

REPORT TO CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

30 MARCH 2023

PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S REPORT TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

COUNCILLOR DENNING PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CUSTOMER SERVICES AND COUNCIL HOUSING

1. Update or commentary on any major ongoing programmes of work
<p>1. Building Council Homes.</p> <p>We have a goal of building 500 homes by 2030 and we are making inroads into that figure. We have already built 100 and have 21 homes in Hamlin Gardens being built and 35 homes at Whipton Gardens soon on the way. There is the start of the phases to build 92 homes there. All of these homes will be built to Passivhaus standards. We must also not forget the 53 flats at Edwards Court that have freed up homes when those who need care move in. Edwards Court is now at 80% occupancy and has also taken part in the Pathway project which has taken patients from the RD&E who are ready to go home but with no care package. They have stayed until a care package has been put in place. This has been from a few days to a few weeks, but it has helped to free hospital beds. The funding for this project ends at the end of March 2023 and the five flats used for the project will be rented out.</p>
<p>2. Retro Fit Programme</p> <p>420 homes have been retrofitted so far and we have put a bid in for Government Funding under the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) for £1.494 million to retrofit a further 245 homes. The full capital costs of works is £3.5 million. We will not know if we have been successful in securing the funding until the end of March 2023.</p> <p>Exeter City Housing was also nominated (anonymously) for an award at the National Retrofit Academy. The category for which Exeter City Council Housing was nominated was " Best Local Authority or Social Housing Association Retrofit Programme" and even though we did not win the award it was great for the retrofit team being recognised for the hard work they do.</p>
<p>3 Tenant Consultation and Engagement</p> <p>Engagement with the tenants is an important part of delivering as a good landlord. We facilitate a group of tenants called the Tenants Voice who meet with officers and discuss and bring issues to the table. One of the projects that has come out of this is the Tenants Portal. This is for tenants who want to be able to see their own account online, report repairs and message Housing Officers.</p>

They have been consulted and have trailed the basic portal. They have given ideas on how to make it a better and easier experience for people to use and these ideas are now being looked at. It is hoped that this will help to cut down on the number of phone calls coming in and rent arrears as tenants can see their accounts.
 This will NOT mean that services will not be there for those who do not wish to use the portal.

4.LGA Peer Review

At the beginning of February the Local Government Association (LGA) undertook a Peer Review on our Housing Services. One member of the LGA and three members from other councils came to see how we deliver our services. They had meetings with staff and tenants and undertook site visits. They did a small presentation before leaving on some of the outcomes which was presented at the Council Housing and Development Advisory Board. The main report will be available within a few weeks. The interim presentation they gave did not flag any major issues .One small issue was that the role of the Housing Officer had changed dramatically during Covid and perhaps should be looked at. This is now in the process of being done.

2. Issues that may impact : services delivery/financial performance/future budget requirements

- 1.Retroft
 If the SHDF is not successful than we will have to look at other funding streams available to continue with the programme. However, having retrofitted 420 homes we do have a good track record and so believe that the bid will be successful.
- 2.
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3. Potential changes to services/provisions being considered

- 1.Rent Collection
 The collection of rents will be put back with the HRA's remit again, hopefully by the end of the year. Currently, arrears stand at 3% and we need to find ways to collect it. It is believed that the Tenants Portal will help tenants as they will be able to see the balance on their accounts rather than telephoning or waiting for a letter.
- 2.
- 3.

