

**FALKIRK COUNCIL**

**Subject: CORPORATE & HOUSING SERVICES PERFORMANCE UPDATE**  
**Meeting: PERFORMANCE PANEL**  
**Date: 19 November 2015**  
**Author: DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE & HOUSING SERVICES**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 This report sets out an executive summary of Corporate & Housing Services performance for the period April to September 2015 and includes our:

- key priorities;
- key areas for improvement;
- significant challenges, risks and changes in Service pressures since last Performance Panel update;
- important indicators; and
- engagement with our customers.

1.2 The attached Performance Panel Statement seeks to update Members on progress towards achieving the important actions and indicators drawn from our Service Plan.

**2. KEY PRIORITIES**

2.1 We have set the following key priorities for our Service since the development of the Service in August 2015. These are:

**Priority One: Delivering improvement and transformation of services across the Council**

**Priority Two: Reviewing our services to ensure they meet the changing needs of our customers and communities**

2.2 As Officers we continually monitor progress on all of the actions within our Service Plan. We have identified ten key actions which ensure the above priorities are met. Progress on each of these is provided in the attached Performance Panel Statement.

2.3 The Performance Panel Statement also includes our Service Plan actions that are currently significantly behind target.

**3. KEY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

3.1 We have established four Improvement Groups within the Service. An update on the progress of each Group is provided below:

### *Future Frontline Service Delivery to Customers*

3.2 The objective of the Future Frontline Service Delivery to Customers is to:

- ensure our frontline services are focussed on supporting those who need our services most;
- improve customer services to all our citizens and communities but access to services on line; and
- achieve savings and efficiencies by rationalising customer facing services focused around addressing the needs of customers.

3.3 This work is being led by a Project Board with representatives from across Corporate & Housing Services. The proposal subject to Member approval is to deliver a hub and spoke model of advice and support, rationalising local offices into 3 main advice centres with additional outreach throughout the Council from other facilities, e.g. libraries etc. It is proposed that this be piloted in one area of the Council over the coming year to ensure it fulfils the objectives noted above.

3.4 The workstreams underpinning this group, and progress to date, are:

- **Digital Self Service** – This work is being taken forward by the Council's Communications Manager and will focus on providing information and means by which people can get or request services on line without having to visit or phone a Council office. Work has already been undertaken to identify priorities for digital self service focussing on areas such as benefits, rents, council tax etc;
- **Staffing** – To deliver a new model of service delivery we need to utilise the skills and experience of our staff in a way that maximises their individual expertise while ensuring that customers' needs are met fully. Discussions will take place with Trade Unions on this work once a model has been agreed by Members;
- **Infrastructure** – As the new model of service delivery assumes that we will develop outreach support and advice clinics, we will introduce mobile and flexible working solutions for our advisers. This is currently being scoped and will be developed as part of our roll out of mobile and flexible working;
- **Processes and Training** – Work has started to identify what processes we need to rationalise and deliver differently if we are to move to on line services. A critical part of the workstream is to identify what training needs to be put in place for all staff within the new provision; and
- **Property** – In order to deliver savings and to be able to consolidate advice and support, there is a need to rationalise the number of one stop shops that the Council has. Savings will therefore be derived from this project. There will however have to be a reconfiguration of remaining local offices to deliver the new services.

3.5 A report on this work is being prepared for the Council's Executive in the near future. This report will propose a new model of service delivery based on principles previously agreed by Members.

### ***Services to Tenants***

- 3.6 The objective of the Housing Management Review Group is to carry out a comprehensive review of our housing management service. The housing front line is changing and the core competencies of front line officers and the qualities those officers need to deliver those services is evolving. There is a need to ensure that services are reviewed and developed to meet those new challenges, given the demographic changes in our communities in terms of the number of older people and those with more complex support needs.
- 3.7 There have been major changes to the environment in which the service operates. The incremental roll out of welfare reform measures, which the service has yet to feel the full impact of, housing supply and constraints on household income have implications for the service. If the Council is to ensure high quality frontline services for its tenants, a review of where savings can be realised in housing management is required, thereby ensuring ongoing investment and enhancement of the customer experience for tenants.
- 3.8 The Group comprises representatives from Housing, Governance and Finance Divisions and will include a tenant representative. In addition, representatives from Adult Social Care and Children's Services will attend on an ad-hoc basis.
- 3.9 Work streams and key actions will be determined in December once the group has agreed the action plan.

