

SERVICE UPDATE

This is a joint report prepared by Heads of Service. The report provides Operational Board Members with a general overview and update on current issues.

Head of Housing Management

The Government road map is finally giving us all some hope that the country is starting to head back to some sort of normality. The vaccination program is now well underway in Derby. I had my first vaccination in March at the Velodrome and found it to be very efficient and well organised. I hope that those of you that have received yours have had a similar experience.

The Housing Management Team together with the rest of Derby Homes are working on our recovery plan with the intention of incorporating any learning from the last twelve months. At the next meeting I hope to be able to give you a far clearer picture about what that will look like. In terms of updates, as always you have a number of reports that cover my service area. Therefore, I am going to concentrate on development with the Derby Association of Community Partners (DACP).

DACP

As you will be aware from the report that came to the last Operational Board, a lot of work has been done to rebuild the DACP. At the last meeting you agreed further funding for the group subject to the following measures being successfully completed:

- review and implementation of the memorandum and articles
- final decision on the Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer
- decision on the structure of the company (proposed to be a company limited by guarantee)
- agreement by the DACP to the standard terms and conditions within the grant agreement document supplied by Derby Homes

I can update you on the progress that has been made during the quarter. Sam Taylor has been doing a brilliant job of supporting members and getting new people interested. There are currently 11 members, 9 of which attended the last meeting. The group are going from strength to strength with meetings held on a monthly basis. During the quarter the following things have been achieved:

- The DACP have agreed to remain as a company limited by guarantee.
- The Memorandum & Articles have been finalised and agreed.
- The grant agreement will be signed off by members at their meeting on 22 April.
- The Terms of Reference have been discussed and roles are being assigned.

- There are 2 confirmed directors (Linda and Kristine), and another 2 who wish to become directors and share the chair / vice chair role (Jill and Tammy)
- We have 2 members who want to be joint secretaries (Claudia and Ruth) who will be responsible for advertising and partnership working.

Head of Housing Options & Homelessness

Derby Homes – Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP)

Derby Homes in partnership with the Council were successful in securing £2.4m funding from the Next Steps Accommodation Programme to acquire properties for use by rough sleepers or those threatened with rough sleeping.

The funding has enabled the purchase of 20 1 bed flats for use exclusively by rough sleepers (or those at risk of rough sleeping) for the next 30 years. By working across Housing Options, Housing Strategy and our Maintenance Teams we met the deadline of acquiring and refurbishing all of these homes ready for occupation by 31 March 2021.

The REST Team developed an assessment matrix to assess the suitability of around 60 people identified as being rough sleepers or at risk of rough sleeping in the city in order to ensure fair allocation of the properties. The Housing Options Temporary Accommodation team worked to ensure that all of the properties were fully furnished and equipped in order to provide the best opportunity for those allocated a property to succeed.

Following a period of pre tenancy engagement, 20 customers were identified and during the course of January through to the middle of March 2021, all were successfully moved into their new accommodation. The flats are dispersed at various locations in and around the city centre. Support to being funded through a revenue element in the Grant for the next 3 years and being provided by Riverside and Action Housing. Each customer receives up to 5 hours of support per week for the duration of their stay.

Derby Homefinder Rolling Review

During April the Derby Homefinder team have been busy conducting a rolling review of households on the housing register identifying those that have not expressed an interest in any property within the previous 3 months. There were 3000 customers that were identified through this process with each household emailed by a member of the Derby Homefinder team, explaining that during these uncertain times we were using the time to review and update our records. The review of the housing register is a rolling review over a three month cycle.

Private Rented Access

The private rented sector access team continues to generate additional properties for our customers, enabling a greater number of homeless preventions and relief of homelessness, which is always a better outcome for all. At the end of March 2021, the team had assisted 237 households into private rented accommodation an increase of 77 compared with the previous year which achieved a remarkable 160 new tenancies in the private rented sector.

The continued success of the team will need to be repeated this year as we look to recover from the pandemic and help to meet the housing needs of customers requiring Housing Options assistance. The focus will be continuing working with the homelessness team to prevent homelessness wherever possible.

Head of Finance and Income

Head of Service Update – Finance & Income

COVID Commentary

All teams are predominately working from home and this will continue be the case as the current restrictions continue. We are not experiencing nor anticipating a material impact to the service or to customers during these restrictions.

