

# Agenda

## Housing and Homelessness Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

This meeting will be held on:

Date: **Tuesday 5 December 2023**

Time: **6.00 pm**

Place: **Zoom - Remote meeting**

**For further information** please contact:

Alice Courtney, Scrutiny Officer

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✉ DemocraticServices@oxford.gov.uk

**Members of the public can attend to observe this meeting and.**

- may register in advance to speak to the committee in accordance with the [committee's rules](#)
- may record all or part of the meeting in accordance with the Council's [protocol](#)

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## **Committee Membership**

Membership will be confirmed at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 04 December 2023.

Apologies received before the publication are shown under *Apologies for absence* in the agenda. Those sent after publication will be reported at the meeting.

# Agenda

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| <b>1 Apologies</b>  |              |
| <b>2 Declarations of Interest</b>   |              |
| <b>3 Chair's Announcements</b>  |              |
| <b>4 Notes of the previous meeting</b>  | 7 - 12       |
| <p>The Panel is asked to <b>agree</b> the notes of the meeting held on 05 October 2023 as a true and accurate record.</p>   |              |
| <b>5 Housing and Homelessness Panel Work Plan</b>   | 13 - 14      |
| <p>The Panel is asked to consider the Work Plan and agree any amendments.</p>   |              |
| <b>6 Housing Performance Monitoring</b>   | 15 - 18      |
| <p>The Head of Housing Services has submitted a Housing Performance report for Q2 2023/24.</p> <p>Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services and Amie Rickatson, Strategy &amp; Service Development Manager have been invited to present the report and answer questions.</p> <p>The Panel is asked to consider the report and agree any recommendations.</p>  |              |
| <b>7 Building Safety &amp; Compliance Within Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Stock</b>  | 19 - 24      |
| <p>The Head of Housing Services has submitted a report on Building Safety &amp; Compliance within Housing Revenue Account (HRA) stock.</p> <p>Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services, Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager, Malcolm Peek, Property Services Manager and Steve Stansfield, Building Compliance and Safety Manager have been invited to present the report and answer questions.</p> <p>The Panel is asked to consider the report and agree any recommendations.</p> |              |

**8 Housing Complaint Handling Performance Q1 & Q2 2023-24** 25 - 36

The Head of Housing Services has submitted a report updating the Panel on the Council's complaint handling performance in relation to the Landlord function for Q1 and Q2 2023-24.

Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services and Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager have been invited to present the report and answer questions.

The Panel is asked to consider the report and agree any recommendations.

**9 City of Sanctuary Accreditation [presentation]** 37 - 46

The Panel is asked to receive a presentation followed by an opportunity for discussion; and to agree any recommendations.

Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services, Richard Wood, Housing Strategy and Needs Manager and Stephen Cohen, Refugee & Resettlement Manager have been invited to present this item and answer questions.

**10 Dates of future meetings**

The Panel is asked to note the dates and times of future meetings of the Housing and Homelessness Panel:

- 07 March 2024, 6pm

*Meetings will take place remotely via Zoom.*

## **Information for those attending**

### **Recording and reporting on meetings held in public**

Members of public and press can record, or report in other ways, the parts of the meeting open to the public. You are not required to indicate in advance but it helps if you notify the Committee Services Officer prior to the meeting so that they can inform the Chair and direct you to the best place to record.

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- To follow the protocol which can be found on the Council's [website](#)
- Not to disturb or disrupt the meeting
- Not to edit the recording in a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings. This includes not editing an image or views expressed in a way that may ridicule or show a lack of respect towards those being recorded.
- To avoid recording members of the public present, even inadvertently, unless they are addressing the meeting.

Please be aware that you may be recorded during your speech and any follow-up. If you are attending please be aware that recording may take place and that you may be inadvertently included in these.

The Chair of the meeting has absolute discretion to suspend or terminate any activities that in his or her opinion are disruptive.

### **Councillors 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; licenses 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". 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.

#### **Members Code – Other Registrable Interests**

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to the financial interest or wellbeing\*\* of one of your Other Registrable Interests\*\*\* then you must declare an

interest. You must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and you must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

### **Members Code – Non Registrable Interests**

Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to your financial interest or wellbeing (and does not fall under disclosable pecuniary interests), or the financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate, you must declare the interest.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects your own financial interest or wellbeing, a financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate or a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under Other Registrable Interests, then you must declare the interest.

You must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room, if you answer in the affirmative to this test:

“Where a matter affects the financial interest or well-being:

- a. to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- b. a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting.”

Otherwise, you may stay in the room, take part in the discussion and vote.

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

\*\* Wellbeing can be described as a condition of contentedness, healthiness and happiness; anything that could be said to affect a person’s quality of life, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect their wellbeing.

\*\*\* Other Registrable Interests: a) any unpaid directorships b) any Body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority c) any Body (i) exercising functions of a public nature (ii) directed to charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

## **Minutes of a meeting of the Housing and Homelessness Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee) on Thursday 5 October 2023**



### **Committee members present:**

Councillor Diggins (Chair)

Councillor Rawle

Councillor Sandelson

### **Officers present for all or part of the meeting:**

Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services

Ossi Mosley, Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Manager

Brendan Lewis, Senior Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Project Officer

Helen Denyer, Service Director for West of England, Mental Health and Substance Use (St Mungo's)

Emma Sage, Housing First Coordinator (St Mungo's)

Benn Kiley, Operations Manager (A2Dominion)

Rachael Torrance, Housing First Support Officer (A2Dominion)

Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager

Alice Courtney, Scrutiny Officer

### **Apologies:**

Councillor(s) Dunne and Fouweather sent apologies.

## **19. Declarations of Interest**

None.

## **20. Chair's Announcements**

None.

## **21. Notes of the previous meeting**

The Panel agreed the notes of the meeting held on 02 August 2023 as a true and accurate record.

In relation to the actions at minute 17 from the meeting on 02 August 2023, the Chair highlighted that an All Member briefing on the Housing Revenue Budget had taken place on 26 September 2023, with the slides and recording being circulated to All Members afterwards, and the video on the same topic had been circulated to All Members in August 2023; both actions were therefore complete.

## 22. Housing and Homelessness Panel Work Plan

The Panel considered the Work Plan.

The Scrutiny Officer provided the following updates on Scrutiny-commissioned items:

- Operation of Housing Associations Within the City – a scope had been drafted in consultation with officers and the Chair, which was included in the agenda pack for the Panel’s approval; due to the resources available and in order to ensure a focused piece of work, the scope had been narrowed and it was proposed that the item title be amended to ‘Housing Associations’ Approach to Tenant Engagement’.
- Implementation of Selective Licensing – this item had been scheduled in to the Work Plan for the March 2024 meeting.
- Financial Viability training/briefing – the Scrutiny Officer had been exploring the possibility of an All Member briefing, however there were potential budget implications for the delivery of a session and there was a need to gain a more detailed understanding of what Panel Members envisaged the scope of a session would include so that the availability of any budget and wider Member demand for a session could be explored to gauge the feasibility of running one. The Panel agreed to feed back to the Scrutiny Officer.

