

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel

17 JUNE 2020

Update from Housing Service
Managers

Housing Maintenance (Operations)

Service delivery

- Essential maintenance and repairs continue to be delivered, whilst observing social distancing, hand-washing and hygiene measures in accordance with PHE guidance
- The majority of office based staff continue to work remotely with O365 and Skype playing a major part in connecting staff across the business to support front line delivery
- Housing Customer Service Hub continue to support tenant contact remotely via telephone, webchat and email – repair requests, Covid-19 screening, estate management enquiries and taking rent payments
- Hub maintained at Marsh Lane depot to support supply chain and operational trade staff

Recovery

- Whilst at the start of the Covid-19 crisis we had to cease reletting empty council properties (due to difficulties in getting materials to bring them up to standard), in late April we begun turning our empty properties around again so they are available for reletting
- As at 15 May, following the Government's easing of restrictions, the back log of routine maintenance and repair requests stood at around 220
- Alongside dealing with new enquiries, the backlog currently stands at 96 requests, of which 52 have been appointed and the remaining 44 are being re-prioritised and risk assessed to enable safe delivery, whilst maintaining social distancing requirements and in consultation with our tenants
- All repair visits undergo 2-stage Covid-19 household screening at appointment and door-step prior to entry

Housing Maintenance (Compliance and Asset Management)

Compliance

- Gas and Electrical – Returned to work as normal. Working through the backlog of outstanding inspections whilst maintaining social distancing requirements and in consultation with our tenants
- Gas currently has 120 outstanding inspections, however 111 have been rebooked with over half of these due to be completed this week
- Electrical has 260 outstanding inspections with 60 rebooked.
- Legislative servicing –
 1. Lifts ongoing
 2. Fire alarms (additional measures introduced for extra care schemes)
 3. Playgrounds still closed, but weekly checks are continuing

Asset Management

- Planned Maintenance Surveyors - Programmes ready and validated. Risk assessments have been received from all contractors. Tenants have been contacted to formulate a return to carrying out the work
- Stock condition surveyors – Undertaking Stock condition surveys (where tenant permits), EPCs on void properties and playground inspections
- Keystone Servicing and inspection module has now gone live, giving a more robust system of accurate information and reporting

Housing Options, Rents, Support & PSH

Service delivery during Covid-19 restrictions

- All office based staff and field workers worked remotely using phones, email, online forms and accounts and video conferencing
- Homelessness interviews continued over the phone
- All homeless households and rough sleepers offered accommodation.
 - Additional accommodation sourced in partnership with hoteliers
 - Our Housing Support team continued to deliver face to face support
- Disabled facilities grant work to install adaptations ceased due to both the care for vulnerable people and shutdown of external contractors
- Rent recovery contact emphasised the support we could offer to help tenants in financial difficulty
 - Spike in Universal Credit Claims – 527 from March to 16/06/20. Normal average 40 per month.
- Housing register applications continued to be received and processed. Vacant properties continued to be advertised and nominated to.

Recovery Plans

- Focus on move on from external temporary accommodation to medium and long term accommodation
- Housing Support provided to households moving on to help sustain accommodation
- Housing Associations in the district are now letting their properties and an increase in void works means social housing supply increasing
- Disabled facilities grant work to install adaptations recommenced on 26th May
- Housing Standards Inspections commenced on 26th May
- Home visits to discuss rent arrears will commence w/c 22nd June
- Cash payments now being made

Housing Estates

Management

- Screening of all clients and households prior to essential home visits
- Completion of task based and person centric risk assessments to facilitate safe delivery of services for staff and vulnerable client groups

Delivery

- The majority of staff continue to work remotely with O365 and Skype facilitating communication between staff and customers in all areas of operational delivery; In addition to this, clients can now use web cam to speak with housing staff
- Intensive support for Extra Care clients and care providers
- Resumed tenancy sign up of properties including Mutual Exchanges. Revised remote support approach to the completion of the process
- Commenced allocation and sign up of additional new properties at Narrowleaf (23). Staggered approach to facilitate and manage social distancing
- Undertaking weekly testing of fire alarms across stock
- Health & Safety inspections across all sites resumed
- Maintained delivery of cleaning services across housing stock
- Reinstated 3 and 9 monthly IT inspections

Housing Strategy and Development

Strategic, Enabling and pre-contract/construction activities

- Fully operational whilst working from home
- Responding to Planning Application consultation requests and enabling opportunities as normal
- Undertaking future site visits
- Building Contractor Framework has generated significant interest from the sector
- Advancing second stage Framework (Professional construction consultants)
- Holding all routine internal and external meetings via Skype
- New business dialogues continuing with developers and agents
- Uncertainty remains over the wider housing market

Site specific

- All sites and building contractors operational, but still some supply issues
- Final 8 homes at Crow Arch Lane handing-over this week
- Jones Lane and 129 Ashley Road due to complete during July
- Making and concluding offers