

SERVICE UPDATE

Report of Heads of Service

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 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.

2 Housing Management – Lorraine Testro

- 2.1 This will be my final Head of service report to you. On 16 December 2022 I will be retiring after 3.5 years as Head of Housing Management and 15 years at Derby Homes. I have stayed here longer than anywhere else in my career and have met some amazing people along the way. It's a great organisation to work for and I will be genuinely sad to leave. However, I feel that the time is right for me, there's so much I still want to do in life and so many places to see. Life is short and I intend to make the most of every minute. It will give me an opportunity to spend quality time with my parents, friends, children, and grandchildren.

- 2.2 There are some challenging economic times ahead of us all, however I am confident that as always everyone involved with Derby Homes will continue to pull together and find the resilience to weather the storm.

- 2.3 I am going to focus my final report telling you about some of the good work that has been carried in the safeguarding arena this year.

2.4 Domestic Abuse Housing Accreditation

- 2.4.1 Derby Homes have been working over the last year towards gaining accreditation for the work that it carries out around domestic abuse. Assessment Dates are planned to take place over 3 days in December 2022. The assessment dates will consist of interviewing staff from across the organisation, ranging from Customer Service Advisors to Senior Management. During the interviews, accreditors will discuss with staff how the domestic abuse policy and process fits with their area of work.

- 2.4.2 The final part of the assessment will be a morning and afternoon session that the accreditors will spend with Complex Needs Officers from Housing Management and Senior Homelessness Advisors from Housing Options to look at Case Management Systems, notes, and tasks. These are the two teams most heavily involved in delivering domestic abuse services within Derby Homes.

- 2.4.3 Evidence has been submitted to the accreditors ahead of the assessment dates, the evidence provided includes the two separate policies for Staff and Customers agreed by the Operational Board as well as our internal process, guidance, and procedure. I am sure that the new Head of Service will update you on the outcome of the assessment in the new year.

2.5 **Safeguarding Campaigns for staff**

- 2.5.1 Over the last two years we have run successful safeguarding campaigns. We concentrated on Domestic Abuse in 2021 and Exploitation in 2022. During the 2022 campaign, monthly updates were sent to staff via the communications team and training was delivered by organisations such as Safe and Sound.
- 2.5.2 The campaigns are used as a way of communicating changes to staff but also highlighting safeguarding issues and reminding staff that Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. It is important, particularly in the current climate that safeguarding is kept high on the agenda and staff are aware how they can report concerns.
- 2.5.3 The safeguarding champions are involved in selecting the campaign each year and have chosen Neglect for 2023. Neglect is the highest category of abuse observed by Derby Homes staff in their day-to-day work.

2.6 **Promoting safeguarding to customers in 2022**

- 2.6.1 An article on safeguarding has featured in both editions of the newsletter this year. There have also been several social media posts. They have covered the following topics: Modern Slavery, Domestic Abuse, Human Trafficking, Hate Crime and Cuckooing as well as including a feature on our safeguarding team. This informed customers aware about how and where they could report safeguarding issues.
- 2.6.2 We will continue to ensure that safeguarding topics are promoted during 2023.
- 2.6.3 I will finish by wishing you all the best for 2023, it has been a pleasure working with you all.

3 **Head of Service update – Ian Yeomans Head of Capital Works**

- 3.1 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 11 November 2022 – Figures included in this report based on that date).

3.2 **Estates Maintenance**

3.2.1 **Estates Pride Programme 22/23 – Update**

3.2.2 Proposals

Capital Budget - The decision of the Operational Board on 9th December 2021 was that all £250,000 Capital Budget to be expended on installing hardstandings. Key features of the programme are:

- 50% carried out by Streetpride - Works commenced May 2022
- 50% carried out by McCabe Civils - Works commenced July 2022
- Delivery split due to ensure capacity to deliver.

3.2.3 Revenue Budget - Well Managed Highways Revenue Budget (other than small areas Well Managed Highways Revenue Budget (other than small areas). 150,000 of resurfacing are programmed & will be completed by Streetpride.

