

SERVICE UPDATE

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

Director of Housing Services

Recruitment to Head of Housing Management and Head of Housing Options positions

Recruitment to the positions of Head of Housing Management and Head of Housing Options is underway, with an additional advertisement placed in the Guardian employment section to ensure we publicise the opportunities nationally. Interview dates are scheduled for 19th and 20th June 2019 with the interview panel including a member of the Operational Board, Jsan Shepherd.

Petwise in your Community

Through our customer surveys we identified responsible pet ownership as an area customers wanted us to focus on. Responsible pet ownership was therefore established as one of 4 local customer priorities. As part of our commitment to responding to the issues that matter most to tenants we continue to promote 'Petwise in your community', a scheme aimed at encouraging responsible pet ownership by offering free dog-wellbeing checks, nail clipping, ear cleaning and microchipping for dogs owned by council tenants. Our last session was held on 24th May at Sussex Circus Housing Office.

Customer Service and Equalities

Since the last Operational Board, we have welcomed three new members to the Customer Service Team, two Customer Service Advisors and an Apprentice. They are all settling in well and are already becoming part of the team.

We have launched our new telephony script which brings together more Derby Homes services via one phone number 01332 888777.

The new opening hours for general enquiries are working well and we have seen an increase in customers contacting us for general enquiries between 9am and 3pm, and in online activity.

Incentive schemes update

The final draw has taken place of the '24/7 campaign' encouraging tenants to register for a Derby Homes online account. The campaign, which has been running since August 2018, has rewarded 247 customers who have registered for a Derby Homes online account with a Lenovo Tablet. The total number of customers with a Derby Homes online account has now exceeded 4900.

The second year of the “Get Online Incentive Scheme” concluded on 31st March. This scheme also encouraged tenants to register to access service on line via the My Account Portal. To win the incentive the customer needed to meet 4 criteria:

- Register for My Account
- Pay rent on line and be one week in from with their rent
- Allow access first time for their annual gas safety check (Customer could rearrange this appointment once)
- Not have a recorded ASB against them

In its second year 134 Customers qualified for the full payment of £100 and 883 Customers qualified for a £50 part payment. These payments have been credited to rent accounts.

Rental Control

We are working towards being able to offer a Paperless Direct Debit option.

The new release of Open Housing V16 is now live. New procedures and internal processes are being developed as more functions / modules become live in the new software. We still have a high number new build and former Right to Buy properties being purchased by DCC.

Leasehold

The team is preparing consultation events to capture the leaseholder’s views in readiness for the new policy.

We are also preparing repairs statements for the final quarter to be sent to all leaseholders.

The Leasehold Focus Group took place in the last week of May.

Income Management

The current rent arrears position is just over £1.86M (w/e 12 May) following good collection over the rent free weeks.

The first rent free, Week 52, which is the year end, the reduction was £286,757 meaning we finished the year on £1,274,885, well below the target of 1.72M. Overall there was an increase of around £50k over the year, which is good considering we have been getting around 25 tenants a week claiming universal credit which will be contributing to the rise.

The second rent free, Week 1 of this year saw a further reduction of was £212,010, which is a good start to the year.

All of the targets for current arrears were met for last year, making it another good year for income collection.

Targets have been set for the current year with the increase in Universal Credit cases in mind, but not on mass migration of cases which are not likely to happen this year in Derby. If there is a change and mass migration starts earlier then targets will need to be revaluated.

We continue to attend groups which increase learning and may help us improve performance such as the West Midlands Welfare Reform Group

We are now working more closely with other teams including Housing Options to try and avoid eviction where possible by assessing the overall all impact on the organisation and encouraging and incentivising tenants to start paying.

We are also working with colleagues looking at possible options in strengthening areas of Income and Advice, especially in the Money Advice and Welfare Rights teams that have where we currently have vacant positions.

Welfare Reform

From 15 May 2019, benefit rules are changing for mixed-age pension couples. In most circumstances this means that both members of a couple will need to have reached State Pension age to be eligible to make a new claim to Pension Credit or Housing Benefit. If household circumstances change on, or after, 15 May 2019 and one partner is below pension age, tenants may be subject to the new Pension Credit and Housing Benefit rules.

Depending on their new circumstances, entitlement to one or both may end. The Department for Works and Pensions have sent letters to tenants affected explaining the issue however if there is no change in circumstances then they will not be affected.

The process of moving existing claimants who receive the six, old-style legacy benefits to Universal Credit is known as Managed Migration. Harrogate has been chosen to pilot the Managed Migration of up to 10,000 claimants in July 2019, once regulations have been passed in Parliament. Full Managed Migration for the whole country is expected to be completed by December 2023. It depends on how the pilot goes, but we do not think Derby's migration of existing legacy benefit claimants is not likely to be before 2020.

As at week starting 13th May 2019, we have 1,368 Universal Credit claimants:

- Families – 651
- Couples – 76
- Singles – 641

Derby Advice

Staffing - The Senior Welfare Rights Officer has started in post. The Welfare Rights Triage Officer is due to start on June 17. We have advertised the Money Advice Team Leader post.

