

To: Housing and Homelessness Panel
Date: 2nd September 2021
Report of: Director of Housing
Title of Report: Quarter one (April – June 2021) update on the performance of Housing Services and the housing related functions of Oxford City Council

| Summary and recommendations | |
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| Purpose of report: | To update the Housing and Homelessness Panel on quarter 1 performance for the Housing Service |
| Key decision: | No |
| Cabinet Member: | Councillor Diko Blackings |
| Corporate Priority: | Deliver more, affordable homes; Supporting Thriving Communities |
| Policy Framework: | Corporate Plan |
| Recommendation(s): That the Panel resolves to: note the report having agreed any recommendations to Cabinet concerning its contents. | |

| Appendices | |
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| Appendix 1 | Corporate and Service KPIs, Housing Services |

Introduction and background

1. This report provides a performance update for Housing Services and the housing related functions of Oxford City Council. The report includes in depth commentary in relation to significant work areas.
2. Specific data and brief commentary in relation to Corporate and Service level Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are provided in Appendix 1.

Homelessness and rough sleeping

3. Quarter one of this year has been a challenging period for the relief and prevention of homelessness, as the housing measures brought in by central government to support people through the pandemic have come to an end. May saw the ending of the eviction ban, with landlords now again able to take people to court and evict without a stated grounds, plus the gradual ending of furlough and other measures designed to support businesses retain staff. These changes will continue to put pressure on homelessness throughout the year, and may get more difficult, due to the end of the temporary increase in the personal allowance of Universal Credit.
4. Despite this challenging environment, services delivered and commissioned by the City Council have continued to respond effectively to homelessness and rough sleeping. The government has been clear that local authorities should now be exiting emergency accommodation secured during the pandemic, and we have been working with individuals to find longer term accommodation options. 350 people have been accommodated through Everyone In, with more than 252 moving on to longer term accommodation. This is already a significant achievement but a sizeable challenge still remains.
5. The lease on Canterbury House, which has been used to accommodate up to 76 people, was due to end on July 19th. However we have negotiated a one month extension for one part of the building which will allow 11 people to be accommodated for this further period. This additional time will help to ensure people can secure accommodation prior to leaving Canterbury House. The Council has been working with St Mungo's who manage Canterbury House and our partners in the sector to secure move on accommodation for everyone. For anyone else who is not able to secure accommodation by July, they will either be able to stay for a further month or will be allocated a hotel room.
6. A recent Rough Sleeping Initiative 4 funding bid has been successful. Funding is only available for one year and has therefore focussed on continuation of existing RSI funded projects due to end, as well as to support the exit from YHA and Canterbury House, including ancillary service at YHA, 'navigators' to support complex clients into settled accommodation and a social lettings pilot to open up access into PRS.
7. In previous years we reported rough sleeping numbers annually following the annual estimate, in line with the national approach. This year we have moved to quarterly reporting on rough sleeping as we now conduct more regular estimates. Last year saw the number of rough sleepers drop to 26, down from 62 the previous year, and the target of 17 was set for end of 20/21. We are currently on track to achieve the end of year target. The number of persons sleeping rough in Oxford at the end of June was 24. We have seen an increase in new rough sleepers in the last few weeks, which is not uncommon when the weather becomes warmer. With

the exit from Canterbury House towards the end of July, we expect to see rough sleeping numbers temporarily increase again at this point. However, compared to the pre-pandemic period, the number of rough sleepers is much lower for the time of year.

8. Statutory homelessness services the council delivers continued to perform well in quarter one, despite the number of people presenting as homeless and the rates of people allocated temporary accommodation still remaining above pre-pandemic levels. The number of households in temporary accommodation (TA) stands at 96, below the target of 110. This year we have moved to report the actual number of households in temporary accommodation at any given time, as opposed to the traditional P1E definition previous used by central government which excluded certain households (such as those in the process of leaving TA).
9. We have adopted a new KPI this year tracking the rate of successful outcomes achieved for those the council owes a homelessness prevention duty to, with success being defined as the customer either being successfully supported to stay in their home, or moved to alternative accommodation. The target has been set at 55%, but 79.6% have been achieved in Q1, a great achievement for the Housing Options team when faced with increased caseloads.

Affordable Development

10. A new corporate affordable housing development KPI was agreed for this financial year, setting a 4 year target of 1,200 affordable homes delivered in the city by 24/25, and within this 750 new homes let at a social rent. A move away from a one year target, to a 4 year target, was in acknowledgment that affordable housing development requires strategic and operational support and preparatory work over several years, so a 4 year target was more likely to drive positive outcomes. A 4 year window would also align with the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Corporate Plan. Over the 4 years quarterly updates and commentary will be provided to update on progress towards the end target.
11. Quarter one saw 49 new affordable homes being delivered in the city, including 48 Social Rent tenancies and 1 Affordable Rented tenancy. 45 were new builds, and 4 were acquisitions. This is a significant acceleration from last year, which was impacted by lockdown and material shortages.
12. OCHL is making good progress with the delivery of new homes. Delivery at Rose Hill is in the final stages, with all shared ownership homes under offer, and work is on track at Between Towns Road, Cumberlege and Elsfeld and Edgecombe Road, despite issues at some sites with industry wide materials shortages and slow statutory utilities connections. Phase 3 of Barton Park will begin to handover of units in Q3 this year.
13. Registered Providers are also playing a key role in affordable housing delivery through some large sites, such as currently delivering at the Wolvercote Paper Mill, and within the next 12 months at Littlemore Park and William Morris Close.

Council Owned Housing Stock

14. Our services for tenants have continued to deliver well as we left lockdown in Q1. Teams continue to work in new ways developed through the pandemic response,

increasingly working in ways joined up in the locality, building towards the launch of new locality hub model trial in September to inform future service development.

15. Progress is being on this year's target of 46% or fewer homes with lower than an EPC C, down from current baseline of 54%, supported by significant investment from the City Council. To support this we have started to develop a substantial bid to Social Housing Decarbonisation fund in September for retrofitting work to current stock. This would be further to money already won this year from the LAD1b scheme to improve 240 homes, which is funding work such as loft and cavity wall insulation, external wall insulation and air source heat pumps.
16. Wider investment in our stock has continued, including the recladding of balconies at Evenlode and Windrush towers now completed.

Rents

17. At the end of June, the Council were above target for the rent collected as a percentage of rent collectable. 91.82% of rent had been collected against the target of 88.5%. Rent arrears at the same time stood at £1,178,342.87, compared to £1,267,448.85 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.

Empty Homes

18. We are continuing to work with property owners to bring empty properties back for domestic use. During April to June 2021, 7 previously empty properties have been re-occupied. All properties had been empty for over 2 years.
19. The annual process of sending out letters to all owners of empty properties is currently taking place. Just over 400 letters will be sent this year. Contacting owners is linked to the New Homes Bonus (NHB) initiative, where the Council receives financial reward for empty dwellings and new building being occupied over and above those that remain empty. The format for the NHB scheme will change from 2022/23 and the payments we will receive for 2021/22 will be the last under the current scheme. Government has recently consulted on the proposed new format of payments, but we are still awaiting details of the new scheme

Financial implications

20. This is a report seeking to provide the panel with updates and requires no specific decision and so has no specific financial implications.

Legal issues

21. This is a report seeking to provide the panel with updates and requires no specific decision and so has no specific legal implications.

Level of risk

22. All risk implications are covered in the body of this report.

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| Background Papers: None |
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