Staffing numbers across the teams are around normal levels and with flexibility around working hours as necessary the core service remains delivered.

Derby Advice

The Debt Respite (Breathing Space) Scheme

The Government has introduced the Breathing Space Scheme which comes into effect on 4th May 2021 and is to be administered by the Insolvency Service. The aim is to give debtors respite from their creditors to allow them time to seek specialist debt advice. There are 2 types of Breathing Space:

- standard breathing space- this is available to anyone and gives the debtor protection from creditor action for 60 days. Most types of enforcement action, creditor contact and interest/charges are frozen for this period. Applications must be made by debt advisors who are authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to provide debt counselling. It can only be applied once in a 12-month period
- mental health crisis breathing space- only available to people who are receiving mental health crisis treatment. Referrals are made from mental health practitioners to debt advisors. The protection lasts for the period of the crisis treatment, plus 30 days. There is no limit to the number of times someone can have this type of breathing space

Our specialist Money Advisers will be able to make applications for our tenants through the Insolvency Service portal. Jaz Sanghera, Income Manager, is the nominated creditor contact for Derby Homes, and he will receive notification if a Derby Homes tenant with rent arrears has been placed under the scheme.

Debt Awareness Week

Monday 22 March - Sunday 28 March marked Debt Awareness Week 2021; the aim of which was to destigmatise and raise awareness about debt. The Money Advice Team prepared information on the service, which was posted on Derby Homes' social media and included in the Derby Home wide staff update during the week.

Partnership working with DCC

The Money Advice Team Leader has been working closely with teams in Derby City Council on the following:

- working with the Benefits Team Leader to update the allowable expenses for the Single Discretionary Award for the new financial year
- attending Council Tax Liaison Group meetings with DCC, the Jubilee project and Citizens Advice to discuss issues regarding the collection/enforcement of Council Tax

This is all part of ensuring there is a joined up partnership approach to dealing with tenants debt cases.

Staff Update

Rebecca Vickers and Elizabeth Bailey have both passed the Institute of Money Advisors (IMA) Certificate in Money Advice Practice. This means that 7 out of 8 of the team are now accredited IMA members.

Rebecca Vickers has also received confirmation from the IMA that they have approved her Debt Relief Order (DRO) intermediary status and she is now able to process DROs. This means that 3 out of the 4 specialist money advisers are now approved intermediaries.

The continued building of professional development of the team over the past few years, will ensure that the team are appropriately trained and professionally registered to deliver services to customers.

Debt Relief Order - Government consultation

Debt Relief Orders (DROs) are one way to deal with your debts if you owe less than £20,000, do not have much spare income and do not own your home.

If you get one:

- your creditors cannot recover their money without the court's permission
- you're usually freed ('discharged') from your debts after 12 months

Derby Homes submitted a response to the Government's consultation proposing to make changes to the future eligibility criteria for DROs on 12 February 2021. Generally, these changes were around making the DRO option more accessible to people and recognised the likely increase in the number of people who may need to utilise this option over the next 12 to 24 months. The decision on the proposed changes is to be made in the next few months

Benefit Appeal Tribunals and other benefits issues

The Welfare Rights team have experienced another significant slow-down in listings for appeal tribunals since the start of 2021. This has impacted on our ability to resolve outstanding benefit cases until appeals are listed and heard, which impacts performance data for the team. We have not received any communication from the Her Majesty's Court and Tribunal Service (HMC&TS) to explain the reasons why but we know from our welfare rights networks that this is the national picture.

The DWP has announced that face to face assessments for disability benefits and work capability are due to resume in May 2021. These assessments will lead to an increase in benefit decisions. This will increase demand on the welfare rights team to challenge decisions.

Winter Covid Grant Scheme

The winter support payment for energy and water bills is distributed through partners in the Derby Advice Alliance and works on a referral system from 'approved referrers'. DCC have extended the grant until 16 April 2021 .

All staff in Derby Advice have made full use of this scheme and have submitted referrals on behalf of residents of Derby and tenants. All referrals have been successful.

