

## **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 Repairs**

#### **Day to Day**

At the end of the third quarter 2019, performance in terms of 'repairs completed in time' is as follows:

- Emergencies – 100%
- Very urgent works – 99.81%
- Urgent works – 99.42%
- Routine works – 99.30%
- Planned works – 97.19%

Performance up until the end of December is generally pleasing with all priorities above / better than the 99% targets other than planned works. We have had some difficulties with planned works in this year due to staffing issues and continued bad weather. We have put together an action plan to try and address the issues and look at ways we can make improvements. We are currently working with our contractors and our own planning of jobs to see where further improvements can be made.

We are now able to report on Appointments Kept Target and for the third quarter we are currently just below the 99% target achieving 98.85%.

Tenant satisfaction with repairs remains high and above target at 99.05% up until the end of the third quarter. During the third quarter we sent out 8946 surveys and 95 were found to be dissatisfied.

We have generated rechargeable repairs up to the end of the third quarter realising £12619.82

We currently have 22 live disrepair cases.

#### **Void Repairs**

Up to the end of the second quarter, the Voids Team has completed 353 active voids compared to 451 for the same period last year. Performance is currently averaging 18.03 days cumulatively to inspect and complete works.

The total number of void works carried out both active and passive is 485 voids compared to 583 voids last year.

The numbers of temporary accommodation void repairs carried out up until the end of the third quarter is 115 compared to 67 for the same period last year.

The current average time is over target and this is mainly down to the problems with resource we have experienced across the Repairs and Investment teams this year. This is down to electrical trades being under resourced for a number of months. This has now been addressed and we expect performance to improve.

## **Electrical Servicing**

At the end of the third quarter the Electrical Team have met target and have achieved full compliance and ended the period at 100%.

Up to the end of December the Electrical Team carried out 831 services over the quarter.

We have also upgraded the lighting at Kestrel house to more efficient LED lighting.

## **Gas Servicing**

At the end of third quarter the Gas Team have met target and have achieved full compliance and finished the quarter at 100%.

Up to the end of the third quarter the Gas Team carried out 10905 services.

We again attained high levels of first time access for gas servicing which for the third quarter was 81%. This is at similar levels to last year although we are below target as we have set ourselves a more challenging target this year.

This quarter the Gas installation team have completed 92% of the Air source heating upgrade at Kestrel House in Sinfin. By installing this type of heating the tenants will have better heat and hot water control over the property which ultimately will save energy costs and make the properties more energy efficient.

## **Head of Housing Options and Homelessness**

### **Rough Sleeper Initiative Fund**

Derby Homes submitted a funding application to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government in early December 2019 for the Street Outreach team and the additional aspects of the Safe Space. I am pleased to inform you that we can confirm this bid has been successful with the award of £755,082 being made to Derby. The additional aspects of the Safe Space that this money will fund include:

- A paramedic with some additional support from a health care professional
- A team of navigators to provide intensive support and assistance to vulnerable customers accessing the service
- An additional 12 units of supported accommodation catering for customers with high needs.
- An additional 8 hours of core support per day to enable the safe space service to operate 24/7

This is a great opportunity to continue the good work, helping and assisting rough sleepers in Derby move away from the streets. The success of the Safe Space and the work of the Outreach team have seen rough sleepers in the city reduce to 15 when the annual informed estimate was completed in November 2019.

## **Allocations Policy**

The allocations policy has been reviewed to ensure that we are making best use of our housing in the city and meeting the statutory duties with the Housing Act and the Homeless Reduction Act. This will see three bands proposed:

- Corporate initiative
- Priority needs
- Housing needs

The consultation process is underway and will provide an opportunity for housing providers, services within the city and all residents and non-residents of the city to share their thoughts and help shape the updated policy. Feedback from the consultation will be incorporated into a cabinet report seeking Derby City Council approval.

## **Private Rented Access**

The private rented sector access team continues to attract additional properties that are able to be offered to our customers as we seek to increase the number of homeless preventions and relieve homelessness. At the end of December 2019 the team had assisted 128 households into private rented accommodation. This success is being embraced and built upon with the recruitment of a further two private rented sector access officers, both for two year fixed periods. The focus will be continuing working with the homelessness team to prevent homelessness wherever possible. This work is being built upon further with the Housing Options Service adopting Derby's Decent And Safe Homes (DASH) team's' national service, call before you serve. This is a free service to private landlords which offers our assistance to try and resolve any issue and prevent homelessness.