3.2.4 Summary of Budget

• Hardstandings – Stream 1 – Streetpride	£125,000
• Hardstandings – Stream 2 – McCabe Civils	£125,000
• Resurfacing of Car Parking Areas – Streetpride	<u>£150,000</u>
	£400,000

3.3 Works delivered to date

3.3.1 Hardstandings

- Completed – 51Nr / Cost: **£162,000**
- Programmed – 33Nr (November:22Nr / January:11Nr)
- Hardstandings programmed in January are those subject to Planning Permission)

3.3.2 Well Managed Highways

- Completed
 - Access road and car park adjacent to 21 to 31 Berwick Avenue - **£26,285**
 - Car Park to Second Avenue / Filbert Walk – **£22,066**
- Programmed – Works to various sites (Wiltshire Rd/Mundy Street/Shetland Close/Kinross Ave/Maine Drive). Works to be carried out November through January following the conclusion of any leaseholder / resident consultation.

3.4 Grounds and Garden Maintenance

3.4.1 The Grounds Maintenance Team commenced the cutting of grass to the 325 communal areas on the 15 March 2022, with the 8th cycle of mowing, completed at the time of writing this update. The Garden Maintenance Teams commenced the cutting of lawns and the delivery of garden maintenance to 462 properties on the 15 March 2022, with the 11th cycle of gardening visits completed. The programme of Winter Works commenced on 1 November 2022. Progress on both workstreams is updated weekly through an activity programme supplied by Streetpride to the Estates Maintenance Team.

- 3.4.2 Following the Operational Board Meeting in September officers from Derby Homes and Streetpride have commenced a Service Review, which will involve both leaseholders and tenants, in designing the Service Specification.

3.5 **Capital Works Team**

In House Team and Local Sub Contractors

- 3.5.1 New Build Programme Delivery - The Schemes are currently being delivered through a mix of external local contractors constructing the substructure, external superstructures (building shell) and the external works, with the in-house team generally completing the internal fit out. The table below summarises the current programme of new build work on site during 2022/23.
- 3.5.2 The focus of the in-house delivery team is on smaller sites (less than 10 units), structures two storeys or less and in locations that external contractors may find uneconomic due to their scale or location.

3.5.3	Address	Units	Project Managed by	Actual / Proposed Completion Date – Status on Site
	Berwick Ave	1 x 3b Bungalows	Derby Homes Arcus	SOS – October 2021 ECD – 9 December 22 2 nd fix elec/heating/ joinery works ongoing.
	Cummings Street	4 x 2b Houses	Derby Homes DCC Architects	SOS – March 2022 ECD - March 2023 Superstructure brickwork complete / Roof structure underway.
	Chesapeake Road	6 x 2b Houses + 2 x 4b Houses (8 units)	Derby Homes DCC Architects	SOS – February 2022 ECD - June 2023 Substructures / External retaining structures complete. Superstructure brickwork ready to start.
	Whittaker Street	2 x 4 bed houses	DH DCC Architects	SOS – November 22 ECD – September 23 Site clearance complete. Substructure excavations commenced.
	Bute Walk	Conversion of a Care home to 6 apartments including alterations to the	DH ARCUS Consulting	SOS – October 22 ECD – September 23 Site investigation excavations / Asbestos surveys completed.

	elevations and external works.		
Monyash Close	1 x bungalows M4(2)	DH ARCUS Consulting	Programmed SOS – February 2022

3.6 **Acquired Properties Work** – The CWT continues to focus on turning around large-scale refurbishments of passive voids and newly acquired homes. During Quarter 3 of 22/23, 14 properties are being refurbished.

3.7 **Kitchen / Bathroom / Wet Rooms / Adaptations Works in Occupied Properties** – All workstreams are well underway, working in occupied properties, delivering the 2022/23 programme.

3.8 **Development Team**
The Team continued to work with our consultants in preparing scheme feasibility reports, designs and working drawings for future new build projects.

3.8.1 To increase the scale and pace of delivery of the New Build Programme, external Contractors are being procured to deliver a range of projects.
The Procurement route will depend on; the level of design information available or required of the contractor, timing of delivery or level of contractor expertise required into the project. A set of Employers Requirements have been written to ensure Derby Homes Standards are incorporated into the projects.

