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Contact:
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* Reporting to Cabinet

3 March 2023

You are requested to attend a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL CABINET HOUSING PANEL to be held on Monday 13 March 2023 at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber.

AGENDA PART 1

1. SUBSTITUTIONS

To note any substitution of Panel Members in accordance with Council Procedure Rules.

2. APOLOGIES

3. MINUTES

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2023 (previously circulated).

4. NOTIFICATION OF URGENT BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED UNDER ITEM 10

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To note declarations of Members' disclosable pecuniary interests, non-disclosable pecuniary interests and non-pecuniary interests in respect of items on this agenda.

6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND PETITIONS

Up to thirty minutes will be made available for questions from members of the public on issues relating to the work of the Committee and to receive any petitions.

7. PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR HOUSING Q3 (Pages 5 - 8)

Report of the Service Director (Property Maintenance and Climate Change).

8. HOUSING COMPLIANCE UPDATE (Pages 9 - 12)

Report of the Service Director (Property Maintenance and Climate Change).

9. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING TEAM AND THE PARTNERSHIP ACCREDITATION FOR LANDLORDS ('PAL') SCHEME (Pages 13 - 18)

Report of the Service Director (Resident and Neighbourhood).

10. SUCH OTHER BUSINESS AS, IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIRMAN, IS OF SUFFICIENT URGENCY TO WARRANT IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION

11. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Panel is asked to resolve:

That under Section 100(A)(2) and (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be now excluded from the meeting for items 11 and 12 (if any) on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of confidential or exempt information as defined in Section 100A(3) and Paragraph 4 (consultations or negotiations relating to labour relations) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act (as amended).

In resolving to exclude the public in respect of the exempt information, it is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

PART II

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS OF AN EXEMPT NATURE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN

Circulation: Councillors J.Cragg (Chairman) G.Moore
F.Thomson (Vice-Chairman) T.Rowse
M.Birleson T.Travell
L.Crofton S.Tunstall
D.Jones R.Trigg
R.Lass

Residents' Panel Representatives

Chris Andrews
Ardita McHugh

Senior Leadership Team
Press and Public (except Part II Items)

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Agenda Item 7

Main author: Ian Hancock

Executive Member: Cllr Fiona Thomson

Wards: All

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET HOUSING PANEL – 13 MARCH 2023

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR (PROPERTY MAINTENANCE AND CLIMATE CHANGE)

PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR HOUSING PERIOD QUARTER THREE 2022/23

1 Executive Summary

1.1 The attached report provides a summary of the strategic Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and comments about performance by exception. The KPIs are monitored quarterly by the Strategic Management Team and Cabinet members at the Council's performance clinic meetings.

1.2 The report is the quarter three performance report for the year 2022/23.

2 Recommendation(s)

2.1 It is recommended that the Panel note the contents of the attached report.

3 Explanation

3.1 The KPIs being reported, as shown in Appendix A, are the corporate KPI's published in the Council's Action Plan for 2022/23.

3.2 The report shows the results for each KPI and how performance compares against target and tolerance. Each result is assessed and highlighted either as red, amber or green.

3.3 The report also includes comments for all KPIs.

Implications

4 Legal Implication(s)

4.1 All controls are in place to manage legal implications.

5 Financial Implication(s)

5.1 There are no new financial implications as a result of this report.

6 Risk Management Implication(s)

6.1 No new risks identified. All controls are in place.

7 Security and Terrorism Implication(s)

7.1 There are no security and terrorism implications arising from this report

8 Procurement Implication(s)

8.1 There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

Classification: Unrestricted

9 Climate Change Implication(s)

9.1 The Decent Homes standard for council housing stock and private sector housing directly affect climate change and are monitored within these KPIs.

10 Human Resources Implication(s)

10.1 There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

11 Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)

11.1 Several of the KPI's impact on the wellbeing of housing applicants, Lifeline customers and tenants.

12 Communication and Engagement Implication(s)

12.1 Performance information is available to the Tenants Panel to be used to identify areas of scrutiny by the Panel.

13 Link to Corporate Priorities

13.1 Each of the KPIs is a corporate published KPI and include the corresponding reference used for performance clinic reports.

14 Equality and Diversity

14.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has not been carried out in connection with the proposals that are set out in this report as the recommendation does not require a policy or service change.

