

# Agenda

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## Housing Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

Date: **Thursday 22 January 2015**

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Time: **5.00 pm**

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Place: **Plowman Room - Town Hall**

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For any further information please contact:

**Andrew Brown**

Telephone: 01865 252230

Email: [abrown2@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:abrown2@oxford.gov.uk)

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# Housing Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

## Membership

Chair	Councillor Sam Hollick
	Councillor Linda Smith
	Councillor Gill Sanders
	Councillor Elizabeth Wade
Co-optee	Linda Hill

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# AGENDA

		Pages
1	<b>APOLOGIES</b>  The Quorum for this Panel is three and substitutes are allowed.	
2	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>	
3	<b>FUEL POVERTY</b>  For the Panel to receive a briefing on the Council's approach to combatting Fuel Poverty.	5 - 10
4	<b>STAR SURVEY RESULTS</b>  For the Panel to receive a briefing on the latest STAR survey results.	11 - 28
5	<b>WORK PROGRAMME</b>  For the Housing Panel to review and note its work programme.	29 - 30
6	<b>NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</b>  To note the notes of the meeting held on 10 December 2014.	31 - 34
7	<b>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</b>  4 February 2015 24 March 2015	

## **DECLARING INTERESTS**

### **General duty**

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed "Declarations of Interest" or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

### **What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?**

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your\* employment; sponsorship (ie payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licences for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

### **Declaring an interest**

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest.

If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

### **Members' Code of Conduct and public perception**

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member "must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself" and that "you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned". What this means is that the matter of interests must be viewed within the context of the Code as a whole and regard should continue to be paid to the perception of the public.

\*Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those of the member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

**To: Housing Panel**

**Date: 22 January 2015**

**Report of: Head of Housing and Property**

**Title of Report: Fuel Poverty**

## **Summary**

**Purpose of report:** To inform Members about work the Council is doing on alleviating fuel poverty.

**Key decision** *No*

**Executive lead member:** Cllr Ed Turner/ Cllr Scott Seamons

**Report author:** Debbie Haynes, Energy Efficiency Policy Officer

**Policy Framework:** Cleaner and Greener  
Meeting Housing Needs

## **Background**

### **What is fuel poverty and its impacts?**

1. The previous definition for fuel poverty was that if householders were using more than 10% of their income to heat their home to a reasonable standard (as per table1 below), then they were in fuel poverty. Recently this changed to a different fuel poverty definition, known as the 'Low Income, High Cost' definition. This considers a household to be in fuel poverty if:
  - they have required fuel costs that are above average (the national median level)
  - were they to spend that amount they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line

2. Whichever definition is used, there are three key components determining existence or levels of fuel poverty in domestic homes which are:
  - the energy efficiency of homes (eg efficiency of heating, levels of insulation)
  - household income
  - cost of energy
3. Cold homes affect the health of those people living there. Adequate heat is defined as 21°C in a living room and 18°C in other rooms. As room temperatures fall, there is an impact on health, which is shown below:

Indoor temperature	Comments
21°C	Recommended living room temperature
18°C	Minimum temperature with no health risk
under 16°C	Resistance to respiratory diseases may be diminished
9–12°C	Increases blood pressure and risk of cardiovascular disease
5°C	High risk of hypothermia

4. Fuel poverty is related to excess winter deaths, of which there were 53 in Oxford in 2013 which is a concern particularly when rising energy prices are considered (Oxford Health Profile 2014). This is only the tip of the iceberg of a wider set of poor outcomes associated with cold unhealthy housing. To put this into context, it is estimated that treating winter-related disease due to cold housing in the private sector costs the NHS around £849 million a year (Department of Health, 2009)

### **Fuel poverty work and the Home Energy Conservation Act**

5. Under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995, local authorities were required to consider measures to improve the energy efficiency of all residential accommodation, including a number of energy efficiency promotions or measures such as cavity wall and loft insulation, and small scale renewables. From April 1996 to 31 March 2006, UK wide, there was an energy efficiency improvement of national domestic housing of approximately 19.26% against a 1996 baseline. However, Oxford exceeded this and met the 30% target in March 2008 which equated to approximately 106,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>.
6. The Council appointed an Energy Efficiency Projects Officer in September 2013, who has a part time responsibility for leading on fuel poverty. This report details work that has been carried out since this point or is pending.

## **Current Fuel Poverty work by Oxford City Council**

### **Oxford City Council's housing stock**

7. Our analysis of the Council's own housing stock shows that many of the quick wins for energy efficiency have been completed including:
  - Approximately 3,500 cavity wall insulation installations
  - 424 external wall insulation installations
  - 7,369 window replacements with double glazing
  - 3,886 gas condensing boilers
  - Centralised biomass system for 72 new Council flats
  - Some solar thermal for older person bungalows and 40 solar photovoltaic installations
8. Further improvements to the Council's housing stock and property portfolio require a strategic approach, and a programme of housing energy efficiency and renewable energy works are being incorporated into the Asset Management strategy and Energy Policy. This is being guided by data from the Council's Stock Condition Survey and subsequent energy data modelling programme which is currently being undertaken.
9. The Asset Strategy will include SAP (energy efficiency rating) targets. The Council's draft Housing revenue account business plan for 15/16 and beyond proposes a substantial increase in resources targeted at energy efficiency investment in the Council's stock.( an additional £9m spend over the next 4 years ) and also includes revenue funding for a free home energy audit for every Council home. External funding, such as from the Energy Company Obligation will continue to be accessed as and when available. In addition the housing investment programme includes for on- going boiler and heating system replacement programmes.
10. Work on insulation is also in progress during this financial year. This includes an external wall insulation programme of approximately 60 properties, utilising the Council's existing HRA budget, Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and Green Deal funding to greatly reduce costs. The tower block refurbishments (five blocks) will also include external insulation, aiming to provide better insulated, ventilated and healthier properties that result in lower energy bills for residents.
11. There has been an award of contract for ECO funded cavity wall insulation work for 87 properties in the 25% most deprived areas (which include Blackbird Leys, Barton and Rose Hill). The second phase of cavity wall insulation, which covers all other areas in Oxford, is shortly to be put out to tender. Direct Services are also installing loft insulation in response to received requests. This will inform a larger roll out in the future as these are more problematic properties for the work.