Rollout of this scheme has been the priority piece of work for the Derby Advice Alliance over the winter- spring months

- 194 referrals submitted with £28k paid in vouchers
- An analysis of the 194 households referred by Derby Homes shows:
 - 106 single person households with a voucher award of £12,750
 - 10 couples with no children with a voucher award of £1,500
 - 22 couples with children with an award value of £3,960
 - 56 single parent households with an award value of £10,080
 - In total 179 children benefitted from these awards

Income Management

End of financial year 2020/21 - Arrears Update

As at year end, current tenants rent arrears were £1,758,851. Over the year this is an increase of 10.5%, or £167,823. This is a good outcome and far lower than the Housemark nationally reported position of 19% increases.

We believe that the supportive, flexible, and empathetic approach to tenants (who engage with us) in arrears, in the long run has been the correct approach. Anecdotally we are aware of a number of tenants who were in arrears, some for the first time, but with the support of Derby Homes entered into payment arrangements and are managing their arrears appropriately.

In summary terms, 812 tenants (6.5% of tenants) owe more than 7-week gross arrears with a total of just over £1.1m in arrears (63.5% of the total current rent arrears). Compared with last year there were 788 tenants (6.31% of tenants) owing more than 7 weeks gross arrears. We did not record a monetary figure at the time.

The number of tenants owing above £2,000 has more than doubled this year. Mainly this has been because these particular tenants have stopped engaging and there has been little alternative formal (legal) action that can be taken due to the new conditions around court and evictions. We expect this number to reduce when full recovery options are available again. However, it is likely that at some stage there will be a spike in bad debts and /or a step change increase in the number of high arrears cases (who are making small contributions against the arrears, the smallest can be £3.75 per week).

	Total Number of Cases	Arrears	Cases over £2,000 rent arrears	% of cases over £2,000
March 2021	3,310		129 (£373,658)	3.89%
March 2020	3,468		63 (£158,239)	1.81%
March 2019	3,817		40 (£104,917)	1.15%

As expected, housing benefit claimants are reducing and tenants claiming Universal Credit are increasing either because they have lost their job, on reduced hours or been furloughed. This is a trend which we expect to continue. We expect changes in employment or reduction in tenants' incomes as furlough support comes to an end later this year.

The situation with the HM courts continues with only eviction warrants issued in certain specified cases, such as abandonment, antisocial behaviour and domestic violence cases or seriously high arrears cases.

Evictions

As mentioned, evictions were mainly suspended by the Government for most of 2020/2021. Derby Homes carried out two evictions in the year and both properties had been abandoned by the tenants before the eviction took place.

Notices

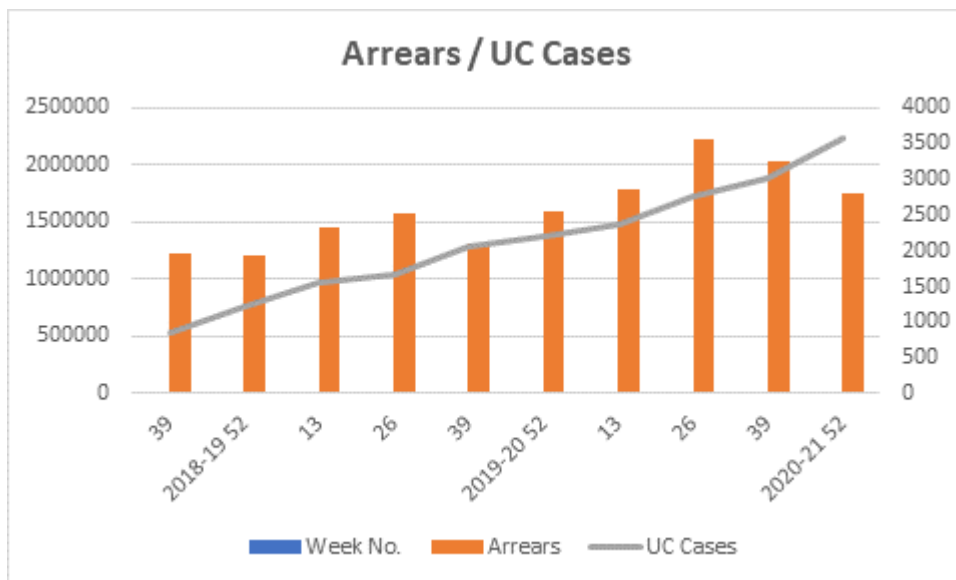
The number of Notices served was significantly down compared with previous years with only 124 being served. This was mainly because of the decision initially not to serve notices early on during the Covid outbreak, lockdown periods and the governments requirement of at least 6-month arrears before a notice could be served

Universal Credit

Universal Credit will continue to have an impact on rent arrears levels as the number of cases increase. Over the last year or so the number of cases has increased from 2,208 to 3,571 which is an increase of nearly 62% over the year. We believe we are around the halfway mark with the number of tenants who will be on Universal Credit.

