

Agenda

www.oxford.gov.uk



Housing Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

Date: **Wednesday 5 October 2016**

Time: **5.00 pm**

Place: **Plowman Room - Town Hall**

For any further information please contact:

Andrew Brown

Telephone: 01865 252230

Email: abrown2@oxford.gov.uk

As a matter of courtesy, if you intend to record the meeting please let the Contact Officer know how you wish to do this before the start of the meeting.

Housing Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

Membership

Chair	Councillor David Henwood
	Councillor Angie Goff
	Councillor Jennifer Pegg
	Councillor Gill Sanders
	Councillor David Thomas
	Councillor Elizabeth Wade
	Geno Humphrey (Housing Panel co-optee)
	Housing Panel co-optee

HOW TO OBTAIN A COPY OF THE AGENDA

In order to reduce the use of resources, our carbon footprint and our costs we will no longer produce paper copies of agenda over and above our minimum internal and Council member requirement. Paper copies may be looked at the Town Hall Reception and at Customer Services, St Aldate's and at the Westgate Library

A copy of the agenda may be:-

- Viewed on our website – mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk
- Downloaded from our website
- Subscribed to electronically by registering online at mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk
- Sent to you in hard copy form upon payment of an annual subscription.

AGENDA

Pages

1 APOLOGIES

Substitutes are not allowed.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3 HOUSING PERFORMANCE - QUARTER 1

9 - 10

Background Information
<p>The Housing Panel has a role in monitoring Council performance against housing targets. This report contains outcomes at the end of 2016/17 quarter 1 (June 2016) for a set of housing performance indicators.</p>
<p>Why is it on the agenda?</p>
<p>For the Panel to note and comment on housing performance at the end of 2016/17 quarter 1. The Panel will receive a performance report for quarter 2 (September 2016) in November.</p>
<p>Who has been invited to comment?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cllr Mike Rowley, Board Member for Housing;• Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager.

4 CHOICE BASED LETTINGS REFUSAL REASONS

11 - 22

Background Information
<p>The Housing Panel in considered proposed changes to the Choice Based Lettings scheme for the allocation of social housing in December 2015. At that meeting the Panel requested further data and analysis around why approximately 15% of offers of suitable accommodation had been refused, including reasons that were considered to be reasonable and unreasonable. The Panel also recommended that officers explore positive ways of reducing the number of offers of housing that were refused.</p>

Why is it on the agenda?

For the Panel to receive a report back on Choice Based Lettings refusal reasons. The Panel is asked to note and comment the report and may wish to agree one or more recommendations to put to the City Executive Board in November.

Who has been invited to comment?

- Cllr Mike Rowley, Board Member for Housing;
- Tom Porter, Allocations Manager.

5 UNDER-OCCUPATION IN THE COUNCIL’S HOUSING STOCK

23 - 36

Background Information

The Panel requested a report on measures to tackle under-occupation in the Council’s housing stock when agreeing its work plan for 2016/17. This follows a previous report in February 2015.

Why is it on the agenda?

The Panel is asked to note and comment on the report. The Panel may also wish to agree one or more recommendations to put to the City Executive Board in November.

Who has been invited to comment?

- Cllr Mike Rowley, Board Member for Housing;
- Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager.

6 ENERGY STRATEGY - HOUSING & PROPERTY

37 - 52

Background Information

The Panel asked to pre-scrutinise a decision on the Council’s Housing Energy Strategy. This decision was deferred indefinitely but in it was agreed that a briefing would be provided to the Housing Panel and this item was included in the Panel’s work plan for 2016/17.

Why is it on the agenda?
The Panel is asked to note and comment on the report and presentation (to be circulated separately). The Panel may also wish to agree one or more recommendations to put to the City Executive Board in November.
Who has been invited to comment?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Mike Rowley, Board Member for Housing; • Debbie Haynes, Energy Efficiency Projects Officer.

7 HOUSING PANEL WORK PLAN

53 - 66

For the Panel to note and agree its work plan, which can be adjusted to reflect the wishes of the Panel.

The Scrutiny Officer will introduce the work plan and advise the Panel on any suggested changes to it.

8 NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

67 - 72

For the Panel to agree and note the record of the meeting held on 7 July 2016.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Meetings are scheduled as follows:

- 9 November 2016
- 1 March 2017
- 3 May 2017

All meetings begin at 5.00pm.

The Panel are also invited to join with Finance Panel members in scrutinising housing budget proposals and the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan in a private session on 10 January 2017 from 5.30pm.

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.

a)

b)

|

**Performance Summary
Housing Panel**

Green = target met
Amber = within tolerance
Red = outside tolerance

Trends compare relative performance with
Prd: previous month

Prev Year End: previous March

Jun-2016

Year on Year: the same period from the previous year

Measure		Owner	Result 2015/16	Latest Data		Year End Target 2016/17	RAG	Trends			Comments
Ref	Description			Target	Result			Prd	Prev Year End	Year on Year	
An Efficient and Effective Council											
HP008	HP008: Number of new homes granted permission in the city	Patsy Dell	Not Recorded	0 Number	26 Number	400 Number	G	↗			Whilst this month's figure is on the low side, monthly fluctuations in the number of planning permissions are normal and expected because it is relative to the number and type of planning applications that are received by applicants.
NI156	NI 156: Limit our use of temporary accommodation at 2015 levels	Stephen Clarke	115 Number	120 Number	123 Number	120 Number	A	↗	↘	↘	There have been a rise in placements, not least due to more tenancy ends in the private rented sector (PRS), and we have fewer options in the PRS to help address these. The team continue to work hard to prevent homelessness and make robust case decisions, against this challenging external environment. Lettings into social housing are also down on last year with 25%. This is due to fewer relets coming through as well as a lack of new build supply.
BV066a	BV066a: Percentage of rent collected	Helen Bishop	98.25%	91.77%	91.77%	98.25%	G	↗	↘	↔	This figure is calculated as the rent collected as a percentage of the rent collectable. This includes the current year rent roll and outstanding rent arrears at previous year end. The figure has been checked and verified as being correct therefore we are exactly on target.
DS011	DS011: Percentage of Right to Repairs completed on time (Gas and Responsive)	Sean Fry	99.70%	99.00%	99.71%	99.00%	G	↗	↗	↗	3148 jobs completed on time, out of the 3157 jobs completed YTD.
DS012	DS012: Percentage of Routine Repairs completed on time (Gas and Responsive)	Sean Fry	95.39%	96.50%	95.94%	96.50%	A	↘	↗	↘	3163 jobs completed on time, out of the 3297 jobs completed YTD. working on WIP

HC016	HC016: Number of affordable homes for rent delivered	Stephen Clarke	166 Number	0 Number	0 Number	7 Number	R				Units at Dora Carr Close are expected to complete in November
HP003	HP003: The number of people estimated to be sleeping rough	Stephen Clarke	56 Number	0 Number	0 Number	45 Number	R				An annual estimate of rough sleepers is done in November.
HP004	HP004: The number of successful interventions with rough sleepers	Stephen Clarke	326 Number	75 Number	117 Number	300 Number	G				Performing over target.
BV064	BV064: Empty homes returned to use	Stephen Clarke	20 Homes	3 Homes	6 Homes	14 Homes	G				Performing over target.
CS002	CS002: Time to process changes in circumstances	Helen Bishop	8 Days	9 Days	9 Days	9 Days	G				The June result was a disappointing 13.99 days (target 9 days), the main reason being that staff were catching up on old work. The year to date is currently 8.69 days that remains within target.
CS005	CS005: Time to process new benefits claims	Helen Bishop	13.86 days	13.00 days	13.28 days	13.00 days	A				June saw an excellent result of an average 12.04 days to process the 343 application forms processed in the month. This improves the year to date result to 13.28 days which is very close to the challenging 16/17 target of 13 days.
HC003	HC003: Homeless Acceptances	Stephen Clarke	141 Number	33 Number	28 Number	132 Number	G				Performing well - under target.
HC004	HC004: Homelessness cases prevented	Stephen Clarke	1,170 Number	275 Number	246 Number	1,100 Number	R				Homeless preventions becoming increasingly difficult due to the buoyant private rented sector market and unaffordability of rents. This indicator is being carefully monitored to see if this trend continues for the rest of this year (at levels that are down on 15/16).
HP006	Total number of affordable homes completed in year	Stephen Clarke	Not Recorded	20 Number	9 Number	35 Number	R				Handovers of shared ownership flats at Barns Road have begun and are expected to complete in July

8

To: The Housing Scrutiny Panel

Date: 12/09/16

Report of: Allocations Manager

Title of the Report: Choice-Based Lettings Refusals

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To provide a briefing on how a refusal of an offer of housing is dealt with in the Allocations Scheme and a summary of offers refused from 1/4/15 to 31/3/16

Policy Framework: Meeting Housing Needs

Recommendation(s): None – for information only

Appendices

Appendix 1: Refusals of 55+ and Sheltered Properties from 1/4/15 to 31/3/16

Appendix 2: Refusals of Family and General Needs Properties from 1/4/15 to 31/3/16

Appendix 3: A summary of unreasonable refusal reasons from 1/4/15 to 31/3/16

1. The Council's Allocations Scheme is the policy used to prioritise those in housing need on the Oxford Register for Affordable Housing (ORAH) for offers of housing. The Allocations Scheme seeks to balance local needs and aspirations with current legislation, guidance and best practice as well as local housing conditions. The current scheme was approved by the Council and came into effect on 12/12/13 and is available on the Council website.
2. Choice-Based Lettings is the process used to advertise new build or existing properties owned by the Council and our Registered Provider partners within Oxford that have become available to re-let. The properties are advertised in weekly lettings cycles. The ORAH consists of three separate housing lists:
 - The Homeless List for applicants to whom Oxford City Council has accepted a statutory homeless duty and placed in temporary accommodation who are awaiting an offer of permanent accommodation
 - The Transfer List for Council and eligible Housing Association Tenants living in Oxford applying for a move to alternative accommodation
 - The General Register List for all other households applying for social housing in Oxford
3. Housing applicants from each list can apply for properties advertised through Choice-Based Lettings and if they are successful they are made an offer. Before proceeding with an offer checks are made as to whether the housing applicant is considered suitable for an offer and whether the property is suitable for their housing requirement. If they are not considered suitable or the property is not considered suitable for their housing requirements they will not be made an offer and the property will be offered to the next suitable housing applicant.
4. Before a housing applicant is made an offer an Allocations Officer will check the shortlist after the lettings cycle has ended and contact the successful housing applicant and send them a written offer of housing. The successful housing applicant is then given an opportunity to view the property before making a final decision about whether to accept the offer of the accommodation they have bid for.
5. The person who finishes first on the shortlist will normally be offered the property although this is not always the case. The Council and other ORAH partners reserve the right not to offer the property to the person highest on the shortlist if the property offers a better match with the needs of another high priority applicant, the person is not considered suitable for an offer of housing or the property is not considered suitable for their housing requirements. If a housing applicant's circumstances have not been fully verified they may also be overlooked.