12. The installation of solar photo voltaic panels helps to reduce fuel poverty by offering tenants free solar electricity. A pilot project on the domestic housing stock installed these in 5 homes, and gave user information to tenants in 2013/14. Currently officers are working on pre-surveys for installation of solar photo voltaic panels on 25 properties in Rose Hill. This forms part of a larger innovative 'ERIC' research project evaluating the potential for community energy in the area. Solar PV electricity, battery storage and low energy LED lighting will be installed and usage monitored, therefore this will offer additional energy savings for tenants than just the free daytime solar electricity.

### **Private rented sector work**

13. The private rented sector generally performs more poorly in terms of energy efficiency than other tenures. Energy Performance Certificates measure the energy efficiency of properties and are required for all private rented properties that go into the rental market. G is the poorest rating. From April 2016, private residential landlords will be unable to refuse a tenant's reasonable request for consent to energy efficiency improvements where finance is available. From 2018 it will be unlawful to rent out a property that does not reach a minimum energy efficiency standard, likely to be E as an EPC rating (Energy Act 2011).
14. The Private Sector Safety team ran an initial trial of around 20 properties last winter, utilising thermal imaging on single private rented properties on a "*by request*" basis. This is due to be built on shortly, with a programme targeting rental properties with low or no EPCs.
15. The Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) Licensing scheme has resulted in significant improvements in overall property standards in the HMO stock. Not all these improvements have a direct impact on fuel poverty but repairs to buildings, new windows and heating system replacements help alleviate tenants' fuel poverty. EPCs have been required as part of HMO licensing since 2011.
16. Inspections carried out as part of the HMO licensing scheme are being used to encourage landlords to make the changes recommended within Energy Performance Certificates if they score poorly (F or G). This is to ensure their properties achieve the minimum energy efficiency standards in advance of the legal requirement.
17. The Council's Fuel Poverty grants aim to lever in external funding to alleviate fuel poverty for Oxford households. This winter's grant is split into two pots: providing small landlord incentives for basic insulation and heating efficiency measures to benefit private sector vulnerable tenants; and supporting other funding streams via the Home Improvement Agency for highly vulnerable householders.



18. Building on data provided by the Building Research Establishment (BRE) for the housing stock across Oxford, work is currently in place to use this and other data to find the areas most at risk of fuel poverty across the city. This will inform both the work of the Council and local community groups.

### **Community and health**

19. This year, Oxford City Council has continued to fund the cross county Affordable Warmth Network, providing a single point of call for residents concerned about their energy bills as well as advice and guidance. This has led to further work to find a meaningful way to monitor the health impacts of fuel poverty across Oxford (and Oxfordshire).
20. Current work on health include the inclusion of a new outcome measure for the Health Improvement Board, looking at number of energy efficiency interventions made by Councils in the Affordable Warmth Network. This incorporates the work of the Private Sector Safety team and the Home Improvement Agency at Oxford City Council. Another project in progress with all health partners, Cherwell District Council and National Energy Federation is a structure for the 'Better Housing, Better Health' project linking energy efficiency of buildings with health outcomes.
21. Regular meetings of the Oxford Fuel Poverty Group are now taking place- this is with key partners, the City Council and environmental community groups. Aims of this are to increase understanding of the issues and support community groups in targeting fuel poverty in their areas, by offering data support, funding advice and appropriate training.

### **Income maximisation**

22. The Financial Inclusion Strategy aims to ensure residents will be supported to access the benefits they are entitled to and any emergency support which is required. In the longer term it also aims to ensure residents can manage their finances and are able to save to provide them with resilience against financial crises.
23. The Council has recently agreed to a new three year funding settlement with the advice sector. For each year of this agreement there will be a priority area agreed by the Council and organisations commissioned to provide advice services. For the first year of the agreement, 2015-16 the priority area is dealing with debt. Measures agreed as part of this work ensuring that people with debt are supported to manage their money and are helped to claim any benefits to which they are entitled.
24. The Council is also working with the two Credit Unions in the city to ensure that residents have access to financial services and are

encouraged to save money. These actions all contribute to meeting the Council's aims of maximising residents' income.

### **Next steps**

The Committee is asked to note and comment on the report, and receive a presentation at the meeting on 22 January 2015.