3.9 **Delivery - External Main Contractors**

3.9.1 **Work Stream 1**

Procurement

Appointment of a Regional Contractor through tendered Mini Competition through EN Procure New Build Framework. Initial Phase of Barlow Street and Compton Street (Planning Constraints almost resolved / design advanced). Work Stream 1 is currently out to tender. Target Start on Site – Quarter 4, 22/23. Project Management through Arcus.

3.9.2 Further Projects at Oaklands Avenue and Patterson Avenue to be supplemented consequent to the resolution of the Leaseholder negotiations at Oaklands and the design finalisation at Patterson.

3.9.3

Address	Units	Project managed by	Notes
Barlow Street	12 3b/5p TA flats	DH ARCUS Consulting	Planning permission granted, subject to planning conditions. Remediation strategy required for ground investigation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree protection – Completed. • Sustainable drainage strategy – GCA completed. • Biodiversity enhancement report – completed.
Crompton Street	6 x 1 bed flats	DH ARCUS Consulting	Construction Information 90% Complete. Protracted Leaseholder issue resolved. Garage buildings and bases demolished.
Oaklands Avenue	6 x 1 bed flats	DH ARCUS Consulting	Construction Information 90% Complete. Protracted Leaseholder issue. On conclusion of agreement Storeroom Building on site to be demolished – Contractor ready.
Paterson Avenue	6 x 1 bed flats	DH ARCUS Consulting	Planning Permission granted. Existing Garages demolished. Subject to several conditions. Full design development in progress.

3.9.4

Work Stream 2

Address	Units	Project Managed by	Notes / Procurement Route
Grange Avenue	37 Bungalows	DH ARCUS Consulting	<u>Design</u> Planning Permission granted on 22.07.22. Subject to seventeen planning conditions. Full design development in progress. <u>Procurement</u> Appointment of a second Regional Contractor through tendered Mini Competition through EN Procure New Build Framework. Target Start on Site – Quarter 1 23/24.

			Project Management through Arcus.
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3.9.5 **Work Stream 3**

Address	Units	Project Managed by	Notes / Procurement Route
Bretton Avenue	Both Redevelopment & Refurbishment under consideration	DH ARCUS Consulting	<u>Consultation Process</u> Stage 1 – Initial event held early October 2021 with all options considered. Stage 2 – Feedback provided to all residents and focus consultation to further investigate favoured options – February 2022. Stage 3 – Open Day event held on 13 through 15 September 2022 to further explore new build / refurbishment options with residents. Stage 4 - Feedback provided to all residents / Councillors during November 2022. Intention to commence detailed design consultation with residents during January 2023.

3.10 **Planned Maintenance Team**

The Planned Maintenance Team continues to manage a wide variety of capital and revenue works, to be delivered during the 2022/23 financial year programme. The headline items can be summarised as follows:

- Re-roofing Works (Budget £2.4 million) – Our contractors, JAL Roofing and Avonside Roofing have completed three schemes, Cowsley Phases 7 through 9, replacing roof coverings and installing solar panels. These schemes straddled the 21/22 and 22/23 financial years. Avonside Roofing ceased trading and entered administration during September, leaving eight properties incomplete. JAL Roofing completed the works. In August, JAL Roofing commenced works at Winster Road on Cowsley Phase 10 (Value £490,000) and in November will start work at Benson Street on Alvaston Phase 1 (Value £790,000). JAL Roofing are the principal contractor on the

recently procured Roofing Framework. Both projects will be completed by March 2023.

- Replacement External Doors & Windows (Budget £1.5 million) – Our contractor, Nationwide are mainly upgrading external doors and frames across the City including works to the 80 cast iron properties at Allenton, referred to below.
- Energy Efficiency Works – Significant additional funding, £802,000 has been obtained, through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund – Wave 1 (SHDF), which has afforded considerable opportunities to carry out energy efficiency works. 80 cast iron properties at Allenton, will benefit from; external wall insulation, new windows and external doors, and improved ventilation. Contractors are currently on site and will be completed by March 2023. The overall cost of the works is approximately £2 million. Derby Homes is currently preparing a bid for SHDF – Wave 2 funding which will afford the opportunity to upgrade the remaining approximately 143Nr. cast iron houses properties in Allenton. Closing date for submitting the bid is mid-November 2022.