### ***Rent Collection & Rent Arrears***

- 3.10 The objective of the Rent Collection & Rent Arrears Improvement Group is to ensure Falkirk Council's performance is within the top half of authorities in Scotland by the end of 2017/18 and then progress on to top quartile performance from that platform. We are currently ranked 21<sup>st</sup> out of 26 authorities in Scotland who have retained housing stock and therefore in the bottom quartile.
- 3.11 The Group comprises representatives from Finance, Housing and Governance Divisions of our Service and will consider the following areas:
- contractual arrangements (frequency of rent payments and payment in advance/arrears);
  - support for tenants;
  - engagement;
  - recovery policy; and
  - documentation.
- 3.12 A number of key actions will be progressed over the next three months including:
- review working practices of best performing authorities; and
  - develop action plan for improvements.

### ***Building Maintenance Division***

- 3.13 An Improvement Group was established following the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) assessment of operating practices within the Building Maintenance Division (BMD). The Group comprises representatives from Trades Unions and BMD management. The main objective is to ensure the future viability of the BMD over the next 5-10 years.
- 3.14 APSE identified and recommended that a number of workstreams be considered to deliver financial and operational efficiencies going forward. These are:
- review current depot provision, linked to the introduction of a mobile working solution. The objective being to reduce the number of depots in order to deliver savings in terms of supervision, management and administration costs, along with lower property operating costs;
  - review the appointments process to ensure that adequate appointment slots are made available and are being utilised;
  - review the process for determining emergency jobs to reduce the ‘over’ prioritisation of work and reduce the response time which is placing a significant demand on the service;
  - review the present working arrangements within the cyclical maintenance programme to identify more efficient and cost effective service delivery arrangements;
  - review the voids process to reduce the number of days to return a void property and increase the overall % voids being completed within the local target times, thereby minimising lost rent;
  - review the current productivity scheme to increase levels of productivity, including the introduction of multi-skilling for certain tasks;
  - review current fleet size to increase productivity, which may result in additional vehicles being required on a spend to save basis;
  - review operating costs within Fleet Management to identify cost efficiencies and see how costs associated with fleet per vehicle per annum can be reduced to nearer the average value experiences by other authorities.
- 3.15 Work groups to support the Improvement Group have been created to progress the workstreams identified. These workstreams, and progress to date, are:
- **Work Scheduling Team** – This was established in August to handle repair requests in Braes, Bo’ness and Grangemouth areas. Tenant satisfaction surveys are being undertaken with c98% of customer satisfaction; 100% of General Maintenance jobs within the pilot area are now appointed with a date and am/pm timeslot being given. Tradesmen now ring ahead to the customer before attending the appointment. This compares to c1/3<sup>rd</sup> of repairs previously appointed;
  - **Mobile Working** – Testing of mobile working commenced at the end of June with 6 operational mobile devices;
  - **Depot Provision** – A single depot solution is the objective going forward, with Inchyra Depot as the preferred site option. However, such a move will take time and is dependent on matters such as mobile working; stores arrangements and vehicle storage being progressed. The first initial phase will be relocation from Winchester Depot, the lease of which expires in approximately 12 months;

- **Working Procedures** – Reviewing clerical and administration arrangements;
- **Cyclical Maintenance** – The need for appropriate benchmarking data was also highlighted by APSE. As such an opportunity was available to undertake a tender exercise for 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the cyclical painterwork (time limited to end of March 2016). This has not impacted on our workforce as our existing painters are undertaking new internal work in Void Houses as part of the new voids house standard;
- **Fleet / Vehicles** – Areas being considered include better use of our vehicle tracking systems and identifying opportunities for more efficient working through one person per vehicle arrangements; and
- **Schedule of Rates** – An independent review of the labour element of our SOR's is being carried out and is comparing c2,000 SOR's with external market and national schedule of rates. This review will also provide details of different and modern working practices which impact on the SOR comparisons.

