

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Health and Housing Policy Development and Review Panel

Date **10 March 2016**

Report of: **Director of Operations**

Subject: **TENANCY MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT**

SUMMARY

This report provides Panel members with an update on performance in regard to current tenant rent arrears, management of empty homes, anti-social behaviour, estate services and tenant involvement.

RECOMMENDATION

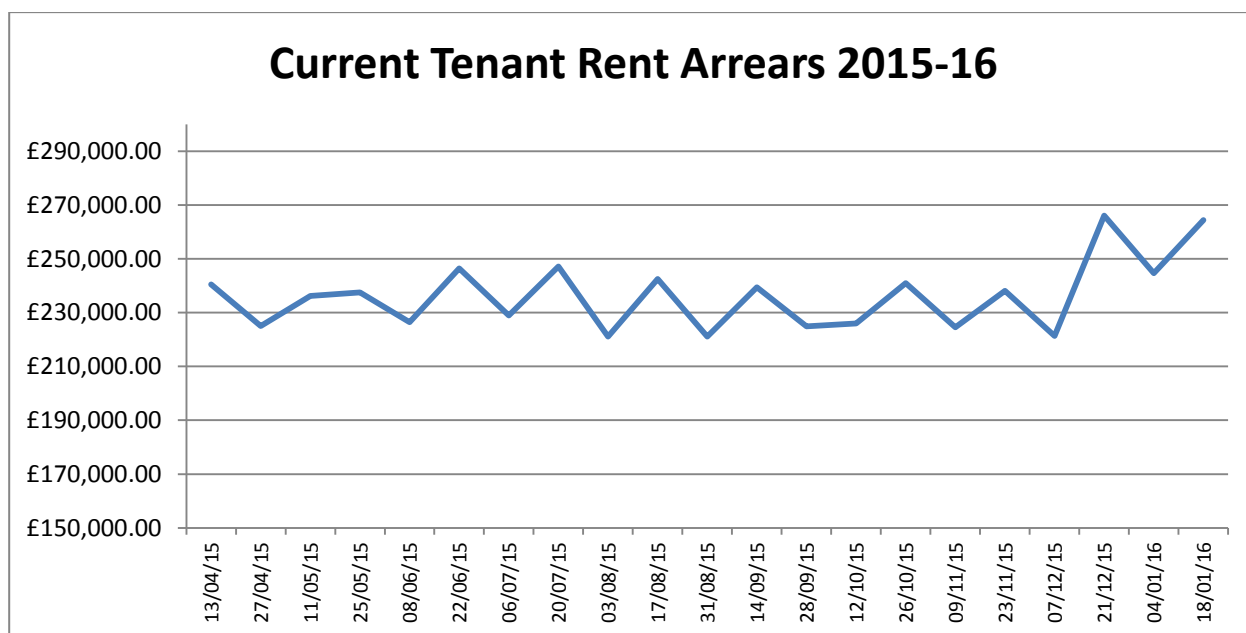
That the Panel notes and scrutinises the information contained within the report.

INTRODUCTION

1. Tenancy Management covers a range of housing service functions which include rent collection and arrears recovery, managing empty homes, dealing with anti-social behaviour, housing estate management and tenant involvement.
2. This report provides panel members with an update on performance and highlights any key service issues officers are dealing with.

CURRENT TENANT RENT ARREARS

3. Current tenant rent arrears as at 31 January 2016 stood at £264,341. This equates to 2.21% of the projected annual rent debit which is similar to that in 2014/15 but an improvement on 2013/14 and 2012/13.
4. The graph shown below helps to illustrate arrears performance for the year to date. Although arrears had decreased slightly in the period April to December 2015 there has been an increase over the Christmas and New Year period which is similar to performance in previous years.



