



Report to Policy Committee

Author/Lead Officer of Report:

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Tom Smith, Director of Direct Services

Tel: 0114 2735493

Report of: Executive Director, Operational Services

Report to: Housing Policy Committee

Date of Decision: 15 September 2022

Subject: Housing Performance Report (Quarter 1) 2022/23

Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? <i>(Insert reference number)</i>				
Has appropriate consultation taken place?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Purpose of Report:

This report provides the Committee with an overview of housing performance for a range of services within the remit of the Committee. This report covers the period for quarter 1 (April – June) of 2022/2023. The first part of the report provides an analysis of the performance, setting this within both the national and local context in which services are delivered. More detailed appendices are included with data showing comparative data from other landlords and regulatory performance. The report allows the Committee to understand and comment on the performance delivery of housing services to both tenants and citizens.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Housing Policy Committee:

1. Notes the Performance Report update provided for quarter 1 of 2022/2023
2. Highlights any issues of concern

Background Papers:

Appendix 1 – Housing Performance Report Q1 2022/23

Appendix 2 – Repairs and Maintenance Report Q1 2022/23

Lead Officer to complete: -									
1	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 60%;">I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.</td> <td>Finance: Tina Sharp</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Legal: Stephen Tonge</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Equalities & Consultation: n/a</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Climate: n/a</td> </tr> </table>	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.	Finance: Tina Sharp		Legal: Stephen Tonge		Equalities & Consultation: n/a		Climate: n/a
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<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>									
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1. PROPOSAL

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Responsibility of Committee

The Constitution of Sheffield City Council delegates to the Housing Policy Committee the responsibility for regular monitoring of data including performance and financial information, and for monitoring the performance of Housing (public sector, private sector, and related functions) services.

This report summarises the performance information for Housing services in quarter 1 of the 2022/2023 financial year. The report highlights areas of note, providing explanation where possible, to facilitate the Committee in carrying out its role in monitoring Housing performance.

1.1.2 Key Areas

The Housing Performance Report for quarter 1 highlights several key areas for the Committee to be aware of:

- The cost-of-living crisis and its impact on tenants and our services
- The COVID pandemic and its lasting impact on our services
- Our performance in safety work
- Tenant contact and how tenants feel about getting in touch with us
- Our delivery of new council housing

1.1.3 Landlord Commitments

Appendix A provides additional information on the performance of Housing services in quarter 1. A copy of the Housing Performance Report Q1 2022/2023 appendix is shared with the tenant-led Housing and Neighbourhoods Advisory Panel to facilitate the monitoring of the delivery of the Landlord Commitments to tenants.

The Landlord Commitments were developed by tenants through an extensive engagement exercise in 2020/2021. They are the priorities set by tenants and drive the way that we deliver our services. It is important that the Committee are

aware of the tenant priorities that make up our Landlord Commitments and our performance against them:

We will offer a range of quality homes

- Your repairs will be done right first time, to a good standard and within agreed timescales
- Your home will comply with all health and safety obligations, including electrical, fire and gas safety checks
- Your home will be of a good quality and meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard
- We will increase the supply of new Council housing in the city

We will take care of your neighbourhood

- Your estate and its communal areas will be clean and tidy and maintained to a good standard
- Fly-tipping will be dealt with quickly and we will educate and take enforcement action to help reduce it
- Working in partnership with other agencies we will manage waste effectively in all our blocks of housing
- We will deal with breaches of tenancy including neighbour nuisance as quickly as possible, fairly and effectively

We will provide a good service to you

- It will be easy to contact us to ask a question or ask for support
- We will be polite and professional and listen to what you say and treat you fairly and with respect
- We will be polite and professional and listen to what you say and treat you fairly and with respect
- We will learn from your views and complaints and use them to improve what we do

1.1.4

Housemark Benchmarking

The performance information included in this report also allows us to benchmark our performance as compared to Housemark's standard metrics.

Housemark is the leading data and insight company for the UK housing sector and using their standard metrics to measure our performance helps us to better understand how we are performing in different areas as compared to their metrics. The metrics also allow us to understand how we are performing as compared to national medians, and similar landlords.

1.1.5

Upcoming Regulatory Changes and Tenant Satisfaction Measures

The Regulator of Social Housing, which sets consumer and economic standards for social housing providers, is set to get enhanced powers from next year. This will give landlords new responsibilities and place them under increased scrutiny.