During discussion, it was queried whether the rough sleeper count formed the basis of a report to the Panel each year and if not, whether it could be included within the Work Plan. Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services confirmed that there was an annual rough sleeper count which took place in winter; the result was embargoed by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) until later in the municipal year so the Council was unable to release the number until the embargo was lifted. It was explained that officers carried out intelligence-based data gathering throughout the year, which probably provided a more accurate figure overall in terms of who was actually sleeping rough locally, whereas the rough sleeper count was more of a national trend tracker. The intelligence-based data gathered was reported to the Panel as part of the biannual Housing Performance Monitoring item, therefore already formed part of the Work Plan.

The Panel noted the update from the Scrutiny Officer and:

- **Agreed** the Work Plan as set out in the agenda pack.
- **Approved** the scope for the Scrutiny-commissioned item on Housing Associations’ Approach to Tenant Engagement and delegated authority to the Scrutiny Officer to schedule the item into the Work Plan in discussion with relevant officers.

## 23. Report back on recommendations

The Panel noted the following Cabinet responses to its recommendations:

- Expansion of the Housing First Programme
- Update on Customer Complaints and Feedback

## 24. Update on the Housing First Programme in Oxford

Brendan Lewis, Senior Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Project Officer introduced the report, which had been commissioned by the Panel to set out progress



and outcomes of the Housing First programme in Oxford. He highlighted that the programme utilised funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and had been operational in Oxford since late 2021. In Oxford, 24 individuals were currently accommodated within the Housing First provision, which would rise to 26 individuals in the next week and an estimated 35 individuals by the end of March 2024. The Panel was informed that the ultimate goal of Housing First was tenancy sustainment and preventing rough sleeping, which was largely being achieved through excellent multi-agency working.

In response to questions, the Panel was advised that:

- Fortnightly meetings took place with the Council's Allocations Team to discuss one-bedroom void properties which may be suitable for Housing First stock.
- Officers were fairly confident that the Council would acquire the required number of Housing First properties in order to meet its targets.
- Housing First was a very limited resource within a large system; it operated on a Panel basis where referrals were taken which set out how individuals met the criteria for Housing First. The Council had rejected some referrals to Housing First where those individuals would be better supported by other services (e.g. if individuals did not need the intensive support element that Housing First provided; or if individuals' support needs meant they were not best supported by a standalone tenancy via Housing First).
- The only pre-requisites for Housing First were that individuals wanted to be accommodated in the provision and were aware of the Housing First principles and their obligations as a tenant.
- Housing First demonstrated a real person-centred approach, where the individual and their needs were at the centre of everything. The introduction of numerous key performance indicators (KPIs) could lead to additional conditionality being placed on the service and service-users which would likely detract from the person-centred nature of the provision. Officers believed that Housing First was more effective by virtue of not leading with KPIs.
- The key measure of Housing First's success was tenancy sustainment, as this indicated whether the service was delivering the right support. Measures such as known hospital and/or A&E presentations, remand in custody, offence charges and incidences of rough sleeping were also monitored to understand the wider societal benefit of Housing First.
- Evictions only occurred in very limited situations, such as if an individual was remanded in custody and expected to remain so for a prolonged period of time.
- Individuals were supported in relation to issues around rent arrears if they arose.
- St Mungo's and A2Dominion had regular meetings together each week with the Council, but also separate from the Council; support workers from the two organisations worked very closely together, including problem-solving meetings, joint welfare meetings and sharing information and contacts. The two providers operated as one big team working closely together to support clients and achieve the best outcomes.
- St Mungo's and A2Dominion also worked closely with other organisations such as Turning Point (drug and alcohol treatment service).

During discussion, that Panel requested that:

- Housing Services officers explore how the additional 'societal benefit' measures which were monitored as part of Housing First (e.g. hospital and/or A&E

presentations, remand in custody etc.) could be anonymised and reported to the Panel alongside the biannual Housing Performance Monitoring.

- A KPI relating to the demand and waiting time for Housing First be included in future Housing Performance Monitoring, including an indicator which set out the timeliness of move-in dates compared to the initial move-in date stated.

The Panel noted the contents of the report; no recommendations were agreed.

*Ossi Mosley, Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Manager, Brendan Lewis, Senior Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Project Officer, Helen Denyer, Service Director for West of England, Mental Health and Substance Use (St Mungo's), Emma Sage, Housing First Coordinator (St Mungo's), Benn Kiley, Operations Manager (A2Dominion) and Rachael Torrance, Housing First Support Officer (A2Dominion) left the meeting and did not return.*

## **25. Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment**

Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager introduced the report, which set out a brief history in relation to the Housing Ombudsman and the Complaint Handling Code, which was strengthened in April 2022. As part of the strengthened Complaint Handling Code, the Council was required to undertake a Self-Assessment. Following the Panel discussion, the Council would be compliant with all mandatory elements of the Code.

In response to questions, the Panel was advised that:

- The Customer Care and Complaints Manager post had not yet been recruited to; the job advert was expected to be published within the next month. The intention was that this post would assist with identifying emergent themes and learning points from complaints.
- In relation to the two mandatory elements which were not yet complied with as per the report, the Housing Annual Report 2022/23 had been published earlier in the week and as such that criteria had now been complied with; the remaining criteria would be complied with as a result of the Panel considering the report and would be updated to reflect that after the meeting.
- A number of the criteria did not apply to the Council, as it did not have a three stage complaints process.

The Panel requested that the Scrutiny Officer forward the list of minor typos or inconsistencies which had been identified in the Self-Assessment to the Landlord Services Manager for implementation into the final document; this included a response being added for criteria 4.16, where the response appeared to be missing.

The Panel noted the contents of the report; no recommendations were agreed.

## **26. Dates of future meetings**

The Panel noted the dates and times of future meetings.

**The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.01 pm**

Chair .....

**Date: Tuesday 5 December 2023**

*When decisions take effect:*

*Cabinet: after the call-in and review period has expired*

*Planning Committees: after the call-in and review period has expired and the formal  
decision notice is issued*

*All other committees: immediately.*

*Details are in the Council's Constitution.*

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## Housing and Homelessness Panel Work Plan

NB This work plan is provisional and is subject to change. Changes made outside meetings are agreed between the Scrutiny Officer and the Chair.

Cabinet items beyond two months in advance are not included on the work plan owing to the greater potential they will move or alternative items of higher priority arise in the meantime.

