

## **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**

#### **Housing Management**

At the time of writing this report we are back in a national lockdown. Following our return to work after the Christmas break we have once again reviewed the services we deliver to ensure we are operating under national guidelines. We have concluded that the risk assessments we had in place are still sufficient to ensure both customers and staff are safe. We have however reduced our face to face contact with customers and are only visiting to carry out essential repairs and where we have safeguarding or health and safety concerns that could compromise the wellbeing of our customers or the wider community.

Last year was a difficult year for many of us, therefore I thought I would share with you some of the things that we were involved in at the end of the year to raise the spirits of both customers and staff.

#### **Parkland View**

Sinfonia Viva brass quintet performed Christmas Carols on the patio area at Parkland View on Tuesday 22 December, fortunately the weather stayed fine and dry. In the week leading up to the performance residents were invited to vote for their top 3 favourite carols and 45 votes were cast. Hark the Herald Angels Sing was the favourite carol closely followed by In St Royal David's City and Away in a Manger.

The open-air performance was socially distanced, and many residents watched from their windows overlooking the patio area. The BBC attended and filmed a piece for the local BBC news, several residents were very excited to be interviewed for the television. Even walkers passing by on the river path overlooked by the patio stopped to enjoy the music and joined in with the huge round of applause as the performance ended!

Parkland View have been highlighted on BBC news twice now in quick succession for the work they are doing to keep customer spirits up during the pandemic.

#### **Christmas Cheer Project**

We worked in partnership with colleagues in the Neighbourhood team as well as community and voluntary sector groups to deliver the Christmas Cheer project. This involved delivering Christmas meals to some of the most vulnerable members of the

community. A couple of Derby Homes community rooms were opened up to support the project, with a number of staff helping to deliver the meals.

In total over 900 meals were delivered across the city. This couldn't have been achieved without Derby College whose students cooked several hundred meals and Derby County who provided food, facilities and cooked the remaining meals.

In addition to this a podcast of entertainment was recorded and sent to customers to watch whilst having their lunch. A number of our staff were involved in providing the entertainment as well as creating and editing the podcast. Examples of the entertainment included:

Christmas messages from a number of Partners including Derby City Council's Chief Executive Paul Simpson, Derby Homes Managing Director Maria Murphy, Derby's Youth Mayor Connie Spencer and Police and Crime Commissioner Hardyal Dhindsa. Christmas Productions were shared from AGE UK Chaddesden Park, Derby Homes Staff, Derbyshire County Cricket Club Staff, Wirksworth Amateur Dramatics Group, Ed Peczek & Friends at the Classic Guitar Academy, The Salvation Army and Sporting Communities also arranged for the singer Andy Quinn to participate.

The playlist is available on YouTube here:

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLhWDAf3ZuuGdTX9qzFH\\_OC9HgGgdKbGpU](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLhWDAf3ZuuGdTX9qzFH_OC9HgGgdKbGpU)

## **End of year celebration event**

In order to end the year on a high I set up an event for housing management staff (supported by the Community Development and Communications team) that was held remotely over Microsoft Teams. The event lasted for an hour during which time I reflected on the good work carried out by teams and individuals throughout the year. In addition to this I asked the teams to provide some entertainment, we have some really talented staff in Housing Management, and I knew they would rise to the challenge. Initially take up was slow, however I think I tipped the scales when I said that unless they were able to put forward ideas, they would have to listen to me singing for an hour. As I'm totally tone deaf, I don't think that was a prospect any of them relished and like magic the ideas began to flow!! We ended up with a real variety of entertainment which included:

Christmas Carols, 12 days of Covid Christmas, a Derby Homes Forever poem, a Christmas quiz, and Derby Homes adapted versions of T'was the Night Before Christmas and Stay Home Another Day, originally performed by E17.

Joshua Knapman also performed his fantastic rendition of Merry Christmas everyone and was voted the best act by his colleagues, winning himself a food voucher. The link is available here: <https://youtu.be/C457n0tiEMk>.

The reflection and entertainment were a tonic for us all, we spend a lot of time ploughing on with new challenges and don't often take the time to reflect. However, it showed me and the team some of the fantastic things they had done despite the many challenges they have faced. I was genuinely very proud of the staff and what they had achieved. There are too many things to mention them all, but I just wanted to

highlight a couple of examples where staff have gone over and above to support customers.

