

Agenda

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Housing Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

Date: **Wednesday 4 February 2015**

Time: **5.00 pm**

Place: **St Aldate's Room, Town Hall**

For any further information please contact:

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Housing Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

Membership

Chair

Councillor Sam Hollick

Councillor Gill Sanders

Councillor Elizabeth Wade

Linda Hill

Councillor Linda Smith

Co-optee

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AGENDA

	Pages
1 APOLOGIES	
The Quorum for this Panel is three and substitutes are not allowed.	
2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
3 UNLAWFUL DWELLINGS	7 - 24
For the Panel to review the Council's approach to combatting unlawful dwellings.	
Ian Wright, Environmental Health Service Manager and Robert Fowler, Planning Enforcement Officer, have been invited to present this item.	
4 TACKLING UNDER-OCCUPATION	25 - 36
For the Panel to consider the Council's approach to tackling under-occupation within Oxford City Council's housing stock.	
Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager, has been invited to attend for this item.	
5 HOUSING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME	37 - 38
For the Panel to review and note its work programme.	
6 NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING	39 - 40
To note the notes of the meeting held on 22 January 2015.	
7 DATE OF NEXT MEETING	
24 March 2015	
2015/16 dates to be confirmed.	

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: 4 February 2015

Report of: Head of Environmental Development and Head of City Development

Title of Report: Unlawful Developments Progress Report

Summary

Purpose of report: To Provide the Housing Panel with a status report

Key decision No

Executive lead member: Cllr. Ed Turner

Report author: Paul Fitzgerald

Policy Framework: Meeting Housing Need

Appendices to report – *Appendix 1 – GIS Layered Maps, Appendix 2 – Ward breakdown of Unlawful Developments, Appendix 3 – Case Studies, Appendix 4 – Cross Working list*

Purpose of Report

1 The Scrutiny Housing Panel requested an update on the progress of the Unlawful Developments project and this report provides members with information on progress to date and comments on future options following the end of DCLG funding on 31st March 2015.

Background

2 Nationally the phenomenon of ‘beds in sheds’ has been well reported, and has been considered to be confined mainly to major conurbations in the south east of England. They are essentially converted garages, or out-buildings, which often lack sanitation and other necessary facilities, but may be capable of being occupied on a self-contained basis. In some instances they are attached to, or are integral to, the main structure.

3 Given the pressures on housing provision and high rental values in Oxford, it was no surprise that instances of such developments have been reported in the city.

4 In response officers carried out a pilot survey of 11 streets in the Cowley and Lye Valley areas of Oxford in 2011/12. Initially 64 dwellings with large outbuildings were identified and investigated, of which 15% warranted enforcement action under planning and/or housing legislation. Migrant workers or young vulnerable families were found to be occupying 90% of the properties that warranted action, i.e. people who were ignorant of their rights and the legal requirements to which such dwellings were subject.

5 Fact finding visits were made to two authorities who have already been dealing with this issue (Slough Borough Council and the London Borough of Ealing) to discover good custom and practice. It was noted that these authorities had longstanding problems and were quite different in nature to Oxford. One authority was of the view that regularising the unlawful dwellings was the best approach because many of them were exempt from planning enforcement controls. This is because an unlawful development becomes lawful if it has been in use for four years or over. The other council was applying a policy of trying to deal with poor properties and deter future developments by using enforcement action where possible.

The Council's response and key aims

6 The Council, therefore decided to establish an Unlawful Development project to run from April 2013 to March 2015, with a budget of £150,000. The purpose of the project was to:

- (a) provide some certainty on the scale of the problem in Oxford
- (b) take enforcement action to act as a deterrent to unscrupulous developers and
- (c) demonstrate to residents that the Council will take action against unlawful developments to prevent the proliferation of poor quality properties in Oxford.

7 An opportunity then arose for additional match funding from the DCLG's Rogue Landlord Programme. This bid for £150,000 was successful and that funding became available in January 2014 and also runs until March 2015.

Project Delivery

8 The team was initially comprised of a Team Manager and a Planning Enforcement Officer to deal with those cases already identified, pending further research to establish the extent of the problem. Additional staffing resource has been added as the workloads were identified for investigation and the team currently consists of a Team Manager, two Planning Enforcement Officers, an Environmental Health Officer a GIS Data Analyst and a Residential Safety Support Officer. Mobile working is being used to increase the efficiency and productivity of field staff and reduce overall costs.

9 Slough Borough Council had demonstrated that an aerial survey was an extremely useful investigative tool. An aerial survey employs state of the art LIDAR technology which not only identifies unlawful dwellings both attached and detached from the main dwelling, it also indicates those in use, via thermal imaging and provides a base line of data to which future surveys can be compared. A city wide, aerial survey was commissioned at a cost of £23,000 by Blue Sky International, employing the technology detailed above. This was weather dependant and was completed in March 2014 with the data becoming available in June 2014.

10 The data provided from that survey is presented as a number of layered maps (see appendix 1), which identifies what should be there, what is actually there and its size, the topography of the land and buildings and the heat profiles.

11 From this we were able to identify those properties that had been built without the benefit of planning permission and building regulation approval, those that were of a sufficient size to have the potential to be used for residential accommodation and those which had a heat profile suggesting they were in use.

12 The number of buildings identified is far more than had been expected and are spread across the city, with concentrations in those areas where the building and land type lends itself to that use (larger gardens, detached or semi-detached properties with side or rear access). The total figure of unlawful developments was in excess of 5,000 with approximately 2,700 having a suspicious heat profile (see appendix 2, unlawful dwelling distribution maps by ward).

13 Further desktop exercises have been carried out to refine the list of Unlawful Developments, using databases such as uniform, council tax, housing benefits, electoral register etc.

Targeting Action

14 The Oxford approach focussed on two distinct property types. Properties were divided into either Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO), or those used as single family dwellings, either owner occupied or privately rented.

15 Approximately 140 properties with unlawful developments were identified as being licensed HMOs. To date 80 of these have been revisited and in 15 cases the licence conditions have been amended to exclude the use of the unlawful structure as residential accommodation. Any breach of this condition will then be dealt with by the HMO enforcement team.

16 For the properties in single occupation a site visit is made to attempt to ascertain the use of the structure. To date a total of 861 visits have been made to investigate unlawful dwellings. These investigations have shown that

approximately 10% of those properties built without planning and building regulation approval that have a suspicious heat profile are being used illegally as residential accommodation. If this figure is applied over the whole city, there are currently approximately 270 such buildings in Oxford, although this does not mean that others may not be brought into use at a later date.

Enforcement Approach

17 Irrespective of the physical condition of those properties, our primary approach is to deal with the absence of planning consent. A substantial amount of planning enforcement activity has now taken place and this will increase over the coming months. The normal planning options are removal of the building (the preferred option) or to take such steps as will prevent its use as a residential dwelling (removal of kitchens and/or bathrooms) and revert to some other use, such as a store, study room or gym.

18 To date 33 Planning Enforcement Notices have been served and a further 10 are due to be served by 31st March 2015. To put this in context, the average number of Planning Enforcement Notices per year is typically 8. This action has resulted in 3 demolitions and 7 unlawful dwellings no longer being in use.