### 05 December 2023 – confirmed reports

| Agenda item   | Cabinet item | Description  | Cabinet portfolio          | Lead officer                          |
|---|--------------|--|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Housing Performance Monitoring 2023/24 (mid-year)                       | No           | To consider the 2023/24 mid-year Housing Performance Report and agree any recommendations. | Cabinet Member for Housing | Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services |
| Building Safety & Compliance Within Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Stock | No           | To consider the report and agree any recommendations.                                      | Cabinet Member for Housing | Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services |
| City of Sanctuary Accreditation   | No           | To consider the presentation and agree any recommendations.                                | Cabinet Member for Housing | Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services |
| Housing Complaint Handling Performance Q1 & Q2 2023-24                  | No           | To consider the report and agree any recommendations.                                      | Cabinet Member for Housing | Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services |

## 07 March 2024 – provisional reports

| Agenda item  | Cabinet item | Description   | Cabinet portfolio          | Lead officer   |
|--|--------------|---|----------------------------|--|
| Landlord Services Transformation (Social Housing (Regulation) Act Compliance) [presentation] | No           | To receive a presentation followed by opportunity for discussion; and to agree any recommendations. | Cabinet Member for Housing | Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services                        |
| Implementation of Selective Licensing  | No           | To consider the report and agree any recommendations.   | Cabinet Member for Housing | Ian Wright, Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety |

| Measure                  | Measure   |                               | 2022/23    | 2023/24                        |                      | Comments  | RAG rating |
|--------------------------|---|-------------------------------|------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|---|------------|
| Corporate or Service KPI | Description   | Reporting Frequency           | EOY result | Target EOY                     | Results at end of Q2 |   |            |
| Corporate                | Total number of affordable homes in Oxford completed in year  | Annually (comments quarterly) | 397        | None - set for end of March 26 | NA                   | 62 affordable homes have been delivered in the first half of this year with an additional 92 homes forthcoming in 2023/24. The Council has a corporate target of completing 1,600 affordable homes, across all tenures, for the next four financial years (23/24 - 26/27). At the end of Q2 there had been a slight slippage in the forecasted delivery of this four-year target to 1,591. Recent changes that have reduced the overall forecast include developers dropping a 22-unit scheme, this scheme remains under review and may be brought back in the future. Earlier in the year there was also a reduction in the number of units for a scheme where securing planning permission on different phases means these units will be brought in at a date beyond the 4-year target. Work is ongoing to secure further opportunities and acquisitions to bring the programme back in line with the target.<br><br>Units delivered are high quality, meet and, where possible, exceed energy efficiency policy. New schemes are under consideration to realign the programme with the Council target. | Amber      |
| Service                  | Total number of homes at social rent completed (of total affordable homes completed)  | Annually (comments quarterly) | 218        | None - set for end of March 26 | 44                   | There is a service level target of 850 for the number of Social Rent homes completed of the 1,600 affordable homes over the next four financial years (23/24 - 26/27). The programme is currently forecast to achieve the four-year target for social rent homes. 44 social rent homes have been completed in Oxford with a further 73 forthcoming in 2023/24.  | Green      |
| Corporate                | % of Council owned housing stock that has an EPC rating below C (average of 95% of council homes have EPC rating of C or above by 2030) | Annually (comments quarterly) | 23.60%     | 30%                            | NA                   | The Council has successfully secured Social Housing Decarbonisation Funding which will target 316 below EPC C properties with Energy Efficiency improvements over the next 2 years improving them to an EPC C. In Q2 the Social Housing Decarbonisation Project was launched with contractors appointed and surveys starting. Works due to start November 2023.   | Green      |
| Service                  | Total standard re-let time (House Mark definition)  | Quarterly                     | 89.61      | 25                             | 70.43                | Performance remains below target for Q2, though shows improvement over the last 6 months. A new key handling procedure has just gone live which will reduce time taken to get keys to ODS Voids team. There are some delays with Allocating properties as the team are responding to high demand in temporary accommodation placements, the team are looking to recruit additional staff to help manage this increased workload. An end-to-end process review is to be carried out covering all the service areas involved (Tenancy Management, ODS, Property Services, Allocations)  | Red        |
| Service                  | Porportion of homes for which all required gas safety checks have been carried out.   | Annually (comments quarterly) | 100%       | 100%                           | 100%                 | We are currently 100% compliant with all gas safety checks.   | Green      |
| ODS                      | Percentage of Emergency Repairs completed on time   | Monthly                       | 99.6%      |                                | 99.7%                | Over Q1 & Q2 a total of 3,890 emergency jobs were completed, 99.7% of these were completed on time. In the first 6 months of this year, a total of 13,161 repair jobs were completed, overall 96.4% of these were completed on time.  | Green      |

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|                    |  |           |       |       |       |  |       |
|--------------------|--|-----------|-------|-------|-------|--|-------|
| Financial Services | Rent Collected   | Monthly   | 99.5% | 92.5% | 95.4% | <p>At the end of September 2023, the Council were above target for the rent collected as a percentage of rent collectable. 95.39% of rent had been collected against the target of 92.50 %. Rent arrears stood at £1,319,493.44 compared to £1,482,544.96 at the same time last year. The arrears figure does not take into account any Direct Debit payments, Direct payments or any calculated regular payments to be made by tenants.</p> <p>We are currently running at an 11% decrease from the same time last year, this is due to the team's consistent approach to monitoring the arrears, staffing levels have been at full capacity for a relatively long period of time and we have also amended the set up within the team resulting in cases that are in arrears having consistent monitoring and communication from their dedicated Income Officer.</p>  | Green |
| Corporate          | Number of rough sleepers without an offer of accommodation | Quarterly | 34    | 30    | 24    | <p>At the end of September, 29 individuals were estimated to be sleeping rough in Oxford. 24 of these individuals did not have an immediate offer of accommodation. 5 of the 29 had accommodation available to them on the night. Of the 29 individuals, 7 have refused offers of accommodation, and a further 6 currently have very limited options due to their suspected immigration status. At the end of Q2, 18 people were accommodated in 'off the street' accommodation (SSTS, TA and B&amp;Bs), all of whom were being supported to find appropriate move-on accommodation. The Rough Sleeping &amp; Single Homelessness Team, along with the wider Housing Needs team, and partner agencies continue to work hard to find appropriate accommodation solutions for individuals who are rough sleeping and who do not have offers of appropriate accommodation, either in supported accommodation commissioned as part of the Alliance, or elsewhere if this is more appropriate. The number of rough sleepers in the city usually increases during the summer months, and this can be demonstrated when looking at September data from 2022 when 46 people were estimated to be sleeping rough, 37 of which did not have an offer of accommodation. Rough sleeping numbers have remained fairly stable in the last 6 months, which demonstrates the good work that is being done by our own teams and our partners.</p> | Green |