In addition, securing ECO 4 grant funding for energy efficiency improvements via our contractor partner, Westville, has enabled us to carry out energy efficiency works, primarily external wall insulation, to 42 flats at Knightsbridge, Mackworth Estate. Works have commenced and are to be completed by December 2022.

Our contractor, Westville, are contracted to carry out the majority of these works, on both sites.

- Redecoration Works – Internally (Budget £300,000) – As part of the Home Decoration Scheme, delivered by our contractor, Buxton Decorators.
- 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.

4 Head of service update – Steve Baylis Repairs Team

4.1 Day to Day

4.1.1 At the end of the second quarter of the financial year 2022/23, performance in terms of ‘repairs completed in time’ is as follows:

- Emergencies – 100%
- Very urgent works – 99.09%
- Urgent works – 95.20%
- Routine works – 86.72%
- Planned works – 69.89%

4.1.2 Whilst performance on urgent works continues to meet target there has been a decline in our ability to complete routine and planned works within the desired timescales.

4.1.3 The number of jobs being reported remains high and additional resources have been engaged to manage the workload. We are currently looking at our productivity levels,

use of van stocks and managing ongoing sickness levels within the team to ensure that this situation improves.

4.1.4

Tenant satisfaction with repairs remains slightly below target at 98.25% at the end of Q2. We have sent out 19128 surveys with a total of 335 customers being dissatisfied. This was made up of customers who were dissatisfied with either the Day to Day, Gas and Electrical teams or that we have not been able to contact. We have generated rechargeable repairs up to the end of the first quarter realising £19949.46

4.1.5

A growing area of concern is the number of no accesses we have despite making appointments and sending texts. This is approaching a third of all appointable jobs. Clearly this has an impact on both how long we take in getting to jobs and has obvious cost implications. We are currently looking at ways we can reduce this figure. We are releasing a communication to our customers explained the importance and value of being in for repairs whenever possible.

4.2 **Voids**

4.2.1

In the second quarter of the financial year 2022/23 performance has remained high.

In the second quarter the voids team completed 181 properties consisting of, 101 active voids, 38 passive voids with 42 temporary accommodation properties, compared to 256 properties in the same period of last financial year.

4.2.2

The active voids turnaround time for the first half of the year has improved from 19.1 days last financial year to 14.2 days this financial year. This will continue to improve for the remaining of this financial year as new measures that have been put in place to manage the team's performance. The downturn in voids numbers has contributed to the improved voids performance which we will continue to monitor moving forward.

4.2.3

The voids team are continuing to have weekly meetings with housing managers and the allocations team, to explore new ways of improving the service and to share and update key to key information. These practices are being replicated in the passive voids fortnightly meeting, which has been showing good signs of improvements with information sharing.

4.2.4

Feedback has indicated that the levels of satisfaction with new homes has fallen and to address this we are now carrying out inspections of all homes on the completion of works prior to a new tenant receiving the keys.

4.3 **Gas Team**

4.3.1 At the end of the Q2 12,474 properties have a certificate less than a year old, 14 have certificates currently over a year which equates to 99.88%. Appropriate action is being taken to gain access in these cases.

4.3.2 We are continuing to fit CO alarms in all properties that require them. We currently have fitted these alarms in over 7000 properties. We are continuing our efforts to source new alarms to ensure all properties have alarms fitted by June 2023.

4.4 **Electrical Team**

4.4.1 At the end of second quarter 99.92% of properties have an in date Electrical Inspection Condition Report. 12,764 homes have a current certificate with only 10 homes outstanding. Of these 3 are currently not occupied and we are working with colleagues to gain access to the remaining 7 homes.

4.4.2 The Electrical Team have also continued upgrading electrical installations across the city which includes 81 Consumer Unit upgrades incorporating new non-combustible equipment to improve fire safety and completed 22 Smoke Alarm Upgrades, expanding the fire detection in our customer's homes.

4.4.6 We are 100% compliant in emergency lighting, fire alarm servicing and sprinkler servicing.

4.4.7 Upgrades to all common rooms door entry system have now been completed. Fob access will maximise the use of these facilities within the community.

4.4.8 All door entry systems throughout the city have upgraded fob systems allowing better management and safety for the residents.

5 **Disrepair**

5.1 We are planning to bring a new policy on Damp and Mould to the first Operational Board next year which will show our commitment to work with our customers to reduce and eliminate issues of mould and damp we find in our properties.