19 In nearly every case where a Planning Enforcement Notice has been served, an appeal is lodged with the Planning Inspectorate. The vast majority of these are found in favour of the local authority. Each appeal generates a fee income of £770 in most cases.

20 In addition to planning enforcement, legal action can be taken by Environmental Development, mainly under the Housing Act 2004. Where housing conditions are so poor as to present an imminent risk to the health, safety or welfare of the occupants, emergency works and/or prohibition orders may be served. In other instances, the preferred option is to prohibit the use of the structure for residential accommodation, under Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004. Should the prohibition order be contravened, there is provision to prosecute the landlord and replace the prohibition order with a demolition order. A range of conditions have been encountered, which has resulted in a range of interventions. It has been necessary to obtain warrants from the magistrates on 2 occasions to enter premises to carry out an inspection. To date 8 emergency notices have been served under the Housing Act 2004 and further notices are due to be served, giving an expected total of 50 notices by the end of the project.

21 In all cases where there is the potential to displace tenants, the tenant and Housing Allocations are informed to prevent cases of homelessness and to provide suitable alternative accommodation.

22 Where a structure is discovered as being used for residential accommodation, it is referred to Council Tax for re-evaluation. This has the potential for additional income and so far 10 confirmed new unlawful dwellings have been put forward to Council tax for banding.

Cross Working

23 It is inevitable that the project overlaps a number of organisations, internal and external, official, voluntary and individuals, and these have been listed at appendix 4.

24 Twelve cases have been referred to HMRC for income tax and VAT evasion for further investigation, with a further data sharing meeting scheduled for the 27th January 2015.

25 The data obtained from the aerial survey will be of benefit to other Council services, for topics such as energy efficiency, flood prevention and this has been made available on the Council's GIS system.

Primary Outcomes

26 By the use of innovative technology and follow up visits the project has established the extent of the unlawful development problem within Oxford City Council. The Council can say with reasonable confidence that there are approximately 270 unlawful dwellings in the City being illegally used as accommodation. This figure is being reduced by the enforcement action currently underway.

27 There is some reassurance in this figure as it indicates that the position in Oxford is much better than some other urban areas in the south east where the local authority has effectively lost control and local residents have joined in rather than complained about the building of unlawful dwellings for rent.

28 Successful Planning Enforcement action has been commenced at an unprecedented scale in Oxford which has resulted in several unlawful properties being demolished. These in turn have been publicised in the local media and on television and this continues to be the case as the team are currently filming with the BBC Programme "Housing Enforcers" which will be shown later this year. This has helped reinforce the Council's position that it will not tolerate unlawful developments and wishes to encourage local residents to speak up about unacceptable and illegal structures being built in their areas.

Future Work

29 This problem will not go away. The financial gain to unscrupulous landlords is too great, and temptation will always be there if these unlawful structures are allowed to remain. However the primary funding source has now been used and there are no further pots of government money available.

30 There are also concerns from City Development regarding the scale of the appeals that will have to be dealt with that are a result of the high number of Planning Enforcement Notices served.

31 The proposal for 2015/16 is to roll forward any underspend in the Environmental Health budget to sustain the project at a reduced level and make a bid for additional funding at the mid-year point.

Recommendation

32 The Committee is recommended to note the report and provide comments regarding the proposed extension of the project.

Name and contact details of author:-

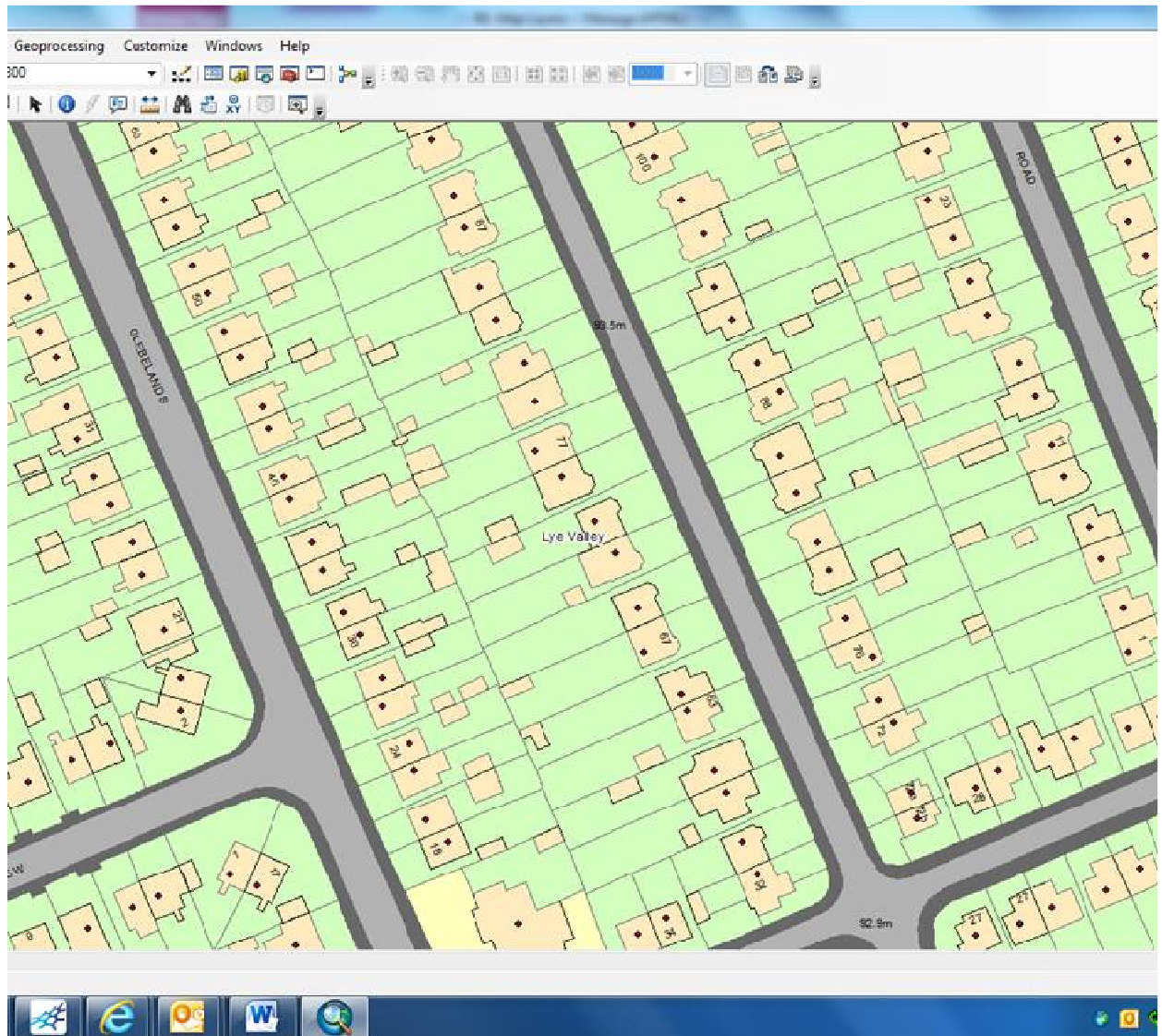
Name: Paul Fitzgerald Job title: Unlawful Developments Manager Service Area / Department: Environmental Development Tel: 01865 252298 e-mail: paul.fitzgerald@oxford.gov.uk
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Version number: 4