5. Officers are anticipating a reduction in the level of arrears between February and April 2016. A verbal update on the position will be provided at the meeting.
6. As part of the arrears recovery process it is necessary to refer some cases to the County Court. In the year to date (April 2015 to February 2016) there have been 24 hearings in court.
7. In the majority of court hearings the case was either adjourned or court order granted on payment terms. Three homes were repossessed, this despite much effort from officers to engage and support the tenants facing eviction. In two of the repossessions the property was family sized accommodation.
8. As at the beginning of February 2016 there were 104 working age tenants whose housing benefit had been reduced due to under-occupying their home. Ninety tenants are under-occupying by one bedroom and fourteen by two bedrooms.

9. 10 of the 104 tenants are receiving discretionary housing payment (DHP) to help them with the shortfall. In 81% of cases tenants are paying on a regular basis and making up the shortfall. Officers are in contact with the remaining 19% with a view to them setting up a repayment arrangement, making a referral for debt advice and advising them of their housing options in terms of a possible move.

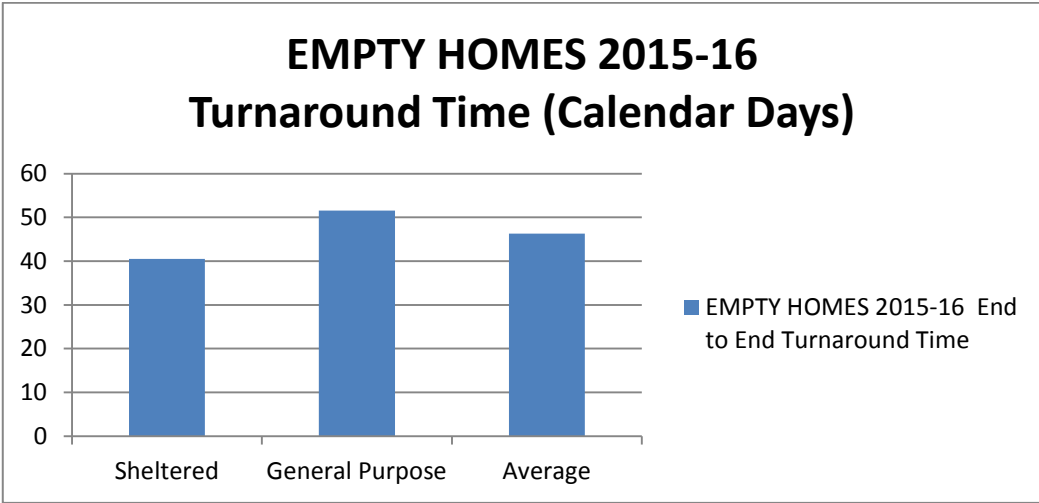
MANAGEMENT OF EMPTY HOMES

10. The way in which empty homes are managed has changed with emphasis on matching the right person to the right property and carrying out works to empty homes that have been identified and agreed with the new tenant rather than reinstating the property to a prescribed standard.

11. In a number of cases it has been necessary to carry out kitchen/bathroom modernisation work, electrical rewiring and adaptations to meet the needs of a disabled tenant or member of their household. This in turn has slightly increased the time taken to relet the property and the loss in rental income.

12. In terms of performance we measure the void period. The start of the void period is the date when the keys are returned by the outgoing tenant and the end of the period is the date when the ingoing tenant’s tenancy begins.

13. The chart below shows the average turnaround time for general needs and sheltered properties for the period April 2015 to the end of January 2016. In the period a total of 127 homes were relet: 66 sheltered and 61 general purpose.



14. In terms of void rent loss, as at 24 January 2016 this amounted to £131,084 which is 1.43% of the total rent due in the financial year to date. This is an increase of 0.24% on that for similar period in the previous year. Further work is being carried out to understand reasons for this and identify opportunities to improve performance.

15. Whilst acknowledging the slight increase in void rent loss, it is pleasing to note that there has been a reduction in the number of new tenants falling into rent arrears and causing anti-social behaviour; evidence that the principle of identifying the right person for the right property is working thereby benefiting the Council and its tenants as tenancies will be more sustainable. Furthermore, evidence from a comparison of randomly selected voids both pre and post Vanguard, shows a continual reduction in the demand for responsive repairs after allocation.