6. If a housing applicant is offered a property and refuses without good reason a penalty may be applied. Unreasonable refusals delay other applicants in housing need moving into a property, cost the Council and other landlords in lost staff time and can result in the landlord losing rental income from having longer void periods. If a housing applicant's reason for refusing is considered reasonable by the Allocations Team they will be able to continue to bid as normal.
7. Applicants on the Homeless List will normally be made one suitable offer of accommodation; this could be an allocation of social housing through the Allocations Scheme or an offer of suitable accommodation within the private rented sector made outside of the Allocations Scheme by the Housing Options Team or Private Sector Team to discharge the Council's homeless duty. This is subject to the right of review.
8. If a homeless applicant refuses a suitable offer without good reason the Council will no longer have a duty to accommodate them and ask them to leave their temporary accommodation and to resolve their housing situation themselves. If the applicant does not move out the Council will take action to take possession of the property.
9. Housing applicants on the General Register or Transfer Lists who are considered to have unreasonably refused two suitable offers of accommodation within the last 12 months will be suspended from bidding for 12 months. With the exception of tenants on the Transfer List occupying a property suitable for a family and seeking to downsize to a smaller property. Other exceptions may also be made on a case by case basis by the Allocations Manager.
10. The Council makes an exception for tenants seeking to downsize to encourage tenants wanting to downsize to bid for all potentially suitable properties so that they can move to a new home they are happy in and more family properties become available to re-let. During 2015/16 there were 42 family properties made available because existing Council tenants were re-housed to smaller more suitable properties.
11. From 1/4/15 to 31/3/16 the Allocations Team made 766 offers of housing. The table below shows whether offers were accepted or refused and for refusals shows if they were considered reasonable or unreasonable.

Offers of Social Housing made from 1/4/15 to 31/3/16

Offers Accepted	629
Unreasonable Refusals	83
Reasonable Refusals	54
Total Offers	766

12. A housing applicant may have various reasons for turning down an offer of housing. Personal reasons for refusing are hard to categorise because they can vary so much. Other reasons for refusing can be broadly categorised to include the following; the location of the property, health reasons, the property type, size or layout and sometimes the condition of the property. Refusal reasons are monitored and if for example an offer is refused due to the condition of the property the landlord will be contacted to see if the property is considered ready to let or if further work is required. A surveyor may be asked to look at the property to ensure it is up to the void standard of the landlord and to check if any further work needs to be arranged before or after the tenant moves in.
13. When a property is advertised through Choice-Based Lettings the property location, size, type, rent and other details such as whether it is adapted or has a bath or shower are all included in the advert. Furthermore, before proceeding with an offer of housing an Allocations Officer will where possible contact the housing applicant to discuss the property details before proceeding with an offer of housing. So if a housing applicant refuses a property for example because they don't want to move to a particular area after applying for the property this will normally be considered an unreasonable refusal unless they can provide evidence about why the area is unsuitable.
14. Appendices 1 and 2 show a more detailed breakdown of the properties refused during 2015/16 by property type and size and whether the refusals were considered reasonable or not. Appendix 1 shows refusals of properties only suitable for housing applicants aged 55 years or older or 60 years or older and suitable for sheltered accommodation. Appendix 2 shows refusals of family properties and 1 bedroom properties with no age restriction. Appendix 3 shows a summary of the number of offers refused without good reason during 2015/16 by reason.
15. In summary during 2015/16, around 1 in 6 of all offers were refused. Based on previous years this is an improvement – during 2014/15, 1 in 5 offers were refused. Only 2 housing applicants were suspended from bidding for 12 months and both were tenants on the Transfer List who refused two properties without good reason within a 12 month period. There were 18 offers refused by under-occupying tenants (these were treated as reasonable refusals and included in 54 reasonable refusals listed) but of those 6 later went onto accept another offer and were re-housed and their former homes were re-let to 6 families in housing need on the ORAH.
16. The Allocations Team continues to seek to balance minimising the number of avoidable refusals against allocating properties within agreed ORAH targets so that properties are offered and re-let to suitable tenants in housing need as

quickly possible. By monitoring refusal reasons and working closely with the ORAH landlords in the City to identify if any improvements in working practices can be made and whether current penalties for refusals are appropriate or need to be changed in the future.

Name and contact details of author:

Tom Porter

Allocations Manager

Housing & Property

Tel: 01865 249811 Email: tporter@oxford.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 1: Refusals of 55+ and Sheltered Properties from 1/4/15 to 31/3/16

Reasonable Refusals of 55+/Sheltered Accommodation

Number of Bedroom	1 Bed	2 Bed	Total
Bungalow	0	0	0
Flat	13	2	15
House	0	0	0
Maisonette	0	0	0
Total	13	2	15

Unreasonable Refusals of 55+/Sheltered Accommodation

Number of Bedroom	1 Bed	2 Bed	Total
Bungalow	0	0	0
Flat	17	2	19
House	0	0	0
Maisonette	0	0	0
Total	17	2	19

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 2: Refusals of Family and General Needs Properties from 1/4/15 to 31/3/16

Reasonable Refusals of Family/General Needs Accommodation

Number of Bedroom	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	Total
Bungalow	5	0	0	0	5
Flat	12	2	3	1	18
House	1	6	6	2	15
Maisonette	0	0	1	0	1
Total	18	8	10	3	39

Unreasonable Refusals of Family/General Needs Accommodation

Number of Bedroom	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	Total
Bungalow	2	0	0	0	2
Flat	21	8	1	0	30
House	2	9	13	2	26
Maisonette	0	0	6	0	6
Total	25	17	20	2	64

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 3: A summary of unreasonable refusal reasons from 1/4/15 to 31/3/16

<u>Reason for Refusal</u>	<u>Number of Refusals</u>
Area	22
Health Reasons	3
Personal Reasons	27
Poor Condition of the Property	2
Rooms too small/size of property	24
Type of Property	5
Total	83

This page is intentionally left blank

To: Housing Panel

Date: 5 October 2016

Report of: Head of Housing & Property

Title of Report: Tackling under-occupation

Summary

Purpose of report: To provide members with an update 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 Mike Rowley, Board Member for Housing

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 Exchange Statistics

Background

1. This report updates the report of 4th February 2015 to the Panel 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 mid-September 2016.

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 mid-September 2016, there were 7,593 occupied properties (excluding homeless temporary accommodation and properties leased to external organisations). Of those, 2,172 (28.6%) were identified as under-occupying. While this remains substantial, it has dropped from 2,314, (30.5%) in January 2015.
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 5,784 properties and 37.6% were under-occupied
Table 1 - Under-occupation in family-sized stock
 - The majority of those under-occupying only require a 1-bed property (67.8%). *Table 2 - Bedroom requirements of under-occupiers*
 - 60.6% 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, 75.5% are under-occupied. *Table 4 - Over 60s in family-sized accommodation*
 - 378 (28.7%) of under-occupying over 60s are over 80 years old. *Table 5 – Over 60s under-occupation by age band*
 - 77.6% 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 2,172 under-occupying households only 131 (6%) are on the REMS scheme. *Table 8 - Under-occupiers on REMS scheme*
11. Among those aged 60 and over who are under-occupying only 66 (5%) are on the REMS scheme. *Table 9 - Over 60s under-occupiers on REMS Scheme.*
12. The number of tenants moving on the REMS scheme has dropped in 2015/16 to 41 compared to 58 and 57 in the two preceding years. No changes have been made to the scheme that would influence numbers so the cause of the drop is believed to be a simple reduction in demand and available supply of suitable properties. *(Table 10 - REMS moves by property moved from)*
13. The associated expenditure on compensation and expenses is demand led. *(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 61 and the highest represented age ranges are between 50 and 59. *Table 12 - Age range of REMS downsizers.*
15. All Council tenants who are under-occupying are pro-actively targeted regarding downsizing and given information about the REMS scheme.

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 around 900 tenants registered on Homeswapper. Tenants are however not required to be registered on Homeswapper to exchange and so the statistics available are not necessarily reflective of those looking for an exchange. Word of mouth remains extremely popular and there is an increase in the use of social media to advertise that someone wants to swap.

Bedroom Tax

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. This has reduced further to 561 in September 2016.

