to that individual. This has undoubtedly led to the success of ensuring that rent arrears are addressed and payment arrangements sustained. It is therefore likely that these tenancies will no longer be classed as 'at risk', the tenant is more confident with dealing with their finances and the need for costly repossession action through the courts by the Council is negated.
10. Unfortunately, not all tenants engage with this service and in these cases, if arrears have not reduced, they are referred to the Neighbourhood Officer to initiate court proceedings for possession of the property.

## **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. Over the last month, we have been talking to our sheltered housing residents to understand how well the service meets their needs and identify ways to improve it. Overwhelmingly, residents valued the work of Sheltered Housing Team and enjoyed living in our schemes. Other key messages were:
  - Support, security and location were rated 'very important' by the majority
  - Residents would prefer more allocated parking and improved storage of mobility scooters
  - Residents would like to see more organised activities at core schemes
  - Some schemes need updating/modernisation to improve security/peace of mind for residents

13. Officers will continue to analyse the results and any proposed changes will be brought back to a future Panel for consideration.

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

### Responsive Repairs

14. 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.
15. 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
16. The service is currently attending an average of 45 appointments per day which has decreased from 50 per day when last reported, these figures will always fluctuate.
17. 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 Apr 19 – Sep 19 was 8.0 days. This trend has not significantly changed since data collection started in January 2017. The total number of appointments undertaken during this period was 5165, with 75% of all jobs being completed on the same day as the customer enquiry.
18. 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, as mentioned in the previous report we were going through a tender exercise for these works in the hope of attracting some local, small to medium companies to join us in maintaining and repairing our properties.
19. This tender is now in its final stages of award, we initially received 182 expressions of interest have been received via the South East Business Portal in relation to the 21 tender opportunities published for the area of Responsive Repairs.
20. The tender closed on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2019, we received tenders from 105 different companies, the majority of these companies were within the Local area and have bid on more than 1 LOT

### Planned Maintenance

21. 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.
22. Our Planned Maintenance Programme is planned over a period of many years. To assist us in doing this, we periodically have independent stock condition surveys carried out 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) has recently been undertaken by Rand Associates who provided a full analytical report of the stock. We will use this information in a new asset management system to better assist us in delivering intelligent planned programmes of work. Decent Home Standard is estimated to be 98%, equating to 39 properties being 'non-decent' based on the government criteria. 578 properties are deemed 'potential failures' over the next 5 years. The average SAP rating is estimated to be 69.3 which equates to being at the bottom of band C on an EPC. Programmes of work will directly focus on maintaining decency standards and increasing energy efficiency in line with the Council's proposed green policy.
23. 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.
24. There are 56 buildings within our stock that require FRAs which were all 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 Deputy Chief Executive Officer and attended by key officers from the Neighbourhood and Maintenance Teams.
25. 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 14 October 2019 are shown below:

Properties with a current LGSR	1739
Properties capped at the gas meter	3
Properties without a LGSR - expired within 0 to 3 months	11
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**

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

## **CONCLUSION**

27. 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)

<b>General Purpose</b>	<b>Fareham North</b>	<b>Fareham South</b>	<b>Locks Heath</b>	<b>Park Gate</b>	<b>Portchester</b>	<b>Salisbury Green</b>	<b>Stubbington</b>	<b>Titchfield</b>	<b>Warsash</b>	<b>Totals</b>
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
<b>Totals</b>	<b>456</b>	<b>445</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>1690</b>

# Sheltered

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