|         |                                       |  |           |     |     |  |   |     |
|---------|---------------------------------------|--|-----------|-----|-----|--|---|-----|
|         |                                       |  |           |     |     | <p>The demand on homelessness services and temporary accommodation has continued to increase over the first half of the year, part of a national picture of rising homelessness and TA use. TA usage nationally is now at an all time high, driven by cost of living/ rapidly rising rents/ frozen Housing Benefit/ and Landlords leaving market due to interest rates. The Council recently signed a letter with 119 other Council's calling for action from central government. We continue to focus efforts on early upstream prevention and moving on households as quickly as possible to manage numbers. We are seeing an average of 8 households a week requiring placement into temporary accommodation, compared to an average of 4 a week throughout last year.</p> <p>Work to establish a new TA private sector leasing model is underway in response to the high demand on TA, increasing our TA stock over the coming months to reduce B&amp;B usage. Recruitment is ongoing, utilising grant funding, to recruit additional front-line officers to support work in prevention and temporary accommodation.</p> | Red   |     |
| Service | Households in temporary accommodation | Quarterly  | 117       | 120 | 174 |  | Red   |     |
| 17      | Service                               | Households in temporary accommodation 12+ months (12 months or more) | Quarterly | 24  | 7   | 17   | <p>The increase in TA demand has meant that it has become more difficult to reduce the numerical number of stays over 12m+. Despite this pressure, we are still focusing on rapidly rehousing clients and move on rates from TA remain high. All TA households over 12m+ have a plan to move them out and are being supported by officers, and the team are aiming for a further reduction in numbers in the coming months.</p> | Red |
| Service | Prevention Duties accepted            | Quarterly  | 206       | 230 | 182 | <p>We are actively working to increase the number of prevention duties that we accept following recent DLUHC feedback and recent changes to funding linked to the number of duties accepted. Ongoing transformation work across Housing Needs is now seeing more teams trained and able to accept prevention duties and focus on the prevention of homelessness. This increase in prevention capacity has come at a key time as homelessness increases, as we are now better placed to support more people, as can be seen in the figures, with us supporting at 6 months just short of the total number we supported for all of 22/23.</p>  | Green   |     |

|         |  |           |     |     |     |  |       |
|---------|--|-----------|-----|-----|-----|--|-------|
| Service | Prevention Duty outcomes - secured accommodation 6+ months at the end of prevention duty | Quarterly | 63% | 60% | 49% | <p>The cost-of-living crisis, record high rents, and frozen local housing allowance has made it very difficult to prevent households from becoming homeless. With landlords leaving the market due to increased interest rates, we are increasingly unable to negotiate to keep individuals in their homes, and with minimal affordable PRS accommodation to move households onto we are finding it increasingly difficult to successfully prevent households from becoming homeless.</p> <p>The increase in cases approaching us for assistance overall has also affected officer's capacity to work with households, with a focus on placing households who are already homeless and reducing the numbers in B&amp;B accommodation. Finding affordable accommodation within the City continues to be difficult due to local housing allowance freeze and the cost of living increase. However, the number of cases we supported to move into accommodation at the prevention stage did increase significantly over September and we hope that this will continue over the coming months.</p> | Amber |
|---------|--|-----------|-----|-----|-----|--|-------|

**To:** Housing and Homelessness Panel  
**Date:** 05 December 2023  
**Report of:** Head of Housing Services  
**Title of Report:** Building Safety & Compliance within Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Stock

| <b>Summary and recommendations</b>                                      |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Purpose of report:</b>   | To inform members of the current Building Safety and Compliance Performance relating to the Council's housing stock. |
| <b>Key decision:</b>  | No   |
| <b>Cabinet Member with responsibility:</b>                              | Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing   |
| <b>Corporate Priority:</b>  | Support Thriving Communities   |
| <b>Policy Framework:</b>  | Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2028  |
| <b>Recommendation(s): That the Panel resolves to:</b>                   |  |
| 1. <b>Note and comment</b> on the report and agree any recommendations. |  |

## Introduction and background

- Oxford City Council has a housing stock of approximately 8,700 residential units. This is made up of the following housing types:

| <b>Property Type</b> | <b>Number</b> |
|----------------------|---------------|
| Flats                | 3642          |
| Bungalows            | 380           |
| Houses               | 4678          |

- The figures for flats include 717 leasehold properties.
- The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that these properties are safe to be used as residential accommodation.

4. Ensuring compliance with this duty involves inspection, servicing and maintenance on a number of building related elements in order to provide assurance that the residential units are as safe as they can be.
5. Building Compliance is increasingly considering building methods, construction type and component types such as ACM cladding and RAAC concrete as recent examples. With Building Regulation requiring confirmation of appropriateness of both existing material and that used in new build property.
6. The compliance elements vary according to the type of property, for example, we have compliance duties that will only apply to communal areas of flats and not in houses i.e. the requirement to carry out a fire risk assessment.
7. Key areas of legislation are:
  - The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
  - The Electricity at Work Regulations 1989
  - The Building Safety Act 2022
  - The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
  - The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
  - 'Legionnaires' disease. The control of legionella bacteria in water systems, (Approved code of practice L8)
  - Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER)
  - Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 (CDM 2015)
  - Building Regulations (all relevant parts and amendments)
8. Property Services manage the compliance activities across Oxford City Council's housing stock and are responsible for ensuring the Council remains compliant and reporting on this to the Executive and Members.
9. Property Services manages the key areas concerning all Council-owned Properties including: Energy & Sustainability, Technical Engineering, Data Knowledge, Surveying & Operational Service Delivery (Repairs & Maintenance) and Building Safety & Compliance.
10. The Building Safety and Compliance team manages areas which include Fire Safety, Water Management, Asbestos Management, Construction Design Management (CDM) and all other related Safety and Compliance items concerning the property portfolio.
11. The team currently consists of a Team Manager; two Building Safety Managers; CDM, Risk and Permit Officers; Fire Safety Support Officer; and an Asbestos & Water Management Officer.
12. A key function of the team in regard to Compliance is to ensure that all compliance inspections are carried out within the required timeframes and component elements (Gas Boilers, Electrical infrastructure, etc.) are inspected, tested and certified at all times.
13. Property Services manage these inspections via contracted services from both internal and external specialist contractors.