6 **Head of Finance and Income – Helen Samuel**

6.1 **Income Management**

6.1.1 **Current tenants' arrears - Update as 30 October 2022**

As of 30 October 2022 (rent week 30) current tenants rent arrears were £2,776,998. When compared with the position at the same time last year the current rent arrears were £2,440,253 so the current position is £336,745 more than last year. This increase is not at all unexpected and following the trend of rising arrears at this time of the year.

6.1.2 As the 'cost-of-living' crisis is impacting on household budgets, Tenants will be finding it more challenging in managing their day-to-day finances.

6.1.3 This crisis and the additional number of tenants moving over to universal credit means we are anticipating the current arrears to end the year around the £2.2m mark (March 2022 £1.9m). Around £0.3m higher – this increase of £0.3m is approx. 0.5% of the annual £58m charged.

6.2 **Housing Support Fund**

6.2.1 There have already been two tranches of the fund which have been fully allocated. A third tranche started in October and Income Officers will continue to support struggling tenants to claim this where possible. In addition to this Officers have also been supporting tenants facing eviction by claiming from the Vulnerable Renters Fund and Money Advice and Welfare Rights Advice Teams continues to be available for tenants as well.

6.3 **Evictions**

6.3.1 Last year there were only 4 evictions. Since the start of April there has only been 5 evictions so far. We did expect evictions to start to increase, however we have not seen this increase and now believe a lower outcome of around 12 to 15 evictions as a maximum number for the year. The main reason for this is the higher arrears we are carrying on rent accounts of Universal Credit claimants. In these cases, Alternative Payment Arrangements (APAs) are being applied for where we can avoid eviction warrants being requested.

6.4 **Universal Credit Impact on Current Arrears**

6.4.1 Last year there were nearly 800 tenants moving over to Universal credit. We are averaging around an additional 14 Universal Credit switches each week. On 30 October we have 4,721 tenants on Universal Credit. Once they move over to universal credit, then unless they takeout an advance it will be at least 5 weeks before they get the first payment and most likely 5 weeks before they pay their rent. It is safe to say any advances in the current climate will be used for food and utility costs rather than rent. Of the current £2.77m arrears outstanding over £2m will be owed by tenants claiming Universal Credit. This clearly shows Universal Credit is having an impact on arrears levels, though it is important to add of this £2m, half was owed by tenants before they started claiming Universal Credit.

6.5 **Welfare Reform update**

6.5.1 After the tenfold increase in Universal Credit claims at the start of the pandemic in April 2020, the numbers have settled down to more manageable levels and we now get around 14 net cases a week. Currently we have 4,721 tenants claiming Universal Credit. Around 67% of the expected 7,000 final number.

6.5.2 As part of our support function to mitigate the effects of universal credit on rent arrears, we attend team meetings for other support services such as Tenancy Sustainment to inform them of what they can do to make sure universal credit

claimants get the best possible start and so that we can identify vulnerabilities at the earliest stage. We can then apply for Alternative Payment Arrangements (APA) and Direct Payments to help our most vulnerable universal credit claimants and subsequently reduce the impact on rent arrears.

