

Agenda

Housing and Homelessness Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

This meeting will be held on:

Date: **Thursday 7 November 2024**

Time: **6.00 pm**

Place: **Zoom - Remote meeting**

For further information please contact:

Celeste Reyeslao, Scrutiny and Governance Advisor

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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

Councillors: Membership 6: Quorum 3: substitutes are permitted.

Councillor Lizzy Diggins (Chair)

Councillor Theodore Jupp

Councillor Edward Mundy

Councillor Asima Qayyum

Councillor Rosie Rawle

Councillor Anne Stares

Apologies and notification of substitutes received before the publication are shown under *Apologies for absence* in the agenda. Those sent after publication will be reported at the meeting. Substitutes for the Chair and Vice-chair do not take on these roles.

Agenda

	Pages
1 Apologies	
2 Declarations of Interest	
3 Chair's Announcements	
4 Notes of the previous meeting	9 - 12
<p>The Panel is asked to agree the notes of the meeting held on 10 October 2024 as a true and accurate record.</p>	
5 Housing and Homelessness Panel Work Plan	13 - 16
<p>The Panel is asked to consider the Work Plan and agree any amendments.</p>	
6 Furnished Tenancy Scheme	17 - 24
<p><i>Appendix 1 to this item includes exempt information pursuant to Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. If the Housing and Homelessness Panel wishes to discuss matters relating to the information set out in Appendix 1 to the report, it will be necessary for the Panel to pass a resolution to exclude the press and public from the meeting (as set out at agenda item 10).</i></p> <p>Cabinet, at its meeting on 13 November 2024, will consider a report from the Head of Housing Services seeking authority to procure and delegation to award a contract to deliver the Council's Furnished Tenancy Scheme. Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services, Richard Wood, Housing Strategy and Needs Manager, Kieran Edmunds, Rapid Rehousing Manager, and Carolyn Devenney, Senior Furnished Tenancy Officer 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>	
7 Implementation of Refugee Resettlement in Oxford	25 - 28

The Head of Housing Services has submitted a report for the Implementation of Refugee Resettlement in Oxford. Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services, Richard Wood, Housing Strategy and Needs Manager, Stephen Cohen, Refugee and Resettlement Manager, and Alan Chandler, Senior Refugee and Migrant Officer have been invited to present the report and answer questions.

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

8 Housing Performance Monitoring (2024/25 mid-year)

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The Head of Housing Services has submitted a Housing Performance report for 2024/25 mid-year. Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services, Richard Wood, Housing Strategy and Needs Manager and Tom Porter, Senior Strategy and Service Development Officer have been invited to present the report and answer questions.

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

9 Housing Complaint Handling Performance (Q1 & Q2 2024/25)

33 - 42

The Head of Housing Services has submitted a report providing an update on complaint handling performance for the Council's landlord function. Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services, Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager, and Katherine Mayes, Customer Care and Complaints Manager have been invited to present the report and answer questions.

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

10 Dates of future meetings

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

- 27 November 2024, 6pm (extraordinary)
- 04 March 2025, 6pm

Meetings will take place remotely via Zoom.

11 Matters exempt or part exempt from publication and exclusion of the public

If the Panel wishes to exclude the press and the public from the meeting during consideration of any aspects of the preceding or following agenda items it will be necessary for the Committee to pass a resolution in accordance with the provisions of Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 specifying the grounds on which their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act if and so long, as in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

(The Access to Information Procedure Rules – Section 15 of the Council’s Constitution – sets out the conditions under which the public can be excluded from meetings of the Council).

11a Furnished Tenancy Scheme Contract - exempt appendix

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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.

The Council asks those recording the meeting:

- 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.

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Minutes of a meeting of the Housing and Homelessness Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee) on Thursday 10 October 2024



Committee members present:

Councillor Qayyum

Councillor Mundy

Councillor Rawle

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services

Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager

Katherine Mayes, Customer Care and Complaints Manager

Richard Wood, Housing Strategy and Needs Manager

Kieran Edmunds, Rapid Rehousing Manager

Abigail Bird, Housing Options Team Leader

Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Manager

Celeste Reyeslao, Scrutiny and Governance Advisor

Also present:

Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, Cabinet Member for Housing

Apologies:

Councillor Diggins sent apologies and was substituted by Councillor Qayyum as Chair for this meeting.

11. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Qayyum stated that she was currently a resident in a Council property; it was not a pecuniary interest but made the declaration for reasons of transparency.

12. Chair's Announcements

None.

13. Notes of the previous meeting

The Panel agreed the notes of the meeting held on 3 July 2024 as a true and accurate record.

Panel agreed to consider item 7 next on the agenda, then item 6, followed by the remaining items as listed.

14. Temporary Accommodation and Homelessness Update

Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities introduced the report and acknowledged the challenges Oxford currently faced with temporary accommodation. A record number of people and households were presenting as homeless and eligible for Council support, but there were not enough temporary accommodation units to meet the current demand. While existing stock was sufficient in previous years, the Council was now increasingly relying on nightly accommodations, such as bed and breakfasts or hotels.

Cllr Smith recognised that this setup was less than ideal for families and highlighted the financial pressures it placed on the Council. She noted the ongoing mitigation efforts aimed at reducing costs and the number of families, particularly pregnant households and those with children, needing temporary accommodation.

Cllr Smith also emphasised the Council's progress, sharing a letter from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government that commended the work of the Housing Needs Team.

Kieran Edmunds, Rapid Rehousing Manager reiterated that despite ongoing efforts, there remained high demand on temporary accommodation, particularly in terms of weekly placements. He added that the Council had invested in staff focused on homeless prevention, achieving a 50% success rate in prevention duties, and that private sector leasing scheme was also being actively pursued. It was noted that the procurement of the new temporary accommodation framework had been successfully published and was currently in active tender.

Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services, Richard Wood, Housing Strategy and Needs Manager, and Abigail Bird, Housing Options Team Leader were also in attendance to discuss the item and answer questions.

During further discussion, the Panel noted the following points:

- Primary factors driving increased homelessness in the city were largely beyond the Council's control such as evictions from private rented sectors linked to high rental inflation and cost-of-living pressures.
- Local challenges faced by Council included rehousing asylum seekers from hotels and the city's disproportionately high number of domestic abuse cases. There had also been statutory changes which lowered the threshold for priority needs and intentional homelessness decisions reducing eligibility for temporary accommodation.
- Oxford rehousing efforts extended to surrounding Oxfordshire towns through reciprocal agreements between local authorities. Comprehensive suitability assessments were conducted and residents' preferences for outside-city housing were considered to ensure appropriate placements in these units.
- Council received a Homelessness Prevention Grant, allowing for the expansion of staff without adding pressure to the general budget. This funding was crucial for delivering services, and the authority was awaiting confirmation of the grant for 2025, hoping for guidance from the Autumn statement or December announcements.