Mutual Exchanges

19. Following a peak in 2013/14 where 113 exchanges were completed, numbers have dropped back down to 74 in 2015/16. *Table 13 - Exchanges by month 2012 - 2016.*
20. In most years, just over half of all exchanges took place between tenants in the same size property and in 2016/17 so far, out of 38 completed exchanges, only 5 involved someone downsizing *Table 14 - Size of property moved to compared with existing home.*
21. In 2015/16, 23% of exchanges were with tenants from outside Oxford. *Table 15 - Destination of exchanging tenants.*

Review of Older Persons Accommodation in Oxford

22. The Review of Older Persons Accommodation in Oxford (February 2016) was presented to the City Executive Board on 17th March 2016.
23. The review conducted a detailed survey of older people in Oxford with over 500 responses, the largest proportion coming from Council tenants. From the survey, only 10% were considering moving from their current homes, while those not wanting to move were citing locality, emotional attachment, loss of possessions if moving to somewhere smaller and loss of family space (spare bedrooms) as some of the reasons for not wanting to move.
24. The report also noted that there was an over provision of sheltered and designated over 55's accommodation in the Council's housing stock, with low demand for those property types.

Flexible Tenancies

25. The Housing and Planning Act 2016 sets out the framework for the phasing out tenancies for life and the introduction of mandatory flexible tenancies for Council tenants.
26. A flexible tenancy is essentially a fixed term tenancy, usually of 5 years, at which point the circumstances of the tenant will be reviewed and a decision taken whether to grant a further 5 year tenancy term or not, depending on the housing need of the tenant.
27. While the regulations are not yet finalised, the introduction of flexible tenancies will see tenancies generally of a 5 year fixed term and although initially it will affect new tenants, some categories of tenants transferring and successors (on death) will also be given flexible tenancies.
28. Depending on the availability of suitable smaller properties, this change will, in time, lead to a reduction in under-occupation.
29. The implementation date is expected to be mid-2017. The regulations will set out decisions that Local Authorities will need to make locally and a report will be presented to the City Executive Board once regulations are available.

Conclusion

30. The number of tenants under-occupying their homes continues to reduce but from a high level. The efforts to promote exchanges and the REMS scheme are on-going.
31. The Review of Older Persons Accommodation in Oxford identified that many tenants simply do not want to move and that their housing aspirations are generally not for the type of accommodation that the Council has available to offer.
32. The introduction of flexible tenancies will potentially have a significant impact on the levels of under-occupation in the longer term.

Next steps

33. That the Housing Panel (of the Scrutiny Committee) is asked to note this report.

Name and contact details of author:-

Name	Bill Graves
Job title	Landlord Services Manager
Service Area / Department	Housing & Property
Tel: 01865 252428	e-mail: bgraves@oxford.gov.uk

List of background papers: None

Version number: 1.0

Appendix 1 – Statistical Analysis of Under-occupation

	Total tenancies	Under-occupied	% under-occupied
2-beds	2524	777	30.8%
3-beds	2988	1287	43.1%
4-beds	243	94	38.7%
5-beds	26	12	46.2%
6-beds	3	2	66.7%
Total	5784	2172	37.6%

Table 1 - Under-occupation in family-sized stock

Size	Number of bedrooms required				
	1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	4-bed	
2-bed	777				777
3-bed	669	618			1287
4-bed	24	24	46		94
5-bed	3	3	2	4	12
6-bed				2	2
Total	1473	645	48	6	2172
Percentage	67.8%	29.7%	2.2%	0.3%	

Table 2 - Bedroom requirements of under-occupiers

Size	Age of main tenant				Total
	Under 60		60 and over		
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	
2-bed	296	38.1%	481	61.9%	777
3-bed	509	39.5%	778	60.5%	1287
4-bed	43	45.7%	51	54.3%	94
5-bed	6	50.0%	6	50.0%	12
6-bed	1	50.0%	1	50.0%	2
Total	855	39.4%	1317	60.6%	2172

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

Size	Tenants over 60	Under-occupying	Percentage
2-bed	664	481	72.4%
3-bed	1007	778	77.3%
4-bed	66	51	77.3%
5-bed	7	6	85.7%
6-bed	1	1	100.0%
Total	1745	1317	75.5%

Table 4 - Over 60s in family-sized accommodation

	Age of main tenant						Total
	60-69		70-79		80+		
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	
2-bed	195	40.5%	128	26.6%	158	32.8%	481
3-bed	305	39.2%	264	33.9%	209	26.9%	778
4-bed	21	41.2%	20	39.2%	10	19.6%	51
5-bed	3	50.0%	2	33.3%	1	16.7%	6
6-bed	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1
Total	525	39.9%	414	31.4%	378	28.7%	1317

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

Size	Number of bedrooms required				
	1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	4-bed	
2-bed	481				481
3-bed	518	260			518
4-bed	20	14	17		20
5-bed	3	2	1		3
6-bed				1	
	1022	276	18	1	1022

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

Appendix 2 – REMS Scheme Criteria & Uptake

Moving From*	Moving to				Designated 55+ or sheltered	
	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 1 - REMS Compensation Amounts

Property Size	Under-occupied	On REMS scheme	% on REMS scheme
2-bed	777	49	6.3%
3-bed	1287	74	5.7%
4-bed	94	6	6.4%
5-bed	12	2	16.7%
6-bed	2	0	0.0%
Total	2172	131	6.0%

Table 2 - Under-occupiers on REMS scheme

Property Size	Under-occupied	On REMS scheme	% on REMS scheme
2-bed	481	27	5.6%
3-bed	778	36	4.6%
4-bed	51	2	3.9%
5-bed	6	1	16.7%
6-bed	1	0	0.0%
Total	1317	66	5.0%

Table 3 - Over 60s under-occupiers on REMS Scheme

Property Size	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016 to 14/9
2-bed	12	26	26	14	7
3-bed	13	27	29	26	11
4-bed	3	4	2	1	4
5-bed	0	1	0	0	0
Total	28	58	57	41	22

Table 4 - REMS moves by property moved from

Size	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016 to 14/9
2-bed	£27,644.58	£67,155.41	£68,541.36	£35,514.07	£19,381.91
3-bed	£35,107.14	£80,532.63	£89,194.30	£81,148.61	£36,426.84
4-bed	£13,994.83	£15,789.84	£6,000	£2,500	£14,000
5-bed	-	£5,500	-	-	-
Total	£76,746.55	£168,977.88	£163,735.66	£119,162.68	£69,808.75

Table 5 - REMS Compensation and Expenses by Type

Age Range	Numbers
20-29	5
30-39	10
40-49	29
50-59	57
60-69	40
70-79	32
80-89	29
90-99	4
Average Age	61

Table 6 - Age range of REMS downsizers

Appendix 3 – Mutual Exchange Statistics

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/7
Apr	11	18	14	5	6
May	5	9	10	11	5
Jun	6	12	14	6	7
Jul	6	13	11	8	8
Aug	3	7	8	14	10
Sep	10	16	8	5	2
Oct	7	10	8	7	
Nov	3	7	4	7	
Dec	0	0	3	3	
Jan	10	5	1	4	
Feb	10	7	8	2	
Mar	4	9	12	2	
Total	75	113	101	74	38

Table 13 - Exchanges by month 2012 - 2016

Property Moved to 15/16	
Size Difference	Numbers
Larger	18
Same	39
Smaller	17
Grand Total	74

Table 14 - Size of property moved to compared with existing home

Internal/External 15/16	
Landlord	Numbers
Out of Oxford	17
HA in Oxford	12
OCC	45
Grand Total	74

Table 15 - Destination of exchanging tenants

This page is intentionally left blank

Oxford City Council's Housing Energy Strategy 2016 - 2020

Tackling fuel poverty and reducing carbon in our housing

Oxford City Council’s Housing Energy Strategy 2016 - 2020

Tackling fuel poverty and reducing carbon in our housing

Introduction	2
Context: Why do we need a Housing Energy Strategy?	2
Supporting documentation	3
Consultation.....	3
Fuel Poverty background.....	4
Oxford City Council’s approach to fuel poverty	4
Key principle: Buildings first.....	7
Work to date.....	7
Insulation.....	7
Current budget and work	7
Data	8
Agreed approach and standards in development brief for new Council housing, complementing Planning requirements.	10
Supporting tenants	11
1. Understanding tenants’ needs and providing support and advice on energy saving behaviour, use of heating systems and energy bills/tariffs.....	11
2. Improving communications on energy and setting programmes of training and knowledge to increase the understanding and capacity of Council staff and partners	12
The Action Plan (including completed actions	13
Aligning small scale measures with existing programmes of work to maximise efficiency	13
Roll out of larger scale projects to improve energy efficiency and energy generation	13
Agreed approach and standards in development brief for new Council housing, complementing Planning requirements.	14

Understanding tenants needs and providing support and advice on energy saving behaviour, use of heating systems and energy bills/tariffs/ Improving communications on energy and setting programmes of training and knowledge to increase the understanding and capacity of Council staff and partners14

Introduction

Context: Why do we need a Housing Energy Strategy?

The Council's Sustainability Strategy sets out its activities undertaken to achieve a wide range of sustainability targets including carbon reduction and fuel poverty, both of which are key elements covered in this Strategy. Oxford City Council has a strong history of carrying out energy efficiency related work in its housing stock and a commitment to carbon reduction across the organisation.

As a social landlord, the Energy Act 2011 places a number of responsibilities on Oxford City Council, primarily to ensure that all properties in the portfolio reach Energy Performance Certificate level E or above by April 2018.