Performance will be closely monitored under proposed changes. It is essential that we prepare for this by prioritising the quality of our performance information, along with the monitoring of it. It is expected that areas such as safety and repairs will be of particular focus.

The Regulator is currently creating a new system for assessing how well landlords are doing at providing quality homes and services which will involve Tenant Satisfaction Measures for landlords to report on. We are currently piloting these measures which will better prepare us for any incoming changes and help us to identify areas which we need to concentrate on. The Regulator measures are highlighted in the performance appendix to this report.

1.1.6

Perception and Transactional Surveys

We collect satisfaction feedback from our tenants via a range of surveys. Our main neighbourhood satisfaction survey is a perception survey, which means that we ask a random sample of all tenants about their perception of our performance in a range of areas. We also carry out some transactional surveys, which are often carried out following a repair or complaint. When carrying out transactional surveys we are usually asking tenants to think about their recent interaction with us, rather than their overall perception. These different surveys can produce quite different results and so it is important to highlight the potential variability in these two different methodologies.

The Regulator measures related to satisfaction included in the Housing Performance Report appendix report are from perception surveys undertaken with tenants (unless otherwise stated). The satisfaction information included in the Repairs and Maintenance Performance Appendix is based on transactional surveys undertaken with tenants who have had a recent interaction with the Repairs and Maintenance Service. Transactional and perception surveys do generate different results which can be seen in the performance appendices.

1.2 How are we performing?

1.2.1 The Cost-of-living Crisis

We know that the cost-of-living crisis is affecting our tenants

Consumer inflation has risen sharply during 2022, placing additional pressures on our tenants who are forced to make tough decisions around eating, heating, and debt. Sheffield is seeing a rise in rent arrears in line with a trend being experienced by social landlords nationwide. This comes as many tenants are facing difficult financial situations.

With satisfaction with the overall service also significantly below target in quarter 1 (63% [target 80%]), it will be important to monitor how tenants experience with our services is affected during the crisis.

The crisis is placing additional pressures on our services

An increase in rent arrears may present a challenge to our 2022/2023 service priority of **reducing rent loss**, however we are still performing well with our rent collection rates, maintaining a 99% rate of rent collection in quarter 1.

Our Repairs and Maintenance Service has reported that the crisis may be contributing to issues of disrepair and problems with properties, suggesting that when people are struggling to afford to sufficiently heat, ventilate, or maintain their homes, this may lead to problems with damp and disrepair. Officers are developing a draft policy around, damp, mould and condensation, primarily in response to the recent Housing Ombudsman's revised guidance but also in response to the cost-of-living crisis which will impact on the fabric of our homes.

There are also anecdotal reports that some tenants may not be allowing the service into their properties to undertake gas safety checks because they are embarrassed about not having credit on meters.

Going forwards, it may also be important to monitor how the cost-of-living crisis is affecting our priority of **making homes across the city safer**.

We are responding to additional challenges by amping up the support we offer to tenants

During quarter 1 we awarded an increasing number of Hardship Fund payments to our tenants (a total of 52).

Our officers in the Income Management and Financial Inclusion Team (IMFIT) are also providing support to people to help them manage money and pay rent.

As we collect more performance information throughout the year, we will continue to monitor the impact of the cost-of-living crisis both on our tenants and our services.

The crisis may present an additional challenge to our homelessness services

Homelessness services have seen an increase in duty acceptances due to increased customer traffic to the service post-COVID. The need for Temporary Accommodation remains high in Sheffield. Bed and Breakfast use remains higher than our target amounts. We are responding to this through plans to increase our Temporary Accommodation stock, and plan to eliminate all family Bed and Breakfast use.

Since last year there has also been a slight increase in successful prevention outcomes. This may be due to the increased resources targeted at prevention, including a Prevention Team and increased prevention culture in the service. Resource has also increased in the Access Team to capture prevention cases at earlier stages.

We will continue to monitor how the cost-of-living crisis affects demand for our homelessness services, and work to our 2022/2023 priority of **preventing homelessness and provided safe and affordable homes for those who need to move.**

1.2.2

COVID Recovery

We are still feeling the effects of COVID

During the height of the COVID pandemic, a decision was taken to only undertake emergency repairs which meant that many responsive and planned works did not take place. This was alongside reduced visits to housing properties and less active tenancy management.

The service has seen a 30-40% increase in demand for repairs compared to pre-COVID and repairs are typically larger and more expensive than they would have been if COVID had not so extensively limited our activity. We are still working to a significant backlog of repairs, meaning that waiting times for repairs are still too long at times.