Cllr Smith welcomed the recent progress on the Renter's Rights Bill which bans no-fault evictions within the private rented sector and noted that there were more lobbying work to do to increase funding for temporary accommodations.

The Panel noted the report; no recommendations were made.

15. Housing Complaint Handling Annual Report 2023/24

Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities introduced the report highlighting the Council's commitment to ensuring that tenants are heard and that complaints lead to meaningful service improvements. She noted the importance in promoting accountability and transparency, allowing the Council to reflect on its performance and continuously improve its landlord services.

Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager presented a slide deck which had been included in the minutes pack. Katherine Mayes, Customer Care and Complaints Manager was also in attendance to discuss the item and answer questions.

Cllr Rawle queried about the number of complaints received, whether it was proportionate to the number of tenants, and how the Council compared to other local authorities. The Landlord Services Manager noted that satisfaction with complaints handling had declined across local authorities, though full annual reports were yet to be published, with many expected to release their figures in October. The Council would compare its data against other authorities of similar size.

In terms of repair delays, Cllr Rawle asked if ODS had clear action plans to reduce response times and manage tenant expectations. The Landlord Services Manager explained that delays were caused by various factors, including labour and product shortages, specifically for issues related to damp and mould. He added that ODS was adhering to timelines prescribed in the government's new guidance on health risks associated with damp and mould.

Cllr Rawle also raised concerns about tenants facing communication issues with their tenancy management officer but reluctant to file a formal complaints. She asked how the tensions were being managed prior to escalating to complaint stage. The Landlord Services Manager acknowledged the issue, explaining that tenancy management officers often spent significant time assisting other tenants, leading to delays in communication. To address this, repair-related calls were redirected to the Contact Centre. The Council was also working on landlord transformation proposals aimed at improving the wider landlord services, which was due to Cabinet in December. The Customer Care and Complaints Manager added that tenant dissatisfaction was handled sensitively to ensure they did not impact how tenants were treated in the future.

Cllr Qayyum asked if the Council tracked costs-related information in complaints, such as repair work, compensation, and officer time. The Landlord Services Manager responded that whilst compensation was tracked and would be further developed under the forthcoming Compensation Policy, the focus remained on ODS's "Fix it First Time" approach to minimise repeat visits for repairs by resolving issues correctly on the first attempt.

The Committee requested further data from quantifying costs incurred from repeat visits and additional expenditures associate with complaints.

The Committee noted the report; no recommendations were made.

16. Housing and Homelessness Panel Work Plan

The Committee noted that the Landlord Services Transformation (Social Housing (Regulation) Act (Compliance) presentation had been deferred to a future meeting.

The Committee also noted three items added to the Work Plan, following changes to the Forward Plan. These items were due to Cabinet in December:

- Housing Revenue Account 30-year Business Plan and Asset Strategy
- HRA 5-year Investment Programme and Delivery Arrangements
- Tenancy Engagement and Management

Further amendments to the Work Plan would be liaised and agreed with the Chair.

17. Dates of future meetings

The Panel noted the dates of future meetings.

The meeting started at 6:08 pm and ended at 7:00 pm

Chair

Date: Thursday 7 November 2024

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.

[Provisional] 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 and Governance Advisor 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.

07 November 2024 – confirmed reports

Agenda item	Cabinet item	Description	Cabinet portfolio	Lead officer
Furnished Tenancy Scheme	Yes	Cabinet report to seek delegated authority to tender and award a contract for a Furnished Tenancy Scheme.	Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities	Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services
Implementation of Refugee Resettlement in Oxford	No	To consider the report and agree any recommendations.	Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities	Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services
Housing Performance Monitoring (2024/25 mid-year)	No	To consider the Housing Performance Report and agree any recommendations.	Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities	Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services
Housing Complaint Handling Performance (Q1 & Q2 2024/25)	No	To consider the report and agree any recommendations.	Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities	Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services

27 November – provisional reports

Agenda item	Cabinet item	Description	Cabinet portfolio	Lead officer
HRA 30yr Business Plan and Asset Strategy	Yes	Cabinet report to seek approval for the draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30-Year Business Plan accompanied by the 3-year Asset Strategy.	Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities	Peter Matthew, Executive Director (Communities and People)
HRA 5yr Investment Programme and Delivery Arrangements	Yes	Cabinet report to seek approval for the HRA 5-Year Investment Programme and delivery arrangements. This report follows on from the 30 HRA Business Plan and Asset Strategy and presents a programme for investing and maintaining council housing stock.	Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities	Peter Matthew, Executive Director (Communities and People)
Tenancy Engagement and Management	Yes	Cabinet report to recommend and seek approval for proposed new tenant engagement arrangements that respond to the Council's resident engagement priorities and will comply with the new Housing Regulator Consumer Standards.	Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities	Peter Matthew, Executive Director (Communities and People)

06 March 2025 – provisional reports

Agenda item	Cabinet item	Description	Cabinet portfolio	Lead officer
Housing and Carbon Reduction	No	To receive a presentation followed by an opportunity for discussion; and to agree any recommendations.	Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities	Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services
Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment	No	To consider the report and agree any recommendations.	Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities	Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services

Tenant Satisfaction (STAR) Survey	No	To consider the report and agree any recommendations.	Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities	Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services
End to End Void Times	No	To consider the report and agree any recommendations.	Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities	Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services
Housing First Update	No	To consider the report and agree any recommendations.	Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities	Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services;

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To: Cabinet
Date: 13th November 2024
Report of: Head of Housing Services
Title of Report: Furnished Tenancy Scheme Contract

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To seek authority to procure and delegation to award a contract to deliver the Council's Furnished Tenancy Scheme.
Key decision:	Yes
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities.
Corporate Priority:	Good, Affordable Homes, Thriving Communities.
Policy Framework:	Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2028.

Recommendation(s): That Cabinet resolves to:	
1.	Approve the procurement of a contract at a value of £4,300,000 over a 5-year period for a supplier or suppliers to provide household furniture, white goods, and carpets as part of a Furnished Tenancy Scheme.
2.	Delegate to the Interim Executive Director for Communities and People in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, authority to award a Furnished Tenancy Scheme contract to a supplier or suppliers, selected by an evaluation panel, following a fully compliant procurement process.

Appendices	
Appendix 1	The Finance Appendix
Appendix 2	Risk Register

Introduction and background

1. This report updates Cabinet on the Council's Furnished Tenancy Scheme, explains rising demand, and seeks approval for a new contract to ensure continuation of this much needed service for council tenants.