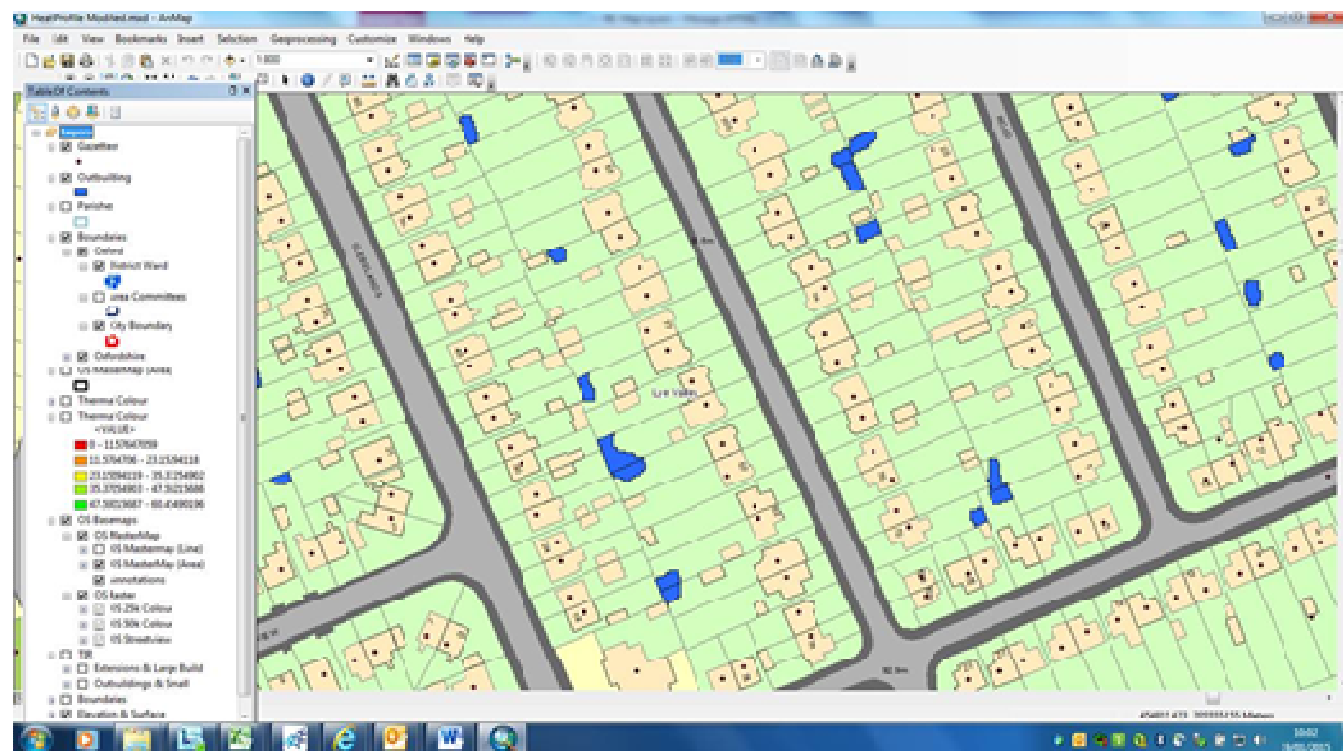
Appendix 1.

Layered Maps.

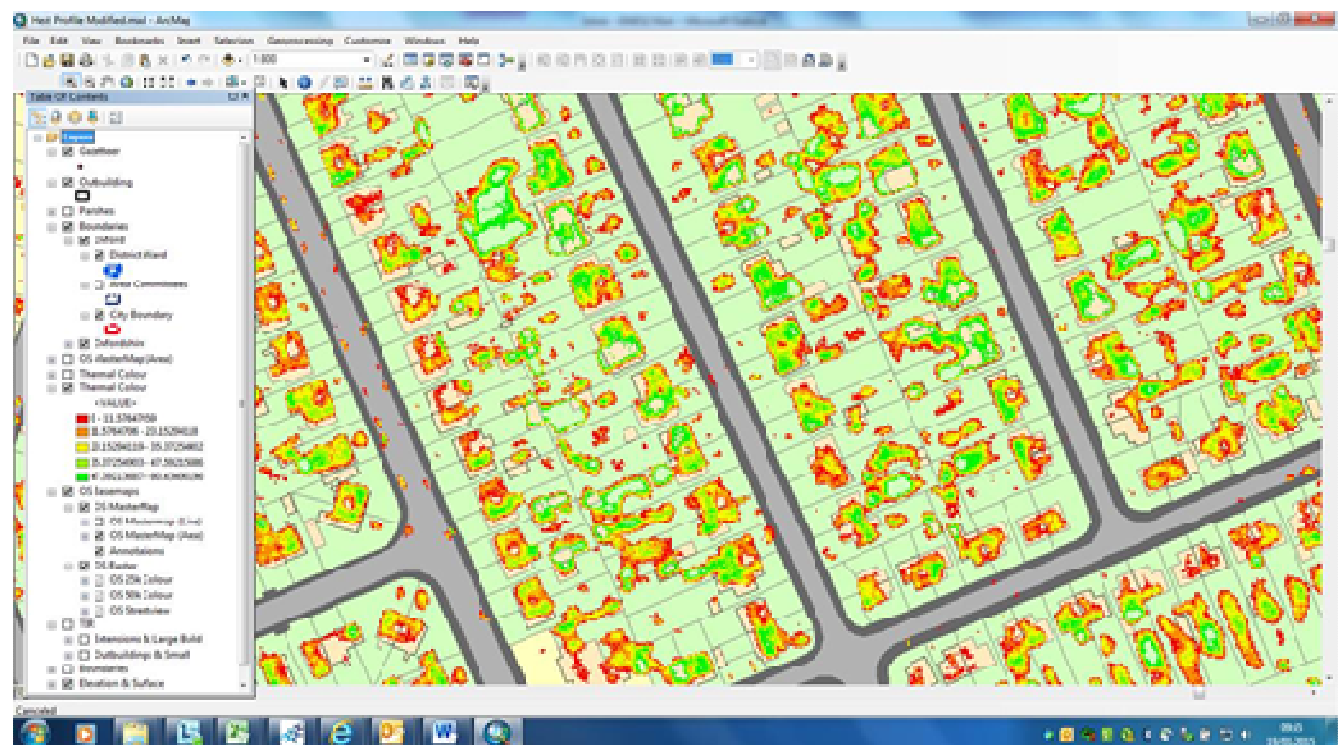
Base layer – what officially should be there.



