

**Housing and Community Safety Policy and
Scrutiny Committee**

14 March 2023

Housing Management Pilot Report

Summary

1. Following a restructure in 2017, ongoing dialogue with Housing Management Staff and stakeholders and in light of increasing demands on and expectations of the Housing Management service we have reviewed the way in which we deliver our services.
2. After a period of consultation and planning with partners and staff the pilot commenced on 9 January 2023 and it is expected this will last between 12-18 months. This report is a summary and for information only.

Recommendations

3. The Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.

Reason: To keep the Committee updated on the Housing Management Service pilot.

Background

4. Following a re-organisation of Housing Management in 2017 a generic Housing Management Officer (HMO) role was created bringing together income management and tenancy management functions. As a result of financial pressures resources in Housing Management are limited and it is widely felt by staff themselves, stake holders and managers that the role is too broad in nature and not sustainable at current levels in terms of delivering quality services to meet tenants needs.
5. In order to address this, we have reviewed how we can best deliver services in future and ensure we get appropriate levels of support to

people where they most need it. We have looked at practice across the country and the world and worked with our internal and external partners to develop the best model to pilot.

6. At this stage we are trying out new approaches and learning about what might work best for us and we are engaging with key stakeholders about their experiences in order to achieve this.
7. After a period of consultation and planning with partners and staff the pilot commenced on 9 January 2023 and it is expected this will last between 12-18 months.

Overall objective of the pilot

8. The Housing Management Service provide a range of services from targeted early intervention and prevention to a more intensive service where required. The model sees services delivered and adapted in a way that considers the strengths and circumstances of tenants and focusses on achieving the best outcome for them
9. The area Teams- East, West and Central are managed by an Area Team Leader who is responsible for the smooth flow of tenants through the Housing management service to ensure they receive the most appropriate levels of support and advice.

Three HMO roles rather than one

Introductory Tenancy HMO role:

10. To ensure that all new tenants are given the help and support they need to ensure their tenancy is successful and sustainable from the outset, including working in partnership with others.
11. New tenants (Introductory tenants for at least the first 12 months of their tenancy) generally require more interventions than secure tenants (where they have had a tenancy for more than 12 months and is now permanent).
12. This will involve the HMO walking alongside the new tenant from the time the property is allocated- carrying out viewings and sign ups and handing over keys. They will ensure rent payments are set up including any claims for benefits and any financial assistance to

ensure tenants have items such as carpets, curtains and white goods.

13. Once the tenant/s have moved into the property a number of periodic visits are carried out at the property to ensure the tenancy conditions are being met, including the property being in good order, all repairs are being reported and completed and relations are good with neighbours for e.g. The HMO will manage all aspects of an Introductory Tenancy.
14. The sign up process and reinforcing rights and responsibilities of tenancies, from the outset, is a critical time in the life of a tenancy and time spent at the start getting tenants settled into sustainable tenancies is a worthy investment for the benefit of the tenant, the council, and the wider community. Where the tenant/s receive support from other agencies including Adults Social Care or housing related support we will work alongside others to ensure a joined- up approach.
15. Within 12 months a decision will be made for the tenancy to move to become permanent or secure, if it has been successful according to agreed criteria, and management will be transferred to the Community HMO for the geographical area. In some circumstances an Introductory tenancy maybe extended for 6 months where there is further work required with a tenant to ensure they are meeting the terms of the tenancy. This maybe as a result of tenancy breaches due to rent arrears, neighbour nuisance, or poorer property condition for e.g.

Community HMO role:

16. The Community HMO will manage the majority of tenancies in a geographical area, including collection of income and arrears, property condition, management of communal areas- internal within blocks and external, moving home for secure tenants, neighbour and other tenancy management issues.
17. Community HMOs, like the other HMO roles, generally work across a range of Council departments such as Public Realm, Local Area Co-ordinators, Adults and Children's Services and with partners including Councillors, Residents Associations, the Police, Mental Health services and other support agencies to achieve the best outcomes for tenants and communities.