Furnished Tenancy Scheme

2. Oxford City Council operates a furnished tenancy scheme that allows eligible council tenants to rent essential furnishings. Eligible tenants are offered the opportunity to rent essential furnishings such as carpets, curtains, cookers, refrigerators, beds and bedding and other items that are needed to set up a new home.
3. Eligibility is limited to new council tenants who have not previously had a social tenancy, new tenants who have been homeless, and existing tenants moving due to domestic abuse, health and other exceptional circumstances.
4. The furnished tenancy scheme has been operational for over 26 years, The Council currently maintains over 1,900 active furnished tenancies. This equates to approximately one in every four council tenants holding a furnished tenancy.
5. The furnished tenancy scheme is designed to be cost neutral so that it does not add burden to Oxford City Council's Housing Revenue Account. The upfront cost of providing furniture is recouped over time from an additional service charge.

Benefits of the Furnished Tenancy Scheme

6. The purpose of the scheme is to provide eligible tenants with the best possible opportunity to succeed in their tenancy by removing many of the immediate financial demands that providing furniture for a home can bring, thus reducing the risk of high levels of indebtedness.
7. Many customers approaching the Council for housing or assistance are on a low income, have no savings and/or are in debt and have little or no furnishings of their own.
8. The provision of carpets and/or furniture substantially improves the quality of life of new tenants and their households, who otherwise would not be able to afford such items and encourages them to make a 'home' out of the property and not suffer undue hardship after moving into their new home.
9. Reducing failed tenancies avoids further costs down the line such as associated management problems, void losses and serves to reduce repeat homelessness.

How the Furnished Tenancy Scheme works

10. Eligible tenants opting into the scheme choose the items needed from our furnished tenancy scheme. Tenants will sign up for the furnishings at the same time as the tenancy for their new home. The furnishings will then be delivered by the awarded supplier or suppliers to the tenant's new home after the tenancy start date.

11. Tenants will pay rent for the items chosen through an additional service charge, for a period of five years, the cost of this charge is eligible for Housing Benefit/ Universal Credit.
12. Tenants will be responsible for keeping the furnishings safely in the property and will be expected to look after the items and keep them in good order (allowing for fair wear and tear). The furnishings will belong and will remain the property of Oxford City Council.
13. At the end of the five years an officer of the council will visit the tenant to determine if they want to end the rental and have the items removed or continue the scheme, this is then reviewed annually with the tenant.

Demand and need for new contract

14. The number of furnished tenancies in Oxford over the last 3 years has significantly increased, in part due to additional supply of new homes, and due to more demand from new tenants linked to cost of living pressures and the Council rehousing more homeless households into council tenancies who may not have basic furniture. As shown by the table below.

Year	Furnished Tenancies
2021/2022	179
2022/2023	250
2023/2024	250

15. More demand for the scheme is leading to an increased expenditure, due to this increased demand we have now used up the value on the current contract, and we now need to procure a new larger contract. Due to the contract value we need to commence a procurement and tender process, with Cabinet approval.
16. The authority has awarded an exemption to extend the contract for a short period of time covering the additional expenditure, to ensure the continuation of service. This will allow the proposed tender process to be completed.

Emergency Furnishings - Temporary Decants

17. The Council also uses the Furnished Tenancy furniture contract for other purposes. Emergency furnishing may be supplied where a temporary decant move is required while modernisation, refurbishment, or repair work is undertaken to any property of Oxford City Council.
18. The Furnished Tenancy Scheme Contract will be utilised to supply the essential furnishings required to complete a Temporary Decant. Residents residing in Temporary Decants will not be required to pay rent for the additional furnished items provided as part of the housing duty. The Furnishing provided for Temporary Decants will belong and will remain the property of Oxford City Council.

Emergency Furnishings -Temporary Accommodation

19. The Council also uses the contract to furnish its temporary accommodation, which we use to accommodate homeless households. The accommodation needs to be considered suitable for residents, and therefore requires the provision of essential furnishings such as carpets, curtains, cooker, refrigerator, beds and bedding and other items. Because this work falls within the Council's statutory homelessness work the General Fund, rather than the HRA, pays for this.
20. Residents residing in temporary accommodation will not be required to pay rent for the furnished items provided as part of the Council's Homelessness duty. The furnishings provided within temporary accommodation will belong and will remain the property of Oxford City Council and are reused for different placements as long as they are safe and in good working order.

Health and Safety

21. The Council shall ensure furnished items supplied within the Furnished Tenancy contract comply with all relevant and applicable safety and statutory regulations. This shall be outlined within the contract specification.
22. Routine inspections are conducted by the Council for inventory checks and safety inspections of white goods. This includes portable appliance testing (PAT) and gas safety checks.

Procurement of the new contract

23. A fully compliant procurement process will be conducted to appoint provider/s in compliance with the Council's constitution and procurement policies, and the law.
24. Consideration will be had in how we ensure the tenants voice and feedback can be represented in the tender process. Site visits may also be carried out as part of the final stages of the tender process where appropriate.
25. The supplier submissions will be evaluated using both quality and pricing elements which will require suppliers to demonstrate compliance with the Council's award criteria, which includes social value. It is worth noting that the Council seeks a commitment from suppliers to pay their employees the Oxford Living Wage (where work is undertaken within Oxford) or the living Wage Foundation Rate. This includes, where appropriate, any employees engaged by a sub-contractor in fulfilling a contract. The evaluation panel will consist of members of the Project Team and Procurement
26. A financial assessment will be carried out on the successful tenderer.

Financial implications

27. As this report details commercially sensitive information the financial implications and budget narrative should be viewed via Appendix 1 – The Confidential Financial Appendix
28. The budget for Furnished Tenancy Scheme is supported by the related service charges collected, which as demand increases, so will the associated rental income.
29. The budget is regularly reviewed to ensure that it recovers its costs and does not become a burden to the Housing Revenue Account.

30. The General Fund expense of providing furnishings for temporary accommodation has an allocated budget provision. The budget will continue to be regularly reviewed.
31. As the level of Oxford City Council housing stock increases due to new housing stock becoming available, the budget will need to be periodically reviewed.

Legal issues

32. The procurement process and award of contract must be undertaken in compliance with the contract rules contained in Part 19 of the council's Constitution and the provisions of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or public Procurement Act 2023

Level of risk

33. Risk Register is attached as appendix 2.

Equalities impact

34. The original remit of the Furnished Tenancy programme, how this is delivered, and the furnishings provided, does not need a new Equalities Impact assessment. The scheme is aligned to the Housing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy and is covered therein.
35. It is anticipated the tenderers will have their own Equality Impact statement and this should be within the social value presentation and a copy provided to OCC. If the scheme is now to include emergency furnishings and temporary accommodation support, the individual characteristics of the tenants will need to be taken into review at the time of the referral.
36. Any disability or protected characteristic of an tenant or applicant should be known at the outset. The confirmation their own needs have been considered should be included in the sign off/ authorisation paperwork to meet the Public Sector Equality Duties and Equality Act 2010.