Name of authors: Ian Hancock/Chris Barnes/Sue McDaid
Titles: Service Director (Property Maintenance and Climate Change)
Executive Director (Place)
Service Director (Resident and Neighbourhood)
Date 13 February 2023

Appendices:

Appendix A – CHP Performance Report – Q3, 2022/23

Red - Out of target

Amber - Within tolerance

Green - On target

BusinessUnit	KPI Description	Latest Note	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Last Year
☐ Housing Repairs									
BPI 109	Percentage Voids returned on time by contractor	There has been significant improvement in Q3 since the start of the new repairs contract.	80	30.12	7.81	93.85		93.85	
BPI 31	The percentage of housing repairs where the work is completed right first time	The new repairs contract started in October 2022 and there have been significant improvements in this area compared to Q2	90	79.64	59.13	88.33		75.08	91.49
BPI 33	The percentage of tenants satisfied overall with the repairs service	Data has been collected since the start of the new repairs contract in October 2022 and is within target	85	0.00	0.00	86.87		86.87	77.39
BPI 34	The percentage of council properties with a valid gas safety certificate	This area is 99.95% compliant figures include all properties Communal and domestic. There is currently 4 domestic properties that are overdue which are going through the access process. There are delays at present in the court process to gain access.	100	99.99	100.00	99.95		99.98	99.97
BPI 66	The percentage of all responsive repairs completed in target	There has been significant improvement in this area since the start of the new repairs contract and Q3 is within target	95	82.28	82.34	95.88		87.17	87.90
☐ Income and Home ownership									
BPI 35	Council tenant arrears as a percentage of rent debit	Q3 - Rent arrears performance remains strong and just sits outside year end target. Currently the arrears are at 2.3% against year end target of 2.2%. We continue to focus on supporting our residents making sure they are able to maintain their rent accounts. Evictions continue to remain low with no further evictions carried out in quarter three. There have been no evictions carried out this financial year.	2	1.92	2.22	2.35		2.35	2.14
BPI 87	% of total housing rent collected year to date	Collection performance stands at 98.40% against a target of 100%. This is below target and there has been an increase in new cases due to cost of living increases, although has shown a slight improvement from quarter 2. The Council continue to work with our residents and give support where it is necessary.	100	102.80	98.20	98.39		98.39	99.39
☐ Neighbour and Enforcement									
BPI 37	The average void property re-let time in days for normal general needs housing (YTD)	Q3 - Naturally, with the mobilisation of the new contractor we saw some delays in Oct and Nov. Dec usually has some delays in letting due to the Christmas period. There is an improvement in the turnaround time of voids generally now that the new contractor is bedded in and this should be reflected in Q4 figures.	18	22.00	22.50	28.13		25.16	21.00
BPI 69	Percentage of customers satisfied with the way their anti-social behaviour case was handled	Q3 - All respondents to surveys during Q3 were happy with the way in which their case had been handled, which continues a positive trend.	80	100.00	83.33	100.00		94.12	75.00
BPI 88	Average void relet time (days) for 'Major' voids	Q3 - With the change in contractor the major void re-let time has been pushed out of target. We hope to realign this comfortably by Q4 and we already see improvements. December also impacts our re-let times due to Christmas.	45	36.90	52.36	52.18		47.15	45.86

Red - Out of target

Amber - Within tolerance

Green - On target

BusinessUnit	KPI Description	Latest Note	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Last Year
Housing Needs/Options									
BPI 29	Total number of households living in temporary accommodation	The number at the end of Q3 was 144 households in temporary accommodation. There have been a number of factors which have prevented the reduction since Q1. The amount of properties available in the private sector has reduced to nearly zero, limiting the possibility of moving people on. There has been an increase in households approaching us at a late stage, reducing the ability to prevent homelessness. The new development at Shredded Wheat should lead to several families moving on though, which is expected throughout Jan and Feb 23	100	146.00	146.00	144.00		144.00	92.00
BPI 63	The percentage of customers who have a Housing Support Plan agreed	value of 81% is reduced due to a reduction in available staff in December. October and November value is 96% and Q4 is expected to return a figure within target. This is not unusual and the plans put in place for focus on this target seem to be working well.	95	93.99	89.00	81.28		88.55	95.81
BPI 65	The percentage of Housing Needs Register applications assessed within 35 days	December 2022 saw a big reduction in the number of new HNR applications received (93 compared to 153 the month before). Whilst this is a regular pattern for December, it normally leads to an increased number of applications in January. In October, six of the 153 applications received took more than 35 days to process. None of the 153 received in November took more than 35 days to process. So far, 53 of the 93 applications received in December have been processed and none have taken more than 35 days.	95	91.89	81.73	88.47		88.47	98.28
BPI 80	The number of households with children who are living in hotel accommodation for more than six weeks	No households with dependent children (families) in hotels beyond 6 weeks	0	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00
BPI 89	The number of rough sleepers	The number of known rough sleepers is 1, an individual who has resisted attempts to assist him, but for whom we have received multiple reports. the team continues to attempt engagement. 2 others have been reported however are known to have accommodation available to them.	0	0.00	2.00	1.00		3.00	0.00



Main author: Elliott Manzie
Executive Members: Cllr Fiona Thomson
All Wards

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET HOUSING PANEL – 13 MARCH 2023
REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR (PROPERTY MAINTENANCE AND CLIMATE
CHANGE)

HOUSING COMPLIANCE UPDATE

1 Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Members of the Cabinet Housing Panel on the Housing Compliance position.