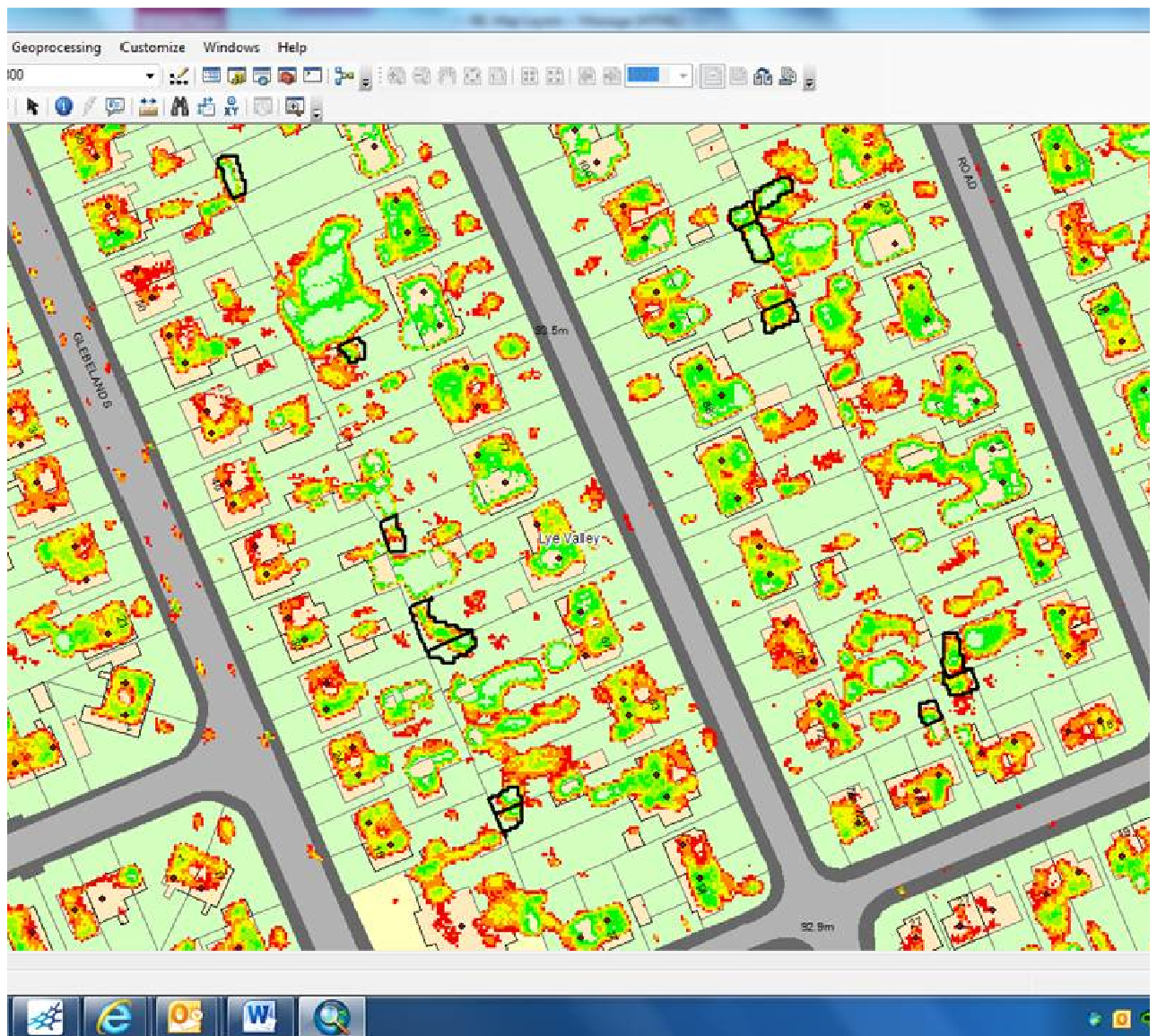
What is actually there – the blue shading indicates an unlawful development



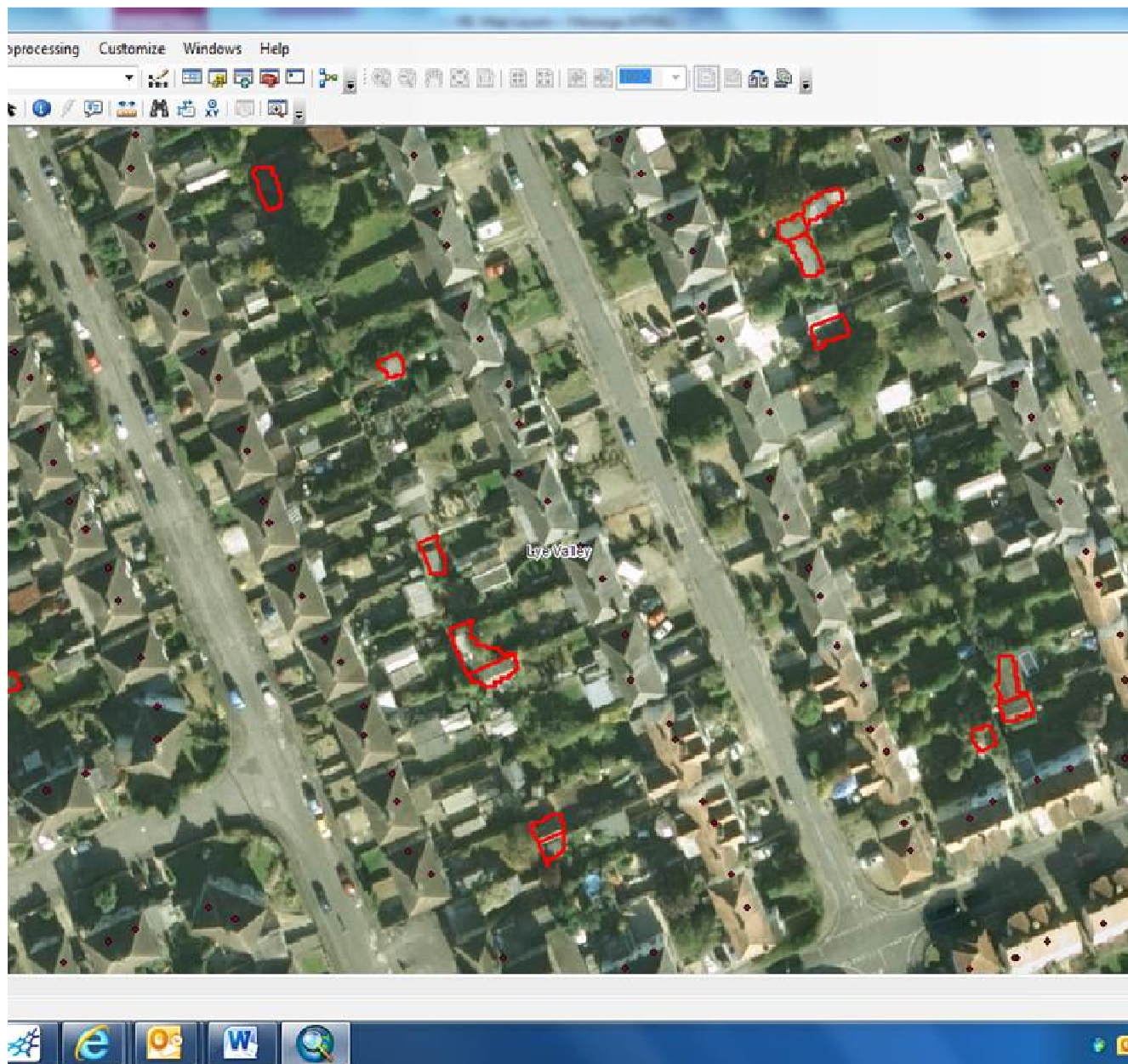
Heat profiles of every building and structure



Properties requiring further investigation are outlined in black.



