

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Health and Housing Policy Development and Review Panel

Date **22 September 2016**

Report of: **Director of Operations**

Subject: **TENANCY MANAGEMENT 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

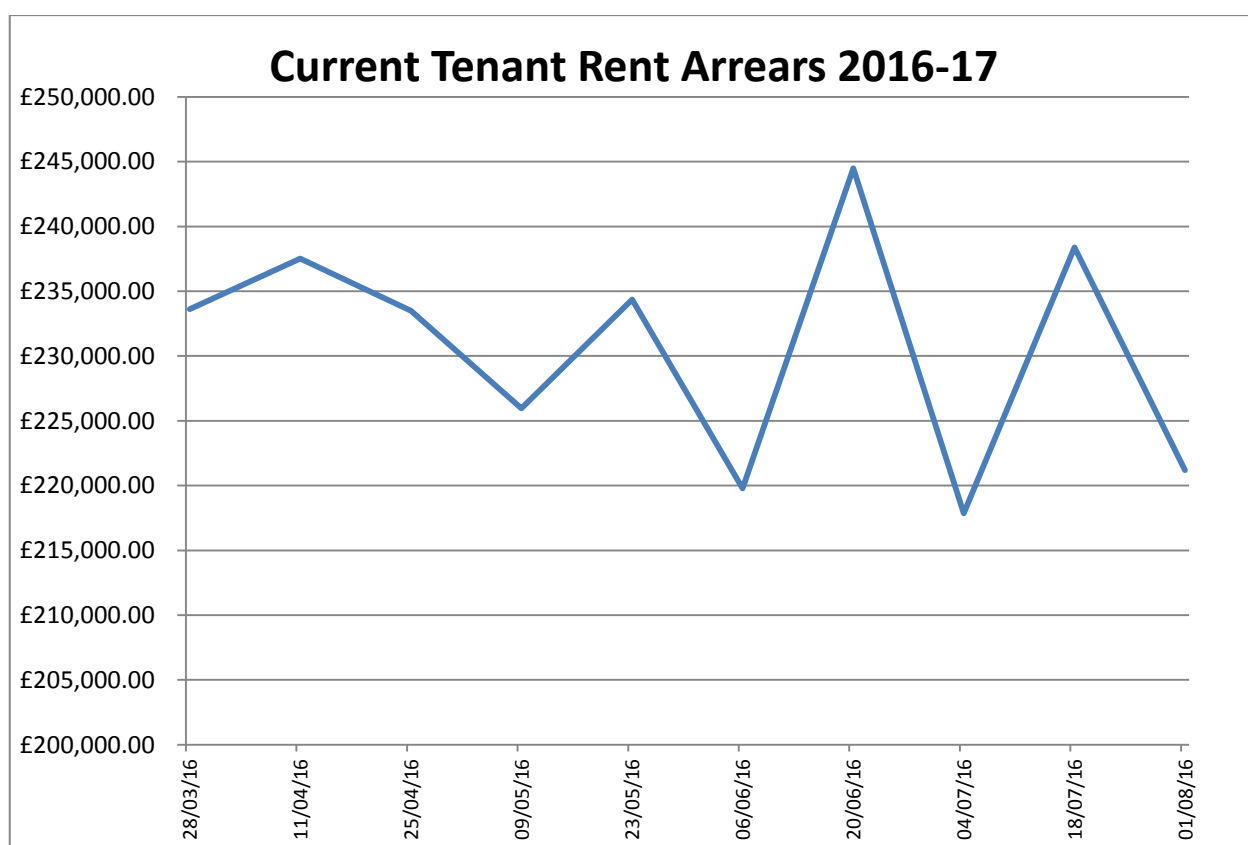
That the Panel notes the information contained within the report.

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 ARREARS

3. Current tenant arrears as at 31 July 2016 stood at £221,180. This equates to 1.66% of the projected annual rent debit which is an improvement to the previous report in March 2016 (2.16%) and for the same period last year (2.02%).
4. The graph shown below helps to illustrate performance for the year to date.