2 Recommendation(s)

2.1 Members of Cabinet Housing Panel are asked to note the content of this report.

3 Explanation

3.1 This report follows on from the update given to the Cabinet Housing Panel on 26th January 2023 and this report sets out the Compliance Position as at 15th February 2023.

3.2 Fire – The completion of fire risk assessments is 100% compliant. We have completed a rolling programme of Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) to ensure this area stays compliant.

There was a total of 239 high risk actions resulting from the FRA's. 227 have been completed. The remaining 10 are fire doors which have been surveyed and ordered and 2 are surveys in loft spaces where access is required. There has been some no access in this area for which we are following the access process.

There were 1581 medium risk actions. 1394 have been completed and there is a programme in place for the remaining.

3.3 Water – This area is 100% compliant and we have completed a rolling programme of reviews to be completed.

3.4 Asbestos – This area is 100% compliant. The 2022/2023 programme is well underway and moving forward smoothly.

3.5 Electricity – The communal blocks programme is 99.99% compliant. The 5-year rolling programme is being followed. One block has an issue because the electric meter cannot be located at the current time. This means that we cannot complete the electric test. We are investigating this with the utility company to enable us to resolve this as soon as possible.

The domestic testing is 99.1% compliant and there are still a number of 'no access' properties. We have managed to bring the initial no access numbers down to 76 properties. We will continue to attempt to gain access to these

properties to ensure they are completed, but the delays in the court process is slowing down progress.

- 3.6 Gas – This area has two parts; domestic (dwellings) and communal (blocks). The communal blocks are 100% compliant and the domestic is 99.91% compliant with eight properties outstanding due to access issues which we are following the process to complete. There are currently long delays in the court process which is slowing down gaining access where court action is needed. Whilst we don't have control over the courts' scheduling of cases, we have now persuaded one of the courts concerned to list these as "telephone hearings" which is assisting with earlier dates.
- 3.7 Lift – This area continues to be 100% compliant.
- 3.8 We have completed rolling programmes for all areas of compliance which will mean we will complete some assessments, surveys and tests slightly earlier than required over the next year to ensure we have a smooth programme each year.

Implications

4. Legal Implication(s)

- 4.1 There is potential for further regulatory action if the Council does not evidence compliance.

5. Financial Implication(s)

- 5.1 This report is for information only and there are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations.

6. Risk Management Implication(s)

- 6.1 There is potential for reputational damage if the Council does not remain in a compliant position.

7. Communication

- 7.1 We have continued to update the website with information on the compliance position and we are actively communicating with residents when works are being completed within their home or communal block.
- 7.2 We have a dedicated email address for tenants to contact if they have any questions or concerns relating to any of the compliance areas.

8. Security & Terrorism Implication(s)

- 8.1 There are no security and terrorism implications arising from this report.

9. Procurement Implication(s)

- 9.1 There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

10 Climate Change Implication(s)

10.1 There are no Climate Change implications arising from this report.

11. Human Resources Implication(s)

11.1 There are no HR implications arising from this report.

12. Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)

12.1 There are no Health and Wellbeing implications arising from this report.

13. Link to Corporate Priorities

13.1 The subject of this report is linked to the following Council's Corporate Priorities 'Our Housing' specifically to Improving Housing Need in the Borough.

14. Equalities and Diversity

14.1 An EqIA was not completed because this report does not propose changes to existing service-related policies or the development of new service-related policies.