The nature of Universal Credit is the housing costs are paid in arrears. Over the years the number of weeks for the first payment have reduced with benefit run on's and speedier payments to the landlords.

The graph shows the increase in rent arrears levels as Universal Credit cases increase.



Welfare Reform update

After the tenfold increase in universal credit claims at the start of the financial year, the numbers have settled down to more manageable levels.

From 18 January to 22 March 2021, the number of new universal credit claims has stabilized, and we are seeing net increases of about 20 claims per week, this is considering claims and tenancies that have ended. As detailed above, at the end of 2020/21 there were just over 3,500 tenants in receipt of UC, around half the total number we anticipate eventually on this benefit.

We envisage that Derby's migration of existing legacy benefit claimants to Universal Credit is likely to happen sometime during late 2021 or 2022. The government expects to finish moving existing benefit and tax credit claimants onto Universal Credit by September 2024.

We continue to work alongside other teams in Derby Homes, such as Tenancy Sustainment to ensure that universal credit claimants get the best possible start to their new tenancy and so that we can identify vulnerabilities at the earliest stage. We can then apply for Alternative Payment Arrangements (APA) and Third-Party Deductions (TPD) to help our most vulnerable universal credit claimants and subsequently reduce the impact on rent arrears.

In March, we wrote to all tenants in receipt of UC advising them on when and how to update their UC journal with details of their new rent in April. We carried out the same exercise this time last year. This is to help ensure that the Housing Costs element within the UC claim continues to be paid and at the correct amount – reducing errors which can cause delays in payments to the tenants and /or ourselves.

The Jobcentre Plus opening hours have been reduced from 18 January 2021. Opening hours will be 10am to 2pm. This is a temporary change and will allow the DWP to continue providing safe and essential services for those who need to come into the Jobcentre and who are unable to interact with us on the phone or digitally. The opening hours of [phone lines](#) remain as they were. In addition, the [Relay UK service](#) and the [Video relay service](#).

Since 3 November 2020 instead of receiving a 4-weekly schedule we now receive APA payments from the DWP daily, the same time as our tenants receive their universal credit payments. The daily payments have made it easier to manage our rent accounts because we will be able to more readily identify which payment relates to which period and it irons out the peaks and troughs every time we received the 4-weekly payment schedule. The TPD's and APA over/underpayments are still received on a 4-weekly schedule. The last month's APA payments from the DWP averaged at £116,538 per week, which equates to over £0.46m per month.

Universal Credit Statistics

As at 5 th April 2021 (year-end)	Number	Gross Arrears
UC singles	1,306	422,004
UC couples *(includes 17 mac)	271	64,210
UC families *(includes 2 mac)	1,994	636,836
Total	3,571	£1,123,050
Gross UC arrears	1,813	£1,123,050
Cases with no arrears/credits	1,758	-£358,767
Net UC arrears	3,571	£764,283
Average arrears per UC Case (£1,123,050 / 3,571)	3,571	£314.49
Daily Alternative Payment Arrangements (APA) since last quarter report	3,680	£1,316,627
Monthly Third-Party Deductions (TPD) since last quarter	1,170	£56,279
Total	4,850	£1,372,906

*mac (mixed age couples)

Highlights of tenants on UC

- 3,571 tenants on UC
- 41% on APA's (where DWP pay directly to Landlord the housing claim for weekly rent costs)
- 16% on Third Party Deductions (where a deduction from the UC claim is paid direct to Landlord to cover rent arrears)
- 1,758 tenants (49%) with no arrears or in credit on their rent account
- £1,372,906 income claimed "automatically" from DWP since last quarter via APA's & TPD's

Accountancy and Accounts Payable Teams

The Accountancy team are currently preparing the 2020/21 Financial Statements and will be liaising with the External Auditors in May. The audit will be conducted remotely as was the case in 2020.