#### **Name and contact details of author:-**

Name: Debbie Haynes

Job title: Energy Efficiency Projects Officer

Service Area / Department: Environmental Development/Housing & Property

Tel: 01865 252566 e-mail: [dhaynes@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:dhaynes@oxford.gov.uk)

#### **List of background papers:**

Oxford City Council Home Energy Conservation Act Report – March 2013

Oxford City Council Financial Inclusion Strategy

Oxford City Council Asset Management Strategy

#### **Version number: 2**

**To: Housing Panel**

**Date: 22 January 2015**

**Report of: Head of Housing**

**Title of Report: STAR Survey Results 2014**

## **Summary**

**Purpose of report:** To report to members the outcomes of the STAR survey 2014

**Key decision:** No

**Executive lead member:** Councillor Scott Seamons

**Report author:** Gary Parsons

**Policy Framework:** Meeting Housing Needs

Appendices to report –

Appendix A – STAR Survey Satisfaction levels by Ward Maps

## **BACKGROUND**

1. In February 2014, a report was presented to the Housing Panel on the outcomes of the 2013 STAR Survey, along with benchmarking data to illustrate how well Oxford City Council were performing compared with other organisations.
2. As part of the Housing Panel work programme in 2014/15 a report was requested to update the panel on the outcomes of the 2014 STAR survey.
3. This report illustrates the outcomes of the STAR Survey 2014, and illustrates benchmarking data with the 2013 outcomes, with direction of travel. To date Oxford City Council are waiting for benchmarking data with other organisations of similar size and capacity to ourselves so we have meaningful benchmarking data. The report will also cover some estate/geographical area

analysis to highlight any emerging issues at this level. Appendix A does illustrate for each of the benchmarking questions what the satisfaction levels are for each ward area (where statistical validity allows).

### **TENANT RESPONSE RATES**

4. The table below highlights that overall the response rate overall was 4% lower than the 2013 STAR Survey responses, even though the total number of surveys issued was slightly higher. The total sample survey was 32% of the City Council's entire Housing Stock (2500 surveys from 7724 dwellings)
5. In relation to the survey responses, it is worth noting that the Sheltered Housing surveys were a complete census, so every sheltered housing property received a survey.

<b>Oxford City Council STAR Survey responses</b>						
<b>Tenure</b>	<b>Surveys Sent</b>		<b>Returns</b>		<b>Response Rate</b>	
	2013	2014	2013	2014	2013	2014
General Needs	2140	2255	620	572	29%	25%
Sheltered	280	245	125	103	45%	42%
Total	<b>2420</b>	2500	<b>745</b>	675	<b>31%</b>	<b>27%</b>

### **BENCHMARKING DATA**

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Benchmarking 2013</b>			<b>Oxford City Council 2013 Results</b>	<b>Oxford City Council 2014 Results</b>	
	<b>Top Quartile</b>	<b>Club Median</b>	<b>Bottom Quartile</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Direction of Travel</b>
Satisfaction with service provided by social housing provider	88.55	84.75	82.85	88.40	84.00	↓
Satisfaction with overall quality of their home	87.65	83.40	80.17	83.40	80.00	↓
Satisfaction with their neighbourhood as a place to live	87.55	85.70	82.80	82.60	80.00	↓
Satisfaction that their rent provides value for money	85.20	79.70	75.30	75.60	74.00	↓
Satisfaction that their service charges provide value for money	74.15	70.10	67.35	71.70	68.00	↓
Satisfaction with repairs and maintenance	85.03	79.85	74.80	87.40	83.00	↓
Dissatisfaction with repairs and maintenance	9.50	11.95	15.53	6.20	13.00	↓
Satisfaction with landlord over how they listen to their views and act upon them	75.25	66.50	63.15	64.30	63.00	↓
Satisfaction with landlord at keeping them informed about things that might affect them as a resident	85.70	85.50	79.83	78.00	78.00	↔

6. The table above illustrates that the STAR 2014 outcomes in terms of direction of travel have declined apart from keeping customers informed, which has stayed the same. Only one area remains between middle and top quartile, which is satisfaction with repairs. All the other areas currently remain between middle and bottom quartile.

7. It is also worth noting that satisfaction nationally amongst organisations is down on previous years.

### **Direction of Travel**

8. The table below highlights the direction of travel with regards to satisfaction levels through the STAR Survey from 2006 to 2014. Apart from the exceptional year in 2006 when the survey first started, the City Council has experienced ups and downs in relation to direction of travel. Comparing the baseline in 2006, overall satisfaction is up, and so is satisfaction with repairs services.

Measure	Oxford City Council STAR Survey Results 2006-2014								
	2006	2008	Direction of Travel	2012	Direction of Travel	2013	Direction of Travel	2014	Direction of Travel
Satisfaction with service provided by social housing provider	80%	82%	↑	87%	↑	88%	↑	84%	↓
Satisfaction with overall quality of their home	83%	84%	↑	83%	↓	83%	↔	80%	↓
Satisfaction with their neighbourhood as a place to live	83%	81%	↓	80%	↓	83%	↑	80%	↓
Satisfaction that their rent provides value for money	77%	76%	↑	77%	↑	76%	↓	74%	↓
Satisfaction that their service charges provide value for money	n/a	n/a	n/a	71%	n/a	72%	↑	68%	↓
Satisfaction with repairs and maintenance	81%	86%	↑	82%	↓	87%	↑	83%	↓
Satisfaction with landlord over how they listen to their views and act upon them	85%	64%	↓	61%	↓	64%	↑	63%	↓
Satisfaction with landlord at keeping them informed about things that might affect them as a resident	86%	85%	↓	76%	↓	77%	↑	77%	↔