- 6.5.3 We also check eligibility for and apply if appropriate for the Single Discretionary Award (SDA) which consists of Council Tax Hardship (CTH) and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP). If they qualify for CTH then they may also qualify for Council Tax Support (CTS). Make applications to the Household Support Fund (HSF), apply for other hardship payments and vouchers.
- 6.5.4 In March, we wrote to our 4,432 tenants in receipt of UC advising them on how to update their UC journal with details of their new rent from 4 April 2022. This is to help ensure that the Housing Costs element within the UC claim continues to be paid at the correct amount and on time.
- 6.5.6 In July, we also wrote out to our tenants that are in receipt of UC and live in Derby Homes owned properties. Their rents increased from 25 July 2022. both exercises are now completed and those in receipt of UC are being paid appropriately.
- 6.5.7 Early signs are that we will be carrying out this exercise again next year due to the DWP IT systems inability to cope with bulk verifications, which they were able to do previously. We have an open request with the DWP to be a pilot authority on any digital solution they propose for this increasing administratively burdensome task.
- 6.5.8 On 9 May 2022, the DWP began sending out forced Migration Notices moving claimants from legacy benefits to universal credit (UC) in the Medway and Bolton areas.
- 6.5.9 Initially just 500 claimants will be affected as the DWP tries to work out how exactly it is going to move 2.6 million claimants onto UC by the end of 2024. Even in those two areas, the vast majority of legacy benefits claimants will not be affected yet. Claimants will have three months from the date on their Migration Notice letter to complete their claim for universal credit.
- 6.5.10 If you are unable to complete the claim in time you can contact the Universal Credit Migration Notice helpline and ask for an extension of the time limit.
- 6.5.11 Since then “the discovery phase”, the term used by the DWP for this managed migration process, has expanded slowly,
- Falmouth and Truro in Cornwall have been added. The DWP initially invited 250 claimants to move to universal credit from the 25th July, in order to test their approach in a different type of location
 - London Borough of Harrow, 250 claimants received 'migration notices' from 'mid-August'.
 - Northumberland, 250 claimants were sent migration notices in the 2-week period that started on 12 September 2022
- 6.5.12 There is no further news on Derby’s migration of existing legacy benefit claimants to Universal Credit. It could happen sometime during late 2022 or more likely 2023.

- 6.5.13 The government expects to finish moving existing benefit and tax credit claimants onto Universal Credit by September 2024. However, the Budget Red Book now shows that date as March 2025.

6.6 Universal Credit Statistics

6.6.1 Highlights of tenants on Universal Credit (UC)

- 4,721 tenants on UC
- 49% of UC arrears cases on APA's (where DWP pay directly to Landlord the housing claim for weekly rent costs)
- 12% on Third Party Deductions (where a deduction from the UC claim is paid direct to Landlord to cover rent arrears)
- 784 tenants (17%) with no arrears or in credit on their rent account

6.6.2

As at week ending 30 October 2022 (wk30)	Number	Gross Arrears
UC singles	1,734	£846,916
UC couples *(includes 45 mac)	344	£137,893
UC families *(includes 4 mac)	2,643	£1,405,147
Total	4,721	£2,389,956
Gross UC arrears	3,937	£2,389,956
Cases with no arrears/credits	784	(£143,187)
Net UC arrears	4,721	£2,246,769
Average arrears per UC Case (£2,389,956 / 4,721)	4,721	£506
Average Weekly APA Payments since April	455	£174,491
Average Monthly APA Payments since April	1,952	£747,820
Number/Amount of Daily Alternative Payment Arrangements (APA) since April	13,661	£ 5,060,338
4-Weekly Third-Party Deductions (TPD) since April (includes 84 APA adjustments for £33,245)	3,608	£165,210
Total APA + TPD	17,269	£5,225,548
*mac (mixed age couples)		

6.7 Derby Advice Update

2022/2023 performance measures

Satisfaction levels with Derby Advice, by our customers, was 100% based on 79 completed customer surveys for Q1.

6.8 **Cost of Living**

We continue to offer benefit checks through our telephone advice line to help maximise our client's income.

We are acting as approved referrers to the Household Support Fund to help our clients access support in the form of vouchers towards food.

Community Action Derby is co-ordinating support for residents and its website provides an overview of the organisations who can help, including Derby Advice.
<https://www.communityactionderby.org.uk/crisis-support/help-with-the-cost-of-living>

6.9 **Welfare Rights team**

As mentioned in the previous update, Allan Reynolds, Welfare Rights Officer specialising in mental health, completed his successful "take up" campaign working with the Early Interventions Team. He now, along with his new job share Leanne Scaysbook, moves on to his next project which is alongside the Depot and Clozapine clinic. This clinic sees patients who either receive their mental health medication monthly via long-acting injection or attend for regular blood tests for monitoring purposes. Referrals have been coming through steadily and Allan and Leanne are working through these to try and identify any missing benefit entitlements. The main work so far has been around rates of personal independence payment and missing elements in employment and support allowance.

6.10 **Money Advice**

Job Centre Plus pilot

We are in the process of setting up a surgery at the Council House whereby the Job Centre Plus book face-to-face money advice appointments for our mutual customers with a Money Advice Officer on a fortnightly basis. The process is to be piloted for 2-3 months to assess demand and take up.