3.16 Around 70 voluntary severance applications have been received for BMD employees. Severance offers have been made to 22 employees, 18 have accepted with a leaving date of 31 October 2015. Accepted offers will cost c£400k and will be funded directly from BMD budgets this financial year, with no impact on the Council's General Fund. Annual salary savings of c£500k are estimated from the accepted voluntary severance applications.

3.17 As there will be no back-filling or replacement of posts released through voluntary severance, efficiencies will be delivered through the above work groups.

3.18 A number of key actions will be progressed over the next 3-6 months:

- expansion of the geographic coverage of the Work Scheduling Team to include a minimum of 1 further local Housing Office area;
- Work Scheduling Team responsible for scheduling all operatives work for the pilot areas, generating supervisory staff efficiencies;
- expansion of mobile working;
- revised store and material supply arrangements agreed;
- agreed "Home to Work" Protocol in place and commencement of home to work arrangements for agreed employee groupings;
- lease terminated for Winchester Avenue and relocation plan in place; and
- tranche 2 voluntary severance applications considered and decision made. Further savings of c£500k are targeted as part of this second wave of voluntary severance.

#### 4. UPDATE FROM LAST PERFORMANCE PANEL

4.1 There have been a number of significant challenges, risks and changes in Service pressures since our last report to Performance Panel. This section notes some of these:

- Best Value Audit Improvement Plan has been agreed by Council and will be supported in its delivery by our Service;

- the Community Planning Partnership has agreed its priorities and outcomes and these will be finalised over the coming months and presented in a final Plan early 2016;
- The service is currently co-ordinating work with regards to refugees both within the Council and across the Community Planning Partnership. This again will be subject of a report to the Executive in the near future.

## 5. IMPORTANT INDICATORS

- 5.1 Our Service has a suite of indicators that are required for statutory and business related purposes. We have identified 16 important indicators. We have provided information on all our important indicators in the attached Performance Panel Statement. Indicators that are on target have comparative data for your information. Indicators that are significantly below target or slightly below target have additional background information on the progress and improvement actions for each.

## 6. ENGAGEMENT WITH CUSTOMERS

- 6.1 Our Service is currently in the process of engaging with our service users on the following:
- **Budget Engagement** – detailed budget options for our Service are currently on the Council website and our customers have the facility to make comments to us directly on any of the proposals. We are currently in the process of engaging with service users in terms of any equality and poverty impact that the budget proposals may have;
  - **Strategic Community Plan** – the most recent Citizen Panel were asked about their perceptions of the area in order to inform the Plan;
  - **Housing Rent** – Tenants will be consulted on rent and value for money through the Tenants Forum and Newsletter in November and December; and
  - **Local Housing Strategy** – the next Citizen Panel will go out at the end of November and will include questions about the Strategy.

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**DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE & HOUSING SERVICES**

Date: November 2015

Ref: 0002 – C&HS Performance Panel Report – November 2015/DAT

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## Corporate & Housing Services - Performance Panel Statement - April to September 2015

### Key Actions Progress



Action is significantly behind target.



Action is slightly behind target or in danger of not achieving deadline.



Action is on target.




Action is completed.