## **Head of Housing Management**

### **Staff structure**

Following the resurrection of a full time Head of Housing Management post and my subsequent appointment to the role, I have been busy over the last few months looking at the management structure in my area. The proposed changes are now complete and a consultation is being carried out with staff.

There are no proposed changes to front line positions and there should be nothing that impacts on service delivery. In fact, I am of the opinion that if agreed, the new structure will help to strengthen customer service in my area. The final structure will not be implemented until staff have had an opportunity to comment and their suggestions have been considered. I will be in a position to give you more information in my next report.

## **Fund Raising**

In the run up to Christmas staff within the local housing offices have been carrying out fund raising events to raise money for our charity of the year, the Padley Centre which helps homeless people. There have been food collections, raffles, cob days, dress down days and fuddles to name but a few. In addition to the food collections, they have managed to raise well over £1,000.

## **Events**

Prior to Christmas the Community Development and Engagement team worked with partners to deliver an event for the city to celebrate Safeguarding awareness week. This was held at St. Martins Church in Allenton and was attended by the mayor and chair of the safeguarding board as well as members of the community. Some community groups were presented with community respect awards. These are given to groups who can show that they consider safeguarding and dignity in the ways they engage with people and in the activities they provide. Mathew Fowler, a member of the Community voice read some of the poems he had written in which he verbalised some of his life experiences. I have seen Mathew speak at a number of events now and I am in awe of his talent, he never fails to inspire me.

Derby City Adult safeguarding board of which I am a member held its yearly review and planning session in January. Mathew attended as he is keen to help the group develop safeguarding practice from a customer perspective. He had written some new poems especially for the event which were an instant hit with attendees. I am sure that Mathews involvement will enhance the work of the board.

## **Head of Finance and Income**

### **Income Management**

As at 27 December 2019 (rent week 39).

Current arrears performance continues to be in a good position with all targets expected to be achieved by the end of March 2020.

The current rent arrears position at week 39 is just over £1.3m and continues to be at better than expected levels. We are forecasting a year end figure of £1.4m as we are aware the DWP are not covering the 53<sup>rd</sup> week this year for Universal Credit claiming tenants.

Evictions are well below the previous year with 20 being carried out so far and with the target now being reduced to 27 for the end of March 2020 (around half last year's number of 52). We continue to work closely with Housing Options and Housing Management to try and avoid evictions where possible by assessing the overall all impact on the organisation. Assisting Universal Credit tenants to move onto a APA (Alternative Payment Arrangement), where the benefit is paid direct to the Landlord, has been a great tool in helping tenants engage and tackle their arrears.

The rent free weeks (weeks 38 and 39) produced the expected reduction in rent arrears levels. At the end of week 37 the current arrears were £1,843,734.

The first rent free week 38 saw the arrears reduce to £1,549,124 which was a reduction of £294,610 and the second week 39 saw the arrears reduce to £1,324,122 and a

further reduction in arrears of £225,002. The total reduction over the rent free weeks was £519,612.

Some of the reduction is due to technical arrears due to the way our payment options work and some down to tenants in arrears who actually pay as they have rent arrears outstanding.

Technical arrears covers things like direct debit and universal credit APA (Assisted Payment Arrangement) payments, whereby we receive a payment covering 4 weeks when we do not charge for 2 of the weeks in December. This makes up for the rest of the months whereby we get a 4 weekly payment covering a calendar month of which some months have 5 Mondays when rent is charged.

We also contacted around 3,000 tenants in rent arrears asking them to clear their accounts or to carry on paying as per their arrangements to reduce rent arrears outstanding.

Universal Credit cases continue at a consistent and manageable rate with around 2071 cases currently claiming. We anticipate around 5,000 eventually.

We continue to look at Mobysofts Rentsense product which may help to improve the efficiency of prioritising which tenants to target for income collection. Mobysoft have taken our data and provided some feedback as to how they could assist. We will be now approaching other users for their experience of using the product. Following this we will consider the benefits in relation to value for money to see if their service can help with future prioritisation of case work.

## **Welfare Reform**

The DWP addressed the issue of early wages being paid by employers in December which could have affected the amount of universal credit received by contacting employers and asking them to report the normal payment dates even though they were paying early. We also contacted our universal credit claimants by text, our website and social media outlets, to make sure tenants reminded employers. We are hopeful that these actions mitigated the number of tenants affected by unnecessary stopping of their Universal Credit payments and the need to then re-apply. This also prevents arrears occurring during this period.

