

**HOUSING PORTFOLIO  
COUNCILLOR V C SMITH****Report to Council – 13 December 2023****Private Sector Housing**

The Caseworker and Housing Grants officers have been working well to reduce the backlog of cases on the waiting list which has now seeing a notable reduction. At the beginning of October there were 35 cases on the waiting list now this has reduced to 20 cases.

Seven DFG Grants were completed in October

The total spend for mandatory and discretionary DFG's for the year to date £411,720 with an approved grant commitment of £240,451 (figures up to end of October)

The Private Sector Housing Officers have been carrying out proactive compliance visits on Licenced HMO's as well as continuing to process HMO licence applications both new and renewals. There are currently 318 licenced HMO properties within the Borough. This proactive work is alongside the teams reactive work across all types of privately rented properties, home owners who need support due to hoarding and other casework in the remit of the team.

Empty Homes work continues to be a focus for the team, providing advice and guidance to owners and dealing with any complaints that arise. To date this year five empty homes are recorded as returned to use, this figure is specific to properties where the Private Sector Housing Team have had direct involvement through either advice, guidance or due to the investigation of a complaint.

**Tenant Satisfaction Survey**

Under new regulatory requirements we are required to complete an annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey, so we can report on the Tenant Satisfaction Measures that have been introduced.

Our survey is being completed by an external company that specialise in social housing market research. The survey for tenants only, and is being conducted from 20 November 2023 until 22 December 2023. Every tenant has been sent a letter. They can return a completed survey or respond online. Telephone surveys are also being completed with some tenants.

A report will be produced with the results, but we also have access to a portal which provides the full responses. If any urgent concerns are raised, such as anti-social behaviour or damp and mould, these are referred immediately to us for further investigation.

**Rent Arrears**

Despite some vacancies in the team, the Housing Income Team continue to achieve good results. In October 2023 current arrears as a percentage of the annual rent debit was 2.5%. This lower than October 2022 when it was 2.63%, and shows we are on track to repeat previous good year end performance. New employees have recently started within the team, which will increase the resource available to offer support to our tenants.

There are two rent free weeks prior to Christmas. For tenants that are in credit, no payment is due. This should assist tenant experiencing financial difficulties at this expensive time of the year.

**Void Properties**

Six months ago, our Housing Repairs team were dealing with 84 empty properties that required work before they could be relet. As at mid-November this had been reduced to only 18. Of these, 13 of them had become void within the last six weeks.

During October 22 properties were let, consisting of 12 Independent Living properties and 10 General Needs properties.

**Housing Options**

It has been an extremely busy period for the Housing Options Team. They worked with 22 households who were unable to return home due to flooding. Across the weekend of 20-22 October 2023 emergency accommodation was provided to all of these households to enable the residents to have a safe and dry place to stay until longer term plans could be made. Out of all the households supported our Housing Options Team are providing ongoing support to 8 households including 2 households who have received a permanent offer of accommodation in the borough with ourselves.

Whilst dealing with an increased caseload as a result of the flooding, our Housing Options Team successfully intervened and prevented 26 instances in which households had a threat of homelessness. This means that 81% of homelessness cases were prevented rather than a main duty being accepted.

**Flooding at Council properties**

During the flooding in Stapleford three council properties on Wellington Street were affected. Our Tenancy Services Team are working with all our tenants, and temporary decant accommodation has been provided whilst their properties are repaired.

**House Building**

Two of the three new build schemes on former garage sites in Chilwell have completed the tender process, with site work to start during November and January. Procurement of a contractor to build out the third scheme (in Watnall) will start in

January 2024. Together these schemes will provide 28 affordable homes for rent on six former garage sites, plus the site of the former Inham Nook pub.

The “buyback” programme of former Council houses has been streamlined, with relationships built with local estate agents and a surveying process to identify necessary works. The scheme has added 5 extra properties to the affordable rent roll since April 2023, with a further 8 properties under offer, and 8 more applications being processed.

21 homes have been added to the affordable rented stock via a series of acquisitions approved by Cabinet in July and October. Negotiations continue to buy a further 18 flats to refurbish.

The vacant post of Head of Asset Management and Development was filled in September.