Carbon and Environmental Considerations

37. Carbon and environmental considerations will be assessed as part of the procurement and tender process. The Council will ensure the contract specification is aligned with its 2024 -2028 Strategy "Zero carbon Oxford" and compliant with relevant and applicable guidance and statutory regulations.

Conclusion

38. The Council requires a new Contract to be procured for the provision of Household Furnishings, carpets, and white goods for the purpose of the Furnished Tenancy Scheme.
39. To comply with Public Procurement Regulations and the Oxford City Council Constitution, officers are seeking authority to procure a supplier or suppliers as part of the Furnished Tenancy Scheme and to delegate to the Executive Director for Communities and People in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, the authority to award the contract to a supplier selected by an evaluation panel following a fully compliant procurement process.

Report author	Carolyn Devenney and Kieran Edmunds
Job title	Senior Furnished Tenancy Officer and Rapid Rehousing Manager
Service area or department	Housing Services
Telephone	01865 602817
e-mail	kedmunds@oxford.gov.uk

Background Papers: None

Risk Register

Furnished Tenancy Procurement

As at: 19/09/24

23

Ref	Title	Risk Description	Opp / Threat	Cause	Consequence	Risk Treatment	Date Raised	Owner	Gross		Current			Target		Comments	Control / Mitigation Description	Date Due	Action Status	% Progress	Action Owner
									P	I	P	I	Score	P	I						
	Loss of HRA monies	Loss of revenue to HRA budget due to higher than usual voids	Threat	No formal contractual arrangements would result in tenants not wanting to or able to stay in properties that weren't properly furnished.	High and quick turnaround of void properties, impact to quality of life for tenants and neighbours	Reduce	19/09/24	Senior Furnished Tenancy Officer	3	3	2	1	2	2	1	The Council has traditionally had contractual arrangements in place since 1998 to furnish properties and the importance of continuing with this service is recognised and supported by the Council	Contract will be let in accordance with Council rules and will be managed appropriately to ensure properties are furnished to the tenants requirements.		Ongoing	70%	Senior Furnished Tenancy Officer
	Delay to having a new contractual arrangement	Risk of no expressions of interest for new contract	Threat	Suppliers do not see opportunity advertised and do not submit a tender or are not interested in bidding.	The Council will have to consider granting an exemption to enter into a short term contract whilst it prepares to get back out to market.	Reduce	19/09/24	Procurement Manager	2	3	2	3	6	1	1	The procurement strategy will consider how the market operates. The Project Team are in discussion with Procurement to decide on the most appropriate option for advertising the requirement.	The incumbent supplier has been advised of the Council's obligation to tender this requirement. An exemption could be granted on a short term basis in the event that the Council is unable to award a new contract or utilise a local government approved framework before the current contract expires.		In Progress	20%	Procurement Team
	New contract price is higher than allocated budget	Contract rates are higher than the allocated budget	Threat	Political and economic factors could lead to an increase in costs for haulage which would potentially lead to an increase in contract prices. Increased demand in the Furnished Tenancy Scheme could also impact total costs against allocated	The Council would either have to increase the budget to meet requirements or increase the FT rental multiplier to accommodate the additional costs needed to meet the demands and to remain non-profitable.	Reduce	19/09/24	Head of Housing Services	4	2	4	2	8	3	2	Regular Financial monitoring will be carried out throughout contract.	Proposed contract rates will be assessed prior to award recommendation being made to assess affordability.		In Progress	50%	Housing Needs and Strategy Manager
	Conflict worldwide will impact on worldwide commodity prices	Contract rates are likely to be higher than the allocated budget due to the increased costs of importing goods whilst supply chain are blocked	Threat	Political and economic factors worldwide should be managed by the supplier. The Council needs to be mindful that further conflict could impact on supply chain. The incumbent supplier has successfully managed the supply chain to date	The Council would either have to increase the budget to meet requirements or increase the FT rental multiplier to accommodate the additional costs needed to meet the demands and to remain non-profitable. A contractor may have to rescind the contract if it becomes uneconomic for them, the impact on us would be that we would not be able to provide furnished tenancies and it would make it difficult to sustain the current furnished tenancies, impacting on the service provision for tenants.	Reduce	19/09/24	Head of Housing Services	4	3	4	3	12	4	2		Proposed contract rates will be assessed prior to award recommendation being made to assess affordability.		Ongoing		Housing Needs and Strategy Manager
	Failure of suppliers to meet contractual commitments (quality, cost, time)	Suppliers are unable to meet contractual commitments.	Threat	Ineffective and inefficient contract management by the suppliers.	Significant operation impact on the furnished tenancy scheme, leading to delays in furniture, overspend on costs and residents moving into new homes and reputational damage.	Reduce	19/09/24	Senior Furnished Tenancy Officer	4	3	2	1	2	1	1	Regular Monitoring will be carried out throughout contract.	Effective and efficient Contract Management by representatives of the Council and the awarded Suppliers.	Ongoing	Ongoing	70%	Senior Furnished Tenancy Officer
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To: Housing and Homelessness Panel
Date: 7 November 2024
Report of: Head of Housing Services
Title of Report: Implementation of Refugee Resettlement in Oxford

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To report back on Implementation of Refugee Resettlement and the viability of the scheme.
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member with responsibility:	Councillor Linda Smith, Housing and Communities
Corporate Priority:	Support Thriving Communities
Policy Framework:	Resettlement Commitments for New Refugee Families
Recommendation(s): That the Committee resolves to: Accept report and scheme updates	

Appendices: none

Introduction and background

- Oxford City Council has successfully participated in government schemes to support refugee resettlement since 2015. Between 2015 - 2023 the Council helped to resettle 52 families: 30 families (126 individuals) within Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS) and 22 families (95 individuals) through the Afghan schemes (namely Afghan Relocations Assistance Policy (ARAP), Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)) and United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS). The Syrian scheme is now closed with UKRS superseding it as the UK global resettlement scheme. The two schemes to resettle Afghans continue under ACRS and ARAP.
- In 2023, Cabinet approved the corporate commitment to resettle at least 8 families (29 individuals minimum) per year from the government approved resettlement schemes as detailed above. Funding for resettlement work comes from central government tariff funding and the viability of the commitment is linked to sourcing appropriate accommodation and subsequent grant funding to help families integrate. The report directed officers to report back on an annual basis on the viability of the scheme. This update sets out progress, which to date has been positive with the Council successfully on track to resettle 8 families in 2024.

Global and National Context

3. There continues to be growing number of forcibly displaced people [circa 122.6 million globally](#), hence the ongoing need to support families to resettle.
4. There are a number of families, abroad and in the UK, in transitional accommodation, already approved under UKRS/ACRS/ARAP that remain unmatched, key factors include large households or having specific need for an adapted property to meet complex medical needs.

