

**To:** Housing and Homelessness Panel  
**Date:** 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021  
**Report of:** Executive Director - Communities and People  
**Title of Report:** Quarter two (July – September 2021) update on the performance of Housing Services and the housing related functions of Oxford City Council

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To update the Housing and Homelessness Panel on quarter 2 performance for Housing Services
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Diko Blackings
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Deliver more, affordable homes; Supporting Thriving Communities
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Corporate Plan
<b>Recommendation(s): That the Panel resolves to:</b> note the report having agreed any recommendations to Cabinet concerning its contents.	

<b>Appendices</b>	
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 two of this year has been an unusual period defined by the post lockdown recovery, with parts of society and the economy starting to return to more like pre-pandemic patterns, but with the impact from the ending of national measures to support vulnerably housed people being felt, with knock on demands on homelessness services.
4. This was the first quarter that services have started to see the impact of the eviction ban being lifted, as well as measures such as the ending of furlough and the end of the £20 per week Universal Credit uplift. This has resulted in a changing profile of people seeking support from the council due to homelessness, with increasing demand from families and households from the private rented sector now observed, while overall demand has stayed higher than pre pandemic levels both in term of homelessness presentations and placements into temporary accommodation.
5. The summer also saw further gradual ending of the Everybody In scheme of pandemic support for rough sleepers, and a huge effort from the council and its partners to seek to rehouse those in interim accommodation. Canterbury House which was used to accommodate 76 people who would otherwise be rough sleeping was closed in August, with those who remained, who were willing to engage with services to find a realistic accommodation solution, accommodated in a hotel when they left. We are currently in the process of moving people on from the other site at the YHA. The exit from the YHA is a major challenge as we seek to find suitable accommodation for those leaving. We have now agreed a short extension on the lease to give more time to help, seeking to move everybody on by the end of February.
6. Our official estimate was 27 people were rough sleeping at the end of quarter two, similar to the number at the end of last year which saw the number of rough sleepers drop to 26, down from 62 at the end of 19/20. Our end of year target is 17, a number we are aiming to hit as continue to work hard to ensure all those moving out of interim accommodation have an offer and those on the street are all given a suitable offer. The summer months are traditionally when rough sleeping peaks each year, made more challenging this year due to the reducing interim accommodation, but we continue to work to bring numbers down further. Plans are currently underway to reopen the Floyds Row centre in the near the future, but with challenges to overcome to ensure this can be done in a covid secure way. The reopening of Floyds Row will help ensure that there is an offer of emergency accommodation to people who are rough sleeping, so a plan to move into settled accommodation can be worked out in a place of warmth and safety.

7. Statutory homelessness services delivered by the Council continued to perform well in quarter two, despite high demand. The number of households in temporary accommodation stood at 104 at the end of the quarter, within the target of 110. Whilst still within target, the figure has been as high as 114 at times during this quarter, with sustained pressure on temporary accommodation as the court system opens up and the eviction ban lifted. A number of measures are being taken to respond to this, with staff making a concerted effort to increase move on into long term accommodation, informed by wider services development as we seek to move towards a more “rapid rehousing” model with shorter stays in temporary accommodation.
8. In October the Council received £223,729 in new Homelessness Prevention Grant funding for homelessness prevention from DLUHC, for supporting vulnerable renters impacted by the pandemic. We are looking to use some of these funds to respond to the homelessness pressure since the end of the eviction ban, with funding going towards further support for tenancy sustainment for private tenants, and more support given to tenants to engage with their landlords to find ways for them to stay in their home and manage any rent arrears.
9. We track 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 we have exceeded this rate with 67% achieved so far this year.