We have started initial discussions with Derby City Council over a replacement for the current financial system – Oracle. The current system was implemented in 2007, with a 2012 major update. A new system is timely and targeted for implementation in April 2023. This will be a significant project for the team and Derby Homes.

Rental Control

The annual rent variation pack (approx. 12,700 packs plus garages, additionally another approx. 800 Stores and Parking permits) were sent out in March and all went well.

We continue to look at the options of introducing paperless direct debit forms for tenants. Once introduced this should save on administration and time for both tenants and ourselves.

Leaseholders – we are looking at options to improve how the Leaseholder Forum can be managed online – we adopted Microsoft Teams (rather than Skype) for the April forum. In addition, we are looking into a new piece of software to improve the ease and timeliness which Leaseholders can report issues to us and for us to get messages to them.

Head of Capital Works

This update, across all Teams within the Capital Works Division (Capital Projects / Development / Estates Maintenance / Planned Maintenance Teams) summarises the main issues impacting on the Team, the works undertaken by the Teams, and the upcoming activities prior to the next meeting of this Operational Board. (Update written on 16 April 2021 – Figures included in this report based on that date).

Estates Maintenance Team

Grounds and Garden Maintenance

The Grounds Maintenance Team commenced the cutting of grass to the 323 communal areas on the 22 March, with the second cycle of cutting having commenced at the time of writing this update. During 2020, the Team achieved 10 cuts across all sites, in spite of; the Covid 19 absences, the secondment of staff to other critical DCC services for four months of the growing season, and delays in the arrival of new mowing equipment. There is a degree of confidence that further significant improvements in performance will be achieved in 2021.

The Garden Maintenance Teams commenced the cutting of lawns and the delivery of garden maintenance to 509 properties on the 25 March.

Progress on both workstreams is updated weekly through an activity programme supplied by Streetpride to the Estates Maintenance Team.

Crime Prevention Team

The Derbyshire Police and Crime Commissioner secured £514,000 from the Home Office's £25 million Safer Streets Fund to deliver a catalogue of free safety improvements across Derbyshire.

In the latest phase of the Project, residents in the West End area of Derby are invited to book a free crime prevention appointment which will see staff from Derby Homes Crime Prevention Team visiting to carry out a free home security check to recommend and install necessary crime prevention improvements. These could include solar lights, improved window locks and window alarms. The scheme is part of a multi-agency partnership to crackdown on theft, burglary and robbery in the West End area.

Up until the 31 March 2021, Derby Homes had received 231 individual enquiries for the target hardening service, of which 162 properties have been visited by an Crime Prevention Officer to offer advice and assess their respective home.

During the booking process, 577 phone calls were made between Derby Homes and members of the public to organise appointments which included proactively speaking to identified residents with known vulnerabilities.

A summary of the crime prevention equipment issued/installed is outlined below:

- 94 solar spotlights have been fitted to properties with limited lighting at the rear access points which were identified in the crime hypothesis as being a primary route of entry for perpetrators to break into properties.
 - Over 800 window alarms have been distributed by Crime Prevention Officers based on the property assessments conducted which helped to identify vulnerable access points.
 - 196 personal alarms have been issued to residents for their personal protection to address the threat of robbery in the area.
- 4 locks were deemed insubstantial based on assessments carried out within all properties. These were changed and upgraded by Crime Prevention Officers.

In addition to the crime prevention work, one resident informed an officer that they were a victim of an ongoing incident. The officer was able to offer immediate advice and signposted this resident to a partner agency. They have since updated Derby Homes they are in much better spirits and thanked them for their assistance.

The current phase of the Project was due to finish on 31 March; however, this has now been extended until 31 May. During the extension period of April and May, Derby Homes have made plans to:

- Install another 47 further solar lights to properties
- Distribute 50 PIR shed alarms to properties (Secure by Design approved).
- Distribute 30 garage bolts (Secure by Design approved).
- Distribute 150 identify pens to properties.

Planned Maintenance Team

The Planned Maintenance Team has commenced the project management of a wide variety of capital and revenue works, to be delivered during the 2021/22 financial year programme. The headline items can be summarised as follows:

- Re-roofing Works (Budget £1.5 million) – Our contractors, JAL Roofing and Avonside Roofing are carrying out re-roofing works across the Cowsley and St Albans Estates, throughout the year.