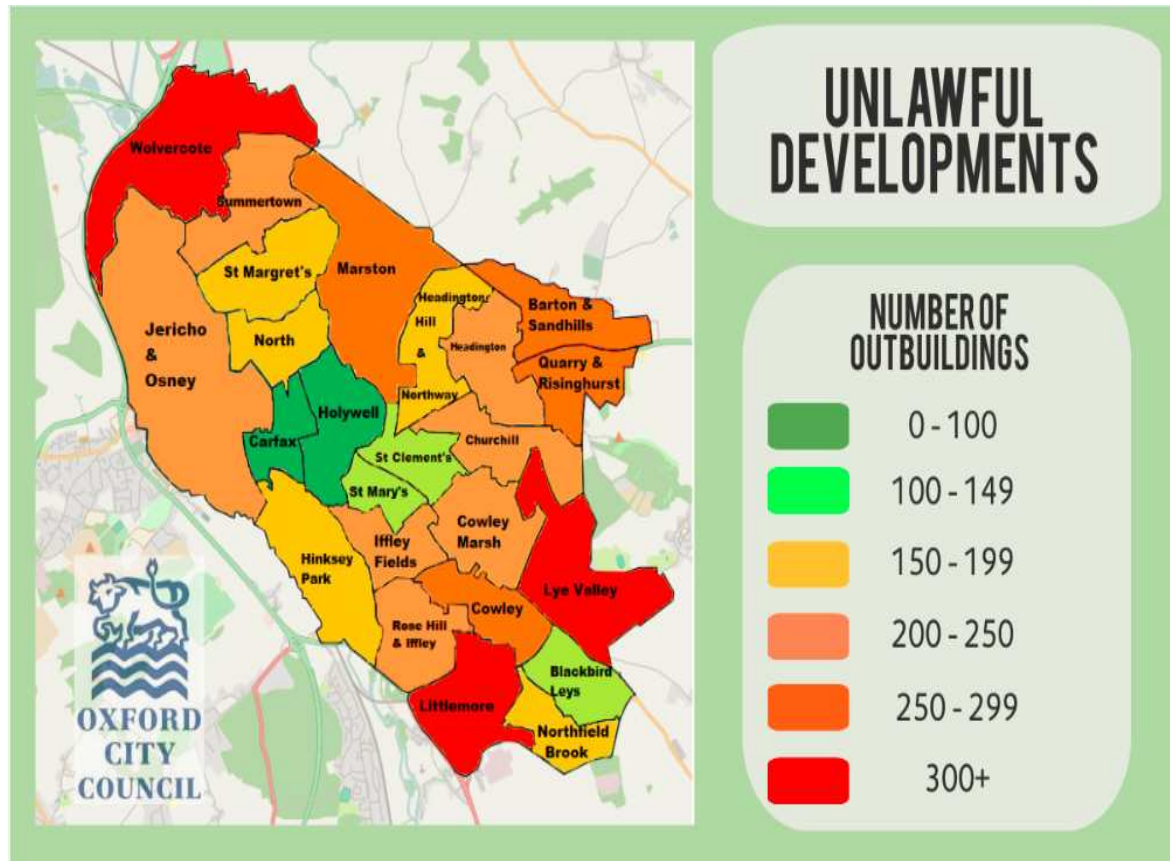
View from the air – unlawful developments are highlighted in red

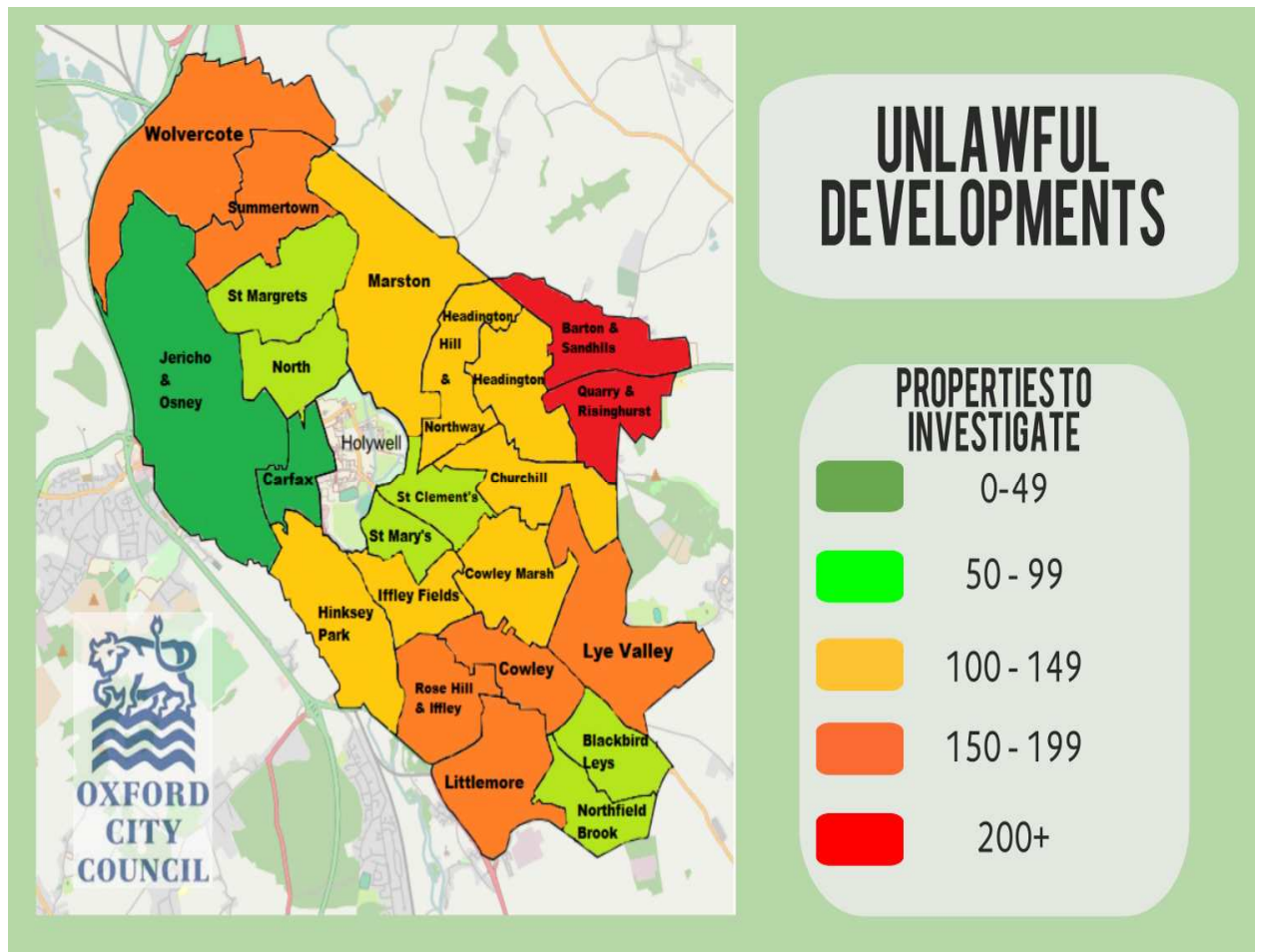


Appendix 2.

Distribution of unlawful dwellings by ward.

Total Number





Distribution of unlawful dwellings showing a heat profile.