In a 2014 Oxford Standard consultation, energy came out as the most major concern for Council housing tenants, a sign that the fear of energy bills is a key issue for them. We know that there is a high number of tenants on low incomes in social housing in the homes, and that an inability to afford to heat the home may lead to debt worries and the under heating of homes. Under heated and/or poorly insulated properties are prone to damp and have health implications for their occupants. It is for these reasons that an Energy Strategy, bringing together existing and future energy related work and setting a framework for improved action is required.

Therefore the three main drivers to this strategy are:

1. Meeting our responsibilities under the Energy Act 2011 and future obligations (such as the Housing and Planning Act)
2. Improving the energy efficiency of and reducing carbon emissions from council homes
3. Further reducing fuel poverty in Council housing tenants.

All current and new build Council domestic housing is included in the scope of this strategy. Budgets have been allocated for upgrades of electrically heated homes to

gas, boiler replacement and loft insulation in addition to the large scale refurbishments of the five tower blocks.

Supporting documentation

The Climate Change Act 2008 committed the government to an 80% reduction in Green House gas emissions by 2050 from 1990. Approximately 45% of UK emissions are from buildings as gas and electricity use (ie 'energy'), so buildings are key to meeting this target.

The Council launched its first Carbon Management Plan in 2008/09 and by the end of March 2011 had implemented measures calculated to reduce CO2 levels by over 25% against a 2005/6 baseline, representing energy bill savings of approximately £290,000 a year. The current 5 year carbon management is nearing completion and the Council is on track to meet its average 5% year on year CO2 reduction target through the on-going programme to install energy (and water) efficiency measures and increase on site renewable energy generation across the Council estate. The Council is now generating over 750,000kWh per year of Solar electricity equivalent to ca5% of total annual electricity consumption.

Fuel poverty has been considered within the Council's financial inclusion strategy, setting out a broad range of actions for fuel poverty including those detailed within this Strategy.

The Housing Asset Management Strategy is the precursor document to this strategy, setting out the commitment to energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty within the context of broader housing stock information and processes for management.

Consultation

This strategy has been consulted broadly with staff and this has informed a range of underlying communication networks and training requirements. However, this Strategy will only note top line actions in order to ensure clarity.

The Oxford Standard consultation in August 2014 showed energy to be the major concern of the 500 tenants who responded to the consultation. Building on this, a small 'understanding energy through our tenants' eyes' session was run with Council housing tenants. This acts as an initial guide to the 'supporting tenants' element of this work. It raised key issues such as the pros and cons of prepaid electricity meters, the importance of personal contact and access to more detail on energy saving, and increased knowledge of the work that the Council was doing.

Fuel Poverty background

The previous government definition for fuel poverty was that if householders were using more than 10% of their income to heat their home to a reasonable standard then they were in fuel poverty. Recently this changed to a different fuel poverty definition, known as the 'Low Income, High Cost' definition, broadly summarised in Figure 1 below. 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

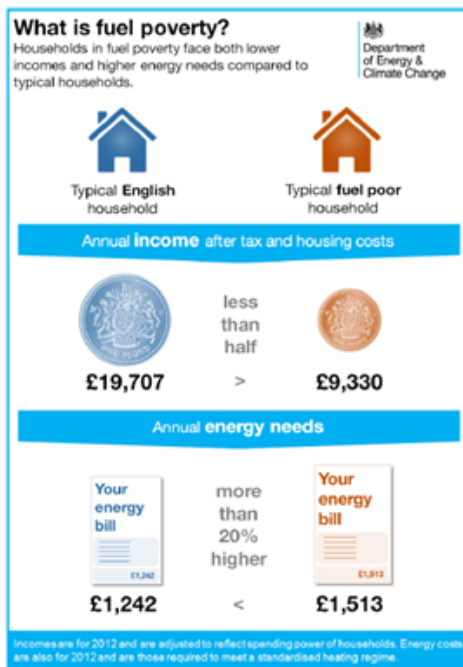


Figure 1: What is Fuel Poverty, DECC 2015

Oxford City Council's approach to fuel poverty

Whilst the Council is also committed to the carbon reduction element of energy efficiency, the primary objective of this strategy is the reduction of fuel poverty.

Whichever definition is used, there are three key components determining the prevalence of fuel poverty in domestic homes:

- the energy efficiency of homes
- household income
- cost of energy

Whilst understanding the need for support on income issues, the Council can tackle fuel poverty primarily by making their dwellings more energy efficient therefore reducing the need for energy use.

To maximise the energy efficiency and therefore minimise fuel poverty in the Council's housing stock by

- Reducing tenants' energy bills and/or reduce under heating of their homes (people often under heat when they can't afford to pay energy bills)
- Supporting those more vulnerable to impacts of fuel poverty (ie those on lower incomes and/or those who have to spend a lot of time in the home)
- Get the best value for money – maximise good quality work carried out under the given budget
- Remaining open to new technologies whilst continuously evaluating them for risks and opportunities including the financial and other impacts for tenants

Using estimated energy performance of buildings¹ matched against tenants on low incomes (housing benefit), it is estimated that 20% of Oxford City Council housing tenants are in fuel poverty at the time of writing.

The approach to energy management agreed in the Council's Asset Management Strategy focuses on the energy efficiency of existing housing stock in order to keep tenants' energy bills as low as possible and reduce fuel poverty focuses on two different areas. Where funding can be accessed for suitable measures/renewables, this will be sourced.

The overall approach requires consideration of the available improvements of the housing stock, available funding and the streamlining of retrofit work to maximize value for money. In order to achieve this, the well-established energy hierarchy will be used (see Figure 2 below)

¹ DECC's targets for fuel poverty assume that properties rated C in their EPC (SAP -69+) cannot be in fuel poverty so this figure assumes anything under this can house people in fuel poverty

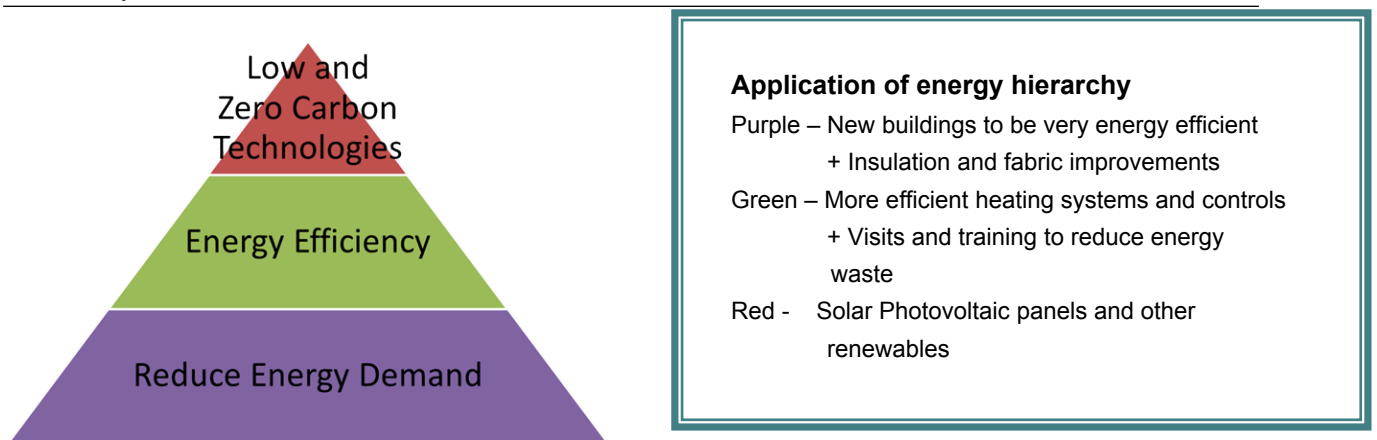


Figure 2: Energy Hierarchy and application to this strategy

Yearly updates and consideration of the financial case and benefits for pre-determined renewables and low carbon technologies can enable a reactive and financially optimal approach to investment (e.g. Feed in tariffs for solar PV and Renewable Heat Incentive for solar thermal, biomass, heat pumps etc).

Key principle: Buildings first

Work to date

Covering an 18 month period from 2014- 2016 prior to budget changes, a number of measures were carried out targeting poorer performing properties where possible. This also attracted funding as detailed below:

Measure	Number	Funding brought in
Cavity wall installs	300	£100,000
Flat block cavity wall insulation removal and refill	12 flats and 1 house	N/A
External wall insulation	80	£125,000
Solar PV installations (over 20 year period)	69	Est. £110,000 income + £62,585 savings to tenants
Moixa battery installs (with Rose Hill Solar PV)	49	£98,000 equivalent
Loft insulation upgrades to 270mm	250 (and now ongoing)	Direct Services work

Insulation

All known cavity wall properties have been insulated, with the majority of this work being free utilising ECO funding.

The majority of houses that are solid wall or traditional build have been either externally insulated or investigated. Key issues for those outstanding include being in conservation areas, other planning issues or infringement on neighbours' properties that are unresolvable. In many cases, internal wall insulation was not a realistic option as kitchens and bathrooms would need removing and reinstalling. Solid walled/ system build flats that can be targeted in the future should funding become available.

Current budget and work

Policy changes announced by Central Government in 2015 have had a significant negative impact on the funding available for investment in energy efficiency works in housing. However, funding continues to be sought to invest in energy efficiency works on council housing projects.