A member of the team supported a tenant that was being physically, emotionally and financially abused by her daughter, as a result of her perseverance and excellent partnership working the lady is now able to live in safety.

Another member of staff was successful in helping a tenant appeal their Personal Independent Payment (PIP) decision. The tribunal was delayed due to COVID-19, however thanks to the member of staff's persistence, the tenant finally received a cheque for £6,800 in September. She was delighted and will now continue to receive ongoing PIP payments which will really enhance her quality of life.

These are just a couple of examples of the good work carried out, during the year many of the team have willingly taken on different roles within Derby Homes, Derby City Council and in a voluntary capacity to support Derby City's Covid response.

## **Head of 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 (to accommodate issues such as home schooling) the core service remains delivered.

### **Income Management**

Currently the whole team (bar one employee) continue to work from home. All essential roles continue to be covered.

### **Arrears Update**

As at week ending Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2021 (rent week 41), the current rent arrears were £1,954,879. Compared with the same week in 2020 they were £1,609,580 this is an increase of £345,299 on the year before. We are forecasting year end arrears at £2.3m, but internally are aiming for between £2.1m to £2.2m, this is in line with Housemark forecasts of a 35% increase from March 2020 levels.

We believe that arrears are higher because the Covid 19 pandemic which is having an impact on tenant's employment and incomes. Derby has been going through the lockdowns and tiers and is currently in the third lockdown. More and more tenants continue to claim Universal Credit either because they have lost their job, on reduced hours or been furloughed. We expect more loss of employment or reduction in tenants' incomes as the busy Christmas period has ended and as usual some short-term increase in seasonal jobs and working hours come to an end. We believe this change to the scheme will result in further tenants needing to access benefits such as universal credit or housing benefit.

The difficulty in taking action against tenants who continue to ignore our efforts in getting them to pay continue as HM courts are mainly out of action except for really exceptional cases. The Government ban on evictions taking place has been extended to 21<sup>st</sup> February 2021 and there is a possibility that could be extended again. All this means that there is the possibility that court and eviction action may not be arranged in time to have any impact in the financial year. Any major turnaround in rent arrears levels will not most likely come about until the latter part of 2021.

In summary terms, 900 tenants (7% of tenants) owe more than 7-week gross arrears with a total of just under £1.2m in arrears (60% of the total current rent arrears).

There is an increasing number of tenants with arrears getting to significant levels. How recoverable these will be and what eventual enforcement action will be taken is not yet known.

Currently 113 tenants owe over £2,000 of which:

- 80 tenants owe between £2000 to £2999
- 25 tenants owe between £3000 to £3999
- 3 tenants owe between £4000 to £4999
- 3 tenants owe between £5000 to £5999
- 2 tenants owe between £6000 to £6999

### **Other Information**

Due to the government's suspension of evictions there have been no evictions carried out since the start of April 2020 other than one abandoned property we were able to take back during a short window before Derby went in to tier 2. All other evictions arranged were cancelled by the courts. These will have to be re-arranged when the ban is lifted. As there is going to be a big backlog, we expect this will take some time and not.

Currently contact is being made and arrears letters sent to tenants in rent arrears. Although many tenants are working with us to get up to date with their rent accounts, there are those who are refusing to engage. Notices are being served on non-engaging tenants so we can initiate court action as soon as we are allowed to. Some tenants do respond but for the tenants who still do not engage and make payments we will have wait until courts become active before they are likely to engage and make payments.

There appears to be a lot less take up of DHP's during this financial year. There is no obvious reason at this stage as to why numbers have reduced so we are trying to identify possible claimants and contact them individually to encourage them to apply where appropriate.

### **Welfare Reform Team**

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

Since the middle of October, the number of new universal credit claims has stabilized, and we are seeing net increases of about 20 claims per week. Adding existing claimants who has a change in circumstances gives us around 35 claims per week in total to assist with.

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 educate and 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 to apply to the DWP, 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.

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 our [phone lines](#) remain as they were. In addition, the [Relay UK service](#) and the [Video relay service](#).