### **Affordable Development**

10. A new corporate affordable housing development KPI was agreed for this financial year, setting a 4 year target of 1200 affordable homes delivered in the city by 24/25, and within this 750 new homes let at a social rent. These targets are currently on track.
11. 68 new affordable homes have been delivered in the city this financial year up until the end of Q2, including 67 social tenancies and 1 affordable rented tenancy. 27 homes were delivered within Q2, 21 at a social rent, 6 at an affordable rent. 26 were new builds, and there was 1 acquisition.
12. OCHL is making good progress with the delivery of new homes. Delivery at Rose Hill has completed, with all shared ownership homes under offer. Edgecombe Road is almost complete, with work on track at Between Towns Road and Cumberlege and Elsfeld, despite issues at some sites with industry wide specialist materials shortages and statutory utilities connections. Phase 3 of Barton Park delivered its first 20 units in Q3 of this year.
13. Registered providers are also playing a key role in affordable housing delivery through some large sites, such as currently delivering at Barton Park, Wovercote Paper Mill, and William Morris Close – latter two of which are due to deliver in Q4 of this financial year.

### **Council Owned Housing Stock**

14. Q2 has seen us continue to progress key work areas to further enhance our offer for tenants and invest in our council stock. Q2 saw the launch of new locality-based pilots in Barton and Blackbird Leys building on new ways of working developed through the pandemic response, increasingly working in ways that are joined up in the locality to inform future service development that we hope will deliver noticeable improvements for our tenants as well as other residents.
15. We successfully dealt with issues arising following a bus crashing into houses on Morrel Avenue. We offered rehousing to those resident in the houses and have been carrying out repairs to the properties to enable the households to return to their homes.
16. Following high winds at the end of October that resulted in cladding coming off Evenlode Tower in Blackbird Leys, we are now dealing with remedial work and checking cladding at all other tower blocks. We have also commissioned an independent technical investigation with a view to obtaining assurance regarding the quality of workmanship.
17. 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 are in the process of bidding to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund 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 and heat pumps. The council is currently working through whole house assessments, identifying medium and long term improvements, including whole house retrofits.
18. We hope to report on void re-let times KPI at Q3, following improvements to reporting from our QL housing system.

## **Rents**

19. At the end of September 91.57% of rent had been collected against the target of 92.50%. Rent arrears stood at £1,435,788.67, compared to £1,347,057.72 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. Rent collection has been more challenging this year within the context of being unable to serve notice on tenants and therefore action cannot be made on escalating accounts, alongside tenants being impacted by increasing cost of living, the UC cut and end of furlough. Internally the team has also seen the implementation of the QL system with attention given to resolve initial issues from rollout and getting staff experienced with the new system.

## **Repairs**

20. Unfortunately due to QL reporting issues we have been unable to supply repairs performance KPIs for this quarter. Work has been underway to rectify this problem and we will be able to provide an update for Q3.

## Social Housing White Paper – Tenant Satisfaction Measures update

21. The government social housing white paper has committed to a number of national changes to the regulation of social housing in order to increase landlord accountability for providing safe homes, quality services and treating residents with respect. As part of this the government proposes bringing in a number of new Tenant Satisfaction Measures all social landlords can be held accountable against in the future.
22. Recent feedback from the Housing Panel has asked for this range of KPIs to be provided for the council owned housing stock as soon as possible, ahead of the national implementation which currently doesn't have a go live date. In November (while these papers were being drafted) the Regulator of Social Housing announced that following earlier consultation with landlords and tenants they will be publishing the details of the proposed tenant satisfaction measures in early December and will go out to formal consultation.
23. Therefore we will seek to supply in the next quarterly performance report to the Housing Panel these KPIs in a dashboard form, using the new ones being published and consulted on in December by the regulator, with available data for the City Council's housing stock and services. In the meantime officers will continue to progress the necessary changes to reporting mechanisms to be able to supply the data regularly in the future.
24. The Council will engage with and respond to the regulators consultation on the draft KPIs, and welcomes any input and views from the Panel as part of this process.

### Financial implications

25. 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

26. 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

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

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<b>Background Papers: None</b>