## **Building Safety Compliance Elements Currently Monitored and Reported On**

14. **Gas Safety:** Monitored monthly by way of reporting the number properties by % with a valid gas certificate against number of properties requiring one. (Note: not all properties have a gas supply). We also monitor progress on Carbon Monoxide monitor installations.
15. **Electrical Safety:** Monitored monthly by way of reporting by % the number of properties with a clean inspection certificate against the number of properties requiring one (based on a 5-year inspection programme). Although the inspection frequency is not an absolute duty, the Electrical Safety Council advises 5-yearly inspections for rented accommodation and this is an accepted industry standard.
16. **Asbestos Management:** Monitored monthly by way of reporting by % the number of properties with an 'in-date' asbestos management survey against the number of properties requiring one.
17. **Fire Safety:** Monitoring various element inspections (fire alarm system, emergency lighting, extinguishers, dry risers, sprinklers etc.) these are reported on a % basis comparing the number of sites requiring the relevant inspection against the number that have received the inspection. Ensuring that all fire risk assessments required are carried out and any actions identified are implemented, again this is reported as a % of those properties with an 'in date' risk assessment. Actions are reported separately.
18. **Water Safety:** Monitored monthly by way of reporting by % the number of properties that require planned preventative maintenance (ppm's) and tank inspections as well as those with an 'in-date' legionella risk assessment against the number of properties requiring one.
19. **Lift Maintenance:** (Passenger Lifts and Domestic Stair lifts) monitored monthly by way of reporting the number properties on a % basis, comparing the number of sites requiring the relevant inspection against the number that have received the inspection.
20. **Lightning Protection Systems:** Monitored monthly by way of reporting the number properties by % with a valid inspection certificate against number of properties requiring one.
21. **Damp and Mould:** Monitoring of damp and mould cases is carried out in order to gauge impact and resource required as it is a relatively new process.

## **Performance Monitoring**

22. The performance monitoring report is scrutinised and reviewed at the monthly Compliance Meeting, with key issues raised to the monthly Housing Review Group (HRG) and Quarterly Corporate Health & Safety Group.
23. Compliance performance year-to-date as of the end of October 2023 is summarised in the table below:

| <b>Compliance Element</b>                                       | <b>Service Provider</b>   | <b>Total number of sites</b>        | <b>Number compliant</b> | <b>% compliant</b> |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Gas safe inspections</b>                                     | ODS (Internal partner)  | 6819                                | 6819                    | 100%               |
| <b>Electrical test &amp; Inspection (5yr)</b>                   | ODS (Internal partner)  | 7914                                | 7041                    | 89%                |
| <b>Fire safety inspections (alarms etc.)</b>                    | Pyrotec (External partner)                                      | 311                                 | 311                     | 100%               |
| <b>Water safety (ppm's, tank inspections, risk assessment)</b>  | SMS Environmental (External partner)                            | 615                                 | 615                     | 100%               |
| <b>Asbestos surveys and re-inspections</b>                      | Asbestos Consultants Europe (ACE) (External partner)            | 615                                 | 615                     | 100%               |
| <b>Lift servicing and maintenance</b>                           | Cotswold Lifts (External partner)                               | Passenger – 16<br>Stair Lifts - 328 | 14<br>314               | 88%<br>96%         |
| <b>Lightning protection (annual inspection and maintenance)</b> | Professional Technical Services Group (PTSG) (External partner) | 10                                  | 10                      | 100%               |

24. The above table reflects the Council's position on statutory testing and inspection programmes managed by Property Services. Overall, it is a good result year to date and is consistent with ensuring a compliant status throughout the year. Those programmes showing less than 100% are mainly due to access issues and these are proactively worked on to gain access with residents via the Resident Liaison Officers and our Tenancy Management Officers.

### **Current Health and Safety Related Work Project Programmes**

25. The focus for fire doors in high rise blocks has changed dramatically since the Grenfell tragedy, with a greater emphasis on fire doors (communal and flat entrance) meeting modern standards. As well as this, the newly introduced Building Safety Act 2022 has made significant changes to the way fire safety is regulated in Higher Risk Buildings. The provision of compliant fire doors is a significant part of this regime, providing assurance to residents that their building is safe from a fire perspective.

26. As a result, a project is currently in progress to replace all flat entrance doors in our 5 Tower Blocks (over 18m) with solid timber FD30 doors, the project is around 40% complete and is being carried out by OCC's internal contractor Oxford Direct Services (ODS) and is due to complete in 2024. The communal doors were replaced in 2021.
27. Oxford City Council also commissioned a Fire Engineers inspection and report for the tower blocks which was completed this year (2023). This provided a greater understanding of the risks regarding Fire Safety in the high-rise blocks and actions required from it.
28. The key actions arising from the report are being worked through and addressed via the Building Safety Manager and the relevant contractors.
29. The project included, as key elements, replacement of all cladding systems with approved materials under the new regulations and guidance, installation of sprinkler systems and the replacement and upgrading of fire alarms.
30. Unfortunately, due to the quality issues with the cladding installation, the works are ongoing with remedial works required. OCC works closely with the Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS), meeting regularly to discuss and review risk. OFRS have outlined on many occasions that they are very satisfied with the improvements to Fire Safety in OCC's High-rise blocks.
31. The Fire Service have stated that in their view the current position of fire safety in OCC's blocks is better than ever before, with non-combustible cladding, sprinkler systems and fire alarms installed through this project. Whilst the project continues to be completed, OCC is also looking forward to further improvements and additions including further upgrading of the alarm systems with controlled evacuation ability with OFRS. Funding for this is budgeted in 2024 when we expect to begin that project.
32. We are also working through actions identified from our fire risk assessments carried out on low rise blocks, putting together programmes of work for internal and external contractors.

### **Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) Concerns**

33. There are a number of blocks which are being surveyed to ensure RAAC is not present, however based on guidance and advice it is unlikely that RAAC was used in the residential properties, but as stated we are checking the possible property types to be able to categorically indicate the non-presence of RAAC and provide assurance to residents.
34. The high-rise tower blocks are currently having a structural survey in progress and whilst RAAC was not specifically included in the survey commission, the structural engineering company (Stantec) have indicated that they believe it is not present.

### **Damp and Mould**

35. In response to recent events, Oxford City Council has implemented a number of initiatives to identify and remedy damp and mould issues being reported by tenants. Property Services have recruited a damp & mould specialist surveyor and have a Damp and Mould working group from across the Council to ensure continued focus and solutioning of this problem. This has included various programmes via ODS and

specialist contractors for the installation of additional ventilation systems and other similar initiatives.

## Summary

36. Whilst there are obvious areas of improvement required and further investment into our properties is needed due to the changing regulations and present challenges, the Council's Building Safety & Compliance is in a positive place. Property Services continues to develop programmes of work and projects to address any compliance needs.