Appendix 3 - Case Studies

1. Cowley Marsh

Background.

Property identified, due to unusual heat profile, routine visit by investigating officer, found two gentlemen of East Timor origin asleep in the a dilapidated asbestos garage mid-afternoon. Main property rented to a young couple also from East Timor, claiming to be the sister of the men in the garage.

No fixed heating or insulation to the structure, meant it was unhealthily cold. The power supply was a cable strung across from the kitchen, leading to a risk of electrocution and fire. There were no cooking or sanitary facilities. Numerous other hazards also existed at the property.





Action

Conditions were deemed to be so hazardous, that there was an imminent risk to the health safety and welfare of the occupants. An emergency prohibition order was served for the structure to be vacated and emergency works were undertaken to disconnect the electrical supply and secure the building. The occupants vacated the premises before the notices were served and the work carried out.

This has not been the only extreme case discovered during the project, but is probably the worst.

2. Lye Valley

Background

Planning were informed of a large structure being built at the rear of a bungalow clearly visible from the road at the rear. No application had been made for either planning or building regulation permission. The overall footprint was larger than the main building and took up almost the entire rear garden. Visits were made by the planning enforcement officer; the owner claimed the building was going to be used as a gym. He was advised to cease work and make the relevant applications.





Action

As no application had been made and works had continued despite advice from the planning enforcement officer to the contrary, a planning enforcement notice was served requiring the demolition of the building and the removal of all building materials and waste from the site. The owner complied with the notice.

Appendix 4

Cross Working

- Thames Valley Police – Information provision and joint visits
- UK Border Agency – Information provision
- Her Majesties Revenue and Customs – Information provision and feedback
- Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority – Information provision and joint visits.
- Oxfordshire Trading Standards – No activity as yet.
- OCC Planning Department – Information provision, joint visits and enforcement.
- OCC Benefit Fraud – Information provision and feedback.
- OCC Building Control - Information provision, joint visits and enforcement.
- OCC Housing Services including Homeless Team – Information provision, joint visits and feedback.
- Oxfordshire Social Services, Children & Families – No activity to date, lines of communication established.
- OCC Council Tax – Information provision and feedback.
- Environmental Development Community Response Team - Information provision, joint visits and enforcement.
- OCC Legal Services – Enforcement.
- National Landlords Association and the Association of Residential Letting Agents.- Information provision.
- Voluntary Sector – Information provision, training.

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To: Housing Panel

Date: 4 February 2015

Report of: Head of Housing & Property

Title of Report: Tackling under-occupation

Summary

Purpose of report: To provide members with details on the range of initiatives in place to tackle under-occupation within Oxford City Council's housing stock.

Key decision No

Executive lead member: Councillor Scott Seamons, Board Member for Housing & Estate Regeneration

Report author: Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager

Policy Framework: Meeting Housing Needs

Appendices to report:

Appendix 1 – Statistical Analysis of Under-occupation

Appendix 2 – REMS Scheme Criteria & Uptake

Appendix 3 – Mutual Exchanges and Homeswapper

Appendix 4 – Bedroom Tax

Appendix 5 – Mutual Exchange Statistics

Background

1. The Housing Panel of the Scrutiny Committee requested a report to update them on the range of initiatives in place to tackle under-occupation within the City Council's housing stock. This report sets out the Council's position as at January 2015

Current Under-Occupation in Council Housing Stock

2. In considering under-occupation, the same criteria is used as the Allocations Scheme when calculating the number of bedrooms required for a household, taking into account ages, sexes and relationships.
3. Each of the following are considered to require one bedroom:
 - Each couple or a single person
 - Each additional adult (aged eighteen and over)
 - Two children of the same sex aged under 16
 - Two children of the opposite sex aged under 10
 - Any other child
4. As at January 2015 there were 7,599 occupied properties (excluding homeless temporary accommodation and properties leased to external organisations). Of those, 2,314, (30.5% of the total stock) were under-occupied using the criteria above.
5. An analysis of under-occupation is shown in Appendix 1. From the analysis:
 - Taking family-sized properties only (2 bedroom and above), there were 5,809 properties and 39.8% were under-occupied. *Table 1 - Under-occupation in family-sized stock*
 - The majority of those under-occupying only require a 1-bed property (67.6%). *Table 2 - Bedroom requirements of under-occupiers*
 - 59.3% of under-occupiers are aged 60 or over. *Table 3 - Under-occupation in under 60s and over 60s*
 - Where tenants over 60 are occupying family-sized accommodation, 77.0% are under-occupied. *Table 4 - Over 60s in family-sized accommodation*
 - 398 (29%) of under-occupying over 60s are over 80 years old. *Table 5—Over 60s under-occupation by age band*
 - 78.6% of under-occupying households where the main tenant was aged 60 or over only require a 1-bed property. *Table 6—Bedroom requirements of over 60s under-occupiers*

Under-occupation initiatives - REMS scheme

6. The Removal and Expenses Scheme (known internally as REMS) is a scheme for Council tenants who are under-occupying their properties and who want to move to a smaller property.
7. Tenants accepted on the scheme will be placed in band 1 on the housing register if they are giving up two or more bedrooms and in band 2 if they are giving up one bedroom.
8. Tenants receive compensation depending on the number of bedrooms that they are giving up, as set out in Appendix 2. *Table 7 - REMS Compensation Amounts*
9. They may also be eligible for certain other expenses up to the value of £1,500, including removal costs, replacement floor coverings, disconnection and reconnection of domestic appliances and help with decorations.
10. Out of 2314 under-occupying households only 127 (5.5%) are on the REMS scheme. *Table 8 - Under-occupiers on REMS scheme*
11. Among those aged 60 and over who are under-occupying only 57 (4.2%) are on the REMS scheme. *Table 9 - Over 60s under-occupiers on REMS Scheme.*
12. Although the numbers are low, the number of tenants moving on the REMS scheme is increasing each year from 28 in 2012/13, to 58 in 2013/14 and to 53 in the first nine months of 2014/15. (*Table 10 - REMS moves by property moved from*) although the number of moves from 4 bed properties remains very low.
13. The associated expenditure on compensation and expenses is increasing with the increased numbers (*Table 11 - REMS Compensation and Expenses by Type*). Any budget shortfalls that are anticipated are covered by underspends to ensure that the scheme continues.
14. The average age of downsizers is 60 and the highest represented age ranges are between 40 and 79. *Table 12 - Age range of REMS downsizers.*
15. Oxford City Council's REMS scheme is one of the most generous operated by local authorities. *Table 13 - Downsizing incentive schemes in other LAs. 3-bed to 1-bed examples*

Homeswapper

16. Oxford City Council subscribes to Homeswapper, which is a national register of tenants looking to exchange home. Almost 900 Registered Providers subscribe to Homeswapper including all of the members of ORAH. Oxford City Council also subscribes to Homeswapper Local, which enables our tenants to search for potential matches down to ward level.
17. There are 835 Oxford City Council tenants registered on Homeswapper with 443 being in 2-bedroom properties and 266 in 3-bedroom properties, however only 3.4% in 2-beds and 21.3% in 3-beds actually want to downsize (*Table 14 - Bedroom requirements of tenants registered on Homeswapper*). Overall, only 75 (8.9%) of all tenants registered want to downsize (*Table 15 - Overall requirements of tenants registered on Homeswapper*).