### Key Priorities

#### CHS Priority One: Delivering improvement and transformation of services across the Council

Action		Progress	Status
CSP15BT004	Review business support functions across all Services to streamline processes, eliminate duplication and deliver efficiencies.	On target. All Services live with the exception of schools support staff, on target to transfer in 2016. Project plans for re-design of functional areas on target.	
CSP15BT007	Deliver a mobile flexible working solution for the Council - including Mobile Device Management, Virtualisation, Home Working etc.	Servers have been received from both suppliers (Atlantis & HP) and are currently being installed and will then be configured. Configuration of the servers is scheduled for completion by 4th November. The applications and desktops will be set up from 4th November until the 17th & testing of the applications will be carried out until the 3rd Floor early adoption goes ahead on the 9th December. BMD/Members and Staff tablets will then be transferred to the live set-up. Sessions with Services to discuss transfer to virtual desktops has started with further sessions being scheduled.	
CSP15VALPER17	Take forward a review of the Council's approach to performance management.	Following the publication of the best value of the Council and improvement plan has been agreed by the Council. This will include a review of how we identify, undertake and support self-assessments. This will be considered alongside other performance management tools such as service review, PIs etc. A workshop for Members on Performance Management is being planned for 2016.	
CSP15VALPER28	Continue to develop the Medium Term Financial Strategy.	The MTFS is regularly updated as new information becomes available and is a working document. Work is ongoing at the moment to facilitate the use of the Integra system to monitor the MTFP and move away from the current spreadsheet system. The BV report recommended longer term planning (5-10 years) and we are looking at how this can be taken forward in a meaningful way.	

Action	Progress	Status
CSP15VALPUB04 Investigate the options for a suitable corporate electronic document and records management system (EDRMS).	Initial work has been undertaken to investigate the opportunity to procure a suitable electronic document records management system. Further work to determine the exact requirements for each Service requires to be undertaken following work being undertaken by the Records Management Group on the classification scheme.	

### CHS Priority Two: Reviewing our services to ensure they meet the changing needs of our customers and communities

Action	Progress	Status
CSP15BT009 Develop a proposal for a suitable channel shift for our citizens to allow them to access our services in a variety of ways and to enable the Council to deliver services as efficiently as possible.	This project is significant in supporting improved access to services, in particular the review of Frontline Service Delivery. There are a number of aspects to this including ensuring clear information on services is provided to the public through a number of medium but also importantly provides services online to the public. Funding for a technical solution to the delivery of online services is currently being considered.	
CSP15ECOWEA01 Review and refresh the Council's Poverty Strategy.	Work started on the review of the Poverty Strategy. This area of work is being progressed alongside the review of the Strategic Community Plan and will inform the priorities within the new Plan.	
CSP15EQUHSG01 Implement the 2015-18 Housing Investment Programme to ensure housing stock continues to meet Scottish Housing Quality Standards beyond 2015; improves energy efficiency; provides additional affordable homes to meet needs and improve our housing estates.	<b>Housing Investment Programme 2015/16 to 2017/18:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The 3 year programme which includes a total investment of £85.7m was approved by Falkirk Council on 11 February 2015.</li> <li>2. Over the life of the programme c£51.45m will be spent on maintaining our existing council housing stock to the SHQS and improving the energy efficiency of our stock to the new EESSH.</li> <li>3. c£34.2m will be spent in delivering a range of initiatives to deliver new and additional affordable homes and to expand the scope of housing options to help meet tenants housing needs.</li> <li>4. The projected expenditure for 2015/16 as reported to executive on 29/09/15 was £28.3m, an underspend of £2.1m. Work is ongoing to identify works that can be brought forward to mitigate the underspend.</li> <li>5. The underspend is due to the planned start dates for Council new build projects being delayed: Duke Street due to planning constraints and Stenhousemuir due to issues with retaining the front facade.</li> </ol>	
CSP15EQUHSG02 Develop a Housing Strategy for older people to meet the needs of increasing aging population.	The Older People's Housing Plan has now been prepared and will be reported to Executive in January 2016.	
CSP15VALPAR02 Support and lead the review of the areas in the new Strategic Community Plan.	A draft Plan which sets out priorities and outcomes will be presented to the Community Planning Leadership Board at its meeting in November. Following this a period for consideration and review by partners will allow a finalised Plan to be prepared for approval by the Board and partners in the new year.	