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
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|                                |
|--------------------------------|
| <b>Background Papers:</b> None |
|--------------------------------|



**To:** Housing and Homelessness Panel  
**Date:** 05 December 2023  
**Report of:** Head of Housing Services  
**Title of Report:** Housing Complaint Handling Performance Q1 & Q2 2023-24

| <b>Summary and recommendations</b>                                      |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Purpose of report:</b>   | To inform Panel members on the Council's complaint handling performance in relation to the landlord function for Quarter 1 and Quarter 2, 2023-24. |
| <b>Key decision:</b>  | No   |
| <b>Cabinet Member with responsibility:</b>                              | Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing   |
| <b>Corporate Priority:</b>  | Support Thriving Communities   |
| <b>Policy Framework:</b>  | Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2028  |
| <b>Recommendation(s): That the Panel resolves to:</b>                   |  |
| 1. <b>Note and comment on</b> the report and agree any recommendations. |  |

| <b>Appendices</b> |                                       |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Appendix 1        | Complaint Handling Performance Tables |
| Appendix 2        | OCC Lessons Learned                   |
| Appendix 3        | ODS Lessons Learned                   |

## Introduction and background

- At its meeting of 02 August 2023, the Housing and Homelessness Panel was provided with an update on complaint handling performance for the last two quarters of 2022-23. This report provides an update on performance for the first two quarters of 2023-24 (April to September 2023).

## Summary

- Appendix 1 sets out the data on complaints for quarters one and two. Appendices 2 and 3 set out the lessons learned from OCC and ODS complaints respectively.

3. The total number of complaints received relating to the landlord function (OCC and ODS combined) was 109 in quarter one and 119 in quarter two.
4. Currently, we have three categories of decisions on complaints, “upheld”, “not upheld” and “partially upheld”. The partially upheld category will no longer be an option in the coming months following the Housing Ombudsman’s consultation on proposed changes to the Complaint Handling Code. Any “partially upheld” cases will be “upheld” going forward.
5. 60 out of 78 (77%) of OCC complaints were upheld or partially upheld and 111 out of 163 (68%) ODS complaints were upheld or partially upheld. 17 (10%) of complaints to ODS were reassigned to other service areas/functions, mainly OCC teams.
6. The main service areas complained about in OCC were Tenancy Management, Property Services and ASBIT. The main ODS complaints were relating to plumbers, carpenters, and planners, as well as joint complaints involving both ODS and Property Services. The key theme in OCC was the quality of service, while communication was the key theme in ODS. Both OCC and ODS have taken the learning and looked to improve areas of weakness.
7. OCC have been reviewing customer journeys with the tenants to better understand concerns and better manage expectations. Better record keeping, following up on communication and keeping in touch with tenants more regularly where there are complex issues have been key learning points improved upon. Tenancy Management have also been managing expectations of their availability through automated email responses and voicemail messages to explain that they are usually unable to take calls or respond to emails quickly because they are with other customers, directing callers to the Contact Centre. OCC are currently recruiting for a Customer Care and Complaint Manager to oversee all the landlord related complaints.
8. ODS have implemented Customer Service training and are providing better explanations to tenants where repairs have taken place. In person communications have been improved and Team Leaders are now required to take ownership of large works involving multiple trades or complex work. The Localz scheme is now providing real-time reminders and updates to tenants about appointments and operatives are now able to book follow-up appointments using their mobile devices (Versaa solution), as well as surveys and updating customer details on-site. ODS complaints regarding communication dropped to five in September, from an average of 12.6 in the preceding five months.

### **Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Consultation**

9. Throughout October and November, the Housing Ombudsman and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman are each consulting on a single Complaint Handling Code for Local Authorities, very much aligned with the code that has been in place for the landlord function since April 2020. The proposed changes to the code relating to the handling of landlord function complaints are relatively minor clarifications in general, however compliance with the code is now a statutory requirement.

## Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Failure Order

10. In July 2023, the Housing Ombudsman issued its first Complaint Handling Failure Order (CHFO) against Oxford City Council. The case in question was being handled by ODS however a request and then a reminder by the Ombudsman to send out a stage 2 complaint response was not followed and a CHFO was issued.
11. Analysis of the cause identified not just human error but single points of failure in the circulation of Ombudsman communications. Measures have now been put in place to auto-forward any communication from either Ombudsman service to several service managers and Heads of Service to increase awareness of a case if one does occur.
12. When the stage 2 response was sent out, the complaint itself was not upheld as the issue was with an electricity meter, which is the responsibility of the energy provider, not the Council. The CFHO has been published in the Housing Ombudsman's quarterly report on CFHOs.

### Next Steps

13. With the Complaint Handling Code expected to be amended following the consultation, some minor changes will need to be implemented to our procedures, including ensuring that stage 1 complaints are responded to within 10 working days of receipt and removing the "partially upheld" option for complaint outcomes.
14. Complaints in ODS are managed through the Aareon QL system with appropriate workflow and PowerBi dashboards to ensure overall visibility of complaints, deadlines, and outcomes. OCC has decided that all complaints will now be managed through QL, and a corporate project is underway to implement the changes, extending the existing functionality to teams across the Council.
15. The new Customer Care and Complaints Manager, when appointed, will be tasked with ensuring that performance, case studies and lessons learned are constantly updated on the Council's website.
16. The quarter three and four performance report to this panel will include a comparison with the Q3 and Q4 reports from 2022-23.

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
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**Background Papers:** None

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## **Appendix 1: Complaint Handling Performance Tables**

### **Complaints Received**

#### **OCC**

| Month        | Stage 1   | Stage 2  | Total     |
|--------------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Apr          | 8         | 0        | <b>8</b>  |
| May          | 15        | 2        | <b>17</b> |
| Jun          | 11        | 2        | <b>13</b> |
| Jul          | 4         | 1        | <b>5</b>  |
| Aug          | 10        | 1        | <b>11</b> |
| Sep          | 10        | 1        | <b>11</b> |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>58</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>65</b> |

#### **ODS**

| Month        | Stage 1    | Stage 2  | Total      |
|--------------|------------|----------|------------|
| Apr          | 16         | 0        | <b>16</b>  |
| May          | 43         | 0        | <b>43</b>  |
| Jun          | 12         | 0        | <b>12</b>  |
| Jul          | 31         | 1        | <b>32</b>  |
| Aug          | 31         | 2        | <b>33</b>  |
| Sep          | 27         | 0        | <b>27</b>  |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>160</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>163</b> |

### **Complaint Outcomes**

#### **OCC\***

| Month        | Withdrawn | Not Upheld | Partially Upheld | Upheld    | Total     |
|--------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Apr          | 0         | 7          | 3                | 4         | <b>14</b> |
| May          | 1         | 3          | 5                | 8         | <b>17</b> |
| Jun          | 0         | 3          | 4                | 10        | <b>17</b> |
| Jul          | 0         | 1          | 2                | 4         | <b>7</b>  |
| Aug          | 0         | 1          | 6                | 7         | <b>14</b> |
| Sep          | 0         | 2          | 6                | 1         | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>1</b>  | <b>17</b>  | <b>26</b>        | <b>34</b> | <b>78</b> |