Name of author:

Elliott Manzie

Title:

Service Manager Housing Repairs and Building Safety

Date:

15th February 2023

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Agenda Item 9

Part I

Main author: Jo Smith

Executive Member: Cllr Fiona Thomson

All Wards

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET HOUSING PANEL - 13 MARCH 2023
REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR (RESIDENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD)

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING TEAM AND THE PARTNERSHIP ACCREDITATION FOR LANDLORDS ('PAL') SCHEME

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 On a national scale, the private rented sector is the fastest growing tenure type, having more than doubled in size in the last decade. This growth, alongside the gradual decline of social rented stock nationally due to policies such as the 'Right to Buy', means that private renting is increasingly becoming the primary option for addressing housing need across the country.
- 1.2 The Private Sector Housing Team (PSHT) sits under the Resident & Neighbourhood directorate and its main focus is to ensure that people in the private rented sector live in safe and decent homes.
- 1.3 The team have the following remit:
 - Regulation (inspections, advice and enforcement) of the Private Rented Sector (PRS) landlords and property standards.
 - Licensing of Mandatory Houses in Multiple Occupation.
 - Interventions for owner occupied properties where there are category 1 hazards, and high category 2 hazards.
 - Provision of mandatory and discretionary grants through the Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy.
 - Prevention of illegal evictions or harassment
 - Enforcing energy efficiency standards
 - Manage the Landlord Accreditation Scheme, PAL (Partnership Accreditation for Landlords).
- 1.4 The PAL service is now in its 10th year and has recently had its funding from the University of Hertfordshire increased to £30,000 annually. There will be regular meetings and discussions with the University to ensure best use of this additional funding.
- 1.5 The PAL service has expanded. PAL is now assisting Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) in providing properties for their facility, engaging with a new Partner Agency and accrediting the University's own on-campus accommodation.
- 1.6 The Private Sector Housing Team has had several recent successes:
 - A Banning order against a rogue letting agent that resulted in a 2-year ban England-wide.

- Civil Penalty cases totalling £52k (these fines are reinvested into the service).
- Enforcement and education of landlords, tenants, and agents alike to ensure the residents of Welwyn Hatfield are in safe, secure homes.
- Carrying out Homes for Ukraine property inspections in addition to their workload to ensure refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine are provided with safe accommodation.

1.6 The Private Sector Housing Team have enhanced our approach towards damp and mould in privately rented property as a result of the tragic death of Awaab Ishak in Rochdale, who died because of prolonged exposure to mould in his home.

2 Recommendation(s)

To acknowledge the recent work carried out by the team to improve outcomes for private tenants in the borough.

3 Explanation

3.1 The Private Sector Housing Team (PSHT) achieves their remit by a combination of advice, inspection and enforcement of the relevant legal standards on matters such as, but not limited to, fire and electrical safety, disrepair and energy efficiency in rented homes, including HMO's and mobile homes.

3.2 The Partnership Accreditation for Landlords (PAL) scheme is run in partnership with the University of Hertfordshire and contributes greatly to the advice and education of landlords and tenants in the private rented sector.

3.3 This year, the team have delivered a number of very successful outcomes and have achieved the following:

- a) Won several First Tier and Upper Tier appeals against Civil Penalty Notices served on non-compliant and rogue landlords and agents.
- b) Achieved the teams' first simple caution of a landlord who was attempting to illegally evict tenants (a simple caution is an alternative to prosecution where the offender admits the offence).
- c) Dealing with the influx of hosts for the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme, where residents of Welwyn Hatfield have opened their homes to shelter Ukrainian refugees. To date we have carried out 98 inspections.
- d) Presented a successful PAL landlord forum at the University of Hertfordshire with speakers from the National Residential Landlord's Association (NRLA) and University, plus special guest speaker Paul Shamplina from Landlord Action.
- e) Our first Banning Order was obtained for a Hatfield Letting agent who is now no longer allowed to engage in any form of property lettings for 2 years across the whole of England.
- f) Officers have carried out Emergency Remedial Action on properties to rectify immediate hazards, the most recent being for electrical safety where the whole building had to be prohibited before being able to make it safe for the occupiers.