From 3 November 2020 instead of receiving a 4-weekly schedule we started to receive APA payments from the DWP on a daily basis, the same time as our tenants receive their universal credit payments. The daily payments have made it easier for us to assist tenants in managing their rent accounts.

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 monthly.

The managed migration pilot project in Harrogate, began in July 2019. Under managed migration, all claimants get "transitional protection", which means that they will not be worse off on universal credit compared to the legacy benefits system. The pilot was paused in March 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic. As of 27 January 2020, just under 80 households had participated in the pilot, and only 13 had been moved on to Universal Credit. It is not clear how many households had moved by the time the pilot was suspended.

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

## Universal Credit Statistics

### Highlights of tenants on UC

- 3,049 tenants on UC
- 43% on APA's (where DWP pay directly to Landlord the housing claim for weekly rent costs)
- 20% on Direct Deduction (where a deduction from the UC claim is paid direct to Landlord to cover rent arrears)
- 887 tenants (29%) with no arrears or in credit on their rent account
- £495k income claimed "automatically" from DWP each month via APA's & Direct Payments

As at 18 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Number	Gross Arrears
UC singles	1,128	£456,140
UC couples *(includes 17 mixed aged couples - mac)	223	73,862
UC families *(includes 2 mac)	1,698	743,620

<b>Total</b>	<b>3,049</b>	<b>£1,273,622</b>
Gross UC arrears	2,162	£1,273,622
Cases with no arrears/credits	887	-£185,302
Net UC arrears	3,049	£1,088,320
<b>Average arrears per UC Case</b> (£1,273,622 / 3,049)	<b>3,049</b>	<b>£418</b>
Monthly Alternative Payment Arrangements (APA) these are received weekly now	1,310	£466,150
Monthly Direct Deduction (DD)	595	£29,016
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,905</b>	<b>£495,166</b>

## Derby Advice

### Staffing

All staff bar one are working from home and managing to deliver all areas of our service. We have started offering virtual benefit form filling appointments where we complete the claim form with the client over the phone whilst using a digital version of the form. We are looking to 'go live' with the Remote Assist software on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021 to enable video calls to clients when this is helpful for us to move on a case. An example would be where they can show us a piece of correspondence that they do not understand, but we need to see to resolve their issue.

We have recruited to half of the new Senior Welfare Rights Officer post that will be responsible for the day to day management of the externally funded projects delivered by Derby Advice. We will be re-advertising the other part of the post.

### Derby Advice Alliance (DAA)

This is a partnership of voluntary, community and statutory agencies, co-operating together under the name 'Derby Advice Alliance' (DAA). The Service Manager for Derby Advice is representing Derby Homes in the alliance. The Alliance will work with and link to Derby's Stronger Communities Board. The purpose of the Partnership is to contribute positively to the Information Advice & Guidance available in Derby, by enabling its member agencies to coproduce, co-design, and work together to support the delivery of quality, streamlined advice services in Derby. This workstream will complement the Derby Homes Financial Inclusion and Capability strategy and resulting Action Plan.

All the other partners in the alliance reported a significant downturn in advice enquiries -some of their partners are struggling to meet funding targets. Whilst we are still meeting/exceeding project targets at Derby Advice, there has been a reduction on enquiries and benefit assessments and appeal tribunals. We envisage that demand will increase substantially at the end of lockdown/furlough period.

The Financial Conduct Authority have that have predicted a 60% increase in demand for debt and money advice by the end of 2021.

## **Winter Covid Grant Scheme**

One of the first positive outcomes from the DAA is the roll out of the Covid Winter Grant Scheme. The winter support payment for energy and water bills will be distributed through partners in the Advice Alliance and will work on a referral system from 'approved referrers'. It is estimated that support will cover approx. 30% of the average energy and water costs for four months. All staff at Derby Advice have been signed up as 'approved referrers' and are submitting referrals for tenants in hardship who would benefit from the scheme this winter.

## **Audit against Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) standards**

We undertook an FCA audit through Central Midlands Audit Partnership in August/September 2020. The final report was issued in December 2020 confirming that we attained the highest assurance rating- 'substantial'. The 2 recommendations were considered to be low risk and have since been addressed.