#### **ODS\***

| Month        | Reassigned | Not Upheld | Partially Upheld | Upheld    | Total      |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------------|-----------|------------|
| Apr          | 6          | 2          | 1                | 7         | <b>16</b>  |
| May          | 6          | 9          | 10               | 18        | <b>43</b>  |
| Jun          | 1          | 3          | 2                | 6         | <b>12</b>  |
| Jul          | 2          | 9          | 6                | 15        | <b>32</b>  |
| Aug          | 0          | 6          | 7                | 20        | <b>33</b>  |
| Sep          | 2          | 13         | 3                | 9         | <b>27</b>  |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>17</b>  | <b>42</b>  | <b>29</b>        | <b>75</b> | <b>163</b> |

\* Based on cases closed in period

## Complaints by Service Area

### **OCC**

| <b>Service Area</b> | <b>Complaints</b> |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| ASBIT               | 5                 |
| Contact Centre      | 1                 |
| Home Ownership      | 1                 |
| Legal Services      | 1                 |
| ODS                 | 1                 |
| OX Place            | 1                 |
| Property Services   | 15                |
| Tenancy Management  | 40                |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>65</b>         |

### **ODS**

| <b>Service Area</b> | <b>Complaints</b> |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| Carpenters          | 15                |
| Customer Services   | 11                |
| DA                  | 1                 |
| Electrical          | 11                |
| Fencing             | 3                 |
| Flooring            | 1                 |
| Gas                 | 11                |
| Glazier             | 3                 |
| Grounds Maintenance | 1                 |
| Groundworks         | 2                 |
| Highways            | 1                 |
| Inspection          | 1                 |
| Painting            | 5                 |
| Planned Works       | 9                 |
| Planning            | 13                |
| Plastering          | 8                 |
| Plumber             | 22                |
| Property Services   | 15                |
| Reassigned          | 17                |
| Road Works          | 1                 |
| Roofer              | 10                |
| StreetScene         | 1                 |
| Waste Household     | 1                 |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>163</b>        |

## Key Themes

### **OCC**

| <b>Key Theme</b> | <b>Complaints</b> |
|------------------|-------------------|
| Behaviour        | 5                 |
| Communication    | 11                |
| Quality          | 3                 |
| Service          | 46                |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>65</b>         |

### **ODS**

| <b>Key Theme</b> | <b>Complaints</b> |
|------------------|-------------------|
| Communication    | 68                |
| Other            | 50                |
| Quality          | 14                |
| Service          | 31                |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>163</b>        |

## Compensation Paid

| <b>Month</b> | <b>Compensation</b> |
|--------------|---------------------|
| Apr          | £1,450.30           |
| May          | £2,350.00           |
| Jun          | £786.00             |
| Jul          | £100.00             |
| Aug          | £650.00             |
| Sep          | £150.00             |

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## **Appendix 2: OCC Lessons Learned**

### ***Behaviour***

- Managing tenant expectations better with the length of time planned and major works take.
- Making sure that we do what we say we are going to do and ensure there are better notes uploaded into QL when in face-to-face meetings with tenants.
- Follow up communications, ensuring outcomes are delivered and recorded.
- Tenant complained numerous times about loud and anti-social behaviour, but the tenant was left feeling no action has been taken or they had not been heard. We need to demonstrate empathy and understanding at the point of contact.

### ***Service***

- Understanding vulnerability and tenants' needs is key to ensuring processes are followed and understood by the tenants.
- Ensuring that we do respond in a timely fashion to damp and mould complaints. If we have failed to provide a service, we do need to make sure that we apologise in a timely and honest way.
- Adapting our service availability times to include an understanding of individual vulnerabilities.

### ***Quality***

- Understanding the needs of the vulnerable and elderly when moving into new build properties and ensuring that the carers can reach clients easily, from car parking to signage.
- Listening and understanding the urgency of the situation the tenant is facing with repairs, so the priority is correctly recorded.
- Understanding and again prioritising the nature of the situation and considering any health and safety implications.
- Where there is likely to be a long-time lag between inspections and surveys and planned works taking place, ensuring the tenant is informed of the timescales, the reasons for any delay and that the tenant is kept updated on progress.

### ***Communication***

- Communicating programme of security and block works, planned repairs and the major works cycles to residents needs to be improved.
- Ensuring that all contact actions are recorded on QL so that outstanding actions are clear and can be picked up when staff leave.
- Tenants are not always able to get hold of their TMO as they are often with other tenants. We need to ensure that the correct way to contact the council is clear and accessible to all our customers.

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## **Appendix 3: ODS Lessons Learned**

### ***Behaviour***

- Training and monitoring to be given to Planners when there is sickness in the operational team.
- Team Leaders and Managers to receive training on customer service.
- Ensure care is always taken of a tenant's personal belongings, and feedback immediately if there is an issue.
- Understanding General Data Protection Regulations and privacy - sensitivity of information sharing with customers
- Ensure areas are kept safe and clear not just in the house, but for neighbouring areas too.
- Customer service training required for dealing with providing suggestions for cleaning in a sensitive manner.
- Tenants expect replacements, not repairs. Operatives need to explain repairs and what they have diagnosed.
- All tenants to be spoken to, even if works are external / visual inspections.

### ***Communication***

- Improvements - keeping tenants up to date in real time about repairs, and to respond to action notes.
- Operatives to report back any issues when works being conducted. Localz will help to relay tenant satisfaction in real time.
- Need to improve communication on the movement of appointments - training to be given and monitored.
- Staff to be shown MyConcern examples in training, and basics surrounding how to communicate with tenants if they are dissatisfied on arrival.
- Operatives to make it clear what next steps are and explain why a repair cannot be completed, encourage make safes at a minimum.
- Improving ongoing and maintaining communication with customers regarding what is happening with their repair.
- Cancelling works without contact must not happen.
- Planners to try all alternative numbers on address - increased use of email for appointments.
- Ensure tenants are kept up to date with timescales on major works and that enquiries are passed to correct team.
- Any delays must be communicated.
- Communication with tenants - explaining they will be sent certificates (e.g. gas safety) instead of being given a copy.
- Ensure any changes to appointments are communicated. Contact Centre to escalate and action notes not responded to

## **Service**

- Increase post inspections or request post work reports from contractors.
- Use systems to identify repeat problems so we can plan for more in depth investigations. May be larger works but avoid returning over again and causing customers to be unhappy.
- Operatives to be given information on where to direct tenants who need to speak to Property Services.
- Ensure systems are correct so we are not using workarounds. Localz to ensure Tenants are made aware when Operative in on route.
- Ensure follow on works are clearly communicated and delays explained to the customer.
- To inform/reassure tenants post inspections happen to pick up any snagging.
- Gain further information instead of assuming it "may" lie with OCC.
- Team Leaders to take ownership of large scale works and ensure all stages are clearly noted and communicated. Contact Centre to escalate action notes not responded to.