18. The Councils Independent Living Communities (ILC's) are also managed within the team of Community HMO's.
19. As a result of the Introductory and Sustainable Tenancy HMO's managing smaller numbers of tenants more intensively, the Community HMOs have larger numbers of tenants, however it is expected that, certainly within time, these tenants individually will require less resources to manage than new tenants or tenants with more complex needs or circumstances, which are being managed by the Sustainable Tenancy HMO.

Sustainable Tenancy HMO:

20. To more intensively manage moderate/ higher level ASB/ nuisance and vulnerability- complex cases where we have not been able to maintain stability within the community HMO team.
21. Where additional and often more targeted specialist support and management interventions are required to ensure tenants have the opportunity to continue in their tenancy prior to enforcement action being taken in more severe cases.
22. This requires a collaborative approach between the HMO and Tenant, often in partnership with other agencies, whereby any issues are identified, and specific actions and timescales agreed. The Tenants strengths and circumstances are taken into account in identifying which areas of improvement they can lead on and where support is required. An example might be a tenant who is hoarding belongings which might present a health and safety risk to others in a block. It may be identified that the tenant has some motivation to make some changes but maybe in need of some practical assistance and some ongoing coaching from a support agency, which housing can facilitate. We might agree to dispose of unwanted belongings as appropriate if they do not have the means to do this independently and we may work with the tenant and the support agency regarding ongoing strategies to reduce the prospects of the problem recurring.
23. Cases are referred from the CHMO though a dialogue with the Team Leader, CHMO and STHMO and It is expected that some broad timescales will be identified and monitored in order that cases receive the support they require and are then returned to the CHMO

team to be managed in the longer term. This is important so that other cases requiring more intensive interventions can be referred to the STHMO for their input. It is not expected cases will remain with the STHO in the longer term and they will have a more dynamic case load than the other roles. The case load for these HMOs will be the smallest of the three roles due to the more intensive case management approach required.

24. In a small number of cases despite the best efforts of officers and partners tenancy conditions are breached either severely or persistently or both and cases may be referred to legal services for enforcement action.
25. Where there is anti- social behaviour or criminal behaviour involved in a tenancy breach a case may be referred to the Community Safety Hub for case management. This may be for a review of the evidence in the case and to consider whether measures such as injunction may be used, or we wish to progress to court to recover a tenancy.

Next Steps:

26. In order to assess how the pilot is working we have allowed an initial two month period for the staff to settle into their roles. The early feedback from colleagues has been positive overall and there is a high level of interest in how the pilot is progressing
27. Throughout the duration of the pilot starting in the next month we will start to seek official feedback from HMO's involved in the pilot on their experiences in areas like outcomes for customers, customer feedback, management of rent arrears and workload.
28. We are also stakeholders interested in feedback from other partners and will be inviting feedback from teams, groups and individuals on your experience of working with the HMOs in their new roles and in customers receiving our services.
29. We welcome all feedback in determining how we deliver our services in future.

Consultation

30. In developing these proposals, we have consulted with key stakeholders including: Tenants Scrutiny Panel, Housing Management Officers and Team Leaders and internal colleagues within Housing services, Local Area Co-ordinators, Customer Contact Centre, Community Safety Hub and Adult Social Care

Options

31. This report is for information only.

Council Plan

32. Good health and wellbeing, safe communities and culture for all and an open and effective council.

Implications

- **Financial**- None known
- **Human Resources (HR)**- None Known
- ***Equalities***- None Known
- **Legal** - None Known
- ***Crime and Disorder*** - None Known
- ***Information Technology (IT)*** - None Known
- ***Property***- None Known
- **Other** – None Known

Risk Management

8. Not assessed at this stage

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Report **Date** 01/03/2023
Approved

Wards Affected: [List wards or tick box to indicate all]

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None

Annexes

None

List of Abbreviations Used in this Report

None