We are still waiting for some feedback from the Harrogate pilot on the mass migration pilot. Feedback has been delayed due to the December General Election. It depends on how the Harrogate pilot goes, but we think Derby's migration of existing legacy benefit claimants to Universal Credit is likely to happen sometime during 2021.

## **Universal Credit Statistics**

<b>As at 30<sup>th</sup> December 2019</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Gross Arrears</b>
UC singles	844	£263,793
UC couples *(includes 2 mac)	121	£36,228
UC families *(includes 5 mac)	1,106	£399,030
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,071</b>	<b>£699,051</b>

Gross UC arrears	1,230	£699,051
Cases with no arrears/credits	841	£165,858
Net UC arrears	2,071	£533,193
<b>Average arrears per UC Case (£699,051/2071)</b>	<b>2,071</b>	<b>£338</b>
Alternative Payment Arrangements (APA)	696	£235,993
Direct Deduction (DD)	550	£18,380
<b>Total</b>	<b>1246</b>	<b>£254,373</b>

\*mac (mixed age couples)

### Highlights of tenants on UC

- 2,071 tenants on UC
- 34% on APA's (where DWP pay directly to Landlord the housing claim)
- 27% on Direct Payments (where a deduction from the UC claim is paid direct to Landlord)
- 841 tenants (40%) with no arrears or in credit on their rent account
- £254k plus income claimed "automatically" from DWP each month via APA's & Direct Payments

### Rental Control

The large annual task of informing tenants of their new year rent charges is underway. We call this "Rent Variation" and testing is underway in preparation for both the actual Rent Variation letters being produced (to around 12,700 tenants). Additionally we are amending how properties are categorised within Open Housing, there should be no impact on tenants but this will give us greater reporting flexibilities from 2020/21. The planned switchover is at year end.

We are currently testing for paperless Direct Debits and aim to go live by late January. This will enable staff to take tenants direct debit details over the phone and set them up directly in Open Housing. This is a lot more efficient than the current practice of sending the tenant a direct debit mandate form, tenants sending this back (often with errors) and it being posted to the bank.

Internal Audit has concluded a review of key controls and reconciliations as part of a Rent Accounting Audit in November 2019. This is as an independent review to ensure our key system controls and procedures are being followed. They rated this area as "Comprehensive" the highest score available.

### Leasehold

Testing of estimated charges is underway in preparation for both the actual accounts and the planned rent group change from annual to quarterly.

## Derby Advice Update

The Money Advice Team Leader is now in post and we are beginning to build up capacity to deliver more specialist money advice. Additionally 1.5 fte specialist Money Advisers have also been appointed and should be starting in post in February. Plus two other money advice staff, who currently do lower level work, have successfully passed the IMA (Institute of Money Advisers) Certificate in Money Advice Practice. This will enable them to take on more complex debt enquiries.

## D2N2 'Money Sorted' project

We have overachieved on the target for Q4.

## Macmillan Welfare Rights Project in partnership with Derbyshire County Council

We have overachieved on the outputs for Q4 and for 2019 overall

For the 12 months ending 31/12/19 the project delivered:

- Total new cases opened in the year – 2028 (KPI 1700)
- Total cases closed in the year – 2365 (KPI 1700)
- Of these closed cases almost 70% recorded a financial gain

## Accountancy

Recruitment to a number of vacant posts in the Accountancy team is in progress with interviews planned late January.

We have met the External Auditors and have started planning for preparing the year-end financial statements drafting. There are some new disclosure requirements this year, one of which is on environmental reporting. Details on this are yet to be confirmed but this is an increasing trend in financial statements for such information to be included alongside the more traditional financial results.

## Head of Capital Works

### New Build and Major Projects Team

Delivery - The Programme is progressing well with all Schemes due to complete between February and April 2020. 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. It is acknowledged that all parties are still trying to find the optimum way to deliver such a programme, however everyone is enthusiastically embracing the opportunities and benefits this work brings to Derby Homes and its tenants.

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

Address	Units	Project Managed by	Proposed Practical Completion Date
Hatfield Rd	2 x Bungalows	Derby Homes Arcus	February / March 2020
Perth Street	7 x 2b Houses + 4 x 4b Houses (11 units)	Derby City Council	From February – April 2020

Gerard Street	4 x 2b Houses	Derby Homes Letts Whittaker Architects	February / March 2020
Bracknell Drive	1 x 2b Bungalows	Derby Homes DCC Architects	February / March 2020
Carson Road	2 x 2 Bungalows	Derby Homes DCC Architects	February / March 2020
War Memorial Village	6 x 1 b Bungalows 3 x 1 b flats (9 units)	Derby Homes Arcus	From March 2020.
<b>Total: 29 Units</b>			

The upcoming Projects for 2020/21 were highlighted by the Director of Investment and Maintenance at the Board Meeting in January 2020.