## **Quality**

- Training to ensure operatives are taking photos and feedback when attending repairs and feeding back to office. Localz will assist here.
- Follow-on appointments to be managed and improvements needed to quality of works. Localz to assist here.
- Look at historical issues if tenants are saying it is ongoing so we can try alternative repairs.
- Improve quality of works.
- Ensure we are on top of all damp and mould surveys - chase follow up work to avoid repeat visits with no outcome.
- Notes monitored throughout every day and spot checked.
- Ensure operatives are retaining photos pre and post work and pre-existing damage noted down.
- Multi-job repairs to be centrally managed & post-inspected. Localz to assist with real-time feedback.
- Proactive property survey to be raised if damp and mould complaints/calls persist.
- Increase post inspections of subcontracted work.

Council of Sanctuary  
Housing and Homelessness  
Panel Tuesday 5 December 2023

[www.oxford.gov.uk](http://www.oxford.gov.uk)



# City of Sanctuary – what it is?

[www.oxford.gov.uk](http://www.oxford.gov.uk)



- City of Sanctuary is a UK based charity. Its mission statement is

*“to provide coordination and development support for networks of community groups supporting people seeking sanctuary, local authorities, Sanctuary Ambassadors, mainstream organisations engaged in streams of Sanctuary and Sanctuary Awards programs that are working towards our vision.”*

∞

- *Sanctuary seekers in this context may include asylum seekers, refugees, vulnerable or undocumented migrants & other groups*



# Council of Sanctuary – Key dates

- 2005 - City of Sanctuary charity started in Sheffield
- 2019 – Oxford Councillors passed a motion affirming its commitment to being a City of Sanctuary. Full details of the motion agreed [click here](#)
- 2020 – City of Sanctuary started the sanctuary ‘Award’ (accreditation) process launched to extend reach and embed an institution-by-institution approach
- 2022 – Further Oxford City Council motion for Officers to feedback on developing a sanctuary strategy and demonstrate what the Council is doing to help those seeking sanctuary in light of Ukraine/Afghan conflicts. The minutes can be found via the link - [WEB LINK](#) (minute 131)
- 2023 – Oxford Councillors confirmed intention to become accredited Council of Sanctuary at the Sanctuary Fair, a joint event with University of Oxford & Asylum Welcome. [Full press release click here](#)
- 2023 – Thriving Communities Strategy (2023-27) action included to develop a Local Authority City of Sanctuary Action Plan and ensure the City Council meets its commitment to become an accredited local authority of sanctuary

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# Council of Sanctuary Local Authority Award (Accreditation)

- *“Sanctuary Awards are provided by the network of local groups and City of Sanctuary UK to recognise and celebrate commitment to our values and vision of welcome and inclusivity and enabling them to become active participants in the City of Sanctuary network.”*

- Summary of key actions:

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1. Join the CoS local authority network
2. Produce an Action Plan co-produced with sanctuary seekers and stakeholders using the *‘LEARN, EMBED, SHARE’* criteria
3. Apply for recognition via the application process, ensuring the Council's meets the relevant criteria

*See attached Council of Sanctuary Award – Procedure and Criteria in Annex 1 for more detailed information*

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# Progress to date

- Oxford City has a proud history of supporting asylum seekers, refugees & migrants in the City, there is ambition to go further. There are many challenges in supporting sanctuary seekers as more people seek refuge in the UK and Oxford from war and crisis in other parts of the world and there is a growing backlog in the number of asylum claims awaiting a decision
- In Oxford, we also have an acute housing supply issue, with many groups needing accommodation, with insufficient supply to meet the need and clear affordability challenges
- 41 ➤ Since December 2015 Oxford City Council has successfully resettled 52 refugee families that have arrived through government resettlement schemes
- Oxfordshire alongside the City and district councils have been recognised as one of the few counties that continue to support the resettling of refugees through government resettlement schemes
- In July 2023, Oxford City Council affirmed their commitment to resettle 8 refugee families per year for the next 5 years, via a paper approved by Cabinet and Council

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# Progress to date (con't)

- Since the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Oxford City has welcomed 424 Ukrainian guests, through hosting arrangements
- Oxford City Council is working collaboratively with Oxfordshire County Council, District Councils, and local VCS organisations to support Ukrainians, hosting a county wide team. There have been over 120 successful cases moving on from hosting arrangements with assistance from the City Council
- The Council is investing over £4million in the Local Authority Housing Fund, Round 1 & 2 to deliver at least 10 properties for Ukrainian and Afghan homeless households providing stability and security
- The Council has utilised central government funding, including the Controlling Migration Fund, to commission innovative projects to support refugees in the City including but not limited to;
  - >The school advocacy programme to help refugees navigate the education system
  - >Additional funding for therapeutic counselling
  - >Bespoke end to end refugee employment support programme

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# Council of Sanctuary accreditation – Key milestones

- May 2023 – Oxford Cllr’s confirmed intention to become Council of Sanctuary at the Sanctuary fair.
- May 2023 – Council listening exercise with members of public & stakeholders
- May 2023 – Staff listening exercise & workshop at housing needs meeting
- June 2023 – Oxford Brookes event, Council promoted Council of Sanctuary
- June 2023 – Internal awareness raising via policy group & Lunch & Learn with Asylum Welcome
- July - Sept 2023 - Partnership meetings with Oxford Brookes (who are aiming for University of Sanctuary), University of Oxford (who have achieved University of Sanctuary status), Migrant Help, Asylum Welcome, Refugee Resource, Oxford Hub, City of Sanctuary charity and others
- Sept 2023 - Anti Racism Charter signatories workshop event
- Oct 2023 – Inclusive recruitment training

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# Project plan – Phase 1

- Oct 23 – Dec 23 – Asylum Welcome commissioned to undertake innovative needs assessment. Needs assessment to engage sanctuary seekers and key stakeholders via 121 interviews and focus groups
- Dec 23 – Internal sanctuary task & finish group to start
- Dec 23 – Council Officers start drafting application form
- Jan 24 - A final report (discussion paper) generated by Asylum Welcome
- Feb-April 24 - Partnership forum sessions to develop action plan, using themes from paper
- 44 ➤ April 24 – final draft application form / action plan checked by City of Sanctuary charity
- May 24 – Local elections
- June 24 – Oxford City Council cabinet (prior scrutiny lead in period) to hear sanctuary report
- June 24 – Refugee Week event to celebrate City of Sanctuary
- July 24 – Submission of application form & action plan to City of Sanctuary
- Summer 24 – Accreditation outcome & public celebration event



Any questions/feedback?



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