However, in quarter 1 of 2022/2023 tenant satisfaction with the Repairs and Maintenance Service was 84% (based on transactional surveys). This is a positive figure and reflects that despite challenges with demand and waiting times, customers are reporting positive experiences with our Repairs and Maintenance Service.

COVID also delayed a reorganisation process in the Repairs and Maintenance Service, in which staff were brought onto the Council's terms and conditions, and productivity in the service increased. However, the new structure for the Repairs and Maintenance Service was implemented on 1st July 2022.

Since COVID, we have also had increasing challenges around disrepair claims in our properties, which have proven increasingly costly. We know that this is an area we need to

prioritise and are targeting additional resource at it. During quarter 1 our performance improved in responding to disrepair liability admissions within target times to almost 95%. This is positive and we will continue to work to improve our performance in all areas of disrepairs.

We are gradually getting back on track in some areas

Backlogs of work in the Repairs and Maintenance Service are reducing and have fallen significantly across most service areas between quarter 4 of 2021/22 and the end of quarter 1 2022/23. The backlog has reduced to from 4,000 planned repairs and 4,000 responsive repairs to 3,400 and 2,700 repairs respectively in that period. The service currently receives around 2,600 new routine repairs a week.

Also, in overall terms the number of days for a repair to be completed has reduced between quarter 4 of 2021/2022 and quarter 1 of 2022/2023.

The service is working hard to speed up the reduction of the backlogs and have employed several private sub-contractors to support this work, alongside additional resources in the service. Sub-contractor mobilisation and performance has however not been as good as we would have expected. This is an area that we are working to improve.

We are seeing positive improvements in some areas of repairs, but stagnation in other areas. Therefore, as the year progresses, we will continue to closely monitor how we continue to address backlogs and deliver on our 2022/2023 priority of **improving our repairs service**.

We continue to lose rent on vacant properties

Reducing the loss of rent is a key priority for 2022/2023. This is particularly important this year due to the difficult financial situation that the service and wider Council faces this year.

The average calendar days taken to relet empty properties has increased during quarter 1 which is concerning given the direct implications this has on our ability to collect rent for the Housing Revenue Account.

The repairs backlogs exacerbated by the COVID pandemic are contributing to this problem, as it is taking us longer to bring empty properties back into use. Our performance in relation to repairs on vacant properties has worsened slightly.

The ongoing problems we experience with reletting empty properties continues to negatively impact our financial position.

Significant work is currently taking place between the Housing and Neighbourhoods Service and the Repairs and Maintenance Service to review our approaches to vacant

properties and improve the speed with which they are repaired and relet. This includes benchmarking and sharing of information with several other Local Authorities.

Our gas safety performance needs to improve

Our 2022/2023 priority around **making homes across the city safer** is hugely important, particularly given that we are responsible for managing and maintaining over 39,000 council homes across Sheffield.

The percentage of properties with a valid gas safety certificate fell between the end of 2021/2022 and quarter 1 of the current year. This was due to issues with data and the move to a new ICT (Information and Communication Technology) System (Total Mobile). During quarter 1, performance in this area has improved with 93% of our properties having a valid gas safety certificate in July 2022.

Gaining access to some properties is a significant issue. Our compliance figures increase to 96% if we discount the 1,386 properties that have been visited 3 times without successful access.

It is worth noting that the Council is however currently at 99.99% legal compliance. This level of compliance is based on our ability to demonstrate that we have taken reasonable steps to gain access to Service Gas appliances as per Regulation 39 of the Gas Safety Regulations.

Only 44 properties have not had a Service visit within the year which equates to 0.00125% of the total. We are prioritising these 44 properties.

Nevertheless, we know that we need to continue to prioritise our gas safety performance to deliver on our priority of having made homes safe across the city by 2023/2024.

We also know that from next year we will face increased Regulator scrutiny in this area as gas safety check rates are one of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures that will come into formal force from next year. Ahead of this we need to keep prioritising gas safety performance.

Our fire risk assessment performance needs to improve

There is a considerable backlog of works identified through Fire Risk Assessments and this is of concern given the potential impact on tenants.

Whilst this has reduced over the last few months, it needs to reduce more quickly given its importance. The issues have been exacerbated due to very high level of properties where access is a problem (with a number not being able to be accessed for many months) and a lack of appropriately skilled

staff to undertake the work, for example appropriately qualified joiners.

