

**8 OCTOBER 2020**

**CLLR LAURA WRIGHT – PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COUNCIL HOUSING  
DEVELOPMENT AND SERVICES  
HOUSING - UPDATE ON PORTFOLIO HOLDER PRIORITIES**

**Housing Assets - Asset Management Team**

**Stock Condition Work**

- Inspections of blocks still continue and have been undertaken with no interaction with residents
- Mail-outs for inspections of individual properties have started and appointments are being booked for these to be carried out with Covid precautions being taken
- Data cleansing, rationalisation, updating and general housekeeping of the stock condition database continues
- A huge amount of stock condition data and expertise has been fed into the Carbon Reduction project.

**Development Work**

- Work continues to identify and bring forward opportunities to meet the 500 home delivery target for the HRA
- The Laings development site re-mobilised in early July and work is progressing well, with the first completions expected in October
- The Extra Care scheme is progressing well, but the Covid restrictions and social distances have caused a slow down on site with completion not expected until around April 2021
- The acquisition of 3 houses in Anthony Road and the completion of the 9 houses at Thornpark Rise is set for early October 2020
- The Bovemoors Lane development has continued and good progress has been made with only a minor slip in the programme
- The procurement of an operator and care provider for the Extra Care scheme has restarted in earnest with input from both DCC and ECC
- Procurement and mobilisation continues on the Vaughan Road and Hamlin Gardens schemes

**Housing Assets - Health, Safety & Compliance**

**Gas**

- Although the regulator did not relax safety inspection (LGSR) requirements, better government guidance was published which helped our access approach with tenants.
- We assisted our gas contractor with their unexpected additional PPE costs agreeing to pay £3,000.
- The KPIs reflect the lockdown and relaxation: Feb 99.76%, Mar 99.55%, Apr 99.24%, May 98.68%, Jun 99.48%, Jul 99.50% and Aug 99.59%.
- Our own teams continue to support the contractor by providing additional reassurance calls to tenants and nuanced letters.
- Gas boiler installation program continues to be delivered
- Gas Repairs – This service remains unaffected.
- All properties with gas appliances now have carbon monoxide detectors installed. This marks the successful conclusion of a two year program. All CO detectors are checked annually when the LGSR is completed.

Electrical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic 5-yearly inspections – Unlike the LGSRs, this works stopped and recommenced in July. Pre-lockdown KPIs stood at 96.36%, were 87.97% at their worst but have since partially recovered to 90.68% in August.</li> <li>• Electrical Repairs – Remain unaffected.</li> <li>• Communal 5-yearly inspections – Although these did not involve electricians entering tenant properties, the risk from the coronavirus and difficulty obtaining PPE meant that the inspections were suspended. Pre-lockdown KPIs stood at 100%, were 82.77% at their worst but since recovered to 92.92% in August.</li> <li>• Emergency lighting upgrades – this extensive program was also suspended but in line with the other electrical work has resumed. We are now transitioning from installing emergency lighting where none existed before - they relied on borrowed lighting (street lights) – to replacing and improving emergency lighting where it already exists so that all blocks of flats will comply with current, modern standards.</li> </ul>
Asbestos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communal re-inspections – This service was largely uninterrupted and good compliance was maintained so that they have resumed 100% compliance.</li> <li>• Voids and surveys – this area of work ceased during the lockdown but has since resumed.</li> </ul>
Legionella	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk assessments – Performance dipped to 97.37% but have returned to 100% compliance.</li> <li>• Testing and inspections – The service was suspended during lock-down but has since resumed.</li> </ul>
Fire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire risk assessments (blocks of flats) were suspended, in agreement with the fire service, until September. However, we were able to recommence in July and plan to finish in November (not October as previously reported).</li> <li>• We are planning for the forthcoming Fire Safety Act and will shortly be procuring a contract to assess the compartmentation (fire stopping) in all blocks of flats.</li> </ul>
Lifts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communal lifts – 6-monthly inspections and maintenance largely unaffected</li> <li>• Domestic stairlifts – emergency repair continues but maintenance and safety inspections were suspended. These resumed in July. KPIs were 45.70% at their worst and have reached 67.87% in August.</li> </ul>
Footpaths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-inspections – this has been a considerable project. All footpaths have now been risk assessed to a single standard and we are now in the re-inspection phase being 97.11% compliant in August.</li> </ul>
<b>Housing Assets - Reactive Repairs</b>	
Reactive Repairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reactive repairs moved to emergency and essential repairs only, following the introduction of restrictions</li> <li>• Non-urgent repairs have been logged and prioritised</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialist contractors (damp proof, roofing) were put on hold and are now resuming</li> <li>• We are planning for an anticipated surge in demand on the service</li> <li>• Sept- we have now reached the point where we are carrying out all the repairs that we would normally, and we are working our way through a significant backlog of jobs.</li> <li>• Our Day to Day Contractors (Mears) now have staff back from furlough.</li> <li>• We have approx. 1,300 jobs to catch up on with 200 inspections to also carry out (these will certainly add jobs to that list)</li> <li>• Mears are looking at measures to increase productivity such as overtime and incentive schemes.</li> <li>• We are now back at normal incoming call levels for service requests. This is at approximately 700 calls/ week with busy days usually Mondays as high as 180 calls / day. In addition emails and requests for service are being logged from our self-serve web site link.</li> <li>• Typically these calls result in more than one job raised as the tenants and leaseholders have been 'saving them up'</li> </ul>
<p><b>Voids</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We reviewed existing void properties to establish whether they should be mothballed or used for temporary accommodation</li> <li>• The void process has now commenced</li> <li>• Re-let times (therefore rental income) have been temporarily negatively affected, but the service has withstood the challenge of COVID</li> <li>• Sept- our void contractors (Mears) are now fully back at work after a proportion of them were furloughed. This has meant that works have been prioritised for the 'mothballed' voids on a housing needs basis with the lettings department as well as working with Mears to create the right mix of types of void to compliment the workforce. So we are mixing in voids without the need for a new kitchen in with maximising the voids for the kitchen fitting teams to spread the work.</li> <li>• We have 23 Major voids currently that are being looked at in order to fast track completion by attempting to get more resources in place from Mears</li> <li>• The backlog will take 2-3 months to catch up on as of course each week new voids (approximately 5 / week) are added to the list.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Assisted Gardening Scheme</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Assisted Gardening Scheme was temporarily suspended with the exception of health and safety works. This service has now recommenced.</li> <li>• w/c 7<sup>th</sup> Sept Following discussions with Glendale our service provider we have now got adequate risk assessments and procedures for travelling through properties with operative and equipment, in place to allow full service to resume for this valued service, there will be a period of catching up to do and we will endeavour to prioritise the most needed areas as well as respond to individuals request for service on a risk based approach, for example, dealing with overhanging brambles will be prioritised over cutting back, long grass.</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>Housing Assets - Planned Repairs</b></p>	