- g) The PAL service was represented at both the International Student fair and Freshers Fair at the University of Hertfordshire. The PAL service and the Team were promoted, and our presence reached a large number of students so that they know who to contact in case of any housing issues.
- h) PAL will be adding a new PAL partner agent in the new year with a large portfolio, which will increase our reach to residents looking to rent properties.
- i) The team have seen a significant uptake in our discretionary grants since the new Housing Assistance Policy was discussed at the Cabinet Housing Panel. A previous report on this was presented to Cabinet in September, but the Cost-of-Living Crisis has pushed people to seek out the Council to assist them with matters that they would ordinarily be able to do themselves.
- j) The discretionary grants range from Home Safety Grants to Hospital Discharge Grants, and all have been promoted via Herts Help and the Herts NHS Trust, who are enabling us to support wider and to those hard-to-reach sectors of the population.
- k) We have been assisting people where boilers have broken down and they are unable to afford a replacement, the installation of handrails, carpets, and small repairs to fixtures and fittings that make a difference to people's lives, enabling them to live safely in their own home.
- l) Large expenditure grants have been approved out of the Better Care fund to assist those in need. The latest one was a funding contribution towards the YMCA Peartree Project which will assist WHBC in getting vulnerable people off the streets and into safe accommodation.
- m) The team continue to evaluate new and existing high-rise blocks in the Borough to ensure that they are either still outside the scope of the Building Safety Bill or, if they are in scope, taking the necessary steps to remedy any fire safety issues.
- n) As a result of the tragic death of Awaab Ishak, we have seen an increase in the number of Damp and Mould cases reported to us. We are taking each case seriously and are prioritising those cases to ensure the wellbeing of the occupants.
- o) The team have been an integral part of the internal officers' Damp and Mould Task group, that has been set up following recent events, and has provided training in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) for Council Surveyors. We have also worked with council housing colleagues to update our website and leaflet content regarding Damp and Mould.
- p) We continue to work with Housing Associations and Private Landlords to educate them of the symptoms of Damp and Mould
- q) We have submitted data as requested to the Department of Levelling Up, Communities and Local Government. These requests concerned

the prevalence of damp and mould in the private rented sector in the borough and our approach towards it.

- r) The team continue to provide informal and formal education and enforcement over and above the points listed above.

Implications

4 Legal Implication(s)

- 4.1 The Council has a statutory duty to act to ensure all private homes within the borough are safe from category 1 hazards, and that all HMO's that are required to be licenced are.
- 4.2 The Council also has the power, under Article 3 of the Regulatory Reform (Housing assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 ("the Order") to provide financial assistance for the purpose of improving living conditions in their area. In this regard we provide discretionary grants through our Housing Assistance Policy.

5 Financial Implication(s)

- 5.1 Failure to actively regulate the private rented sector could result in unsafe conditions for tenants and a serious loss of stability and homes for private sector tenancies.
- 5.2 Failure to regulate the private rented sector would also result in a loss of income from both Mandatory HMO Licensing fees and from the service of Civil Penalty Notices (fines) issued to non-compliant and rogue Landlords. These fees and fines contribute towards the cost of providing the service
- 5.3 The regulations allow for the recovery of any associated costs of taking urgent and non-urgent remedial action, based upon an assessment of officer time, actual costs of work undertaken, and any other overheads incurred in taking the action. This helps contribute towards the cost of the service provided by the private rented housing team.

6 Risk Management Implications

- 6.1 The risks related to this report are:

The risks associated with not delivering these services appropriately would have implications on the health and safety of private tenants and on residents and present a potential risk to the Council's reputation and legal challenge.
- 6.2 There must be sufficient funds to cover the demand for DFGs in the Private Sector. The current budget is considered to be more than sufficient to meet the demand for DFGs even if there is an increase in demand. This is based on the trend in demand over the last three years with a tolerance for increased demand.

7 Security and Terrorism Implication(s)

- 7.1 None.

8 Procurement Implication(s)

8.1 None.

9 Climate Change Implication(s)

9.1 Part of the work of the team includes ensure that properties with an EPC rating of less than E (eg F and G) are not privately rented in accordance with the legislation. This contributes to the climate change agenda as properties of EPC rating F and G are not considered sufficiently energy efficient.

10 Human Resources Implication(s)

10.1 The services listed above are provided within the existing resources of the Private Rented Sector Housing Team.

11 Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)

11.1 Tackling poor an unsafe housing conditions in the Private Rented Sector will contribute towards the Council's vision of the health of the residents of WHBC. Housing is a determinant of health. In order to ensure that each resident of WHBC has an equal life chance and a life expectancy to reflect that of the national average, the Council needs to utilise all legal and enforcement options available to drive standards up within the Private Rented Sector.

12 Communication and Engagement Implication(s)

12.1 The service provides regular updates to the Communications team regarding outcomes and successes in dealing with non-compliant and rogue landlords.

12.2 The service also has regular liaison meetings with internal departments and external partner agencies such as the Police, Herts fire and rescue, and Herts County Council.

13 Link to Corporate Priorities

13.1 The subject of this report is linked to the Council's Corporate Priority 'Quality Homes through managed growth' and specifically to the commitment 'we will provide high quality housing, thriving neighbourhoods and sustainable communities.

14 Equality and Diversity

14.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has previously been produced for the delivery of the work of the Private Rented Sector Housing Team and so is not required for the subject of this report.

Name of author	Jo Smith
Title	Private Sector Housing Manager
Date	10/2/23

Background papers - Not applicable

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