The issues and outcomes from the visit by the HSE was also discussed at the Board Meeting.

### **Major Improvement Works – Kitchen & Bathrooms**

Delivery - Up to the end of January 2020, the in-house Major Improvement Team have delivered the following number on Component upgrades:

- Kitchen Upgrades - 227
- Bathroom Upgrades - 147
- Wet Room Installations – 115
- In addition the Team has delivered; a significant number of whole house refurbishments to mainly to properties acquired by the Council, using capital receipts with improvement values in the range of £30,000 to £70,000; extensions to occupied and void properties and a limited amount of work to Council Educational establishments.

Tenant Feedback on Kitchen and Bathroom Work - Tenant satisfaction with the quality of the work is 95.7% against a target of 95% for the year to date. During Quarter 3 of 2019/20, 65 respondents (38 in receipt of new kitchens and 27 in receipt of new bathrooms) to our post works surveys and of those, 55 said they were very satisfied with the quality of the work. For the whole year to date, of the 76 respondents to the surveys in receipt of a new kitchen, only 5% have expressed dissatisfaction.

Following interest at the previous Operational Board about the issues behind the 5% dissatisfaction, interrogation of the free text comments, on the returned surveys, has highlighted some interesting comments from our tenants, which are repeated below in a short list:

- *Choice of cupboard doors was very limited and all samey. Would like to have had wall tiles or splashback especially to sink area. Work was programmed but had to be postponed for about 4 weeks*
- *Decoration work should be done to finish off kitchen*
- *More plastering could have been done to make it easier to decorate*
- *Start date was given then had to be altered which was inconvenient for the tenant*
- *The electrician that arrived on the first day didn't complete work correctly. Rest of the team were brilliant*



- *The plastering of the kitchen could have been better, there are still some rough patches & flaking paint on the walls. The light switches haven't been changed and there are dead sockets left on walls*
- *Wall units are too small in size, wrong carcass for the kitchen units were sent but they accepted them as they didn't want to wait another 4 weeks*
- *Work to install kitchen should be inspected by a supervisor on completion*
- *Would have liked wall tiles above worktops instead of the upstand*

Improvement Project - As a consequence of the above and recognising the need to improve the quality of the tenant experience before, during and after the kitchen upgrades, we have instigated an Improvement Project, involving customers and key members of the delivery team. The initial event in January involved a visit to the Rixonway (our kitchen unit supplier) in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, where the Project team identified ideas to improve specification and ways of communicating with customers during the improvement process. A second meeting of the whole team is arranged for late February 2020.

## **Planned Maintenance Team**

The Planned Maintenance Team, as at the end of January 2020, has project managed a wide variety of capital and revenue works, delivering the 2019/20 programme. The headline items can be summarised as follows:

- Replacement of External Doors & Windows – 427 new composite external doors have been installed by our contractor, Nationwide Windows, mainly to properties in the Cowsley Estate and across the City, picking up properties where access had been previously denied. Additionally, 70 properties have had new Upvc windows installed, again City wide, picking up individual properties.
- Re-roofing Works – Our contractors, Avonside Roofing & JAL Roofing, have completed the re-roofing of 212 properties, across the Cowsley Estate.
- Solid Wall Insulation Works – 15 poorly insulated properties in Austin and Mackworth estates have received external wall insulation, through our contractor the Westville Group. Additionally, our in-house team (of two operatives) have internally dry-lined 14 solid-walled void properties.
- Redecoration Works – As part of the Home Decoration Scheme, our contractor, Buxton Decorators, have provided a decorating service to 779 customers by decorating 891 rooms. Additionally, Repairs Prior to Painting & External Painting have visited and completed all required remedial works to 3100 properties.
- Disability Adaptations - To date completed 479 minor/major adaptation referrals
- Major Adaptations and Extensions – The Team have a number of such works utilising the services of external contractors and the in-house workforce.

## **Procurement Matters**

Strategic Procurement Project – A project team was established in December 2019. The Terms of Reference can be summarised as follows:

- Review of Contract Management Processes especially in relation to Procurement Compliance / review of and documenting of procedures for varying contracts.
- Review current Procurement Policy / Strategy ensuring consideration of all opportunities to achieve a best value approach, including; Procurement Consortia (both regional and national), Derby Homes procured Frameworks, traditional tendering etc.