### **Perceptions of problems on estates**

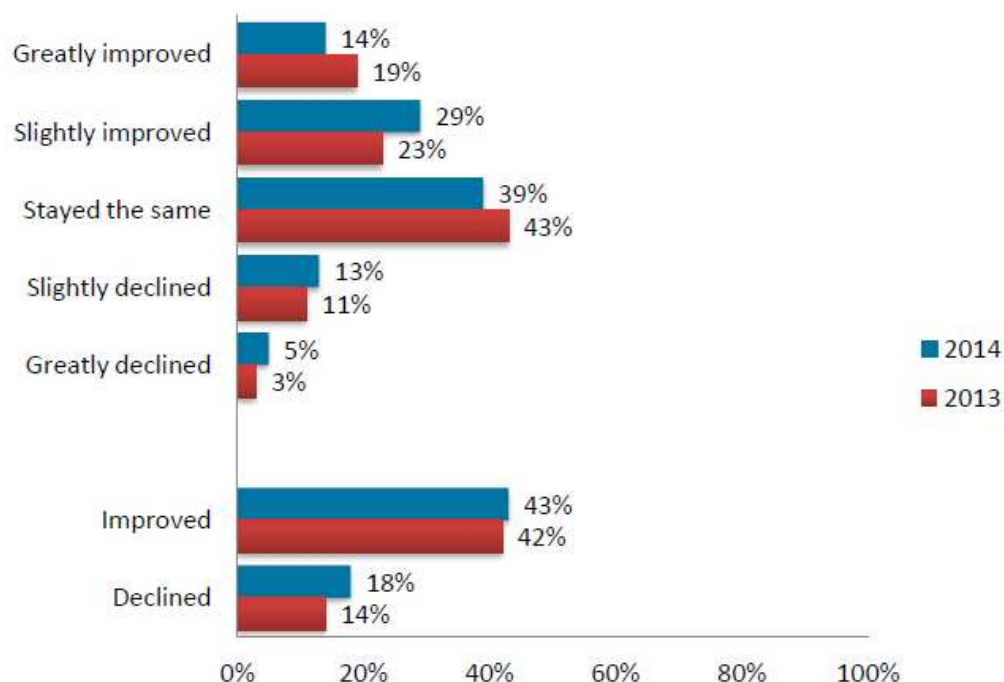
9. The top three problems have remained the same on most estates, which is car parking, Rubbish or Litter and Dog Fouling/Dog Mess. Noisy Neighbours has replaced Disruptive Teenagers this year however, and this could be a result of the work the ASBIT team do.

Problem	Tenants Perceptions (Major/Minor problem %)				
	2013 STAR Results		2014 STAR Results		Direction of Travel
	(%)	Rank	(%)	Rank	Rank
Car Parking	64%	1	73%	1	↔
Rubbish or Litter	59%	2	65%	2	↔
Dog Fouling/Dog Mess	52%	3	59%	3	↔
Noisy Neighbours	38%	6	53%	4	↑
Drug use or dealing	39%	5	47%	5	↔
Disruptive children/teenagers	40%	4	46%	6	↓
Noise from traffic	33%	7	45%	7	↔
Other crime	28%	10	44%	8	↑
Vandalism	32%	8	40%	9	↓
Drunk or rowdy behaviour	32%	8	39%	10	↓
Pets and animals	28%	10	38%	11	↓
People damaging your property	18%	13	25%	12	↑
Racial or other harassment	17%	14	24%	13	↑
Graffiti	19%	12	24%	14	↓
Abandoned or burnt out vehicles	11%	15	16%	15	↔

### **Perceptions of whether estates have improved or declined**

10. Comparing 2013 with 2014 STAR Survey data, there is a very slight increase in perceptions that estates have improved (1% increase), however dissatisfaction has also increased by 4% compared to 2013.
11. In relation to estates, the areas where they feel their estates have declined the most are Blackbird Leys (18%), Littlemore (18%), Headington (16%) and Rosehill and Iffley (15%).

**Figure 26: Perceptions of whether the estate has improved or declined (Valid tenant responses)**



**Table 17: Perceptions of whether the estate has improved or declined – by ward (Valid tenant responses)**

Ward	% improved	% stayed the same	% declined
Northfield Brook (31)	72%	20%	8%
Rosehill and Iffley (55)	67%	18%	15%
Barton and Sandhills (45)	60%	31%	9%
Blackbird Leys (51)	55%	26%	18%
Churchill (44)	43%	43%	13%
Iffley Fields (38)	36%	53%	11%
Headington (31)	23%	61%	16%
Littlemore (43)	20%	62%	18%

### **Next Steps**

12. Scrutiny Housing Panel notes the contents of this report.
13. Once benchmarking data is available for 2014, and other organisations data is comparable, a further report can be produced and presented to members, similar to that report provided in February 2014.
14. STAR Survey data for 2014 is currently being compared to Quality of Life survey information on areas affecting estates and certain regeneration areas.



It is hoped that if any correlations can be made, that this information will be used to help form the programmes work for 2015/16 for projects such as the Great Estates programme, and targeted at the regeneration areas where issues have been raised by households.

**Name and contact details of author:-**

Name: Gary Parsons

Job title: Housing Strategy & Performance Manager

Service Area / Department:

Tel: 01865 252711 e-mail: [gparsons@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:gparsons@oxford.gov.uk)

**List of background papers:**

1. *STAR Survey 2014 Final Report*

**Version number: 0.1**

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# **STAR Survey 2014 Key Satisfaction Levels**