Oxford City - wider migration context

5. There remains one contingency hotel in the city and 45 dispersal units for families and single people seeking asylum. These sites are managed by the Home Office and the Council supports those households who lose their accommodation when their refugee status is recognised following a successful asylum claim, in line with our statutory homelessness duties.
6. The Council continues to work on supporting Ukrainian's who have settled through the government visa schemes and the team works hard to secure move on accommodation, including into the private rented sector.
7. Prevailing housing conditions including continuing rent increases put pressure on refugee families sustaining their tenancies, much like other households in Oxford.
8. The work of the Council's resettlement programme has instigated and led to the Council applying for accreditation to become a Local Authority of Sanctuary.
9. The Council continues to work collaboratively with County and District colleagues through the Oxfordshire Migration Partnership.

Resettlement Phase 1 (2015-2021)

10. The SVPRS scheme successfully resettled 30 families and the last SVPRS family exited support in November 2023. To prevent homelessness and maintain landlord relationships, officer involvement has subsequently been required to assist a small number of SVPRS families.

Resettlement Phase 2 (2021-2023)

11. Phase 2 contract commissioned in November 2021 for 2 years was extended until September 2025 to resettled 22 families to continue integration support to families who arrived in the summer 2023.
12. ARAP/ACRS schemes are designed as 3-year programmes as opposed to 5-year UKRS/SVPRS. The first families from Phase 2 will start exiting the scheme from December 2024 onwards. After the closure to the resettlement scheme, the families will access support services in the same manner as the rest of the community. Where specialist support is required, referrals to mainstream services are made.
13. All, but one of the families continue to live in the original property that they were placed in upon arrival. They have been successfully supported with renewing their tenancies without major rent increases allowing long term sustainability. Three single individuals have moved out of Oxford, but all other families intend to remain in Oxford city.

Resettlement Phase 3 (2024-2026)

14. The Council is on track to resettle 8 families in 2024. This has been facilitated through a new service agreement for the provision of comprehensive bespoke person-centred support for refugee families. The contract has been awarded to Asylum Welcome and three sub-contractors offering specialist support, following a tender process in summer 2023. This will ensure refugee families are empowered to manage their own resettlement journey.
15. Additional collaborations have also been developed with other local providers to enhance English skills for adults via ESOL provision.
16. The properties procured in 2024 are a mix of social tenancies through the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) (comprising of 1 x 4-bedroom (6 ppl) and 3 x 2-bedroom properties (2ppl, 2ppl, 3ppl)) and private rented sector (PRS) properties (comprising of: 1x 2-bedroom property (3ppl), 1x 3-bedroom (4ppl), 1x 4-bedroom (5ppl), 1 x 5-bedroom (7ppl)).
17. The planning work has started on procuring further 8 properties for 2025. These will also be a mix of LAHF (3) and PRS (min 5) properties. Social enterprise Beam has been contracted to source properties and develop networks with new landlords. Marketing and communication tools are being used to advertise the need for properties through an updated website, landlord's forum, and media adverts.
18. In June 2025, a review of Phase 3 will be completed to check on progress and assess viability to decide whether to continue beyond January 2026. The Council may extend the contract year on year for up to a further 5 years to 2031 on the assumption that a minimum of 8 households (29 ppl) are resettled per year and that the last arrival in year 5 will require the 2-year support service.

Additional benefits of the Council's participation in Resettlement Schemes

19. Resettlement Programme continues to be financially self-sufficient, with all Council staffing required to make the scheme a success, paid for from the grant.
20. Resettlement grant funding has also enabled the Council to work in partnership to support other projects which provide supplementary services for refugee families, for example the School Advocacy Project and Health Access Project via Asylum Welcome, a dedicated counselling service via Refugee Resource, and a Refugee Employment Support Programme (RESP) via Aspire and other local organisations.

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Background Papers: None

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Housing Update against Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for Quarter 2 (24-25) for the Housing and Homeless Panel

Corporate or Service KPI	Description	Reporting Frequency	Target - 2024/25	End of Quarter 1 Result	End of Quarter 2 Result	Comments	RAG Rating
Corporate	Tenant overall satisfaction with services provided by landlord (OCC)	Annually	79%	N/A	N/A	Reported on annually.	N/A
Corporate	Number of Rough Sleepers without an offer of accommodation	Quarterly	30	28	42	At the end of September, 47 individuals were estimated to be sleeping rough in the city on a particular night. 42 of the 47 had no offer of accommodation on that night. 13 of the 42 were believed to have no recourse to public funds, which severely restricts the options of accommodation available. Nationally numbers of people rough sleeping are rising, linked to the wider housing crisis and lack of affordable accommodation. Locally we continue to see high demand for supported accommodation and at the same time, move-on from supported accommodation is low due to lack of affordable options. We are pursuing the transformation of services delivered by the Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance to combat	Red

						local pressures. Additionally Somewhere Safe to Stay beds have been made available which should help us move more people of the street in Q3.	
Service	Number of households in Temporary Accommodation (TA)	Quarterly	NA	250	245	The number of households in TA in Oxford has dropped slightly since Q1, but homelessness demand and new TA placements remain high so could rise again. The numbers in hotel accommodation has dropped to 108, down from 131 in June. Rated red, as while numbers have dropped in Q2, TA numbers are still high and is a major risk for the Council as it could rise again. Despite a continued high placement rate, this marginal decline has been achieved, as a result of the Council's investment into homelessness prevention and the increase in move on accommodation the Council has delivered.	Red
Service	Percentage of all duties accepted are Prevention Duties	Quarterly	50%	54.50%	59.7%	We continue to take the majority of our homelessness duties at the prevention stage, providing support to clients before they become homeless. This has been achieved thanks to investment into our homelessness prevention teams, so they have had the capacity to work with increasing numbers of clients presenting for support.	Green
Service	Prevention Duty outcomes – secured	Quarterly	60%	60.50%	62%	We continue to see good outcomes for households we own a homelessness prevention duty towards, this is	Green

	accommodation 6+ months at end of Prevention Duty					despite a very difficult housing market with rising rents. This has been achieved through additional investment into our prevention teams to deal with demand, and they are successfully keeping more people in their current properties and helping them move before becoming homeless.	
Service	Percentage of households in Temporary Accommodation 12+ months	Quarterly	15%	9%	12%	We continue to see significant levels of move on from our TA into permanent housing, keeping length of stay low despite huge demand on TA placements due to rising homelessness nationally. As a result, only 12% of clients living in TA have been there over 12 months. This may be difficult to maintain with a spike of people between 9-12 months linked to rising TA demand last year but should then drop again. This has been achieved through good prioritisation of the supply of social and private housing for TA move on.	Green
Service	Total standard re-let time in days (House Mark definition)	Quarterly	25	90.6	95.3	An end-to-end void process review has been undertaken to improve performance in this area. On-going work is continuing to embed the improvements identified to bring down average re-let times for properties to acceptable levels across several teams – including the Tenancy Management, Voids, Property and Allocations Teams. A significant number of properties that became void	Red