- Replacement External Doors & Windows (Budget £1.5 million) – Our contractor, Nationwide are mainly upgrading external doors and frames across the City, throughout the year.
- Solid Wall Insulation Works - Significant additional funding has been obtained, with the Council, through the Green Home Grant, which has afforded considerable opportunities to carry out energy efficiency works. A total allocation of £2.3m has been awarded.
The timescales for delivery are extremely tight and work will need to be completed by the end of December 2021. Whilst we have identified the final few uninsulated council homes for support, the majority of the grant will support work to private homes on Council estates.
We have now agreed the details of a scheme of improvement work to non-traditional flats in Mackworth to secure ERDF grant funding for energy efficiency improvements via our joint bid with Nottingham City Council. This scheme will provide low carbon heating upgrades, solar PV and external wall insulation to 48 existing homes and will attract £380k in grant funding. Westville are contracted to carry out the majority of these works.
- Redecoration Works – Internally (Budget £290,000) – As part of the Home Decoration Scheme, to be delivered by our contractor, Buxton Decorators.
- Redecoration Works - Externally – The Repairs Prior to Painting (Budget £834,000) & External / Internal Painting (Budget £587,000) Works - carried out by Allsopp & McCleod and Bell Group respectively, are working across the City throughout the year.
- Major Adaptations and Extensions (Budget £700,000) – The Team have a number of such projects utilising the services of external contractors and the in-house workforce.

Capital Projects Team

Major Improvement Works

NSAP Project - As mentioned earlier in this report The Capital Projects Team and the Voids Team worked together to refurbish the properties, which required various levels of refurbishment between £1,000 and £30,000.

COVID Testing for Asymptomatic Individuals - Derby Homes supported the Council in constructing a Testing facility within the Riverside Centre on Pride Park for people who are asymptomatic. This involved constructing 12 Testing Stations, laying floor coverings to staff and testing areas, forming access ramps, erecting access routes through the Centre, moving seating and portable washing facilities from elsewhere in the City to the Centre. The Centre was closed on 30th March and relocated in a smaller form to the ground floor of the Council House, where it reopened on 19th April.

Acquired Properties Work – Throughout 2020/21 the CPT continued to focus on turning around large-scale refurbishments of passive voids and newly acquired homes. Since the last update in February 2021, a further 15 properties have been completed.

Kitchen / Bathroom / Wet Rooms / Adaptations Works in Occupied Properties –
All workstreams restarted, working in occupied properties, on 6th April 2021, immediately after Easter.

Over the next 3 months it is intended to increase the resources within the Capital Works Team to deliver more kitchen replacements over the coming years. We are also in the process of selecting a new kitchen supplier and will work with a group of tenants to on this process.

Clearly the stop/start nature of work during 2020/21 has meant that we are playing catch up now on scheduled work, alongside the work planned for completion during 2020/21.

New Build Programme

Delivery - The Schemes are being delivered through a mix of external local contractors constructing the substructures, external superstructures (building shell) and the external works, with the in-house team generally completing the internal fit out.

Notably since the last update, works were completed on the nine bungalows for the War Memorial Village. These properties are a glimpse into the future of housing standards and something Derby Homes can be very proud to have delivered for the Charity and the City.

The key features of these properties are:

- Underfloor heating
- Air-source heat pumps
- Triple glazing
- Well insulated floors, roofs and walls
- Solar panels on the roofs
- Car ports with electric vehicle charging ports

The table below summarises the current programme of new build work on or recently on site.

Address	Units	Project Managed by	Actual / Proposed Completion Date
Perth Street	7 x 2b Houses + 4 x 4b Houses (11 units)	Derby City Council	Practical Completion - May 2021 (In Two Phases)
Gerard Street	4 x 2b Houses	Derby Homes Letts Whittaker Architects	Practical Completion - May 2021

The table below details the next Projects due to start on site in the next two months.

Address	Units	Project Managed by	Start / Proposed Completion Date
Berwick Ave	1 x 3b Bungalows	Derby Homes Arcus	May 2021 / January 2022
Chesapeake Road	6 x 2b Houses + 2 x 4b Houses (8 units)	Derby Homes DCC Architects	May 2021 / June 2022

Cummings Street	4 x 2b Houses	Derby Homes DCC Architects	June 2021 / June 2022
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Development Team

The Team continue to work with consultants in preparing scheme feasibility reports, designs and working drawings for future new build projects, such that a prompt start can be made when the projects currently on site are completed.