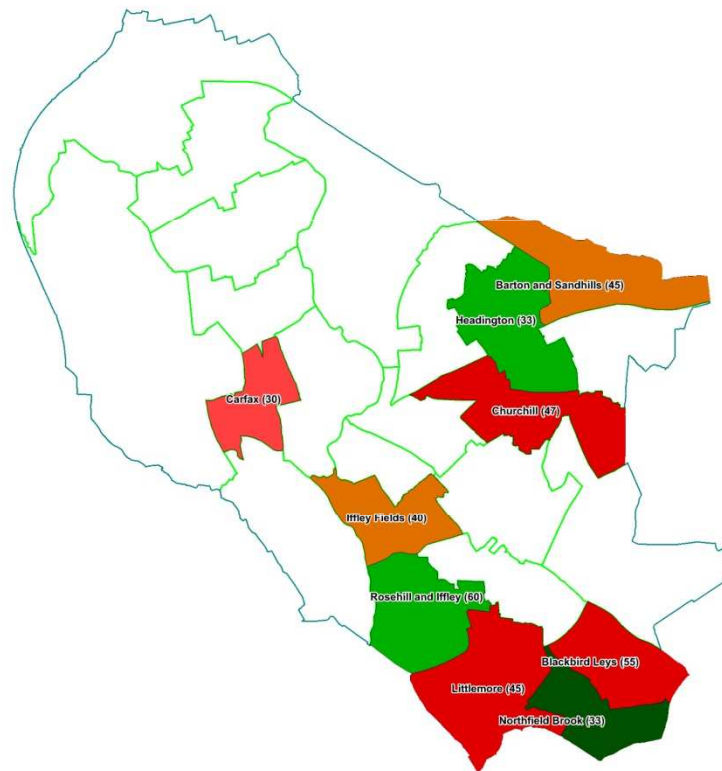
**7<sup>th</sup> November 2014**

**Gary Parsons  
Housing Strategy & Performance Manager**



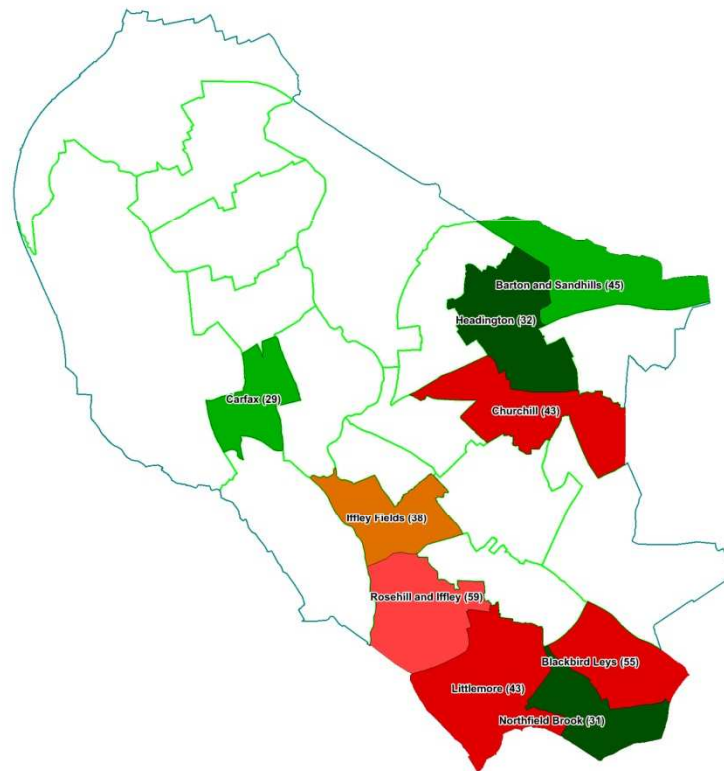
# Housing Services Satisfaction

Q1 Taking everything into account, how satisfied are you with the housing services provided by Oxford City Council?



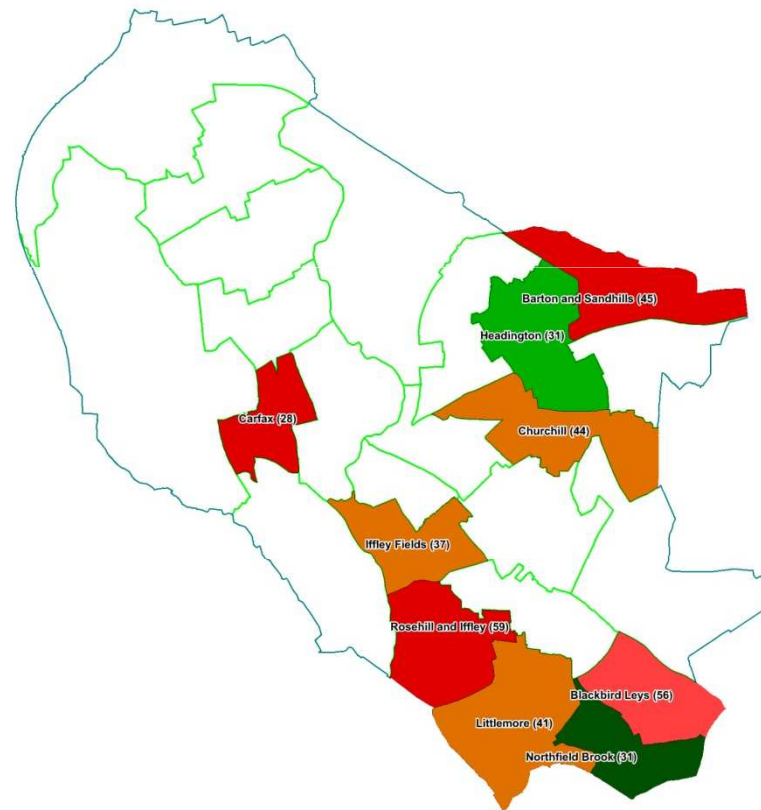
# Satisfaction with overall condition of home

Q2 How satisfied are you with the overall condition of your home?