## **Accountancy and Accounts Payable Teams**

The team are preparing for new national rules (to minimise VAT fraud in the Construction sector) around the accounting for VAT on certain construction works undertaken by Contractors. These new rules apply from March 2021. We will be liaising with relevant Contractors engaged by Derby Homes and explaining how we will require their invoices to be submitted in the future and deductions we will be making and paying over to HMRC from these. We are keen to ensure this change is managed with the minimum of disruption to their payments.

The Accountancy Team have started meeting the External Auditors and are preparing for the Interim and Final Audits. This will be conducted remotely as in 2020.

## **Rental Control**

The team are preparing for the annual rent variation pack which gets sent to tenants – the packs will start to go out at the end of February. There are approx. 12,700 packs plus garages, additionally another approx. 800 Stores and Parking permits. 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 Derby Homes.

Leaseholders – we are looking at options to improve how the Leaseholder Forum can be managed online – this is likely to be either on Skype or Microsoft Teams. 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 Housing Options & Homelessness**

### **Next steps accommodation programme**

Following the successful funding application under the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP), the delivery of the project is underway. At the time of writing this report the capital programme has:

- 15 properties now purchased with work being undertaken to make some ready to let.
- A further 5 properties are currently going through the acquisition process and remain on track for delivery by the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.
- There are 2 of the 15 properties purchased tenanted with support being delivered by Action Housing and Riverside.
- A further 3 more properties will be tenanted by the end of week commencing 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021.

The 'Covid Secure' sleeping pods have been purchased and installed at the Safe Space and have proven to be a success amongst guests using this facility. The Safe Space has been operating at maximum capacity on most evenings with daytime access also proving popular amongst the customer group. During the day the provision of video conferencing is available for customers to access Probation appointments, DWP and treatment services as some examples. This is being widely promoted for use by partners in the city.

Similarly, the Grant funded bed and breakfast provision, under the revenue stream within NSAP, has been well used during the winter months. This has been complemented by the private rented sector offer for non-qualifying EEA customers and has proven to be invaluable. The use of private rented for non-qualifying customers has enabled the REST team to provide intensive work that has seen success in moving some of these customers from being non-qualifying to qualifying.

## **Private Rented Sector**

Despite the Coronavirus pandemic, the Private Rented Sector (PRS) Access Team have continued to successfully work with landlords and tenants in the private rented sector. By the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter (31/12/2020), the team had managed to achieve 169 positive placements into the private rented sector in the financial year 20/21. Of these, 126 placements discharged a statutory prevention duty and 35 discharged a statutory relief duty. During the first national lockdown, house moves were only allowed in extreme circumstances, plus we have also seen a temporary ban on evictions and Covid related issues for both tenants and landlords. Whilst this may have temporarily reduced the availability of PRS stock - the team are still sourcing accommodation.

Despite the house move ban in earlier lockdown, there have been 98 positive placements made for single people, 50 positive placements have been made into 2 bed properties, 17 into 3 bed properties and 4 into 4 bed and over properties.

The eviction ban in 2020 prevented landlords evicting tenants and currently any notice period needs to be for 6 months. As the pandemic will affect landlords and tenants alike, the team are currently campaigning to promote our Call B4 You Serve (CB4YS) initiative which is designed to prevent homelessness at the earliest opportunity. Promotional leaflets have been sent digitally to landlords and agents as well as media posts and press releases.

The team has issued copies of the leaflet to Derby Food 4 Thought Alliance to distribute across the city to vulnerable tenants accessing their service. Of the 169 positive placements made into the private rented sector, 45 of those originated as



CB4YS enquiries from landlords hoping to save a tenancy, of those 45 enquiries, 39 tenancies were saved and did not progress to eviction, a current success rate of 87%.

## **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 during the Covid 19 restrictions, the works undertaken by the Teams, and the upcoming activities prior to the next meeting of this Operational Board. (Update written on 31 January 2021 – Figures included in this report based on that date).

## **Capital Projects Team**

### **Major Improvement Works**

#### **Kitchen / Bathroom / Wet Rooms / Adaptations Works in Occupied Properties –**

All workstreams restarted on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2020 but halted on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2020 as Covid-19 restrictions tightened prior to the Lockdown announced in December 2020.