						<p>before the processes were changed, were let in the second quarter, impacting the overall average shown. However, re-let times for new voids since 1/4/24 have improved significantly and will reduce overall void times as improvements to the processes are further embedded. The average relet times for new voids have dropped from 96.89 days in Q4 23/24 to 69.71 days in Q1 (24/25) and were down to 46.12 days in Q2 (24/25).</p>	
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To: Housing & Homelessness Panel
Date: 7 November 2024
Report of: Head of Housing Services
Title of Report: Housing Complaint Handling Performance (Q1 & Q2 2024/25)

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To provide an update on complaint handling performance for the Council's landlord function.
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities
Corporate Priority:	Good, Affordable Home, Well-Run Council
Policy Framework:	Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28

Recommendation(s): That the Panel resolves to:
1. Note and comment on the content of the report.

Appendices
None

Introduction

1. At its meeting in October 2024, the Housing and Homelessness Panel considered the Annual Complaint Performance & Service Improvement Report 2023/24, which also set out the background to the Housing Ombudsman and its Code of Complaint Handling.
2. This report provides information on the performance of the Council's complaint handling relating to the landlord function for the first two quarters of 2024/25, in terms of the volume, outcomes and timeliness of the responses.
3. A further update on complaint handling and performance improvement will next be provided in the formal 2024/25 annual report.

Context

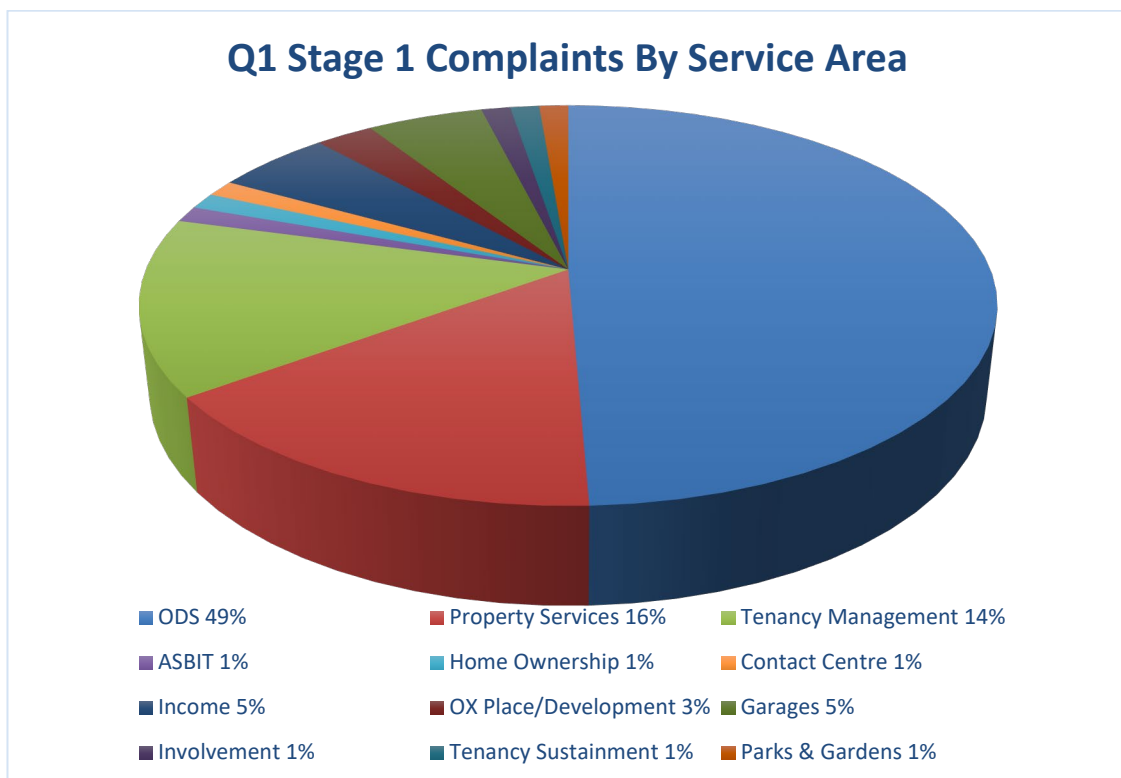
4. Both OCC and ODS handle a significant number of interactions with tenants and leaseholders over the course of a year, covering the Contact Centre, the Incomes team (rents), Tenancy Management, ASBIT, Sustainment, Estate Management, Planned Maintenance and day to day repairs.
5. Each year, ODS alone carry out over 34,000 repairs in tenants' homes and over 54,000 visits once compliance activities and planned maintenance works are included.
6. There have been changes within the Customer Care and Complaints team, with an officer leaving the organisation early in Q1 and their replacement starting in September. This temporary reduction in capacity has led to a backlog situation with stage 1 complaints which is being managed and reduced.

Stage 1 Complaints

Quarter 1 (1st April 2024 to 30th June 2024)

7. The table below sets out the number of complaints received and upheld by OCC and ODS respectively in Q1. Q1 2023/24 for OCC in brackets

Organisation	Received	Upheld
OCC	62 (29)	32
ODS	51	23
Total	120	55



8. Notes on Q1 data:

- Two of the 62 cases received by OCC were withdrawn.