Budget is available for gas heating systems and loft insulation programmes, allowing the setting of a minimum standard for the Council's housing stock on these measures. The current works are detailed below:

- Sample EPC survey then prioritise all properties rated Energy Performance Certificate E, F and G for potential improvement measures
- Determine the basic measures that should be applied to all properties (e.g. loft insulation and boiler replacement for very old and inefficient models)
- Offering an upgrade of traditionally electrically heated properties to gas central heating to all tenants where this is feasible. Many tenants have refused this offer for a variety of reasons.
- Aligning smaller measures such as loft insulation with larger work programmes
- Bring in funding where possible for larger scale works, adjusting priorities as necessary
- Incorporating energy saving measures such as LED lighting, boiler upgrade and loft insulation into the voids process

However, the Council has a legal as well as an ethical responsibility to ensure any properties that are rated F or G in their Energy Performance Certificates are improved to an 'E' or above.

Data

Whilst the Council has been working on energy efficiency measures in its homes for a long time, a recent stock condition survey has enabled a data driven, targeted approach to improving energy performance. Updates of systems and data means that programmes of work can be aligned and checked against each other. Energy modelling showed the measures that should form required work in each home and that would improve the efficiency of the building the most. This is being used to pull out work programmes for large scale projects based on the poorest performing property types. The correct building data is vital for allocation of properties and securing the most external funding possible. Keeping building information up to date is vital.

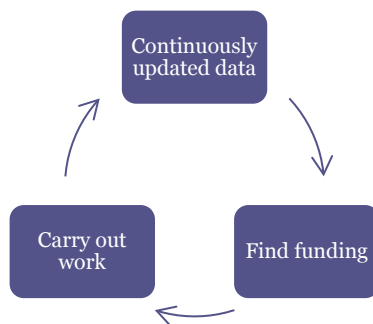


Figure 3: Data cycle

Energy Performance Certificate data is key for evaluating performance and accessing available funding so surveying will be carried out accordingly.

Non traditional system builds account for 1,166 of the existing dwellings and offer a challenge in terms of the approach to insulation and refurbishment. A number of these have been previously insulated and the remainder are being assessed in terms of the best approach.

Bigger projects: The Council's approach.

Boiler replacement and Electric heated properties

The Council will replace the least efficient boilers first with efficient gas condensing boilers. All electric properties will be offered gas where feasible, with an aim of minimising electric heating in Council housing (although many refusals have been received).

Cavity Wall insulation

The Council has insulated all known cavity walled homes by the end of the first year of this strategy. Where unfilled cavity walls are found, funding will be sought to insulate them.

Loft insulation

The Council will roll out loft insulation of 270mm to all properties, initially aligning with boiler replacement programmes (and others in the future) throughout the life of this Strategy.

Tower blocks project

- Building thermal envelope improvements will be 10% improvement above the building regulations.
- Energy efficiency improvements have a target of SAP improvements of 15 point improvement in ground floor, 20 point improvement in mid floor and 30 points in top floor dwellings
- Contractor and energy advice visits offered to all tenants to ensure appropriate electricity tariff changes, and appropriate use of heating and hot water systems.

Solar PV and other renewables

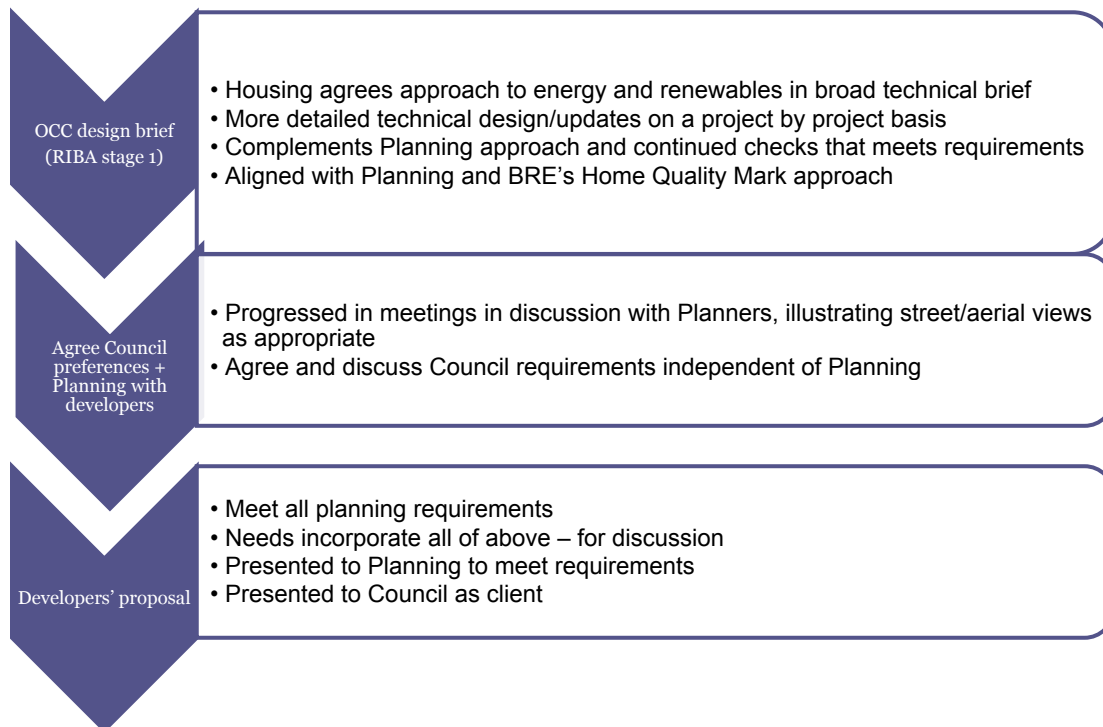
These continue to be explored where external funding makes them financially feasible

Agreed approach and standards in development brief for new Council housing, complementing Planning requirements.

Current Planning policy requires 20% of all regulated and unregulated energy use to come from renewable or low carbon sources.

The Council is currently updating Design Guide and including a sustainability brief for future domestic housing. This includes levels of low carbon/renewable technologies and minimum standards for the insulation of homes, amongst other areas.

The approach in this Design Guide will be incorporated into all initial discussions and tenders on new council housing development, and co-exist with planning requirements. The purpose is to continue an appropriate consideration of sustainability. The process is detailed in the action plan and summarised in Figure 3 below:



Supporting tenants

1. Understanding tenants' needs and providing support and advice on energy saving behaviour, use of heating systems and energy bills/tariffs.

Resident involvement and support is vital and can be used to maximise efficiency of systems. This includes controls evaluation, understanding boilers, and maintenance. Key areas of affordable warmth/energy efficiency support for officers to provide include

- Evaluating and improving building performance
- Energy behaviour and using energy using systems
- supporting those most vulnerable to the impacts of cold homes
- Dealing with financial issues (energy bills and beyond)

Building on this, a small 'understanding energy through our tenants' eyes' session was run with Council housing tenants as an initial guide to the 'supporting tenants' element of this work highlighting three points below:

- **Monitoring & controlling energy use.** Some of the tenants prefer to use prepaid electricity meters, so that they can more easily control their energy use. But these can make electricity more pricey on a unit by unit basis.
- **Making personal contact.** People all have different personal circumstances, and someone with a family may have very different concerns about conserving energy than someone living by themselves and struggling with bills.
- **Spelling it out.** The tenants we spoke to told us that they don't just want information on how to save energy in the home - but more detail and, where possible, financial support.

In employing two Energy Advice Officers to visit the homes of tenants to advise on energy efficiency, heating system and basic energy tariff issues, the Council has responded to these points. This work is carried out in conjunction with a part time Citizens' Advice Office worker who offers detailed support and guidance on debt issues and financial planning.

After 9 months, 752 properties had been visited by energy advice officers with 1179+ unsuccessful access attempts (this is with 3 months at 1 officer only). The impact they have had includes:

- 40 inefficient boiler or heating related referrals with 11 replacements

- 125 loft insulation installations were carried out as a result of referrals to Direct Services
- Total recordable cost benefit to tenants so far is £49,890 and potential savings we are able to estimate are £4,212. We know this is underestimated as it doesn't include what tenants have changed or where they have switched supplier.
- Referrals to the CAB have resulted in 39 clients receiving financial and debt support with a further 5 awaiting contact or booked in.
- 20 Energy related issues have been advised on (inc priority services register, switching, financial help), 101 Debt related (stopping creditor action, repayment negotiation, stop bailiffs action, financial planning) and 4 Benefits related issues.

2. Improving communications on energy and setting programmes of training and knowledge to increase the understanding and capacity of Council staff and partners

As concerns about energy bills increase in tenants, front facing staff's and Councillors' need of support and advice on issues related to energy efficiency also increases. As part of the consultation process, staff were given information then asked for areas that they needed support with and issues that they needed to be dealt with within the strategy.

This has been incorporated into a broader training programme for all front facing staff in housing but also those in the private rented and home owner sectors across the Council. Key areas of training include:

- Fuel poverty and basic energy efficiency
- Gas and electric heating systems – understanding and advising
- Energy bills, meter readings and other energy finance issues such as pre payment meters and switching supplier

Key to this work is the early work of setting up of a communications and referral map and system aligned with the new Energy Advice Officer roles. All front facing officers including Direct Services have been given training on energy advice and the process to be aligned with existing roles. Energy efficiency training to frontline staff is now in the corporate training programme and available to all staff.

Delivering the Strategy

The Action Plan (including completed actions) Aligning small scale measures with existing programmes of work to maximise efficiency

Action	Date	Owner
Include the installation of loft insulation with the boiler replacement programme	Complete/ Ongoing	Gary Bateman
Identify other minor measures to be aligned in planned works programmes	31 March 2016	Jon Gould

Roll out of larger scale projects to improve energy efficiency and energy generation

Action	Date	Owner
Complete the first year's insulation programme for simple cavity and solid walls	Complete	Jon Gould
Identify hard to treat properties (including system builds) and insulate	31 March 2015	Debbie Haynes/ Nigel Archer
Complete the first year's programme for solar PV installation	Complete	Jon Gould
Investigate alternative models of funding for council properties for solar PV	Ongoing	Debbie Haynes
Upgrade electrically heated properties to gas.	31 March 2018 Work in progress	Debbie Haynes/ Barry Smith

Agreed approach and standards in development brief for new Council housing, complementing Planning requirements.