## Important Indicators on Target

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Target	Benchmark
	Value	Value	Value		
<b>AHS 1 Percentage of New Tenancies sustained for more than a year</b>	87.7%	89.1%	89.4%	90.0%	87.7% SHBVN / SHR 2014-15
<b>AHS 12 Percentage of settled accommodation secured by unintentionally homeless applicants</b>	84.1%	89.9%	91.6%	80.0%	80% (Scottish Government report on Operation of Homeless Persons Legislation June 2014)
<b>FIN_ISG_061 Number of days to process new Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction claims</b>	40	26	20	25	24 days DWP Scottish average for 2014/15
<b>FIN_ISG_063 Number of days to process Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction change events</b>	16	10	9	10	8 days DWP Scottish average for 2014/15
<b>CHS060 Percentage of FOI enquiries dealt with in 20 working days</b>	N/A	N/A	92%	100%	No Benchmark applicable, however expectations would be 100% as per FOI timescales.
<b>CNS056 Procurement Capability Assessment</b>	60	70	Annual	75	60 Scotland Excel Local Authority Average 2014
<b>GGV 6 Percentage of Rent Lost through properties being empty during the last year</b>	1.25%	1.72%	1.19%	1.0%	1% SHBVN / SHR 2014-15
<b>HQM 3a Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs (in hours)</b>	6	7	6	7	6.3 hours SHBVN / SHR 2014-15
<b>HQM 4a Average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs (in working days)</b>	14	14	12	12	8.6 days SHBVN / SHR 2014-15
<b>HQM 9 Percentage of Tenants satisfied with the standard of their home when moving in</b>	82.3%	84.1%	92.0%	90.0%	81.7% SHBVN / SHR 2014-15

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Target	Benchmark
	Value	Value	Value		
HQM 11 Percentage of Tenants who have had repairs or maintenance carried out in last 12 months satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service	89.7%	89.3%	88.7%	90.0%	86.90% SHBVN / SHR 2014-15

### Important Indicators slightly below target

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Target	Benchmark
CHS061 Sickness Absence: Corporate & Housing Services	N/A	N/A	4.51%	4%	No benchmark - target locally determined

#### Progress

Absence is managed in line with the Council's Managing Sickness and Absence Policy. This involves a combination of Return to Work interviews; specialist medical and OH referrals; workplace adaptations; informal and formal monitoring. All staff has been trained on the Council's absence policy.

Information updated October 2015.

#### Improvement Action

A number of measures have been taken to minimise sickness absence across the Service. These include:

- Barrachd has now been rolled out and provides management information. Work continues to develop this process.
- New divisional absence targets have been identified and agreed by Joint Consultative Committee.
- The trigger process has ceased and has been replaced by a number of new actions as reported at Joint Consultative Committee.
- HR is currently reviewing absence/capability policies.

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Target	Benchmark
GGV 5a Gross rent arrears (all tenants) as at 31 March each year as a percentage of rent due for the reporting year	7.65%	7.66%	Annual	6.10%	6.1% SHBVN / SHR 2014-15

#### Progress

The 2015/16 data will be available in April 2016. We have developed an approximation to allow monthly tracking of rent arrears. The approximation is currently 6.67% as at end September 2015. At present we are seeing an improvement on associated indicators that indicate we will be close to achieving our target by the end of 2015/16.

#### Improvement Action

A Rent Arrears Improvement Project has been commissioned, with membership agreed. The objective of that project is to ensure that we are in the top half of Scottish authorities by the end of 2017/18 financial year.

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Target	Benchmark
<b>HQM 1 Percentage of Stock meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard</b>	87.30%	82.79%	Annual	89.15%	84.1%
<b>Progress</b>					
<p>Our percentage for both SHQS compliance and meeting the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) is 100% for all properties within the scope of the SHQS. The properties within the scope of SHQS include all social rented properties (16328) excluding all exemptions and abeyances.</p> <p>Our exemptions and abeyances include the following:</p> <p>Exemptions – 730 Properties</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. 244 properties have undergone a design feasibility study to extend our existing CHP and install a district heating scheme. The initial findings have indicated that the extension is not economically viable and further investigations are ongoing.</li> <li>. 24 properties are located within a conservation area, which is restricting the energy efficiency measure that can be carried out. Design and liaising with planning is ongoing.</li> <li>. 462 properties that have an electric wet heating system installed and we are currently working with BRE and Scottish Government to ensure that the energy efficiency methodology best reflects the performance of the system.</li> </ul> <p>Abeyances – 2080 Properties</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. 57 properties that await gas supply. Work ongoing with utility company.</li> <li>. 569 properties have gas supply installed and we are waiting on the tenants arranging their meter upgrade.</li> <li>. 262 properties where we have been unable to gain access.</li> <li>. 1026 properties where tenants have refused programmed work.</li> <li>. 166 properties where owner occupiers have refused to participate.</li> </ul> <p>Therefore our overall SHQS compliance within our total stock is 83% (and the 17% is made up entirely of exemptions and abeyances).</p> <p>Information updated October 2015.</p>					
<b>Improvement Action</b>					
<p>A 3-year investment programme is in place and this identifies works required across our properties to meet the SHQS by the 2015 deadline. Works include replacement heating and heating upgrades to improve the energy efficiency ratings, fabric improvements, upgrading the remaining high rise flats, replacing kitchens and bathrooms, electrical upgrades, estate improvements and health &amp; safety improvements. We have completed a full stock condition survey, and have initiated a 5 year rolling programme of stock condition surveys to maintain our properties in line with the SHQS beyond 2015.</p>					