Customer satisfaction - We have completed the end of year analysis of customer satisfaction with Derby Advice. This year 100% of the people who used the service and gave customer feedback were satisfied with the service. We received some excellent feedback including the following:

“Without the help of my Welfare Rights Officer, who was friendly, concerned and did everything on my behalf; I would have given up trying to challenge the DWP about my money. It could not have been better”

“I had been trying to sort out my benefits for nearly two years and nobody would listen to me before I came to you – nobody wanted to know. They should give the service more funding as you are the only place in Derby who gets things done”

“Vital, knowledgeable support throughout the traumatic process from DLA to PIP, especially with submissions to the appeal tribunal”

Customer Communications

We have worked with the Design Team at Derby City Council on the branding for our 100 Years of Council Housing campaign. This will form a key part of our awareness campaign and help our engagement with tenants and the public to raise awareness of the role, history and importance of Council Housing across the country as well as in Derby. As well as helping collate an initial t-shirt order, we are now working on ordering some basic branded items for staff, such as pin-badges and lanyards.



Recent award ceremonies

- **Resolve Awards** – Won “Team of the Year” for Proactive Engagement and Enforcement Partnership (PEEP), along with Public Health and City Centre Policing
- **Dignity in Care Award** - recognised by the Derbyshire Dignity Awards for our achievements in supporting vulnerable tenants (Submitted by Tenancy Sustainability Team)
- **Public Finance Innovation**– Sadly no wins, but finalists in Public Finance Leader of the Year (David Enticott) and Achievement in Financial Reporting & Accountability
- **Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS)** – Sadly no win, but finalists in Excellence in Engagement in Support and Care for Parkland View.

We have worked with the Customer Engagement Team to order a basic supply of branded goods for events and engagement activities.

We have worked with the Customer Engagement Team on recent events, such as the Community Room relaunches and ASB events and also promotion for the Charity of the Year.

We are looking to procure a new email marketing service to help us reach customer with more timely, relevant news and information about our services.

Staffing

Our Creative Content Apprentice has switched apprenticeships and has moved to the Customer Service Team.

Head of Repairs

Day to Day

At Yearend 2019, performance in terms of ‘repairs completed in time’ is as follows:

- Emergencies – 100%
- Very urgent works –99.90%
- Urgent works – 99.93%

- Routine works – 99.73%
- Planned works – 98.45%

Performance up until the end of March is generally pleasing with all priorities above / better than the 99% targets other than planned works. There has been a continued improvement in performance in the last few months on planned works although we have just missed the planned works target.

We are currently unable to report on the Appointments Kept Target due to issues with reports having to be rebuilt since the implementation of Open Housing. It is worth noting though that this year we have only missed 22 appointments.

Tenant satisfaction with repairs remains high and above target at 99.64% up until the end of year. During the year of 23,685 surveys sent out only 85 were dissatisfied.

We have generated rechargeable repairs up to the end of quarter 3 realising £27,355.46.

We currently have 13 live disrepair cases.

Electrical Servicing year end performance figures

At the end of the 2018/19 year the Electrical Team have met target and have achieved full compliance and ended the year at 100%.

Up to the end of March the Electrical Team carried out 3195 services over the 12 months.

Gas servicing year end performance figures

At the end of March 2019 the Gas Team have met target and have achieved full compliance and finished the month and year at 100%.

Up to the end of March the Gas Team carried out 14741 services over the 12 months.

We again attained high levels of first time access for gas servicing which for the last financial year averaged 81%

The new Open Housing servicing module is now live and working , the engineers are now using electronic certification which updates the certificate into swordfish so that the certificate can be viewed by anyone. Therefore unless further technical information is required then any officer at Derby Homes can see and print a current landlord gas safety certificates.

Over the next 12 months, We are also looking to trial a staggered working pattern with some of the gas service engineers so that they will be starting later and finishing later so that we can carry out services early evening for working families.

The new service charges have now been worked out for Kestrel House once the heating system has been upgraded to air source and there will be an estimated saving of around £402 per year by updating the system, the final consultancy with the tenants will be taking place shortly.

From a performance and satisfaction perspective we are pleased with the year end results. For a number of years we have been trying to find a way to measure jobs

completed Right First Time. We are now able to work this out from our scheduling system. A report is going to the Operational Board next month and we are asking them on exactly how we should measure this new target.

Head of Governance & Corporate Support

It is very pleasing to say that Derby Homes has been announced as a finalist in the Derby Telegraph Business Awards 2019, in the category for Apprentice Employer of the Year. The Derby Telegraph Business Awards aim to celebrate success, recognise achievement and highlight the innovative people and companies in Derbyshire who are putting our region on the map by boosting the economy while making a positive contribution to the local community. This is the second year we have been shortlisted following coming runners up in 2018. This year we have been shortlisted alongside HL Plastics and Imperial Commercial. The winner will be announced at the awards ceremony on 5 June 2019.

Work is now well under way for this year's Apprentice recruitment, we have had an overwhelming response to the vacancies and interviews are planned for late June/early July. Apprentices will start employment with Derby Homes in September 2019.

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

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