Derby Homes Financial Inclusion and Capability Action plan

We have completed our 6 monthly review of the Action Plan. Actions include:

- We have requested that Derby City Council's allowable expenditure figures for the Single Discretionary Award for 2022/23 are uprated part way through this financial year given the cost-of-living crisis.
- We have been given an additional grant of £1,610 from the Institute of Money Advisers (IMA) to help fund the cost of credit reports used when applying for Debt Relief Orders for customers.

6.11 **Accountancy & Accounts Payable Team**

Crowe carried out the external audit of the 2021/22 financial statements in mid-September, the team were based on site for two weeks working with the accountancy team. The audit went very well, the auditors have given the financial statements a

“clean” audit report. The accounts are to be considered by the Board at their meeting on 24 November 2022.

Workshops are continuing alongside the Council with Technology one (new financial system from April 23). We’ve now moved onto the first part of the testing stage of the implementation. The project continues to be on track for April 2023. Alongside this work is continuing on the interface requirements from Open Housing rents, this is getting very close to completion and implementation into Oracle as a starting point, then will be test in the new FMS when the interface testing is carried in the new system.

Preparation for the 2023/24 budget has started. Heads of Service have meetings in place to discuss these proposals as well as the forecasted quarter 2 position for 2022/23

6.12 Rental Control

The Team have stopped testing the new Direct Debit (DD) module in V17.4 of Open Housing (OH) until several issues with the module have been resolved by Capita. From a tenant's perspective, they won't notice any difference as the existing system will continue until we are confident that the new system works as intended.

The current financial climate is having an impact on the tenants who pay by DD. The number of returned payments has increased by over a third since this time last year.

Between April 21 and Oct 21, we had 685 returned payments (effectively this means that the DD was rejected by the bank). For Apr 22 to Oct 22, we had 1,055, so an increase of over 50%. We are also seeing an increase in tenants asking to change their DD payment date. This delays payment and widens the gap between DD payments so creates or increases rent arrears.

Naturally all these adjustments create additional workload on the team to amend future DD's in an attempt to recover the payment that was rejected.

7 Head of Housing Options & Homelessness

7.1 Vulnerable Renters Fund

The Vulnerable Renters Fund (VRF), is a scheme to assist those who are experiencing rent arrears and potential eviction proceedings in the private rented sector. By assisting at an early stage we are able to prevent evictions and the need for rehousing. The scheme was extremely successful in 2021 in preventing homelessness. The scheme this year has been up and running for approximately 6 weeks at point of writing this update. 22 applications have been made to the scheme, 11 successful payments have already been processed and those tenancies have been rescued. During the application process, the caseworker is also identifying what other support and assistance the customer/tenant might benefit from to help them with the cost-of-living-crisis, to date this has included us assisting customers to make 10 applications for Single Discretionary Award payments, 11 Household Support

Fund applications and 2 referrals to specific debt advice organisations. We are seeing excellent links being formed with the Welfare Reform Team who are now making applications for payments from the VRF.

7.2 Female Floating Support Scheme

We are currently working with DCC to develop a floating support offer for female victims of domestic violence who have complex needs. The proposal would enable women to access practical support to maintain their temporary or emergency accommodation, linking them into other women specific courses that aim to improve wellbeing and build resilience. We will provide further details in due course.

7.3 Housing Options

Working with colleagues in Derby City Council we have introduced specific housing advisors to assist with move on for Afghani families from the bridging hotel and the Ukrainian families from host families. Again, there are some barriers/hurdles due to overcome not least because of the nationwide affordable housing crisis. We are seeing very positive outcomes of this collaborative working ensuring that we can effectively manage the customer expectations for housing and jointly manage cases daily.

The areas listed below have no implications directly arising from this report:

Consultation
Financial and Business Plan
Legal and Confidentiality
Council
Personnel
Environmental
Equalities Impact Assessment
Health & Safety
Risk
Policy Review

For more information please contact:

Maria Murphy Managing Director / 01332 888522 / maria.murphy@derbyhomes.org

Background information: None

List of appendices Appendix 1 - Housing Management update

This report has been approved by the following

Managing Director	Maria Murphy Taran Lalria	29/11/22 29/11/22
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