To date, between Lockdowns, the in-house Major Improvement Team have delivered the following number on Component upgrades:

- Kitchen Upgrades - 65
- Bathroom Upgrades - 62
- Wet Room Installations – 26
- DFGs - 10

Over the next 3 months it is intended to build the resources within the Capital Works team to deliver an increase in the number of kitchen replacements over the coming years. We are also using this time to select a new kitchen supplier. We will work with a group of tenants and our workforce to select a new long term supply partner for this work. 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.

**Acquired Properties Work –** Post the first Lockdown, the Capital Projects Team continued to focus on turning around large-scale refurbishments of passive voids and newly acquired homes. Since the last update in December 2020, a further 18 properties have been completed, with an additional 10 due to be completed before the end of March 2021.

**NSAP Project -** Last October Derby was awarded £1.2million in government funding to help support rough sleepers, following a successful bid as part of the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP). This funding is match funded with an additional £1.2million by Derby City Council. This money allowed the Council to purchase 20 units of accommodation, specifically for at-risk individuals with complex needs such as entrenched rough sleeping, previous failed tenancies, and individuals who would otherwise struggle to manage independent living. All properties have to be ready for occupation before the end of March 2021

The Capital Projects Team and the Voids Team are working together to refurbish the properties, which required various levels of refurbishment between £1,000 and £30,000. The CPT refurbishing the properties in worst condition. The first property was

completed in December and at the date of this report 6 properties had been completed. All the works will be completed on time.

**COVID Testing for A Symptomatic Individuals** - During January the Capital Projects Team have been helping to get the Riverside Centre on Pride Park ready to be used as a COVID Testing Centre for people who are asymptotic by 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 works were completed on the 25<sup>th</sup> January.

## New Build Programme

Delivery - The New Build Programme restarted in a staged manner, post the first Lockdown, with care being taken to ensure compliance with Covid 19 working practices and working through the gradual restart of the construction industry and the attendant issues with the supply of contractors and materials.

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. At times it has been a challenge to schedule them in as we drift from one version of lockdown to another. However, the Team are working hard to complete the homes at Perth Street and Gerard Street, our last two live sites.

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
Carson Road	2 x 2b Bungalows	Derby Homes DCC Architects	Actual Completion – October 2020
Hatfield Rd	2 x 2b Bungalows	Derby Homes Arcus	Actual Completion – October 2020
Bracknell Drive	2 x 2b Bungalows	Derby Homes DCC Architects	Actual Completion - November 2020
War Memorial Village	6 x 1 b Bungalows 3 x 1 b flats (9 units)	Derby Homes Arcus	Actual Completion - January 2021 (In Two Phases)
Perth Street	7 x 2b Houses + 4 x 4b Houses (11 units)	Derby City Council	Practical Completion - March 2021 (In Two Phases)
Gerard Street	4 x 2b Houses	Derby Homes Letts Whittaker Architects	Practical Completion - April 2021
<b>Total: 29 Units</b>			

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

Address	Units	Project Managed by	Start / Proposed Completion Date
Berwick Ave	1 x 3b Bungalows	Derby Homes Arcus	March 2021 / December 2021

Chesapeake Road	6 x 2b Houses + 2 x 4b Houses (8 units)	Derby Homes DCC Architects	April 2021 / June 2022
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### **Development Team**

The Team continued to work with our 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, Cummings Street and Whitaker 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.

In addition, the Team are integral in the purchasing of 20 additional, individual properties under the NSAP initiative between October 2020 and March 2021. The Development Manager is managing the relationship with Homes England through IMS (Information Management System), processing completions and payments.

### **Planned Maintenance Team**

The Planned Maintenance Team has project managed a wide variety of capital and revenue works, delivering the 2020/21 programme. The headline items can be summarised as follows:

- Re-roofing Works – Our contractor, JAL Roofing recommenced work on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2020 and have continued to work throughout. They have completed the re-roofing of 137 properties valued at £664,000, across the Cowsley Estate.
- Solid Wall Insulation Works - Our contractor, Westville recommenced work on the 15<sup>th</sup> June 2020. 36 poorly insulated properties in Austin and Mackworth estates have received external wall insulation.