## Important Indicators significantly below target

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Target	Benchmark
<b>CHS033 Sickness Absence: Craft Staff</b>	5.5%	7.1%	6.8%	5%	4.09% APSE Performance Network (BMD Family Group) 2013/14

### Progress

Absence is managed in line with the Council's Managing Sickness and Absence Policy. This involves a combination of Return to Work interviews; specialist medical and OH referrals; workplace adaptations; informal and formal monitoring. All staff has been trained on the Council's absence policy. .

Information updated October 2015.

### Improvement Action

A number of measures have been taken to minimise sickness absence. These include new software to improve management information. Further training for managers on the occupational health process has been completed. Long term absences and those employees meeting absence triggers are regularly reviewed in consultation with HR. HR are also developing new procedures to assist managers in the process of managing absence, as reported to JCC.

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Target	Benchmark
<b>CHS047 Percentage of 1st stage complaints responded to within timescales</b>	N/A	N/A	83%	100%	100% SPSO Target

### Progress




Performance levels will continue to be closely monitored on a monthly basis. 1st stage complaints received year to date was 539. Those closed within 5 working days were 439. April 80%, May 87%, June 76%, July 91% Aug 83% Sept 71% Year to date performance is 83%.

Information updated October 2015.




### Improvement Action

Increased focus on checks by Customer Service Team and Service Unit Managers on a twice-weekly basis on overdue cases and increased focus on performance. We are continuing to develop our processes to ensure that timescales are adhered to.

## Audits

Title		Update	Status
CSP15AU002	Community Planning Audit - Follow up work	Review and submission submitted to Audit Scotland.	
CSP15AU003	Data Accuracy Visit in relation to Annual Return on Charter carried out by Scottish Housing Regulator	Inspection completed and letter received to confirm that Falkirk Council's data was found to be accurate. Full report is still to be published	
CSP15AU004	BSI Accredited Services - Internal and External Audits	<p>The British Standard Institution (BSI.) completed their last visit in May 2015 and confirmed the areas assessed during their audit to be effective. In November 2015, BSI will conduct a further surveillance visit and again look evidence to ensure our quality management system meets the requirements of ISO9001:2008.</p> <p>In addition to the above a program of over 25 internal audits were completed, over the year, to support the achievement of statutory, regulatory and contractual requirements. The effectiveness of these internal audits is also subject to scrutiny by BSI as part of their regular program of surveillance visits.</p>	

## Inspections

Title		Update	Status
CSP15IN001	Benefit Risk Inspection	Stage 2 of 8 completed - self assessment and updated action plan returned to Audit Scotland. Awaiting contact from them for Stage 3 - site visit.	
CSP15IN002	Thematic Inspection of Rent Consultation Methodology	Inspection completed but report from the Scottish Housing Regulator has still to be published	
CSP15IN003	Annual Inspection of Registered Events	The inspection is due to take place in January/February 2016 for events registered in 2015.	
CSP15IN004	Inspection of Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act 2000 (RIPSA) Activities	An inspection by the Office of Surveillance Commissioners (OSC) will be undertaken on 17 November 2015. OSC will report back and provide recommendations which will then be considered.	