Action	Date	Owner
The Council to ensure the design brief includes a section on renewable energy and insulation levels, setting the standard for this and other areas of sustainability.	December 2016	Alan Wylde
Consolidate the Council's Housing team's approach with that of the Planning team to ensure future housing schemes can meet the planning requirements with sustainable solutions	31 December 2016	Debbie Haynes

Understanding tenants needs and providing support and advice on energy saving behaviour, use of heating systems and energy bills/tariffs/ Improving communications on energy and setting programmes of training and knowledge to increase the understanding and capacity of Council staff and partners

Action	Date	Owner
Appoint Energy Advice officers to provide home energy audits and referral networks to key internal and external officers – two year contracts	Complete	Martin Shaw/ Debbie Haynes
Commission and link in energy bills/debt advice service for referrals to complement existing – two year	Complete	Debbie Haynes

contract		
Set up a training plan for officers to ensure joined up approach to energy issues and appropriate referrals	Complete	Debbie Haynes
Investigate roll out of smart meters/ reduction of pre-payment meters	31 December 2016	Debbie Haynes

SCRUTINY WORK PLAN

October 2016 – May 2017

Published on: 27/09/16

The Scrutiny Committee agrees a work plan every year detailing selected issues that affect Oxford or its inhabitants. Time is allowed within this plan to consider topical issues as they arise throughout the year as well as decisions to be taken by the City Executive Board. This document represents the work of scrutiny for the remainder of the 2016-17 council year and will be reviewed monthly by the Scrutiny Committee.

The work plan is based on suggestions received from all elected members and senior council officers. Members of the public can also contribute topics for inclusion in the scrutiny work plan by completing and submitting our [suggestion form](#). See our [get involved webpage](#) for further details of how you can participate in the work of scrutiny.

The following criteria will be used by the Scrutiny Committee to evaluate and prioritise suggested topics:

- *Is the issue controversial / of significant public interest?*
- *Is it an area of high expenditure?*
- *Is it an essential service / corporate priority?*
- *Can Scrutiny influence and add value?*

Some topics will be considered at Scrutiny Committee meetings and others will be delegated to two standing panels. Items for more detailed review will be considered by time-limited review groups.

The Committee will review the Council's [Forward Plan](#) at each meeting and decide which executive decisions it wishes to comment on before the decision is made. The Council also has a "call in" process which allows decisions made by the City Executive Board to be reviewed by the Scrutiny Committee before they are implemented.

Scrutiny Committee and Standing Panel responsibility and membership




Committee / Panel	Remit	Nominated councillors
Scrutiny Committee	Overall management of the Council's scrutiny function.	Cllrs Azad, Chapman, Coulter, Fry, Gant (Chair), Hayes, Henwood, Pegg, Simmons, Taylor, Tidball & Wilkinson
Finance Panel	Finance and budgetary issues and decisions	Cllrs Fooks, Fry, Simmons (Chair) & Taylor
Housing Panel	Strategic housing and landlord issues and decisions	Cllrs Goff, Henwood (Chair), Pegg, Sanders, Thomas & Wade, Geno Humphrey (tenant co-optee)

Current and planned review groups

Topic	Scope	Nominated councillors
Budget review 2017/18	To review the Council's 2017/18 draft budget and medium term financial strategy	Cllrs Fooks, Fry, Simmons & Taylor
Devolution plans for Oxfordshire	To scrutinise devolution proposals for Oxfordshire	Cllrs Coulter, Gant, Hayes, Simmons & Tidball (Chair)
Language schools	TBC	TBC

Indicative timings of 2016/17 review panels

Scrutiny Review	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May
Devolution plans for Oxfordshire	Scoping		Evidence gathering		Reporting					
Budget review 2017/18	Scoping		Evidence gathering		Reporting					
Language schools	Scoping		Evidence gathering		Reporting					

	Scoping
	Evidence gathering
	Reporting

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 OCTOBER 2016 - PROVISIONAL REPORTS

Agenda item	Decision	Description	CEB Portfolio	Report Contact
Recommendation monitoring - Inequality Panel	No	To monitor progress and implementation following the recommendations of the Inequality Panel, which reported to the City Executive Board in July 2015.	Corporate Strategy and Economic Development	Val Johnson, Policy Team Leader
Educational attainment	No	To consider an independent report on the Council's educational attainment investments produced by Oxford Brookes University.	Young People, Schools and Skills	Tim Sadler, Executive Director Community Services
Review of Tree Management Policy	Yes	The Tree Management Policy was adopted in 2008 and last reviewed in 2011. If the Tree Management Policy needs to be revised then a report will be submitted to the CEB	Leisure, Parks and Sport	Stuart Fitzsimmons, Parks and Open Spaces Manager

51

7 NOVEMBER 2016 - PROVISIONAL REPORTS

Agenda item	Decision	Description	CEB Portfolio	Report Contact
Air Quality	No	To consider data on air quality in the City and ways of improving air quality in the worst areas (e.g. the city centre).	Climate Change and Cleaner Greener Oxford	Mai Jarvis, Environmental Quality Team Manager
Discretionary Housing Payments spend	No	To monitor Discretionary Housing Payments spend mid-way through the year.	Customer and Corporate Services	Paul Wilding, Programme Manager Revenue & Benefits
Safeguarding Language School Students	Yes	Update on safeguarding arrangements for foreign language students studying in Oxford.	Community Safety	Richard Adams, Community Safety & Resilience Manager
Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) 2015/16	Yes	This is the City Council's 12th AMR to assess the effectiveness of planning policies contained within Oxford's Local Development Plan.	Planning and Regulatory Services	Rebekah Knight, Planner

Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP) for Oxford	Yes	This report will request approval of our aims, objectives and emission reduction target for the City and adoption of the action plan attached to the Sustainable Energy Strategy.	Climate Change and Cleaner Greener Oxford	Mairi Brookes, OxFutures Programme Manager
Digital Strategy	Yes	Sets out the City Council's vision and strategy for delivering a world-class digital city.	Customer and Corporate Services	Neil Lawrence, Digital Development Manager

6 DECEMBER 2016 - PROVISIONAL REPORTS

Agenda item	Decision	Description	CEB Portfolio	Report Contact
Recommendation Monitoring - Cycling	No	To monitor progress and implementation following the recommendations of the Cycling Review Group, which reported to the City Executive Board in September 2015.	Climate Change and Cleaner Greener Oxford	Sophie Hearn, Contracts Manager
Workplace parking levies	No	To consider the pros and cons of the proposed introduction of workplace parking charges in Oxford.	Corporate Strategy and Economic Development	Andrew Brown, Scrutiny Officer
Corporate Plan 2017/2018	Yes	A new Corporate Plan for the period 2017/2018 · The pre-consultation draft report will be submitted to CEB in December 2016. The post-consultation draft report will be submitted to CEB in February 2017.	Corporate Strategy and Economic Development	Caroline Green, Assistant Chief Executive
Performance monitoring - quarter 2	No	Quarterly reports on Council performance against a set of corporate service measures chosen by the Committee.	Corporate Strategy and Economic Development	Andrew Brown, Scrutiny Officer

30 JANUARY 2017 - PROVISIONAL REPORTS

Agenda item	Decision	Description	CEB Portfolio	Report Contact
Leisure update	No	To receive a further update in response to the Committee's written questions to the Head of Community Services on leisure performance.	Leisure, Parks and Sport	Ian Brooke, Head of Community Services
Recommendation monitoring - Recycling rates	No	To receive an update on the monitoring of recycling rates and the impacts of the Blue Bin Recycling League following a site visit to the Waste Services Team.	A Clean and Green Oxford	Jeff Ridgley, waste Services Business Development & Fleet Manager
Grant Allocations to Community and Voluntary Organisations 2017/2018	Yes	This report is for the City Executive Board to make decisions on the allocation of grants to the community and voluntary organisations for 2017/2018.	Culture and Communities	Julia Tomkins, Grants & External Funding Officer

53

28 FEBRUARY 2017 - PROVISIONAL REPORTS

Agenda item	Decision	Description	CEB Portfolio	Report Contact
Graffiti prevention	No	To consider the appreciative inquiry and focus group around graffiti and other initiatives to solve the issues long term.	Climate Change and Cleaner Greener Oxford	Liz Jones, Interim ASBIT Team Leader
Performance Monitoring - quarter 3	No	Quarterly reports on Council performance against a set of corporate service measures chosen by the Committee.	Corporate Strategy and Economic Development	Andrew Brown, Scrutiny Officer

27 MARCH 2017 - PROVISIONAL REPORTS

Agenda item	Decision	Description	CEB Portfolio	Report Contact
Recommendation Monitoring - Guest Houses	No	To monitor progress and implementation following the recommendations of the Guest Houses Review Group, which reported to the City Executive Board in December 2015.	Corporate Strategy and Economic Development	Richard Adams, Community Safety & Resilience Manager
Waterways Public Space Protection Order	Yes	The report will contain a proposal to the CEB to introduce a Public Spaces Protection Order for certain behaviours on the waterways within Oxford City's local authority boundary.	Community Safety	Richard Adams, Community Safety & Resilience Manager
Sustainability Strategy 2017	Yes	The report will provide the revised Oxford Sustainability Strategy, which will set out the vision for Oxford's sustainable future and steps we are required to take to deliver it.	A Clean and Green Oxford	Mai Jarvis, Environmental Quality Team Manager
Safeguarding Report 2017/18	Yes	An annual report to monitor the progress made on Oxford City Council's Section 11 Self-assessment Action Plan 2016-2017 and to approve the Action Plan for 2017-2018.	Finance, Asset Management and Public Health	Val Johnson, Policy Team Leader