- Review current Procurement Documentation, such that it is explicit that all procurement options are considered in future ensure that all staff potentially involved in procurement are aware of the options available and that they are readily accessible.
- Refresher training for staff as required, including the elevation of procurement matters in psyche of staff – Included in Team Meeting Agendas alongside Health & Safety
- Review of Contract Management Processes especially in relation to Procurement Compliance
- Review of and documenting of procedures for varying contracts.
- Consideration of Project Management of Materials Supply Contract with Buildbase and development draft timeline and options for its re-procurement (with projected expiration in 37 months)

## **Operational Procurement Activity**

Capital Works Framework Review- Heading up a project to review and re-procure, where required, the current Derby Homes Framework Agreements relating to all construction and maintenance activity carried out by the Capital Works Team (and other Teams where there is an overlap of activity). The driver for this project is to ensure that the Framework of Contractors, for the delivery of various trades / work types, is fit for purpose, providing the flexibility, scope and number of contractors, able to cope with the increasing volume and scope of work.

The initial meeting on 28 January reviewed the current Frameworks and developed an action plan of re-procurements for the next 6 months. The highest priority has been given to the following:

- Substructure and Superstructure Frameworks – Potential increased volume of new build work in 2020/21 will mean that; greater flexibility required to operate both frameworks independently or in combination; increased numbers of contractors; options to add roofing and groundworks.
- Groundworks / Fencing / Landscaping Framework – Significant increases in what is often piecemeal workload requires a review such that framework offers; greater flexibility; increased number of contractors; improved value for money.

## **Generally**

Over the next few months I will focus on the following areas, striving to improve further the quality of the service:

- Team Structure – Ensuring that it is equipped and sufficiently resourced to deliver its programmes of work to; budget, quality and time.
- Ensuring that the Team is professional in its approach
- Improving the quality of contract and project documentation
- Project Management including financial management of overall programme
- Contract Management including record keeping
- Communication with the team, between teams and with clients and contractors
- Working with our corporate Health and Safety function to improve CDM compliance

## **Next Time**

The Update for the next Operation Board will look forward across 2020/21 providing you with a summary of the key initiatives and the projected delivery outputs.

## Grounds Maintenance – Response to query from Councillor Lucy Care

At the January Derby Homes Board meeting Councillor Lucy Care queried whether Street Pride use pesticides on our Estates.

Pesticides are used on Derby Homes estates. The products we use for the control of weeds are:

- Valdor Flex, residual weed control
- Glyphosate as a total weed control.
- Katana residual weed control
- Dual nomix
- Hi Lite nomix

These products are all MAPP approved for amenity use. The Health and Safety Executive aims to ensure that pesticides do not harm human health or have unacceptable effects on the environment. They do this principally by using the law to set strict conditions on the way these products can be used and work with other organisations to ensure the risk and impact of using them are understood and controlled appropriately. Each pesticide must carry a unique product registration number which is allocated upon issue of the first commercial authorisation for that product. It is this registration number which (for agricultural, horticultural and home garden products) is also referred to as a MAPP number. 'MAPP' stands for 'Ministerially Approved Pesticide Product' number. It has been issued for all new products given authorisation on or after 1 July 1999.

All Street Pride operatives applying pesticides are NPTC certified, meaning that they are:

- able to safely use pesticides
- qualified to work in public places using pesticides
- have a recognised life-time professional qualification within the industry.

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

Lorraine Testro, Head of Housing Management:

Tel 888675 Email [lorraine.testro@derbyhomes.org](mailto:lorraine.testro@derbyhomes.org)

Matt Palmer, Head of Housing Options & Homelessness

Tel 642158 Email [matt.palmer@derbyhomes.org](mailto:matt.palmer@derbyhomes.org)

Steve Bayliss, Head of Repairs:

Tel 888774 Email [steve.bayliss@derbyhomes.org](mailto:steve.bayliss@derbyhomes.org)

Shaun Bennett, Director of Investment & Maintenance:

Tel 888545 Email [shaun.bennett@derbyhomes.org](mailto:shaun.bennett@derbyhomes.org)

Taran Lalria, Head of Governance & Corporate Services:

Tel 888608: Email [taranjit.lalria@derbyhomes.org](mailto:taranjit.lalria@derbyhomes.org)

Michael Kirk, Head of Finance & Income

Tel 888703 email [michael.kirk@derbyhomes.org](mailto:michael.kirk@derbyhomes.org)

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