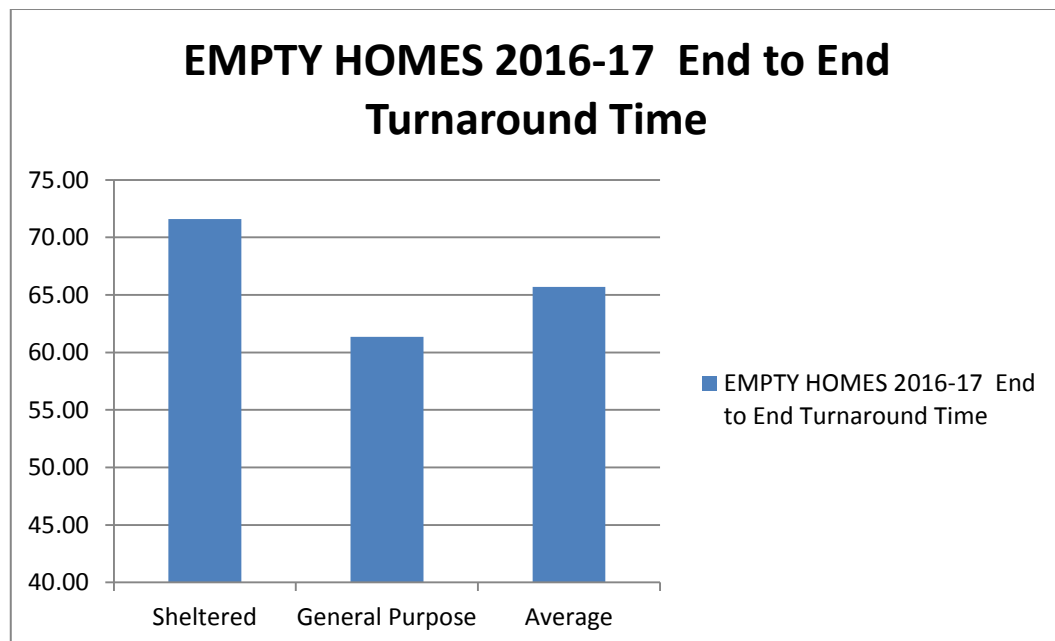


5. As part of the arrears recovery process it is necessary to refer some cases to the County Court. Since the last report, for the period March 2016 to July 2016, there have been 13 hearings in court.
6. In the majority of court hearings the case was either adjourned for further information or a court order was granted on payment terms. Three homes have been repossessed in the past 6 months despite much effort from officers to engage and support the tenants facing eviction. The accommodation repossessed included 2 family-sized homes.
7. A Vanguard Intervention started recently which is looking at rent arrears and trying to identify any areas where changes can be made to improve on current practice. Having visited a random sample of tenants, it became evident in a large number of cases that we were not offering people a method of payment which they would have chosen –

namely, flexibility when using direct debits to pay their rent. We only offer direct debits on the 1st of each month which clearly does not suit everyone as many tenants receive their wages or benefits on a weekly or fortnightly basis. Due to changes taking place in the very near future direct debits can be set up to take money from an account on any day of the week and for any frequency. The advantages of this are that tenants paying by this method have money taken automatically and do not have to remember to make a payment. There is also the added bonus that if a direct debit fails, the bank notifies the Council within a few days so that a discussion can take place with the tenant quickly to try and resolve the issue.

MANAGEMENT OF EMPTY HOMES

8. 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.
9. 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 increased the time taken to relet the property and the loss in rental income.
10. In terms of performance we measure the total 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 incoming tenant's tenancy begins.
11. The chart below shows the average turnaround time for general needs and sheltered properties for the period April 2016 to the end of July 2016. In the period, a total of 80 homes were relet; 46 general purpose and 34 sheltered lettings.



12. Average turnaround time has increased by 13 calendar days since April 2016. This is largely due to letting a number of long term empty homes. A number of these remained empty because they were difficult to let, whilst others required extensive works.

13. In terms of void rent loss; at the end of July 2016 this totalled £69,002 which is 1.81% of the total rent due in the financial year to date. This is an increase on that for similar period in the previous year and is largely attributed to the long term empty homes.
14. Whilst acknowledging the increase in void rent loss, evidence from a comparison of 30 randomly selected voids both pre and post Vanguard intervention continues to show a reduction in the demand for responsive repairs after allocation.

DEALING WITH ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

15. 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 Police. Currently there are 3 tenants on Acceptable Behaviour Contracts. One secure tenant has been served Notice due to on-going ASB problems and possession proceedings are now being considered.

Period	Reported incidents	Serious cases
Apr – July 2016	5	2

16. Although there has been a reduction in the total number of ASB cases during the past 6 months 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, Legal Services, Police and other support agencies to help resolve ASB issues.

HOUSING ESTATE MANAGEMENT

17. The cleaning of housing blocks forms part of a corporate cleaning contract. The current contract lasts for 5 years and commenced in April 2016. The contractor is Hi-Spec cleaning services.
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. The satisfaction level for Block Cleaning for the period April 2016 to July 2016 inclusive stood at 83%. This is slightly down on that for the previous year.
20. Quarterly Performance meetings are held with the service provider. The last meeting was held on 26 July 2016. The main issues discussed were cleaning of stairwells at a number of maisonette blocks and window cleaning.
21. 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 again obtained from tenant and leaseholder representatives and housing staff and is collated to give an overall % satisfaction rate.

22. The satisfaction level for Grounds Maintenance for the period April 2016 to July 2016 inclusive stood at 98%.
23. Quarterly meetings are held with officers from the Council's Streetscene team and the last meeting was held on 8 June 2016. No issues or concerns were identified.
24. Estate inspections are carried out in areas which have been highlighted by either tenants or officers as having problems. For the period 1 April 2016 to 31 July 2016, 7 inspections have taken place where any problems were noted and action has been taken to rectify any issues.
25. The main issues arising from the recent inspections were the dumping of fly-tipped waste to communal areas of flats and maisonette blocks and overgrown grass verges. At the time of writing this report these issues have been addressed to the satisfaction of all concerned.

TENANT INVOLVEMENT

26. Since the last Performance Monitoring Report in March 2016, 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 a training event held twice a year which helps improve knowledge and understanding across a range of housing issues);
 - **Estate Monitors Meeting** (A twice-yearly event for tenant and leaseholder volunteers who help monitor block cleaning and grounds maintenance work);
 - **TSG Quarterly Review Meeting** (To discuss and review the Gas service provided to tenants).

RISK ASSESSMENT

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

CONCLUSION

28. 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)