54

2 MAY 2017 - PROVISIONAL REPORTS

Agenda item	Decision	Description	CEB Portfolio	Report Contact
Recommendation monitoring - Local economy	No	To monitor progress following the local economy review group, which considered Council support for city centre retailers.	Corporate Strategy and Economic Development	David Edwards, Executive Director City Regeneration and Housing
Fusion Lifestyle's 2017/18 Annual Service Plan for the management of leisure facilities.	Yes	The report will recommend that the City Executive Board endorse Fusion Lifestyle's Annual Service Plan for the management of the Council's leisure facilities for 2017/18.	Leisure, Parks and Sport	Lucy Cherry, Leisure and Performance Manager

JUNE 2017

Agenda item	Decision	Description	CEB Portfolio	Report Contact
Local Plan Preferred Options	Yes	Progress of the review of the Local Plan	Planning and Regulatory Services	Sarah Harrison, Senior Planner

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - TO BE SCHEDULED

55

Agenda item	Decision	Description	CEB Portfolio	Report Contact
Public Spaces Protection Orders	No	To monitor the impacts of PSPOs the city, including the numbers and types of early interventions and enforcement actions.	Community Safety	Richard Adams, Community Safety & Resilience Manager
Assessing disabled impacts in planning	No	To consider how the Council fulfils its duty to assess the impacts on disabled people of new developments and changes of use, including for businesses and private and social sector housing.	Planning and Regulatory Services	Patsy Dell, Head of Planning & Regulatory Services
Design Review Panel	No	To consider the work and effectiveness of the Oxford Design Review Panel.	Planning and Regulatory Services	Patsy Dell, Head of Planning & Regulatory Services
Disabled Students' Allowance	No	To consider the impacts of cuts to Disabled Students' Allowance on disabled students in the City.	Corporate Strategy and Economic Development	Andrew Brown, Scrutiny Officer
Health and Wellbeing Board update	No	To receive an update on the work of Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board by the Council's representative on the Board.	Finance, Asset Management and Public Health	Val Johnson, Policy Team Leader
Police and Crime Panel update	No	To receive an update on police and crime scrutiny activities by the Council's representative on Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel (PCP).	Community Safety	Andrew Brown, Scrutiny Officer

FINANCE PANEL

8 DECEMBER 2016 - PROVISIONAL REPORTS

Agenda item	Decision	Description	CEB Portfolio	Report Contact
Gross budgeting	No	To receive a briefing on gross council income and expenditure.	Finance, Corporate Asset Management and Public Health	Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services
Budget monitoring - quarter 2	No	To monitor the Council's finances at the end of quarter 2 2016-17 (September).	Finance, Corporate Asset Management and Public Health	Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services
Treasury Management Performance: Annual Report and Performance 2016/17	Yes	This performance monitoring report on the Treasury Management Strategy: Annual Report and Performance 2016/17 is submitted twice a year: Dec 2016– the position at the 30 September 2016 (Half Year).	Finance, Asset Management and Public Health	Bill Lewis, Financial Accounting Manager
Feasibility study for the development of a site for a Transfer Station for Recycled Material	Yes	To present a feasibility study for the development of a site to operate a Council managed transfer station for City collected co-mingled recyclables, green waste, street arisings and engineering works spoil.	A Clean and Green Oxford	Geoff Corps, Cleaner Greener Services Manager, Fiona Piercy, Partnership & Regeneration Manager

56

16 JANUARY 2017 - PROVISIONAL REPORTS

Agenda item	Decision	Description	CEB Portfolio	Report Contact
Service reviews	No	To consider the outcomes of comprehensive reviews of a number of service area budgets undertaken as part of this year's budget setting process.	Finance, Asset Management and Public Health	Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services

Funding mechanisms for affordable housing	No	To consider alternative and innovative models for financing new affordable housing.	Finance, Asset Management and Public Health	Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services
Scrutiny Budget Review 2017/18 - recommendations	No	To agree recommendations following the annual scrutiny budget review.	Finance, Asset Management and Public Health	Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services

1 FEBRUARY 2017 - PROVISIONAL REPORTS

Agenda item	Decision	Description	CEB Portfolio	Report Contact
Scrutiny Budget Review 2017/18	No	Review of the Councils draft budget for 2017/18 and medium term financial strategy.	Finance, Asset Management and Public Health	Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services
Capital Strategy 2017/18	Yes	To consider the Council's Capital Strategy for 2017/18.	Finance, Asset Management and Public Health	Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services
Treasury Management Strategy 2017/18	Yes	Treasury Management Strategy for 2017/2018, including prudential indicators. The post-consultation draft report will be submitted to CEB in February 2017	Finance, Asset Management and Public Health	Bill Lewis, Financial Accounting Manager
Divestment	No	To consider an ethical policy on divestment.	Finance, Asset Management and Public Health	Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services

57

29 MARCH 2017 - NO REPORTS CURRENTLY SCHEDULED

HOUSING PANEL

5 OCTOBER 2016 - PROVISIONAL REPORTS

Agenda item	Decision	Description	CEB Portfolio	Report Contact
Housing performance - quarter 1	No	To consider Council performance against a set of housing service measures chosen by the Panel.	Housing	Stephen Clarke, Head of Housing and Property
Choice Based Lettings refusal reasons	No	To receive a briefing on reasons given by Choice Based Lettings applicants for refusing Council properties, including requests for minor adaptations.	Housing	Tom Porter, Allocations Manager
Under-occupation in the Council's housing stock	No	To receive an update on the levels of under-occupation in the Council's housing stock and efforts to reduce under-occupation, including support and incentives for downsizing.	Housing	Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager
Energy Strategy - Housing & Property	No	To consider past, current and future work around energy in Housing, and Housing & Property's approach to Energy and fuel poverty in its own domestic housing stock.	Housing	Deborah Haynes, Energy Efficiency Projects Officer

58

9 NOVEMBER 2016 - PROVISIONAL REPORTS

Agenda item	Decision	Description	CEB Portfolio	Report Contact
Housing performance - quarter 2	No	To consider mid-year Council performance against a set of housing service measures chosen by the Panel.	Housing	Stephen Clarke, Head of Housing and Property
Universities land management	No	To invite representatives of universities to discuss their approach to land management in the City.	Corporate Strategy and Economic Development	Andrew Brown, Scrutiny Officer

Rent performance	No	To monitor the Council's rents performance including current and former tenant arrears.	Housing	Tanya Bandekar, Service Manager Revenue & Benefits
Tower block refurbishment	No	To receive a progress update on the Tenant Scrutiny Panel's review of the tower block refurbishment project.	Housing	Stephen Clarke, Head of Housing and Property
Houses in multiple occupations (HMOs)	No	To consider the licensing of HMOs in the City including member oversight of HMO planning decisions (currently delegated) and rules around the numbers of rooms and the number of HMOs in the street etc.	Corporate Strategy and Economic Development	Ian Wright, Service Manager Environmental Health
Right to Buy Retention Funding	Yes	Seeks approval for alternative mechanisms to use Right to Buy Retention Funding to avoid having to return any such funding to Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).	Finance, Asset Management and Public Health, Housing	Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services

1 MARCH 2017 - PROVISIONAL REPORTS

Agenda item	Decision	Description	CEB Portfolio	Report Contact
Housing performance - quarter 3	No	To consider a report on Council performance against a set of housing service measures chosen by the Panel.	Housing	Stephen Clarke, Head of Housing and Property
Access to the private rented sector	No	To receive a briefing on Council support to people in receipt of Housing Benefit in accessing the private rented sector, including the rent guarantee scheme, Home Choice pilot and 'real lettings' property investments.	Housing	Dave Scholes, Housing Strategy & Needs Manager
Rough sleeping	No	To consider how the Council deals with people sleeping rough including those with no recourse to public funds.	Community Safety, Housing	Ossi Mosley, Rough Sleeping & Single Homelessness Officer
Allocation of Homelessness Prevention Funds	Yes	To agree the allocation of the homelessness prevention funds with the purpose of meeting the objectives of the homelessness strategy	Housing	Ossi Mosley, Rough Sleeping & Single Homelessness Officer

3 MAY 2017 - PROVISIONAL REPORTS

Agenda item	Decision	Description	CEB Portfolio	Report Contact
Great Estates update	No	To receive an update on progress made in developing masterplans for estates and working up and delivering a rolling programme of priority improvement schemes.	Housing	Stephen Clarke, Head of Housing and Property
Empty garages and former garage sites	No	To receive an update on how the Council is dealing with empty garages and former garage sites.	Housing	Martin Shaw, Property Services Manager
Empty Property Strategy	No	To receive a briefing on the Council's approaches to dealing with empty properties in the City ahead of a refresh of the Council's Empty Property Strategy 2013-18.	Housing	Melanie Mutch, Empty Property Officer (Private Sector)

HOUSING PANEL - TO BE SCHEDULED

60

Agenda item	Decision	Description	CEB Portfolio	Report Contact
Housing Revenue Account Business Plan	Yes	To pre-scrutinise a decision on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) business plan, which sets out projected income (from rents, service charges etc.) and expenditure on the Council's housing stock.	Finance, Asset Management and Public Health	Stephen Clarke, Head of Housing and Property
Housing Company for Oxford	Yes	To pre-scrutinise any decisions on funding the Housing Company for Oxford and monitor progress in the Company's first year of operation.	Housing	David Edwards, Executive Director City Regeneration and Housing
Private sector licensing	Yes	To pre-scrutinise any decisions on extending private sector licensing to non-HMO properties.	Planning and Regulatory Services	Ian Wright, Environmental Health Service Manager