This will also be an area which will face increased Regulator scrutiny from next year as rate of fire risk assessments is another Tenant Satisfaction Measures that we will be judged against. This needs to be an area of focus in the year ahead.

We are helping tenants in private rented housing by identifying and removing serious hazards

As well as ensuring our council homes are safe for our tenants, the Housing and Neighbourhoods Service also supports tenants in private rented accommodation across the city, ensuring landlords are complying with health and safety standards. During quarter 1, 33 fire safety hazards in the private sector had been resolved, resulting in 168 occupants living in safer homes because of our intervention.

Category 1 hazards are defined as a hazard that is a serious and immediate risk to a person's health and safety. Category 2 hazards are defined as less serious or less urgent but still required attention to resolve. For quarter 1, the service had help to make 242 private rented occupants' homes safer through the removal of Category 1 hazards or high scoring Category 2 hazards. Much of this work is based on reactionary work and is reliant on officers encountering hazards in properties, timeframes for abatement of hazards, and occupancy numbers.

1.2.3

Tenant Contact

Tenants remain frustrated with getting through to us on the phone

Tenant satisfaction with how we as a landlord listen to views and act upon them scored 57% for quarter 1, although this may appear as a low score it is only 3% off Housemark's median benchmark score which is 60%. Average tenant satisfaction with the contact centre was 62% for quarter 1. This score may reflect an ongoing frustration amongst tenants with how they can contact us.

Telephoning our contact centre remains the main method by which tenants can contact us with issues, such as repairs. We know that people can find waiting times frustrating, and we are working to bring additional resource into the contact centre to tackle this. However, frustrations remain with our telephone system.

Housemark has identified that nationally landlords with a greater take-up of electronic media are more likely to have higher satisfaction rates for ease of contact.

Becoming a **more transparent, engaging, and inclusive landlord** is one of our key priorities for 2022/2023, and we continue to explore options that would help us deliver on this,

including the digitalisation of our services, and the methods by which tenants are able to contact us.

We know that repairs enquiries make up a large volume of our contact centre calls, and we are looking into digitalising Repairs reporting so that people can report repairs online. This change would reduce pressure on the contact centre and make it easier for tenants to contact us about repairs.

We are performing better in some areas of tenant contact

Despite ongoing challenges around contact centre volumes, the average contact centre call waiting time for housing has fallen since the start of quarter 1.

It is important to note that the beginning of quarter 1 falls within peak demand season for the contact centre due to the end/new financial year, and new rent bills. We will continue to monitor how we cope during our busier periods and how resources are being best utilised during these times.

Also positive is the reduced average waiting time to report a repair through the Repairs contact centre. This fell from 29 minutes in quarter 4 of 2021/2022 to 14 minutes in quarter 1 of 2022/2023.

When tenants do have interactions with staff, they agree that we treat them fairly and with respect (83%). This is our highest satisfaction score from our Neighbourhood Survey which is an excellent reflection on our staff and tenant's experiences with them.

We are also scoring better on tenant satisfaction with being kept informed about the things that matter to them. This is a positive reflection on our efforts to continually develop our communication methods. For example, in the Housing and Neighbourhoods Service we are increasingly utilising e-bulletins, our Facebook page, and direct emails.

We also continue to develop our engagement methods, working closely with Tenant and Residents Associations (TARAs), utilising consultation and surveys.

Satisfaction with the overall service lies at 63%, which falls significantly short of the Housemark median 88%. Whilst this score is below what we need it to be, it gradually improved during quarter 1, and we will continue to work on how we can bring this score up and target the key areas tenants told us they were concerned with (repairs, and the contact centre).

How we handle our complaints requires improvement

Satisfaction with our handling of complaints and tenant knowledge of how to make a complaint are included as part of our Neighbourhood Survey and will be key areas the Regulator will be interested in. Tenant satisfaction around the handling of complaints has scored second lowest out of all the

neighbourhood survey questions for quarter 1. However, satisfaction levels around knowing how to make a complaint scored quite highly and possibly links to "keeps tenants informed" and general communication with tenants. New tenants will have information in their new tenancy literature and so this may have been reflected in responses from new tenants.

As part of our requirement to self-assess against the Housing Ombudsman Handling Code, we have identified areas for improvements and are developing an action plan to ensure we are complaint across all areas in relation to how we manage complaints. Our performance data across complaints will help to reflect that we are doing this, and we will continue to monitor this closely in 2022/23.

We are continuing to deliver new council housing despite some delays

Our stock increase programme includes both acquiring and building new council homes. The overall target for 2022/23 is 358 new homes (137 acquisitions and 221 new builds).