<b>Planned Repairs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All works undertaken by the Planned Works Team have now recommenced on sites taking into consideration COVID 19 precautions for all tradesmen and residents etc.</li> <li>• We have revised our programmes of work to accommodate the delays, including the new precautions</li> <li>• Kitchen and Bathroom contract to commence imminently</li> <li>• Work continuing to align the net zero retrofit programme with all wider planned works activity</li> </ul>
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**Tenancy Services - Estates**

<b>Housing Officer Team Lettings &amp; Leasehold</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk top tenancy reviews and flexible tenancy reviews still being carried out via phone contact</li> <li>• Home Visits only being carried out in exceptional circumstances and in accordance with Risk Assessment</li> <li>• Requests for joint visits with other agencies/colleagues where concerns have been highlighted are going ahead in accordance with Risk Assessment guidance</li> <li>• Escape Route Inspections have now resumed on a regular basis and clearing a backlog of built up debris and rubbish which accumulated over lockdown</li> <li>• Housing Management IT system is embedding well and old system is due to be decommissioned at the end of September</li> <li>• Additional cleaning of Older Persons Accommodation communal areas ongoing</li> <li>• Reviewing and assessing feasibility of re-opening Common Rooms on OP sites in light of recent 'Rule of Six' changes</li> <li>• Keeping tenants updated on Housing Services via social media</li> <li>• Use of 'decant' properties for Housing Options to provide safe accommodation for Rough Sleepers has now ended</li> <li>• Dealing with complaints, MP enquiries and reports of anti-social behaviour as normal although some restrictions around being able to conduct face-to-face interviews which would previously have taken place at the Civic Centre. Alternatives are being explored</li> <li>• Properties being re-let as usual with Risk Assessment and Social Distancing measures in place</li> <li>• Not currently carrying out Pre-Void inspections as the nature of the visit requires prolonged and close physical proximity to the tenant making social distancing measures difficult to achieve</li> <li>• Mutual Exchange processing has recommenced</li> <li>• Right to Buy applications continue as normal</li> <li>• Leasehold Service charges to be published as normal at the end of September</li> <li>• OPPSO Service operating as normal within Risk Assessment guidance</li> </ul>
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**Performance, Strategy & Resident Involvement**

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- Devised a three stage recovery program, to resume normal services and communicated same to tenants and leaseholders in a timely manner
  - We have contributed to the corporate Business Continuity Plan from a Housing point of view
  - We have updated our risk register to help mitigate the negative effects of Covid-19
  - All furloughed staff have returned to work
  - We provided information and answered customer queries through our social media accounts
  - Our performance has held up despite all the current difficulties e.g.: stable staff levels; rent arrears at the median level according to Housemark; whilst reports of ASB have increased by 58% from March, Housemark have reported a 60% increase within the sector
  - Provided performance and operational delivery data to a number of agencies (NROSH, Housing Ombudsman and Housemark) in addition to normal requirements
  - Provided a link between housing and the Exeter Wellbeing Hub for tenants and leaseholders of the Council
  - Held an online Focus Group meeting with involved tenants via Zoom
  - Increased the number of followers of the Housing Services Facebook page which is continually updated
  - Successfully decanted tenants from the Laings properties and the Vaughan Road bungalows
  - Recruited and appointed a new Housing Decants Officer
- Participated in the Comms. Team Meetings so that there is a consistent message across all platforms of the Council

No. of complaints / enquiries received	MP enquiries	Cllr enquiries	Service Level Complaints	Corporate Complaints	TOTAL
June	3	0	6	2	11
July	5	4	8	3	20
August	2	2	9	7	20
					51