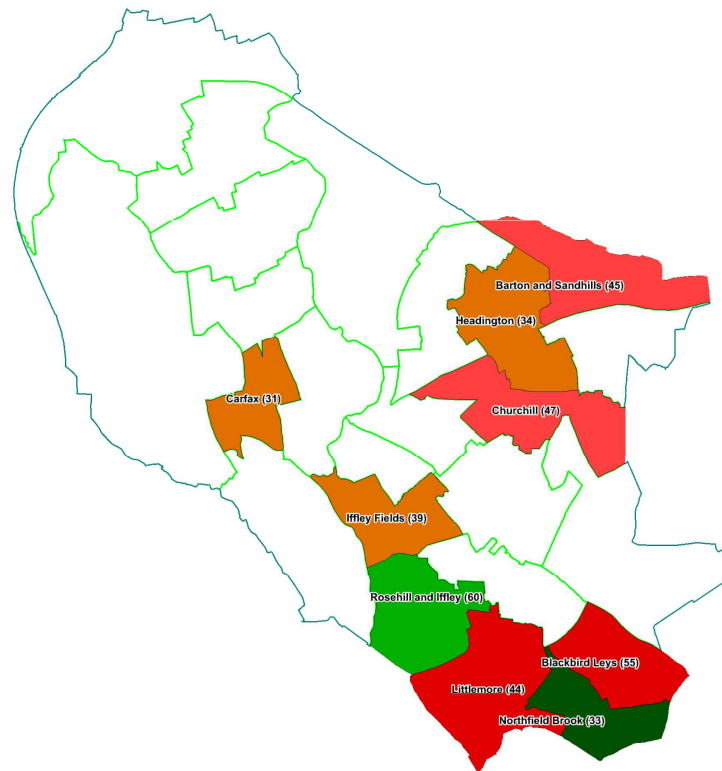
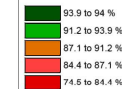
# Satisfaction with estate as a place to live

Q2 How satisfied are you with your estate as a place to live?



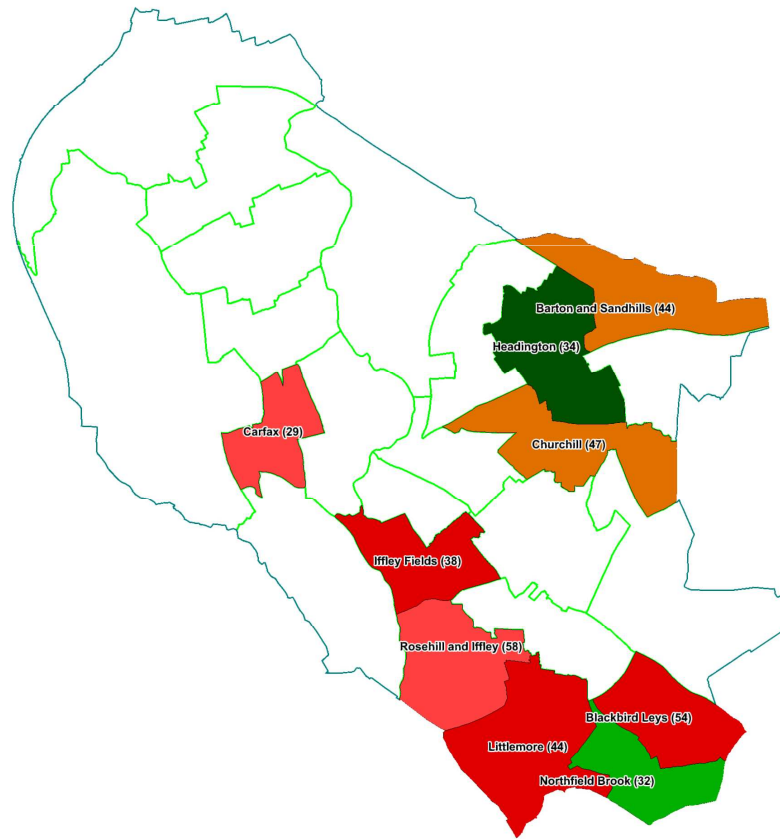
# Satisfaction with quality of home

Q2 How satisfied are you with the overall quality of your home?



# Satisfaction with rent providing VFM

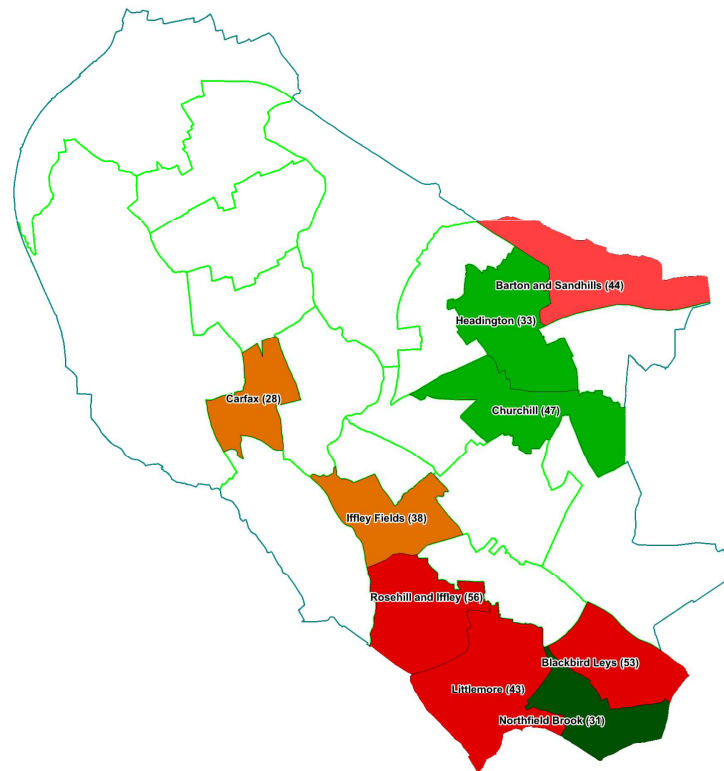
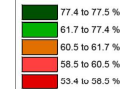
Q3 How satisfied are you that your rent provides value for money?