Significant additional funding obtained, with the Council, through the Green Home Grant has afforded considerable opportunities the carry out energy efficiency works. An allocation of funding for Round 1B of £0.9m and Round 2B of £1.4m has been obtained. The timescales for delivery are extremely tight and work will need to be completed for Phase 1B by the end of September 2021 and Round 2B by the end of December 2021. We are working with Council colleagues to help deliver both rounds by the deadline. 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.

- Redecoration Works - Internally – As part of the Home Decoration Scheme, our contractor, Buxton Decorators, who recommenced work on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020, have provided a decorating service to 305 customers by decorating 376 rooms.
- Redecoration Works - Externally – The Repairs Prior to Painting & External Painting, carried out by Allsopp & McCleod and Bell Group respectively, recommenced on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2020. To date the teams have visited and completed all required remedial works to 960 properties and redecorated 140 properties.
- Major Adaptations and Extensions – The Team have a number of such works utilising the services of external contractors and the in-house workforce.

Throughout the period, our lifting equipment contractors, Prism and Stannah, provided a servicing and repair service, subject to access restrictions, with Prism providing a 24/7 standby service to deliver hoists / stairlifts for customers discharged from local hospitals. Both contractors are now able to carry new equipment installations.

## **Estates Maintenance Team**

Grounds Maintenance – A full programme of winter works have been carried out over the past three months, the progress of which has been reported weekly through an activity programme supplied by Streetpride to the Estates Maintenance Team. This has been achieved though a significant improvement in the:

- **Operational Management** - The appointment of Charles Edwards as the new Grounds / Arboriculture Manager, who started in August 2020, has provided operational leadership on the ground and significantly improved levels of communication with Derby Homes.
- **Sickness Levels** - The levels of sick leave absenteeism have reduced noticeably and save for Covid 19 related absences, would have been much lower. At the end of November all staff had returned from Covid isolation.
- **Recruitment** – Interviews held during October / November 2020 successfully filled the five vacant posts such that the Team now has a full establishment. This is the best position the service has been in during 2020/21.

During 2020, the Team achieved 10 cuts across all sites, in spite of; the Covid 19 absences, the secondment of staff to other 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.

## **Supply Chain Issues – Covid 19**

Progress on all sites is dependent of the availability of materials and their quality surprisingly continues to present problems, with the following supplies affected by intermittent shortages:

- Plaster and plasterboard;
- Floorboards and Skirtings
- Sanitary ware
- Ironmongery
- External timber items such as fence panels and posts;
- Paints and coatings for external use;
- Bagged cement and concrete.

The Team are working with our supply chain partner, Buildbase, to improve supplies but the situation remains challenging. Many manufacturers have extended delivery times or reduced the breadth of their “offer”.

As reported earlier in this update, following the re-procuring the Kitchen Supply Contract by Efficiency East Midlands, We have commenced a Mini Competition for the selection of a new supplier to replace our existing supplier Magnet (Rixonway).

### **Supply Chain Issues – Brexit**

A Brexit Planning Workshop was held with key supply chain partner, Buildbase – Brexit preparations discussed at the regular monthly meeting on 30th November 2020 and a special meeting on 16th December 2020. Buildbase & DH Purchasing Team worked on developing core materials list to support essential repairs service, based in Top 50 items supplied including van stock. Consideration has been given to the stockpiling of key materials. In addition to above with specialist contractors, with focus on securing future supply of spare parts for equipment such as passenger lifts and stairlifts and heating systems. Buildbase has updated its supplier database to provide information on extended lead in times / materials availability consequent to the impact of Brexit. Both parties continue to investigate increase synergy with Buildbase procurement team to help maintain security of supply and reduce material cost volatility during 2021.

### **Head of Repairs**

#### **Day to Day**

Following on from our last update staff sickness levels in the day to day team have remained consistently low and we have continued to provide a first-rate service to our customers to ensure they are kept safe, warm and dry.

The increased levels of very urgent / essential jobs (around 900 per month), has increased over the last couple of months. This is now approximately 50% higher than the same time last year.