In addition, the Development Team are re also reviewing the risks for new projects that were due to start during the second half of 2020/21. Activities include:

- Managing Leaseholder issues prior to the demolition of the Crompton Street Garages and Blagreaves Avenue Storage building. Preparatory work for the housing projects
- Identifying different ways of delivering future schemes, mixing delivery between; inhouse teams, SME local contractors and larger regional contractors. Pre-programming commencement on site dates for Crompton Street, Blagreaves Avenue and Barlow Street.
- Carrying out preparatory design work for Barlow Street flats and Grange Avenue bungalows, both projects that we are keen to get into the planning process as soon as possible.
- Commencing the consultation process in conjunction with our communication consultants with residents on Bretton Avenue, Littleover, to develop nature and extent of the redevelopment

Head of Repairs

It goes without saying that this financial year 2020/21 has been extremely challenging due to the coronavirus pandemic. Our main focus has been to keep our customers safe, warm and dry. We have safely carried out over 850 'essential repairs' per month.

To ensure that we could manage our resources and work safely 'routine' works were affected during the year. We stopped taking new requests for all but essential works but continued to work through those already in the system. Throughout the year we have effectively caught up on these jobs which now gives us an opportunity in the new financial year to have something of a fresh start.

We re-opened a full repairs service from 6 April 2021 and are expecting an increase in repair requests due to the impact of the pandemic. Financial provision has been made to cope with additional demand.

We have started to trial a new 'face time' type system with tenants who are comfortable using mobile technology to assist with diagnosing repairs. The initial feedback is positive from both staff and customers and we are planning to roll this out in the coming months.

Voids

Our team working on empty homes have continued to work throughout the year, ensuring that we have been able to relet homes to individuals and families in need.

Interestingly the team actually completed more empty homes during 20/21 than the previous year.

We remain focussed on improving our work across Derby Homes to minimise the time that homes are un-occupied and have regular cross-team meetings to explore ways of improving the service and better communicating across teams.

The material issues that we had experienced earlier in the financial year have improved significantly and our suppliers support is greatly appreciated. We will continue to monitor the material availability and any changes with working practices now the pandemic is hopefully coming to an end.

Electrical Servicing and Compliance

Although we were forced to suspend electrical testing for three months at the start of the pandemic the team subsequently caught up and maintained compliance.

Access has improved and our customers have been very accommodating under the circumstances.

Gas Team

Alongside the challenges created through the pandemic our gas servicing team also had to deal with IT issues which caused problems with scheduling. Through extensive testing and upgrades of the IT system the situation was resolved and at the end of the year our performance was fully compliant. Only 20 homes were without a valid certificate but all have been visited at least three times or the tenants are continuing to shield.

Many gas breakdowns that are reported to us are caused by loss of pressure. This is an issue which is easy to resolve and we are currently trialling a new device that can be fitted to boilers and allows the system to be re-pressurised by the tenant, without the need for a visit from an engineer.

Water Safety (legionella)

Throughout the current pandemic we have carried on the water safety sampling and testing regime in the buildings that required it. We have also made sure that all void properties have had a Water Risk Assessment carried out before the property has been let and any remedial works have been carried out from this.

Any properties that have not been used i.e. community rooms have been drained and isolated and are programmed for water safety testing as soon as the property is put back in use.

We are 100% compliant in this area.

Head of Governance & Corporate Services Governance

We are now working towards this year's intake of Apprentices, the apprenticeship vacancies adverts will start to be rolled out during April and May, with the recruitment and selection processes taking place during the summer in time for a start date of September. We will be taking on a total of 17 new apprentices, see below:

- 1 Electrical Apprentice
- 3 Joinery Apprentices
- 2 Plastering Apprentices
- 1 Plumbing & Heating Apprentice
- 2 Surveying Apprentices
- 1 Health and Safety Apprentice
- 3 Housing Apprentices
- 1 Anti-Social Behaviour Apprentice
- 1 Accounts Assistant Apprentice
- 1 Customer Service Apprentice
- 1 Procurement Apprentice

If Board Members or others would like to discuss this report ahead of the meeting please contact

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