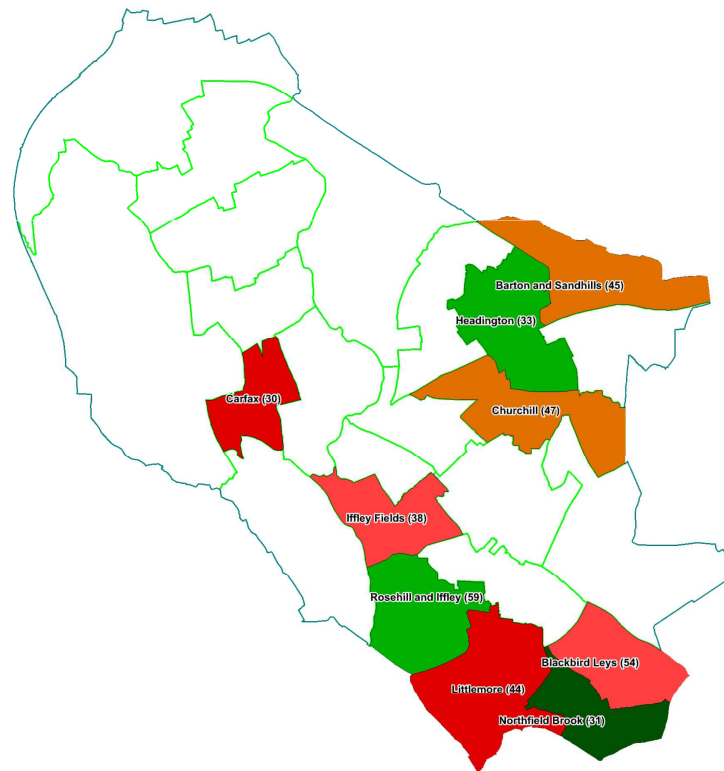
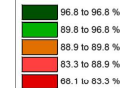
# Satisfaction with Service Charges providing VFM

Q4 How satisfied are you that your service charges provide value for money?



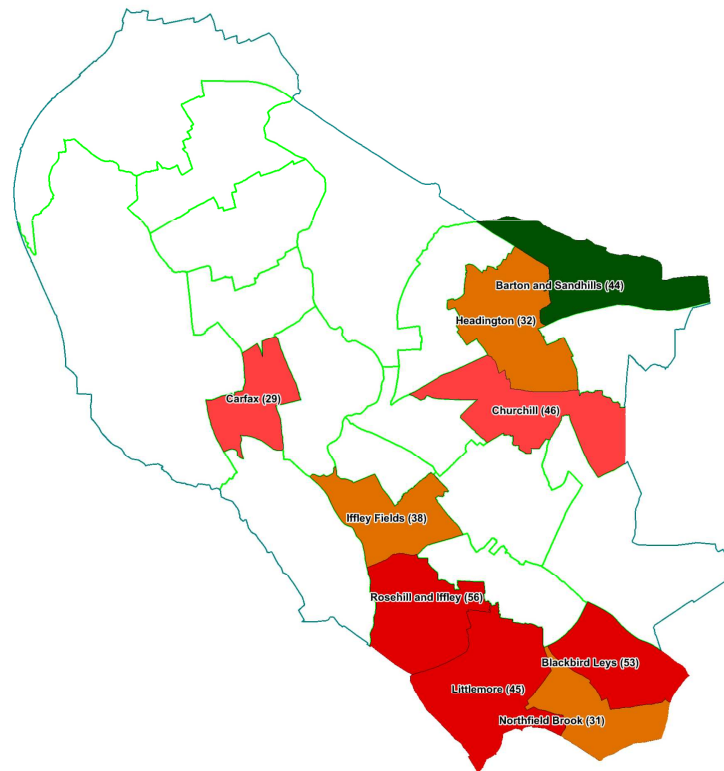
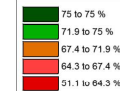
# Satisfaction with Repairs & Maintenance

Q5 Generally, how satisfied are you with the way Oxford City Council deals with repairs and maintenance?



# Satisfaction that OCC listens to views and acts upon them

Q6 How satisfied are you that Oxford City Council listens to your views and acts upon them?



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## Housing Panel work programme 2014-15