DEALING WITH ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

16. The table below provides information of reported incidents of Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) where officers took some form of action against the perpetrators. This action could have been anything from sending a letter to carrying out visits with Community Safety and the Police. Currently there are 4 tenants on Acceptable Behaviour Contracts. Two secure tenants and one introductory have been served Notice due to on-going ASB problems and possession proceedings are now being considered.

Period	Reported incidents	Serious cases
April 15 to Jan 16	12	5

17. Although there has been a reduction in the total number of ASB cases over the past year, the number of serious cases has increased. The knock on effect being that housing officers are spending more time attending multi-agency meetings with Community Safety, Police, Legal Services and other support agencies/organisations to help resolve ASB issues.

HOUSING ESTATE MANAGEMENT

18. The communal areas of the Council's blocks of flats and maisonettes are cleaned on a weekly basis. Windows to the communal areas and individual units within sheltered housing blocks are cleaned on a 3-6 monthly basis. Feedback is obtained from tenant and leaseholder representatives and housing staff and is collated to give an overall satisfaction rate.
19. Satisfaction level for block cleaning remains high. For the period April 2015 to February 2016 inclusive this stood at 87% and has been consistent throughout the year.
20. Quarterly Performance meetings are held with the service provider. The last meeting was held on 27 January 2016; no major issues were highlighted or discussed.
21. The cleaning of housing blocks forms part of a corporate cleaning contract. Last autumn the contract was put out to tender and a number of tenders were received. The successful contractor Hi Spec has been awarded a 5 year contract with a possible 2 year extension option. The new contract starts in April 2016 and on 9 March 2016 officers and a number of tenant/leaseholder representatives met with the new Contractor.
22. The external areas around housing blocks and general needs areas, including garage service areas, are maintained by the Council's Streetscene team. This includes grass-cutting, weed treatment, litter-picking and sweeping of hard surfaces. Feed-back is obtained from tenant and leaseholder representatives and housing staff and is collated to give an overall % satisfaction rate.
23. Satisfaction level for grounds maintenance remains high and for the period April 2015 to February 2016 inclusive this stood at 93% and has been consistent throughout the year.

24. Quarterly meetings are held with officers from the Council's Streetscene team and the last meeting was held on 9 December 2015, no issues of concern were identified.
25. Estate inspections are carried out in areas which have been highlighted by tenants or officers as having problems. In the year to date 14 inspections have taken place where problems were noted and action has been taken to rectify any issues.
26. The main issues arising from recent inspections were the dumping of fly-tipped waste to communal areas of flats and maisonette blocks and overgrown hedges encroaching onto public footpaths from privately-owned gardens. At the time of writing these issues have been addressed to the satisfaction of all concerned.

TENANT INVOLVEMENT

27. Since the last Performance Monitoring Report in September 2015, tenants and leaseholders have been involved in the following events:

- **Editorial Panel meeting** (Tenants and officers meet to discuss articles for inclusion in tenant and leaseholder newsletters);
- **Tenant and Leaseholder Forum** (An open forum for tenant/leaseholder representatives who meet to discuss housing issues of interest with council officers);
- **South Coast Training** (Up to 10 tenants/leaseholders attend training event held twice a year which helps improve knowledge and understanding across a range of housing issues);
- **Tenant Participation Advisory Services (TPAS) presentation** (TPAS is an independent body which provides support to tenants groups and housing organisations in the area of tenant involvement); and
- **Estate Monitors Meeting** (A half yearly event for tenant and leaseholder volunteers who help monitor block cleaning and grounds maintenance work).

RISK ASSESSMENT

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

CONCLUSION

29. This report has provided panel members with an update on performance across a range of housing management services.

Background Papers: None

Reference Papers: None

Enquiries: For further information on this report please contact Jane Cresdee (Ext 4483)