Pay to stay	Yes	To pre-scrutinise any decisions on the local implementation of government plans to increase rents for council and housing association tenants with incomes over £30,000 a year. This is known as “Pay to Stay”, and it is expected to start in April 2017 for council tenants.	Housing	Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager
Flexible tenancies	Yes	To pre-scrutinise any decisions on the local implementation of government plans to prevent local authorities in England from offering secure tenancies for life to new council tenants in most circumstances.	Housing	Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager
Leaseholder relationships	No	To consider Council relationships with leaseholders including the views of individual leaseholders.	Housing	Stephen Clarke, Head of Housing and Property

This page is intentionally left blank

HOUSING PANEL (PANEL OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE)

Thursday 7 July 2016

PANEL MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors Goff, Henwood (Chair), Pegg, Sanders, Thomas, Wade and Humphrey.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Andrew Brown (Scrutiny Officer), Stephen Clarke (Head of Housing and Property), Michael Browning (Private Sector Safety Team Leader), Bill Graves (Landlord Services Manager), David Rundle and Ian Wright (Service Manager Environmental Health)

BOARD MEMBER PRESENT: Councillor Price (Corporate Strategy and Economic Development)

52. APOLOGIES

The Scrutiny Officer opened the meeting and said that there were no apologies.

53. ELECTION OF HOUSING PANEL CHAIR

Councillor David Henwood was elected Chair for the year.

54. APPOINTMENT OF A TENANT AS A CO-OPTED MEMBER OF THE HOUSING PANEL

The Panel agreed to re-appoint Geno Humphrey as a co-opted member of the Panel for the year.

The Panel questioned the background and process for appointing a co-optee and considered a proposal that there should be two tenants on the Panel, with one appointed each year for a period of two years, or at least an overlap in their terms while the newer co-optee got up to speed. The Panel agreed to seek the views of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that the Panel already had 7 members in total and cautioned against increasing the membership.

55. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

56. HOUSING PERFORMANCE - 2015/16 QUARTER 4

The Head of Housing and Property introduced the quarterly performance report, which set out Council performance against higher level indicators at the end of March 2016. He said that the Council had achieved strong results in challenging

circumstances. The key pressure was on homelessness, rough sleeping and the use of temporary accommodation.

In response to a question about the numbers of children in temporary accommodation, the Panel heard that the majority of households in temporary accommodation were families with children. Most of the 120 households in temporary accommodation were housed in general needs stock which was suitable and secure. These households did not have to regularly move to new accommodation and change schools. The use of private rented stock had been falling over a number of years but the Council had for the first time last year breached the 6 week time limit on housing a family in bed and breakfast accommodation. The Council was buying additional stock to be used as temporary accommodation through a real lettings investment which was managed by St. Mungo's Broadway.

The Panel requested to monitor the following information over time:

- The total number of children in temporary accommodation;
- Numbers of families and single person households in temporary accommodation;
- The average length of time spent in temporary accommodation.

57. TENANT SATISFACTION

The Landlord Services Manager introduced the report and said that the Council was working more closely with tenants than ever before. He said that the response rate was very low and both overall satisfaction and overall dissatisfaction were down slightly but within the confidence interval. The STAR survey conformed to a standardised methodology that was used across the sector and enabled comparison. The Council was also looking to hold appreciative inquiries involving recent users and complainants, as these had been used to improve processes in other services. The Panel also heard that there had been a spike in demand for fencing repairs following bad weather which caused a national shortage of timber but there was no longer a backlog.

The Head of Housing and Property added that the results about listening and acting upon feedback were disappointing because the Council did do lots of in depth tenant involvement, drilled down into the drivers of satisfaction and acted on the feedback tenants provided.

In response to a question about whether tenants were offered feedback forms following repairs, the Panel heard that satisfaction from feedback forms was 95%. The Panel commented that tenants they came across were generally happy and that within the data there were lots of positives. The Panel suggested that the Council should release results data to local newsletters and through the Tenants in Touch magazine.

The Panel asked about the shifting of tenant services online and heard that the Tenant Portal had been launched last year but that channel shift would be a slow process given that half of tenant households included at least one person over the age of 65.

58. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING POLICY

The Board Member for Corporate Strategy & Economic Development introduced the report. He said that the consultation feedback had generally been positive but only 17% percent of respondents had been landlords, so there was a need to proceed with care. Respondents had generally supported the Councils aims which included focusing on energy efficiency, reducing carbon emissions, food poverty and beds in sheds. This report would set the strategic framework for future interventions in the private rented sector. Legal advice would be sought prior to the development of a selective licensing scheme, which would be subject to a public consultation and at least two further reports to the City Executive Board. The intention was that the scheme would be self-funding and reflect the range of conditions in the private rented sector.

The Panel asked a number of questions including about the scale and risks around the roll-out of a selective licensing scheme, and how good landlords would be encouraged and rewarded. The Panel heard that the preference was for selective licensing to be rolled-out city-wide because all but three wards could already be considered to have a high proportion of privately rented properties. However, approval from DCLG will be required for such a scheme. There was a need to get good landlords onside from the beginning and fee structures would be set to encourage good practices, as with the licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupations (HMOs), while robust enforcement action provided a deterrent.

The Panel also asked about the illegal subdivision of HMOs and issues around Airbnb properties. The Panel heard that these were complex issues and that action had already been taken regarding a landlord who had illegally subdivided properties in an attempt to avoid HMO licensing. The Environmental Health Service Manager explained the circumstances in which these might be properties of interest to his team, for example if an Airbnb property was advertised with breakfast included.

The Panel questioned measures to improve energy ratings and the possible use of social prescribing to improve housing conditions. The Panel heard that it was now a legal requirement for landlords to provide an Energy Performance Certificate and the Council was targeting the poorest performing properties. Social prescribing had been tried in other areas and a housing and health cost calculator had been developed and is being used but there was a need to convince health partners such as the local Clinical Commissioning Group to invest in prevention. The Board Member said that closer working between health and housing formed part of the Council's devolution proposal and the new development at Barton Park had been awarded with Healthy City status.

The Panel considered the consultation methodology and questioned the locations and outcomes of road show events, the use of social media and whether feedback was provided to respondents. The Panel heard that the choice of locations was based on findings from a previous consultation. The Panel noted that future consultations on specific schemes were likely to attract a bigger response than the overarching Policy document. The Panel commented that they would like to see road show events at other locations and the use of local newsletters to advertise consultations and provide feedback to communities. The Panel suggest that future consultations exercises should be carefully designed and that members should have an opportunity to contribute suggestions.

The Panel agreed to make the following recommendation to the City Executive Board on 14 July 2016:

- That careful thought is given to future public consultations on private sector housing interventions and that members are specifically invited to comment on the range and style of any consultations.

59. REVIEW OF LORD MAYOR'S DEPOSIT GUARANTEE SCHEME

The Private Rented Sector Team Leader introduced the report. He said the scheme had been introduced 23 years ago and was last reviewed 8 years ago. The proposal was to enhance the scheme by offering an increased bond above Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates, which were significantly below market rents in the City, and also offering a loan equating to 6-8 weeks rent in advance.

The Panel strongly supported the scheme and the proposed enhanced offer and questioned why the Private Rented Sector Team had only been able to help eight households last year given that 252 assessments had been undertaken. The Panel heard that the market had shrunk in recent years and that refusals were largely due to landlords rejecting applicants. A survey last year had revealed that only 5% of landlords and agencies would accept Housing Benefit claimants, despite 70% of this group being in work. Applicants with rent arrears would also be refused unless they had a repayment plan in place. Applicants were required to find properties themselves and needed to be motivated to encourage landlords to take them on but were signposted to 'tenant ready' courses.

The Panel questioned the level of funding available for the scheme and the risk of the enhanced offer being suspended due to lack of funds. The Panel heard that the scheme was funded from a one-off £50k reserve and that expenditure would be monitored in-year. The expenditure and the number of clients assisted would be reviewed and reported annually. The Panel suggest that a report should come to the City Executive Board and Scrutiny after one year so that if necessary, any funding changes could be picked up in the following budget round.

The Panel agreed to make the following recommendation to the City Executive Board on 14 July 2016:

- That after the pilot year a review of the enhanced offer including expenditure, the number of clients assisted and refusal reasons is reported to the City Executive Board.

Councillor Sanders left the meeting during this item.

60. HOUSING PANEL WORK PLAN

The Panel agreed to add the following items to the work plan for consideration later in the year:

- Empty garages and former garage sites;
- Proposed changes to the status of people living on boats;
- Difficulties accessing the private rented sector for people in receipt of Housing Benefit;

- Land management by the universities.

The Tenant Co-optee advised the Panel that the Tenant Scrutiny Panel would be reviewing the tower block refurbishment programme and offered to report back on progress later in the year.

The Panel agreed to invite members of the Finance Panel to the meeting on 3 May 2017 for joint consideration of the progress of Oxford City Housing Ltd at the end of its first year.

61. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Noted.

62. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Panel noted the dates of future meetings and agreed to continue with a 5pm start time.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that five meetings had been set but that some flexibility could be applied during the year, for example if a major housing decision was going to be taken in a month when no Panel meeting was scheduled.

Councillor Goff apologised that she would be away for the meeting in October.

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 6.55 pm

This page is intentionally left blank