

HOUSING PORTFOLIO COUNCILLOR M Radulovic MBE

Portfolio Holder's Report to Council – 14 December 2022

Allocations

On 1 November 2022, Cabinet approved a Home Release Scheme. This is an incentive scheme to encourage tenants who are under-occupying Council properties to downsize to a smaller property. Moving home can be a daunting prospect for tenants who may have lived in their property for a number of years and may not feel they can do so without support. The Home Release Scheme puts into place financial support as well as the support of officers to assist with some of the practical arrangements. No pressure will be put on tenants to move under this scheme. The housing service have started to contact tenants who may wish to move.

As at the end of November there were 1,799 households on our waiting list. 513 of these are in our priority bands 1 and 2. It is essential that we look at alternative solutions, such as the Home Release Scheme, to ensure that people in need are rehoused as soon as possible.

Good progress is also being made in improving our turnaround times for void properties, so that people can be rehoused quicker. The number of empty properties is the lowest it has been all year, and in November there was an average of eight new tenancies per week.

Homelessness

The Housing Options Team continue to see a rise in the number of landlords serving notices on their tenants, which has led to more approaches to the team from people at risk of homelessness. The team were dealing with 124 homelessness cases at the end of November.

The number of households in temporary accommodation continues to reduce, as more void properties are returned and people are offered a permanent home.

Repairs

The Repairs Review continues to progress, with the team moving back into the Housing Service. Following approval at Cabinet on 4 October 2022, new software is being implemented which will improve accurate diagnosis of repairs, and the number of jobs that can be completed at the first visit. Processes are being reviewed, including record keeping, to ensure that comprehensive information is kept for future reference and to be able to fully answer enquiries at first point of contact.

The tragic death of Awaab Ishak, who died of a respiratory condition caused by mould in his social housing home, has rightly focussed attention on the responsibility of all landlords to ensure that their homes are well-maintained and safe to live in.

The housing department has robust processes for dealing with damp and mould, and has had a zero tolerance approach to dealing with reports for a number of years. Employees within our Housing Repairs Team are provided with equipment and trained to test for damp in our properties. We have completed a full review of how we address damp and mould issues, and have complied with requests from the Regulator of Social Housing for information regarding our approach.

Income Management

As at 19 November, current arrears were £328,136. This is £4,359 higher than the same period last year. However, given the current cost of living crisis an increase of less than £5,000 is very good performance.

We now have a team of two Financial Inclusion Officers, which has increased the amount of support that can be offered to tenants, both for rent arrears and wider debt and income issues.

New Build Development on Council owned land

Chilwell garage sites - Planning Applications have been approved for the following garage sites:

- 4x2 bed houses and 2x1 bed flats at Felton Close, Chilwell,
- 2x3 bed houses at Gayrigg Court, Chilwell,
- 2x2 bed houses and 1x3 bed house at Selside Court, Chilwell,

These schemes are in the Housing Capital Programme for 2022-2024 and the building works will be tendered early 2023. Homes England funding has been applied for and a decision is expected before Christmas. It is anticipated that these 3 sites will start on site April 2023 with completion a year later.

Watnall garage sites - Planning Applications have also been submitted for the following garage sites:

- 2x3 bed houses at Chilton Drive/Spring Close, Watnall (approved at November planning committee),
- 2x2 bed houses at Chilton Drive Watnall (the planning application will be considered at January 2023 planning committee),

These schemes are in the Housing Capital Programme for 2022-2024 and the building works will be tendered in the Spring. Homes England funding will also be applied for in the Spring (funding cannot be secured on sites without planning). It is anticipated that these 2 sites will start circa June 2023 with completion a year later.

Inham Nook pub site and Barn Croft garages – The Council bought the Inham Nook pub in 2021. The pub has been demolished and the planning application for the 15 new homes (12 x 2/3 bed houses and 3 x 1 bed flats) has been approved by planning committee but is subject to the signing of a section 106 agreement. Homes England funding has been applied for and a decision is expected before Christmas. These new homes are in the Housing Capital

Programme for 2022-2024 and the building works will be tendered once the section 106 has been signed. It is anticipated that the work will begin on site in 2023 with completion a year later.