### Items for Housing Panel meetings

<b>Suggested Topic</b>	<b>Suggested approach / area(s) for focus</b>
Performance monitoring	Regular monitoring of performance measures for Estates Regeneration, Housing Supply and Welfare Reform and Housing Crisis.
Housing Strategy	Review headline priorities and sought outcomes in Housing Strategy at draft stage, and the action plan post-consultation.
Increasing the provision of affordable housing	Monitoring of performance measures; scrutiny of the Housing Business Plan and the Housing Strategy; consider alternative options e.g. pre-fabs and 'pods'; possible review topic.
Homelessness	Monitoring of performance measures; scrutiny of the Housing Business Plan and Housing Strategy; pre-scrutiny of homelessness grant allocations; possible review topics.
Rent arrears	Monitoring of performance measures; bi-annual update reports.
STAR survey results	Monitoring of results.
Tackling under-occupancy	Report on efforts to tackle under-occupancy; consider in rent arrears reports.
Oxford Standard	To receive a progress update on the delivery of the Oxford Standard through the Asset Management Strategy and Action Plan, including an update on work to improve thermal efficiency in the Council's housing stock.
Private sector licencing	Update report on the scheme; consider views of landlords and PRS tenants.
Unlawful dwellings	A report on the City Council's approach to tackling illegal dwellings e.g. beds in sheds, given that funding ends in April 2015.
Aids & Adaptions Policy	To scrutinise proposed changes to the current policy.
Repairs exemptions policy	To scrutinise proposed changes to the current policy.
De-designation of 40+ accommodation	Update report on the final phase of de-designating 40+ accommodation.
Sheltered Housing	To contribute to and monitor the customer profiling survey of residents in sheltered accommodation and how this data should inform future provision.
Fuel Poverty	To receive an update on the City Council's approach to the issue of Fuel Poverty. Commission/review research; consider during other items; possible review topic.
Supporting people	Verbal updates on the joint commissioning of housing support services.

### **Draft Housing Panel Agenda Schedules**

<b>Date, room and time</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Lead Member; Officer(s)</b>
22 January 2015, Plowman Room, 5pm	1. Fuel Poverty  2. Star Survey Results	Deborah Haynes& Paul Wilding  Gary Parsons
4 February 2015, St Aldate's Room, 5.30pm	1. Unlawful dwellings  2. Tackling under-occupancy  3. Housing Strategy 2015-2018 (pre-scrutiny)	Ian Wright  Bill Graves  Gary Parsons
24 March 2015, Judges Room, 5pm	1. Non-statutory homelessness services  2. De-designation review year 4	ShaiburRahman  Tom Porter

## **HOUSING PANEL (PANEL OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE)**

**Wednesday 10 December 2014**

**COUNCILLORS PRESENT:** Councillors Sanders, Hollick, Wade, Hill and Smith.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Andrew Brown (Scrutiny Officer), Alison Dalton and Martin Shaw

### **70. APOLOGIES**

No apologies were received.

### **71. HOUSING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME**

The work programme was noted.

The Panel was advised that there is capacity to add additional items to the 24 March meeting.

### **72. ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY - COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK**

The Housing Panel considered the Asset Management Strategy – Council Housing Stock at its public meeting on 10 December 2014. The Committee would like to thank Martin Shaw and Allison Dalton for assisting this wide-ranging discussion.

The Housing Panel support the Strategy and the direction of travel it provides.

The Panel reviewed what the strategy says about void property repairs and felt that the wording on page 13 could be stronger than 'encourage tenants to leave their home in a good state of repair'. Members sought assurances that the City Council does all it can within the resources available to ensure that houses are in good condition when left vacant. The Panel recognises that the City Council would not want to hold deposits, and that recharges can be difficult to recover after the event, so the focus should be on working with tenants prior to properties becoming vacant.

The panel discussed heating and ventilation and noted that where new heating systems are installed, it is vital that residents are shown how to use them correctly. It was also noted that agencies such as Age UK advise older residents to keep their windows closed. The Panel sought assurances that the City Council works closely with such partners to ensure consistency of such communications.

Members questioned how widespread the problem of mould is across the Council's housing stock. Members commented that it has been known for mould to be painted over and sought assurances that this was not common practice.

The Panel recognise the need to make better use of the Council's existing housing stock and questioned whether information about the National Home Swap scheme is made available to tenants who are under-occupying.

Officers agreed to look into issues with night light systems that have installed in communal areas.

The Housing Panel will monitor delivery against the aims set out in the strategy. The panel will also consider the Council's Energy Strategy, Private Sector Housing Policy and its approach to under-occupancy in due course.

### **73. OLDER PERSONS HOUSING REVIEW**

The Housing Panel considered a briefing on the Older Persons Housing Review at its public meeting on 10 December 2015. The Panel would like to thank Allison Dalton for supporting this item.

The Panel recognised that surveying older residents to understand their housing requirements should be done with a high degree of sensitivity. Face to face surveys would therefore be more preferable than online or written surveys.

The Panel supports the idea of involving Oxford Brookes University in conducting the face to face surveys. Tenant volunteers should also be utilised as they can provide a valuable and familiar link to older tenants.

The Housing Panel came to the view that City Council should be seeking to maximise the possible future benefits of conducting a review into housing for older people by expanding the scope of the project to include older people living in privately-owned or rented accommodation.

The Panel commented that the timescale for the project seemed short, even with the existing scope. The Panel is in favour of a longer and deeper review and feel that appropriate resources should be allocated to delivering this.

The Panel recognised that many older residents will not want to move in any circumstances. While seeking to survey as many older residents as possible, the panel felt that there is potentially a lot of value in understanding the requirements of those who are approaching older age. This can better inform longer term planning.

The Panel also commented that where single older tenants are under-occupying and would consider moving, there is a lack of suitable accommodation available for them to move in to. The panel noted that the new units being developed at Barton are predominantly 2 and 3 bedroom accommodation.

The Panel agreed that elected members should have the opportunity to be involved in overseeing this project and recommend the establishment of a member steering group.

The Panel agreed to monitor progress after 3 months and to consider the findings of the review.



#### **74. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Panel noted the notes of its meeting on 9 October 2014.

#### **75. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The Panel noted that an additional meeting has been scheduled for 24 March 2015.

**The meeting started at 4.15 pm and ended at 6.20 pm**

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