Bedroom Tax & Mutual Exchange “Speed-dating”

18. On 1 April 2013, 956 households in Oxford were affected by the bedroom tax. This included Housing Association tenants as well as around 600 Oxford City Council tenants. By 1 September 2014, this had reduced by almost 30% to 678 households in Oxford. *Table 16 - Bedroom Tax reducing numbers*
19. Analysis carried out by the Council’s Welfare Reform Team eight months after the implementation of the Bedroom Tax identified that downsizers only accounted for 13 (5%) of all those who were no longer affected by the Bedroom Tax at that time. The main changes in circumstances were tenants finding work, children being registered and adult children returning home. *Table 17 - Reason tenants no longer affected by Bedroom Tax*
20. As a response to the introduction of the Bedroom Tax, the Council organised a series of mutual exchange “Speed-dating” sessions, designed to put those affected by the Bedroom Tax in direct contact with tenants who need to move to large accommodation. These sessions attracted considerable interest across the media and was promoted heavily and directly with tenants affected by the Bedroom Tax.
21. The “Speed-dating” sessions were attended by around 290 households however despite the numbers, there was a mismatch of attendees as the majority were in 2-bed properties wanting to move to larger properties, while of those wanting to downsize who did attend, most were in 2-bed properties in any event.
22. Although the sessions were well attended, no tenants downsized by finding an exchange as a result of the initiative. The publicity did however significantly improve awareness of exchanges and a record number took place in the months that followed.

Mutual Exchanges

23. The number of mutual exchanges has increased significantly from 75 in 2012/13 to 113 in 2013/14. The trend is continuing in 2014/15 with over 100 exchanges expected to be completed. *Table 18 - Exchanges by month 2012 - 2015.*
24. In 2014/15 so far, over half of exchanges were between properties of the same size (*Table 19 - Size of property moved to compared with existing home*) and only half of all 18 who downsized were affected by the Bedroom Tax (*Table 20 - Exchanges with tenants affected by Bedroom Tax*).
25. Of all those that exchanged in 2014/15 so far, 85 have exchanged either with a City Council tenant or a tenant of another Registered Provider in Oxford. 15% have exchanged with tenants outside of Oxford. *Table 21 - Destination of exchanging tenants.*
26. The Council has a budget to provide assistance to those affected by Bedroom Tax who have found a downsizing exchange, however the take up is extremely low, reflecting the low numbers involved.

Conclusion

27. Despite the financial implications of the Bedroom Tax, publicity, the REMS incentives and assistance for exchanging tenants, the problem of under-occupation in our stock remains significant and movement by under-occupiers to smaller accommodation remains low. Officers will continue to support the initiatives already in place.
28. The research being carried out under the Older Persons Housing Review will inform the future approach to initiatives to tackle under-occupation from a holistic perspective, taking into account aspirations of older people relating both to property and services available.

Next steps

29. That the Housing Panel (of the Scrutiny Committee) is asked to note this report and provide comment on the existing initiatives in place to tackle under-occupation.

Name and contact details of author:-

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Service Area / Department	Housing & Property
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List of background papers: None

Version number: 1.0

Appendix 1 – Statistical Analysis of Under-occupation

	Total tenancies	Under-occupied	% under-occupied
2-beds	2538	810	31.9%
3-beds	3001	1380	46.0%
4-beds	242	109	45.0%
5-beds	25	13	52.0%
6-beds	3	2	66.7%
Total	5809	2314	39.8%

Table 1 - Under-occupation in family-sized stock

	Number of bedrooms required				
Size	1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	4-bed	
2-bed	810				810
3-bed	721	659			1380
4-bed	31	31	47		109
5-bed	3	3	3	4	13
6-bed				2	2
Total	1565	693	50	6	2314
Percentage	67.6%	29.9%	2.2%	0.3%	

Table 2 - Bedroom requirements of under-occupiers

	Age of main tenant				
	Under 60		60 and over		Total
Size	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	
2-bed	309	38.1%	501	61.9%	810
3-bed	570	41.3%	810	58.7%	1380
4-bed	54	49.5%	55	50.5%	109
5-bed	8	61.5%	5	38.5%	13
6-bed	1	50.0%	1	50.0%	2
Total	942	40.7%	1372	59.3%	2314

Table 3 - Under-occupation in under 60s and over 60s

Size	Tenants over 60	Under-occupying	Percentage
2-bed	688	501	72.8%
3-bed	1015	810	79.8%
4-bed	71	55	77.5%
5-bed	6	5	83.3%
6-bed	1	1	100.0%
Total	1781	1372	77.0%

Table 4 - Over 60s in family-sized accommodation

	Age of main tenant						
	60-69		70-79		80+		Total
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	
2-bed	186	37.1%	147	29.3%	168	33.5%	501
3-bed	320	39.5%	271	33.5%	219	27.0%	810
4-bed	26	47.3%	19	34.5%	10	18.2%	55
5-bed	2	40.0%	2	40.0%	1	20.0%	5
6-bed	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1
Total	535	39.0%	439	32.0%	398	29.0%	1372

Table 5—Over 60s under-occupation by age band

	Number of bedrooms required				
Size	1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	4-bed	
2-bed	501				501
3-bed	553	257			810
4-bed	25	18	12		55
5-bed	3	1	1		5
6-bed				1	1
	1082	276	13	1	1372

Table 6—Bedroom requirements of over 60s under-occupiers

Appendix 2 – REMS Scheme Criteria & Uptake

	Moving to				Designated 55+ or sheltered	
Moving From*	4 Bed	3 Bed	2 Bed	1 Bed	2 Bed**	1 bed
5 Bed	£1,000	£2,000	£3,000	£4,000	£3,500	£4,500
4 Bed	£0	£1,000	£2,000	£3,000	£2,500	£3,500
3 Bed	£0	£0	£1,000	£2,000	£1,500	£2,500
2 Bed	£0	£0	£0	£1,000	£1,000	£1,500
*Plus up to £1,500 moving expenses						
** The higher compensation amount ONLY applies to 2 bedroom properties suitable for older applicants and NOT properties suitable for families with children						

Table 7 - REMS Compensation Amounts

Property Size	Under-occupied	On REMS scheme	% on REMS scheme
2-bed	810	41	5.1%
3-bed	1380	78	5.7%
4-bed	109	7	6.4%
5-bed	13	1	7.7%
6-bed	2	0	0.0%
Total	2314	127	5.5%

Table 8 - Under-occupiers on REMS scheme

Property Size	Under-occupied	On REMS scheme	% on REMS scheme
2-bed	501	19	3.8%
3-bed	810	35	4.3%
4-bed	55	3	5.5%
5-bed	5	0	0.0%
6-bed	1	0	0.0%
Total	1372	57	4.2%

Table 9 - Over 60s under-occupiers on REMS Scheme

Property Size	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15 to 12/14
2-bed	12	26	24
3-bed	13	27	27
4-bed	3	4	2
5-bed		1	
Total	28	58	53

Table 10 - REMS moves by property moved from

Property Size	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15 to 12/14
2-bed	£27,644.58	£ 67,115.41	£ 63,833.43
3-bed	£35,107.14	£ 80,659.74	£ 86,982.30
4-bed	£13,994.83	£ 15,789.84	£ 5,894.00
5-bed		£ 5,500.00	
Total	£76,746.55	£169,064.99	£156,709.73

