

Title: Housing Performance Report – November 2023

Information/Discussion Report – Discussion

Recommendations: The DMC is asked to note the report and comment.

Report Summary: This report provides performance information on areas of the Housing Service provided to council tenants.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides performance information on areas of the Housing service provided to council tenants, and is mainly based on the period from June to September 2023, ie Quarter 2.
- 1.2 The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 places new requirements on all social landlords in respect of the quality and safety of homes, and the quality of neighbourhoods and housing services – including complaints, anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse, tenant engagement and the provision of performance and other information to tenants.
- 1.3 The Council is currently working with Housemark, a housing data organisation, who are currently conducting Camden's first tenant satisfaction survey as part of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures under the new regulatory regime. This survey will be completed by April 2024, and results will be fed back to DMC's and residents more widely in the summer of 2024.
- 1.4 The transformation work taking place within housing and repairs services aims to achieve the following outcomes:
 - Residents experience an empathetic, joined-up housing service and access the support they need quickly and effectively
 - Residents have access to decent, safe, warm and friendly housing and advice
 - Camden's estates and neighbourhoods have a greater sense of community cohesion and belonging
 - Residents and staff are more connected, feel listened to and empowered; and their feedback is used to drive improvement.

2. HOUSING SERVICES PERFORMANCE

2.1 Tenant participation and engagement

- 2.1.1 Involving residents in council services is widespread across the Council, and the new social housing regulatory framework places additional emphasis on how tenants are involved in shaping their services, holding their landlord to account, having their voices heard, and being informed about performance.
- 2.1.2 As part of Camden’s work to listen to and empower tenant voices both through tenancy visits and the intensive tenant participation programme, Council staff have visited 4,750 homes and held pop-up events attended by various Council teams on 16 council estates to discuss estate and service improvement with tenants. This has involved close working with TRAs and active community organisations. More events are scheduled, particularly door knocking in some areas of street properties to have conversations with tenants in those properties. Some early findings from the events held so far show that anti-social behaviour remains a consistent theme across Camden estates as well as issues with the satisfactory completion of repairs. Residents spoke favourably about where they live; appreciating the neighbourliness of their estates and how people look out for each other; and some expressed an interest in participating in matters regarding their estate – eg opportunities for estate gardening and growing schemes.
- 2.1.3 A tenant conference is being planned for next year where there will be discussions on topics that tenants decide are most important to them, as well opportunities for wider consultations. This is the subject of another report on the agenda for this meeting

2.2 Management of empty council homes (voids)

- 2.2.1 Reducing the number of empty homes, and the time taken to turn them around before letting is a priority. Voids management has shown improvement, with the number of average void turnaround days decreasing from 228 days in Q3 22/23 to 180 days in Q2 23/24. The slight increase from 160 days in August to 202 days in September was due to the ongoing work to return some of the Council’s longest-standing vacant homes back into use. As properties with longer void periods are let they will slightly skew the average times.

	Q3 2022-23	Q4 2022-23	Q1 2023-24	Q2 2023-24	Change Q3 2022 to Q2 2023
Average re-let times for empty	228	232	206	180	21% reduction in days void

2.3 Rent arrears

	Q4 2022-23	Q1 2023-24	Q2 2023-24
Rent arrears	£15,293,089	£17,104,480	£17,935,141
Collection rate	97.37%	94.72%	95.95%
% of tenants in 7 weeks+ arrears	15.22%	15.44%	16.12%
Number of tenants on UC	6,076	6,399	6,594
Total arrears by tenants on UC	£ 7,140,272	£8,930,423	£9,523,126
% of tenants on UC direct payments (as of all UC claimants)	33%	33%	33%
Number of tenants claiming full housing benefit (HB)	2,463	2,423	2,393
% of tenants claiming full HB in arrears	11%	11%	11%
Number of tenants claiming partial HB	6,647	6,571	6,553
% of tenants claiming partial HB in arrears	42%	44%	45%
Number of tenants not claiming HB	13,259	13,337	13,423
% of tenants claiming no HB in arrears	60%	60%	61%

2.3.1 Rising rent arrears remains a key challenge for the Council, with tenants struggling with additional financial pressures from rising heating charges, rent charges and increased cost of living. Whilst the arrears have increased, data in recent quarters shows a slow-down in the rate of growth. In September 2022, the Council set up a rent pilot to have a focussed team supporting residents with rent arrears. Following a review of this pilot, it is being extended as part of the Council's approach to meeting the challenge of growing arrears.

2.4 Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

2.4.1 Anti-social behaviour remains a key priority for many of Camden's residents. In response to this, Housing is working with colleagues in Contact Camden and Community Safety to form an operational ASB task force to tackle issues and jointly improve processes and make sure the Council maintains contact and communication with residents reporting ASB.

2.4.2 Anti-social behaviour is also a new reporting requirement of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and is a key tenant satisfaction measure. Housing services are

working towards ensuring the services' reporting arrangements are compliant with these regulations, and lead to better management of cases for residents,

2.5 Fire Safety

2.5.1 Ensuring the safety of Camden residents and those the Council are a landlord for is of paramount importance, and fire safety is central to this. The number of outstanding fire risk assessments (FRAs) and fire safety actions is falling each quarter. As of October 2023, Housing have completed 97% of the fire risk assessments on Camden estates. Housing is prioritising the completion of fire risk assessment actions, actively monitoring and reporting them at both the Fire Risk Compliance Safety Panel and the Housing Safety and Regulatory Board.

2.6 Domestic violence and abuse (DVA) and violence against women and girls (VAWG)

2.6.1 During 2022/23, 11% (236) of homelessness cases reported domestic abuse as the main reason for loss of accommodation. DVA is disproportionately a gendered issue; in 85% of DVA homelessness cases the main applicant self-identified as a woman. Transgender applicants also are disproportionately affected, with 25% of all transgender homelessness applicants reporting fleeing domestic violence and abuse as the reason they are homelessness.

2.6.2 Housing is working to achieve Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation and have been working with a full time DAHA Coordinator since March 2023. There are a number of areas of work taking place across the Housing service in relation to this, including reviewing some past cases to learn from how they were managed, and bringing staff training up-to-date so that responses to tenants experiencing abuse and violence is improved.

2.7 Enquiries and complaints

2.7.1 How the Council responds to enquiries and complaints leaves a marked impression on residents, and there is ambition across the service to make concerted improvements in this area. For the last quarter (July to September) Housing services responded to just over a quarter (28%) of Stage 1 complaints within the target time of 10 days.

2.7.2 The service is taking actions to improve responses to complaints, including routing all tenancy management complaints to one team from December for better co-ordination and ensuring holding responses are sent where enquiries require responses from multiple teams and may take longer than the target time. Housing will be conducting an analysis of where complaints are currently being held up and reviewing some complaints in order to learn from them. Such learning will be built into service improvement plans.

2.8 Conclusion

2.8.1 Service improvements across Housing are very much focussed on seeking to ease the pressures residents are experiencing particularly in regard to accessing services

and dealing with the cost-of-living crisis. Housing services are also looking to improve how it uses data to help it monitor progress and look for early corrective actions where possible.

2.8.2 Feedback from DMC on the contents of this report and the measures presented is welcomed.

Report Ends