For quarter 1, a total of 25 acquisitions have been completed. (16 general acquisitions and the 9 new build acquisitions at Baxter Court for Temporary Accommodation). This falls in line with the expected delivery for quarter 1 and is in line with budget and cashflow forecasting.

With regards to New Build delivery, 8 homes were delivered against the expected target of 14 in quarter 1. This is due to drainage and highways delays occurring on the Berners site where 6 handovers were anticipated. These are now expected to be delivered in quarter 2. Even though the numbers subject to delay appear to be small, the number of tasks and processes involved in the delivery of new builds, regardless of the numbers of homes to be delivered, are numerous.

For Berners specifically, the delay of 6 homes amounts to only 8% of the total units on this scheme and the relative budgetary impact, due to delay at a late construction stage, is small. As the delayed homes are planned to be delivered in quarter 2, the maximum impact on forecasting, cashflow and income will only span 3 months.

For specialist accommodation such as Older Persons Independent Living and Learning Disability units, the timely delivery can be critical as a new tenant may be moving from a different facility or private rented accommodation where approval and notice periods are lengthy. This is not applicable in quarter 1 but will be monitored in quarter 2 when the 140 Older People's Independent Living homes at Adlington (Buchanan Green) are due for completion.

Delays in programme delivery can have several impacts such as meaning there is less availability of suitable housing options; the inability to reduce pressure on waiting times and priority lists; delays in delivery of pre-allocated units and extended construction disruption for existing tenants neighbouring live sites. Delays to the programme can also create potential budget impacts such as slippage to capital project delivery, not meeting funding target requirements, additional contract costs (if delay is due to no fault of the contractor) as well as revenue implications such as rent loss compared to anticipated income.

2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE?

2.1 Our Sheffield – Priorities and Delivery Plan 2022-23

The Council have developed a new set of strategic priorities for 2023/2024 ([Our Sheffield – Administration Priorities](#)) with the intention for these priorities to form the basis of the new medium term Corporate Plan which is currently in development. To help support this, the Our Sheffield Delivery Plan 2022-23 has been developed. The plan focuses on some of the key challenges the Council need to address before more longer-term strategic goals can be achieved. There are several areas in which housing performance feeds into broader corporate priorities, and as the new Corporate Plan emerges from the administration priorities, we will continue to monitor and report on how we are performing against broader corporate priorities.

3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?

3.1 There has been no consultation on this report, however, it is anticipated that the Committee's response to issues documented in the report may necessitate future consultation.

We do regularly report to the Housing and Neighbourhoods Advisory Panel (HANAP) wherein we seek input and feedback from our tenants on our performance reporting, and our targets for performance.

The Repairs and Maintenance Service also report to their reference group of tenants around performance, and similarly gain input and feedback on a range of performance areas.

4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

4.1 Equality Implications

4.1.1 There are no direct equality implications arising from this report. There are likely to be equality implications arising from the Council's response to many of the issues documented in

this report equality impact assessments will be undertaken for these as needed.

4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

4.2.1 There are no direct financial and commercial implications arising from this report. There may be financial and commercial implications arising from the Council's response to many of the issues documented in this report. Any budgetary implications that arise will need Member approval and decisions around this may to be made at a future Housing Policy Committee.

4.3 Legal Implications

4.3.1 Specific legal issues arising for consideration have been correctly explained at the relevant points in the report. Save for those no legal implications arise from this report.

4.4 Climate Implications

4.4.1 There are no direct climate implications arising from this report. There are likely to be climate implications arising from the Council's response to many of the issues documented in the first part of this report: climate impact assessments will be undertaken for these as needed.

4.5 Other Implications

4.5.1 There are no other direct implications of this report. There may be other implications arising from the Council's response to many of the issues documented in this report.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 The Housing Policy Committee has delegated responsibility for the regular monitoring of data including performance and financial information, and the performance monitoring of Housing (public sector, private sector, and related functions) services. Therefore, no alternative options to the production of this report have been considered.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The Housing Policy Committee has delegated authority to monitor the performance of Housing services to ensure that:
 - 6.1.1 The service is delivering for tenants, and that tenant satisfaction is closely monitored
 - 6.1.2 Limited resources are maximised due to budgetary pressures
 - 6.1.3 The Council is delivering on corporate priorities
 - 6.1.4 Performance information is shared with external organisations such as the Regulator of Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman for scrutiny

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