Table 11 - REMS Compensation and Expenses by Type

Age Range	Numbers
20-29	3
30-39	10
40-49	21
50-59	37
60-69	29
70-79	23
80-89	14
90-99	2
Average Age	60

Table 12 - Age range of REMS downsizers

Landlord	Compensation	Max Expenses
LB Camden	£4,000.00	N/K
Oxford City Council	£2,000.00	£1,500.00
Cambridge City Council	£2,000.00	£800.00
Lewes DC	£2,000.00	£500.00
Basildon Council	£1,500.00	N/K
Brighton & Hove City Council	£1,500.00	N/K
Harlow	£1,500.00	£1,000.00
Ashford BC	£1,000.00	Yes
Cornwall Housing	£1,000.00	N/K
Bournemouth BC	£1,000.00	500+
Epping Forest DC	£1,000.00	£500.00
LB Lambeth	£1,000.00	£500.00
Exeter City Council	£0.00	£500.00
Hull City Council	2 weeks rent	N/K

Table 13 - Downsizing incentive schemes in other LAs. 3-bed to 1-bed examples

Appendix 3 – Mutual Exchanges and Homeswapper

Current Size	Requirements	Numbers	Percentage
1 Bedroom	Same Size	72	67.9%
	One bedroom more	30	28.3%
	Two bedrooms more	4	3.8%
1 Bedroom Total		106	100.0%
2 Bedroom	One bedroom less	15	3.4%
	Same Size	244	55.1%
	One bedroom more	182	41.1%
	Two bedrooms more	2	0.5%
2 Bedroom Total		443	100.0%
3 Bedroom	Two bedrooms less	5	1.9%
	One bedroom less	49	18.4%
	Same Size	145	54.5%
	One bedroom more	66	24.8%
	Two bedrooms more	1	0.4%
3 Bedroom Total		266	100.0%
4 Bedroom	Two bedrooms less	2	10.5%
	One bedroom less	4	21.1%
	Same Size	11	57.9%
	One bedroom more	2	10.5%
4 Bedroom Total		19	100.0%
5 Bedroom	Same Size	1	100.0%
5 Bedroom Total		1	100.0%
Overall Total		835	

Table 14 - Bedroom requirements of tenants registered on Homeswapper

Requirements	Numbers	Percentage
Two bedrooms less	7	0.8%
One bedroom less	68	8.1%
Same Size	473	56.6%
One bedroom more	280	33.5%
Two bedrooms more	7	0.8%
Total	835	100.0%

Table 15 - Overall requirements of tenants registered on Homeswapper

Appendix 4 – Bedroom Tax

	Deduction Rate					
	14%		25%		All	
Apr-13	781	Change	174	Change	956	Change
Dec-13	616	-21%	123	-29%	739	-23%
Jan-14	593	-24%	118	-32%	711	-26%
Apr-14	593	-24%	101	-42%	694	-27%
Sep-14	577	-26%	101	-42%	678	-29%

Table 16 - Bedroom Tax reducing numbers

Reason	Households	%
Carer exemption	26	10%
Claim cancelled or suspended	48	18%
Disabled child exemption	15	6%
Downsized	13	5%
Exempt accommodation	15	6%
Foster carer	2	1%
Higher bedroom need	56	21%
Lodger	5	2%
Non dependant	46	17%
Pension age	3	1%
Work	40	15%
	269	100%

Table 17 - Reason tenants no longer affected by Bedroom Tax

Appendix 5 – Mutual Exchange Statistics

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Apr	11	18	14
May	5	9	10
Jun	6	12	14
Jul	6	13	11
Aug	3	7	8
Sep	10	16	8
Oct	7	10	8
Nov	3	7	4
Dec	0	0	3
Jan	10	5	
Feb	10	7	
Mar	4	9	
Total	75	113	80

Table 18 - Exchanges by month 2012 - 2015

Property Moved to 14/15	
Size Difference	Numbers
Larger	18
Same	44
Smaller	18
Grand Total	80

Table 19 - Size of property moved to compared with existing home

Bedroom Tax Downsize 14/15	
Size Difference	Numbers
Same	1
Smaller	9
Grand Total	10

Table 20 - Exchanges with tenants affected by Bedroom Tax

Internal/External 14/15	
Landlord	Numbers
Out of Oxford	12
HA in Oxford	23
OCC	45
Grand Total	80

Table 21 - Destination of exchanging tenants

Housing Panel work programme 2014-15

Items for Housing Panel meetings

Suggested Topic	Suggested approach / area(s) for focus
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.
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 (expected in April 15).
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

Date, room and time	Agenda Item	Lead Member; Officer(s)
4 February 2015, St Aldate's Room, 5.30pm	1. Unlawful dwellings	Ian Wright
	2. Tackling under-occupancy	Bill Graves
24 March 2015, Judges Room, 5pm	1. Housing Strategy	TBC
	2. Non-statutory homelessness services	ShaiburRahman
	3. De-designation review year 4	Tom Porter

2015/16 dates TBC

HOUSING PANEL (PANEL OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE)

Thursday 22 January 2015

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Sanders, Hollick (Chair), Wade and Smith.

CO-OPTES PRESENT: Linda Hill

OFFICERS PRESENT: Andrew Brown (Scrutiny Officer), Nichola Griffiths and Deborah Haynes

76. APOLOGIES

None.

77. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

78. FUEL POVERTY

The Panel noted that the definition of fuel poverty has changed and that fewer people meet the newer definition. The Panel heard that modelling the 'fuel poverty gap' could help the City Council to target the worst affected residents, and that officers are looking at how this approach could be applied in Oxford.

The Panel also noted that energy efficiency is the main component of fuel poverty that the City Council can really affect.

The Panel questioned to roll out of solar PVs and suggested that tenant-facing staff in Direct Services could play a role in keeping an eye on installations and advising tenants on the use of free electricity.

The Panel questioned whether the City Council has looked at purchasing energy in bulk, citing the example of Tower Hamlets Borough Council, and whether this is within the scope of the new Energy Strategy. The Panel heard that this is something that officers are aware of but that it would be quite complicated to do and would require some additional expertise.

The Panel requested further information about the availability of emergency support, and energy tariffs for vulnerable persons.

The Panel also asked to review the latest excess winter deaths figures for Oxford.

79. STAR SURVEY RESULTS

The Housing Panel reviewed the STAR Survey results 2014 at its meeting on 22 January 2015. The Panel would like to thank Nicola Griffiths for introducing this item and answering the Panel's questions.

The Housing Panel noted the tenant satisfaction results were down across the board compared to last year. However, the City Council is awaiting data from other local authorities which should indicate whether this is a national trend.

The Panel noted that more tenants had been contacted in 2014 than in 2013 but returns were down. The Panel questioned why the sample size was small and suggested that door-knocking would be more effective than sending letters. The Panel heard that the STAR Survey is conducted by a consultation service but that there will be an opportunity to review this arrangement following the 2015 survey.

The Panel questioned how the results would be used and whether any improvements are planned in response.

80. WORK PROGRAMME

Noted.

81. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Noted.

82. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Noted.

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 6.10 pm