We have continued to reduce the number of non-urgent jobs that were suspended at the beginning of the pandemic. We are hopeful, subject to access to complete these jobs by the end of the financial year.

The Surveying team are offering a full range of services to our customers to carry out inspections, mutual exchanges and technical support to other colleagues. All Surveyors have been allocated days in which they carry out inspections, this has worked well with the Customer Services Team allowing flexibility for other staff to carry out home working and cover in times of peak demand.

We are also currently trialling remote assist which is a remote video inspection system, which negates the need for a physical visit. This has been particularly useful during the pandemic. We do feel moving forward that this will enable us to be more efficient in surveying our customers properties as well as giving them more convenience.

Our subcontractors have continued to provide excellent support to our directly employed tradespersons. They have particularly assisted in attending the more urgent repairs on a timely basis.

We are currently putting plans in place for when the most recent lockdown is completed.

## **Void Repairs**

Following on from the last update the voids team absence levels have remained consistently low, despite the voids team having experienced some Covid-19 related absences. The voids team have continued to provide a full service to our customers in these challenging times.

The void number have been relatively consistent from the last financial year. However, there has been more larger voids (passive voids) than the previous year. The temporary accommodation properties have also been consistent from the last financial year. What is pleasing is that the rechargeable repairs have reduced significantly so far this financial year (Quarter 3).

The voids team are continuing to have weekly active voids meeting 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 is showing good signs of improvements and information sharing.

The material issues that we had experience earlier in the financial year appears to have subsided. We will continue to monitor material availability and any changes with working practices.

## **Electrical Servicing**

Electrical Testing in properties was suspended on 23rd March and re-commenced on July 15th. At the time of commencement there were 305 Electrical Services overdue and 260 Electrical Repairs following the safety check outstanding.

In the last update it was explained that the objective was to reduce those numbers ASAP. The Electrical Team with the help of a contractor have worked extremely hard which has enabled the team to complete the overdue services and repairs. The teams low level of sickness during these times have also helped achieve this.

Access has improved and our customers have been very accommodating under the circumstances. For the upcoming months the focus will be to remain on course with our objectives and continue providing the high quality service expected.

## **Gas Breakdowns/Servicing**

In this quarter, quarter 3 we have carried out a full gas breakdown service to ensure all tenants have heating during the pandemic and met all of our targets within target times. Gas servicing continues and we are making arrangements where tenants are needing to self-isolate. We have identified some issues within our servicing module which manages the appointment process. This matter is in hand and we are making good progress to ensure that data is accurately managed within the necessary timescales.

## **Gas Heating Installation**

Following the lockdown this winter we are completing prebooked works and carrying out installations work on boiler failures, acquisitions and void properties where needed.

We are hopeful to restart the full programme as soon as the current lockdown restrictions are lifted.

## **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.

## **Head of Governance & Corporate Services Governance**

### **Board Member Recruitment**

The Board Appointments Panel has recently met and made the following tenant board member appointments

Derby Homes Board: Charlene Bhurton

Operational Board: Kevin Ellaway and Natasha Cover

There are still a number of vacancies on the Operational Board and recruitment will continue during the coming months.

### **Corporate Support and Employee Development**

Derby Homes' Apprenticeship Strategy has been reviewed in accordance with Derby Homes' three-year review schedule. It has been amended to reflect the development of our work in this area and has been approved by the Board in January 2021. The Apprenticeship Strategy 2021/2024 ensures Derby Homes continues to develop the Apprenticeship Programme as well as recognising the work that has taken place on apprenticeships over the last three years. The aim of the Apprenticeship Strategy is to provide high quality learning opportunities for our apprentices and employees and to optimise use of Derby Homes' levy contributions.

Our 2020 apprentices have now all started with us, joining our apprenticeship programme we have five Housing apprentices, one Customer Service apprentice, one Apprentice Painter, one Maintenance Operative Apprentice, one Apprentice Joiner and one Apprentice Electrician. This brings our total of apprentices at Derby Homes to 33. With the new Government initiatives that were introduced in 2020 when employing new apprentices, we are due to receive £23,500 in apprenticeship incentive payments this year.

All apprentices are developing well and we continue to work with training providers in order to maintain good working relationships and track all apprentices' progress.

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

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