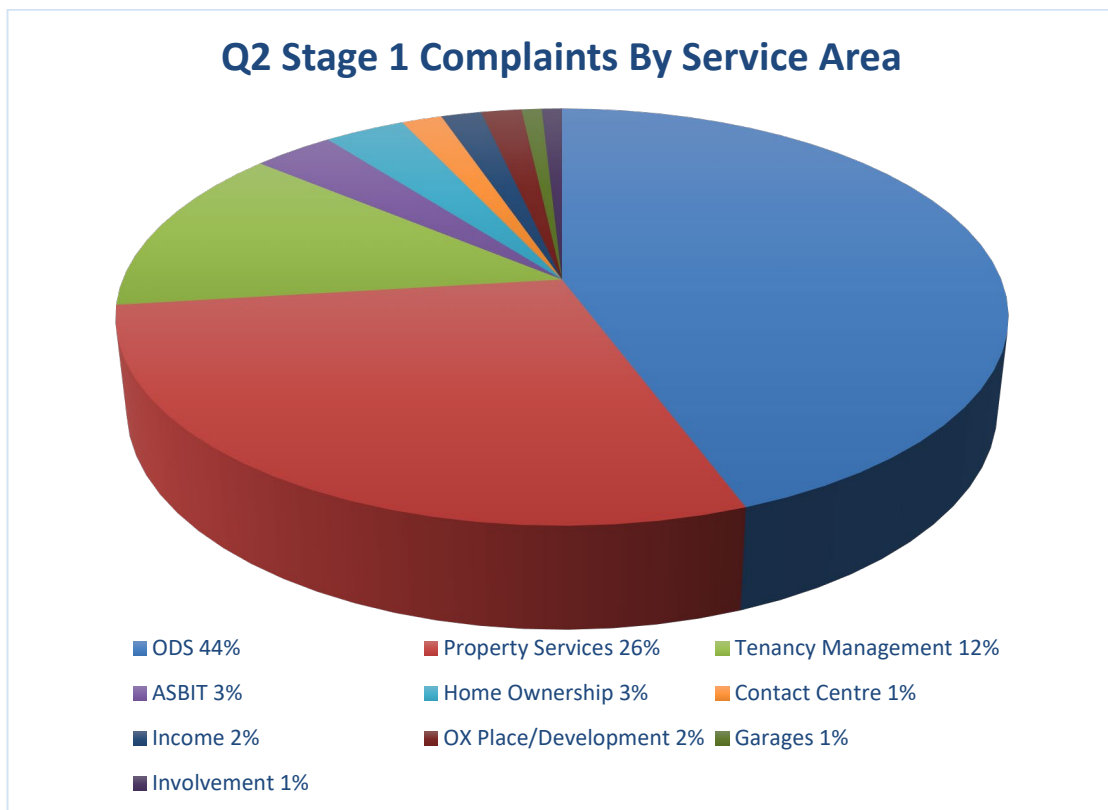
9. 48% of the cases handled by OCC were responded to within the prescribed timescale, as a result of the reduced capacity in the team.

- 79% of the cases handled by ODS were responded to within the prescribed timescale.
- Four cases received by ODS were subsequently referred to OCC.
- One ODS case was rejected as not meeting the criteria for a complaint.

Quarter 2 (1st July 2024 to 30th September 2024)

10. The table below sets out the number of complaints received and upheld by OCC and ODS respectively in Q2. Q2 2023/24 for OCC in brackets.

Organisation	Received	Upheld
OCC	31 (22)	6
ODS	37	27
Total	68	33



11. Notes on Q2 data:

- There are approximately 25 additional cases in the OCC backlog to be logged.
- Two cases were rejected as being service requests.
- One case was rejected because the issue occurred five years ago.
- One case was rejected as a duplicate.
- One case was rejected by ODS for not meeting the criteria of a complaint.

12. 16% of the cases handled by OCC were responded to within the prescribed timescale, again as a result of the reduced capacity in the team.

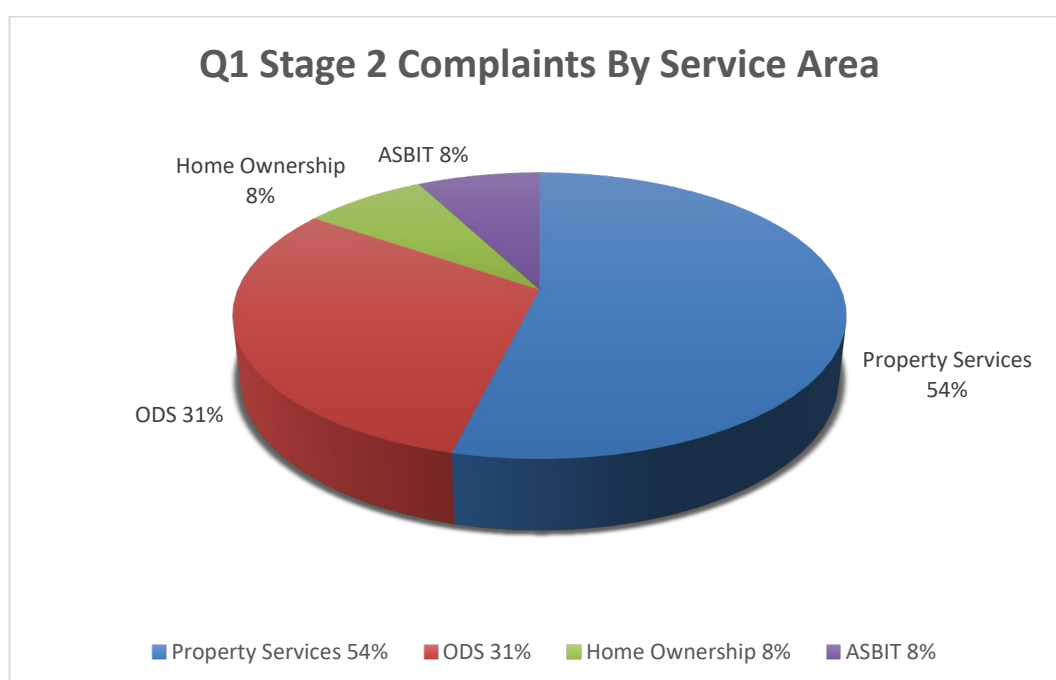
- 84% of the cases handled by ODS were responded to within the prescribed timescale.
- At the end of Q2, 22 OCC cases were still in progress.

Stage 2 Complaints

Quarter 1 (1st April 2024 to 30th June 2024)

13. The table below sets out the number of complaints received and upheld by OCC and ODS respectively in Q1. Q1 2023/24 for OCC in brackets

Organisation	Received	Upheld
OCC	9	4
ODS	4	1
Total	13	5



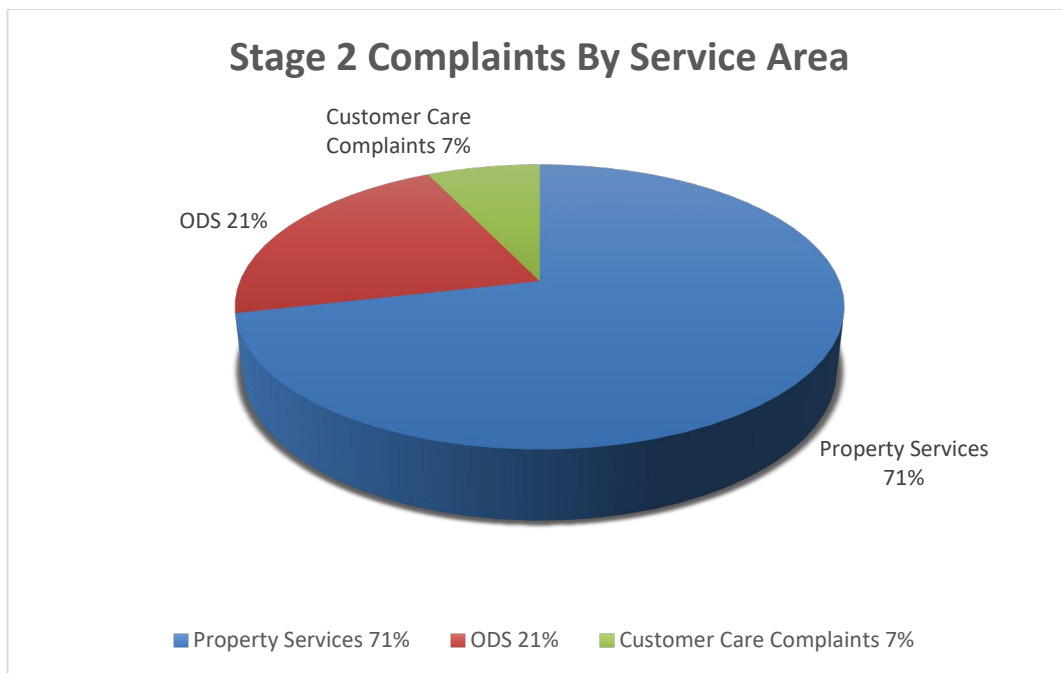
14. Notes on Q1 data:

- 89% of the cases handled by OCC were responded to within the prescribed timescale.
- 75% of the cases handled by ODS were responded to within the prescribed timescale.

Quarter 2 (1st July 2024 to 30th September 2024)

15. The table below sets out the number of complaints received and upheld by OCC and ODS respectively in Q2. Q2 2023/24 for OCC in brackets.

Organisation	Received	Upheld
OCC	10 (2)	7
ODS	2	0
Total	12	7



16. Notes on Q2 data:

- One of the 10 Stage 2 cases received by OCC was withdrawn.
- One ODS stage 2 case was referred to OCC.
- Two OCC cases were still in progress at the end of Q2.
- One ODS case was still in progress at the end of Q2.
- 86% of the cases handled by OCC were responded to within the prescribed timescale (including two extensions).

Housing Ombudsman

Quarter 1 (1st April 2024 to 30th June 2024)

17. The table below sets out Housing Ombudsman activity in Q1.

Decisions where a complaint is outside jurisdiction	2
Determinations received	2
Cases resolved with HOS intervention without investigation	1
Investigations started	1

18. Determination 1 found an instance of service failure in respect of our response to reports of loss of heating and hot water, and one of maladministration in respect of our complaint handling. We were ordered to provide a written apology, pay £300 in compensation, and review our complaint handling and provide a report on this to the Ombudsman. These orders were complied with, and we received praise from the Ombudsman for our report which they said would be shared internally as an example of good practice.
19. This case and the failures were referred to in the annual report where a Complaint Handling Failure Order was received in July 2023 in respect of the issues identified.
20. Determination 2 found there were service failures relating to our handling of the resident's reports of noise, our complaint handling, and our record keeping. We were ordered to pay £550 in compensation, arrange for an independent structural survey within eight weeks of the determination, produce an action plan detailing how we intended to address the issue, review our record keeping practices; provide a report to the Ombudsman, and review our handling of the complaint. We are still working through the action plan agreed and are providing fortnightly updates to the Ombudsman.
21. The case resolved with Ombudsman intervention was one where the resident wanted compensation. The Ombudsman suggested this might be suitable for mediation. Upon review of the case, ODS (who handled the complaint) confirmed the resident had not previously requested compensation and agreed to pay the £1000 the resident was asking for.

Quarter 2 (1st July 2024 to 30th September 2024)

22. The table below sets out Housing Ombudsman activity in Q2.

Decisions a complaint is outside jurisdiction	0
Determinations received	0
Cases resolved with HOS intervention without investigation	0
Investigations started	5

23. While there were no determinations in Q2, the number of investigations started by the Housing Ombudsman is notable.

Compensation

24. Compensation totalling £7,387.64 has been offered relating to cases received by OCC in Q1.

25. Compensation totalling £4,270.77 has been offered relating to cases received by OCC in Q2.

Trends

26. The number of complaints being received, and Housing Ombudsman activity have both increased significantly and these were expected following the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code (which came into effect on 1st April 2024) becoming law.

27. The Housing Ombudsman has also reported a significant increase in cases being referred to them (91% increase in the first 9 months of 2023/24) and their ongoing publicity campaign, highlighting poorly performing landlords and high compensation amounts awarded, has rightly contributed to an increase in tenant awareness and the importance of making complaints.

28. Within OCC and ODS, awareness of what is to be considered as a complaint has improved, and improved reporting across the Council has contributed to an increase in complaints being formally investigated.

29. Across the more commonly referenced service areas (ODS, Property Services, Tenancy Management), the overall percentage share of complaints relating to each service area remain stable compared to data reported in the Complaint Handling & Service Improvement Report 2023/24.

30. There has been a slight rise in complaints relating to garages and the Incomes Team, but these are only a small number of cases and do not indicate a wider concern. We will continue to monitor these areas.

31. Almost half (42%) of the 19 Stage 2 cases received by OCC in were at least in part related to damp and mould issues, compared to 20% of the 93 Stage 1 complaints received in the same period. This shows that damp and mould-related complaints are more likely to escalate as they are disproportionately represented at Stage 2.

32. Housing Ombudsman investigations are becoming more frequent and complex. The amount of evidence and background information requested as part of each investigation has increased. In addition, we have also seen an increase in ad

hoc enquiries from the Ombudsman, our reporting responsibilities, and requirements for overseeing and evidencing compliance with their determinations.

33. It should be noted that the Housing Ombudsman is itself operating in a backlog situation and many of the cases being investigated are from a year or more ago, before our improved complaint handling measures were in place. They have increased their staffing levels and as time moves on, they will be handling more recent cases.
34. A large part of the increase in cases going to the Housing Ombudsman is due to the residents' growing awareness of their right to access that service and we are obliged to promote it to complainants in all formal complaint correspondence) However, the determinations we receive are a very useful way of assessing how we are performing against the Ombudsman's Code and give us valuable guidance on how we can improve.

Progress against recommendations from annual report

35. The departure of the previous Customer Care & Complaints Officer has impacted on the capacity available to make progress against the future plans detailed in the Complaint Performance & Service Improvement Report 2023/24 or the improvements suggested by the Housing & Homelessness Panel and Cabinet following that report.
36. Improvements have begun in terms of capturing more information around compensation offered, as included with this report. Further information on the information captured around compensation payments will be provided in the next annual report.
37. Initial discussions have been held with ODS about how to better identify trends and themes including the use of robotic process automation (RPA). We are also looking to standardise our reporting so the information we provide is accurate and commensurate.

Conclusion

38. Complaints at all stages have increased compared to the same period in 2023/24.
39. The proportion of complaints being upheld remains similar to the previous period.
40. Housing Ombudsman investigations and activity generally has increased significantly.
41. Complaints received continue to provide excellent learning opportunities through all service areas.

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Background Papers: None

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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