

**HOUSING PORTFOLIO
COUNCILLOR V C SMITH
Report to Council – 11 October 2023**

Property Acquisitions

Since the Council began to buy back properties purchased through the Right to Buy we have acquired 32 properties which were previously in Council ownership. This year the Council have committed to spend over £2.5million (£2,553,900) on acquiring properties for the Housing Revenue Account. Since April 2023 we have purchased five properties - four, three bedroom houses and a one-bedroom bungalow. We are currently progressing 14 active applications and expect to complete the purchase of another four properties at least, within the next few months. The properties we acquire are used to house applicants from our housing waiting list.

On 25 July 2023, Cabinet resolved to purchase one block of five flats in Stapleford. The purpose-built flats were constructed in 2005 and are maintained to a high standard. Properties like this are a quick and relatively inexpensive means of adding good quality rental stock to the Council's asset base.

Independent Living Open Days

A series of Independent Living Open Days are taking place during October at Regency Court in Beeston; Cloverlands Court in Watnall and Guttersloh Court in Stapleford. These provide an opportunity for anyone who may be interested to drop in and learn more about what it is like to live in Independent Living. This includes older residents, and also those who provide care or support to older people.

During the Open Day there is a tour of the scheme, including available properties, guest rooms and communal facilities and a chance to meet with current tenants who can provide their first-hand experiences of living in an Independent Living scheme. If a resident is interested in our schemes, officers will be available to discuss the application process and provide support for anyone who wishes to apply.

Neighbourhood Inspections

Our Neighbourhood Co-ordinators have relaunched their Neighbourhood Inspection programme and will be visiting every area of the borough where there are Council owned properties in the coming months. As well as publicising each inspection, every local tenant and ward member will receive an invite to their local inspection.

Inspections last approximately two hours and provide an opportunity for tenants to identify any issues in their area and speak to their Neighbourhood Co-ordinator about any concerns they have. They help to ensure general areas are kept tidy, fly tipping is removed and repairs are reported. It is also an opportunity for officers to discuss any ideas that tenants have for improvements to the area, and submissions to our Housing Community Fund.

Resident Involvement Group

On 8 August 2023 the Engagement Team held an evening Resident Involvement Group (RIG) meeting at Scalby Close in Eastwood. 18 tenants attended. The group discussed the work of the Housing Regulator and the Housing Ombudsman. Our Senior Neighbourhood Co-ordinator also attended to discuss the work of the Neighbourhoods team. The group was given information about how they could get involved further, including the Community Fund and Community Champion role.

On 12 September 2023 there was a further meeting of the Resident Involvement Group held in the daytime at our Council Offices. A discussion was held with the 8 tenants that attended about changing the remit of this group, so that different items are considered by the meeting held in the office and those held at different locations in the evening. They discussed the group being more involved in scrutiny of services and amending the terms of reference to reflect this.

Housing Repairs

Our new Repairs Contact Centre is fully staffed and has begun to take calls from tenants regarding their repairs. We have also had some success in recruiting to trade positions, with a number of new multi-skilled and single trade operatives starting work in the Repairs team. This has allowed us to begin the work to reduce our reliance on external contractors. Our in-house team completed 733 responsive repairs in August 2023.

Damp and Mould

On 7 September 2023, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities published guidance for landlords on 'Understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the home'. The Council will ensure that this guidance is fully understood and implemented, both in relation to the properties we own and our duties in regards to private sector tenants.

The guidance will be used to inform the work being implemented following the Council's self-assessment of our approach to damp and mould, which was approved by Cabinet on 5 September 2023.

Private Sector Housing

A new Housing Grant Officer commenced in post at the end of August, the officer is experienced in disabled facilities grants which has enabled him to take on a case-load quickly which will begin to reduce the backlog of cases.

A full audit of the HMO Public register has been carried out which identified some minor errors and a small number of duplicated entries which have all now been rectified. There are 298 licenced HMO properties in the Borough. In the second quarter of 2023-24 a further 11 HMO licences were issued

7 DFG Grants were completed in July and August.

The total spend for mandatory and discretionary DFG's for the year to date £319,043 with an approved grant commitment of £144,258 (figures up to 8/9/23).