

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 25 July 2024

6.00 pm

**Committee Rooms 1-2, City
Hall**

Membership: Councillors Gary Hewson (Chair), Pat Vaughan (Vice-Chair),
Councillor Natasha Chapman, Thomas Dyer, Adrianna McNulty,
Neil Murray, Lucinda Preston, Anita Pritchard and Emily Wood

Substitute member(s): Councillors Liz Bushell and Annie Currier

Officers attending: Democratic Services, Michelle Hoyles, Simon Walters, Martin
Walmsley, Emily Holmes and Toby Forbes-Turner

A G E N D A

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Please note that, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, when declaring interests members must disclose the existence and nature of the interest, and whether it is a disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI) or personal and/or pecuniary.	
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Present: Councillor Gary Hewson (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Pat Vaughan, Councillor Natasha Chapman,
Councillor Neil Murray, Councillor Lucinda Preston and
Councillor Emily Wood

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Thomas Dyer, Councillor Adrianna McNulty
and Councillor Anita Pritchard

1. Confirmation of Minutes - 7 March 2024

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 March be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a true record.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Pat Vaughan declared a Personal Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'Financial Performance - Outturn 2023/24'. His granddaughter worked in the Finance Department at City of Lincoln Council.

Councillor Pat Vaughan declared a Personal Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'Treasury Management Stewardship and Actual Prudential Indicators Report 2023/24 (Outturn)'. His granddaughter worked in the Finance Department at City of Lincoln Council.

3. Change to Order of Business

RESOLVED that the Strategic Risk Register contained at Section B of the report be considered alongside the Strategic Risk Register Quarterly Review Report.

4. Strategic Risk Register - Quarterly Review

Emily Holmes, Assistant Director – Transformation and Strategic Development:

- a) presented Performance Scrutiny Committee with a status report of the Strategic Risk Register as at the end of the fourth quarter 2023/24
- b) reported that the strategic risk register currently contained fourteen risks as follows:
 - 1) Failure to engage & influence effectively with the Council's strategic partners, council staff and all stakeholders to deliver against e.g., Council's Vision 2025
 - 2) Failure to deliver a sustainable Medium-Term Financial Strategy (that supported delivery of Vision 2025)
 - 3) Failure to deliver the Towards Financial Sustainability Programme whilst ensuring the resilience of the Council
 - 4) Failure to ensure compliance with existing and new statutory duties/functions

- 5) Failure to protect the local authority's long term vision due to changing structures and relationships in local government and impact on size, scale and scope of the Council
- 6) Unable to meet the emerging changes required in the Council's culture, behaviour and skills to support the delivery of the Council's Vision 2025 and the transformational journey to one Council approach and service delivery
- 7) Insufficient levels of resilience and capacity exist in order to deliver key strategic projects & services within the Council
- 8) Decline in the economic prosperity within the City Centre
- 9) Failure to deliver key strategic projects
- 10) Failure of the Council's key contractors and partners to remain sustainable and continue to deliver value for money
- 11) Failure to protect the vulnerable in relation to the Council's PREVENT and compliance with safeguarding and domestic abuse duties
- 12) Failure to mitigate against the risk of a successful cyber-attack against the Council
- 13) Impacts of uncertainty of Government's migration policy on the Council's service delivery, capacity and MTFS as well as the impacts for the City as a whole
- 14) Failure to deliver critical services in an emergency situation.

Members considered the contents of the report.

RESOLVED that the Strategic Risk Register as at the end of the fourth quarter 2023/24 be noted.

5. Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item(s) of business because it is likely that if members of the public were present there would be a disclosure to them of 'exempt information' as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

6. Strategic Risk Register - Quarterly Review

Emily Holmes, Assistant Director – Transformation and Strategic Development:

- a) provided members with the revised Strategic Risk Register as attached at Appendix A
- b) invited members' questions and comments.

RESOLVED that the Strategic Risk Register as at the end of the fourth quarter 2023/24 be noted.

7. Inclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that the press and public be included back into the meeting.

8. Financial Performance - Outturn 2023/24

Laura Shipley Financial Services Manager:

a) presented a report to Performance Scrutiny Committee with the provisional 2023/24 financial outturn position on the Council's revenue and capital budgets, including:

- General Fund
- Housing Revenue Account
- Housing Repairs Service
- Capital Programmes

b) requested that Performance Scrutiny Committee note that the financial outturn was still subject to Audit by KPMG, the Council's external Auditors

c) provided information on the following:

- **General Fund Revenue Account** – for 2023/24 the Council's net General Fund Revenue Budget was set at £14,402,660, including a planned contribution from balances of £191,110 resulting in an estimated level of general balances at the year-end of £2,228,739. The finance performance quarterly monitoring report for quarter 3 predicted an underspend against the revised budget of £476,652 (before additional transfers to earmarked reserves and carry forward requests. The provisional outturn for 2023/24 now indicated an improvement of £383,314 (before additional transfers to earmarked reserves and carry forward requests) Based on this position, additional transfers to earmarked reserves, and carry forward requests, totalling £843,547 had been proposed which resulted in an overall budget underspend of £16,419. This represented a variance against the revised budget of 1%. Full details of the main variances were provided in Appendix B
- **Housing Revenue Account** — for 2023/24 the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) net revenue budget was set with a planned contribution from balances of £58,930, resulting in estimated general balances at year-end of £1,125,517, after allowing for the 2023/24 outturn position. The financial performance quarterly report for quarter 3 predicted an overspend of £13,787. The provisional outturn for 2023/24 now indicated an improvement of £19,515 resulting in an overall budget underspend of £5,728 (including additional transfers to earmarked reserves.) There was a number of significant variations in income and expenditure. Full details of the main variances were provided at Appendix D
- **Housing Repairs Service** – For 2023/24 the Council's Housing Repairs Service (HRS) net budget was set at zero, which reflected

its full cost recovery nature. The provisional outturn for 2023/24 showed the HRS had a deficit of £288,844, an improvement of £263,218 since quarter 3 which had been repatriated to the HRA. Full details of the main variances were provided at Appendix F

- **General Investment Programme** – the revised General Investment Programme (GIP) for 2023/24 amounted to £15.334m following the quarter 3 report. At quarter 3 the programme had reduced by £3.702mm to £11.632m as shown at paragraph 7.2. The overall spending on the General Investment Programme active schemes for the final quarter of 2023/24 was £10.4m, which was 86% of the 2023/24 budget as detailed in Appendix I
- **Housing Investment Programme** – the revised programme for 2023/24 amounted to £16.120m following the quarter 3 position. At quarter 4 the programme had decreased by £1.388m to £14.732m as shown at paragraph 7.10 of the report. The overall expenditure on the Housing Investment Programme for the final quarter was £14.732mm, which was 91.3% of the budget as detailed at Appendix J of the report

d) invited members' comments and questions

Question: Referred to the General Fund Year End Key Variances detailed at table 3.3 of the report with reference to increased non-recoverable temporary accommodation costs, increased non recoverable supported accommodation costs and a reduction in Housing Benefits overpayments. There was an £835k shortfall, what was the breakdown for this figure? How much was for temporary accommodation costs and how much was for supported accommodation costs? How did it compare to last year?

Response: The detailed breakdown was contained at Appendix B of the report. For 2022/23 the pressure for Temporary Accommodation was £64k and the actual cost was £447k compared to 2022/23 which was £168.6k and the actual cost was £352k. The budget had been increased every year. For Supported Accommodation the pressure was £168.6k and actual cost of £442k for 2023/24 compared to 2022/23 which was pressure of £91k and actual cost £224k. The actual cost for Supported Housing had doubled from 2022/23 to 2023/24. The variances only related to the Housing Benefit Subsidy pressures, the actual Bed and Breakfast costs less Housing Benefit payments sat within the Housing General Fund, which had also seen a growing pressure year on year due to increased demand

Question: Referred to the carry forward requests detailed at section 3.7 of the report in relation to inflation pressure on the Grounds Maintenance contract – supplier billing error of £57k. What was the ground maintenance supplier billing error?

Response: : The Grounds Maintenance Contractor had been in contact at the end of the financial year to advise that they had incorrectly calculated inflation on their Grounds Maintenance invoices throughout the year. The final invoice had yet to be received, but was estimated to be in the region of £50k, due to an in-year underspend on the Grounds Maintenance budget of £57k, it had been proposed to Executive that this be carried forward to cover the costs in the new financial year.

Question: Referred to the HRA earmarked reserves as detailed at paragraph 4.7 of the report in relation to the De Wint Court sinking fund additional outturn contribution of £92,500. As this was a joint scheme with Lincolnshire County Council would they be making a contribution?

Response: There would be no contribution from Lincolnshire County Council or Homes England. The asset was owned by City of Lincoln Council.

Question: With reference to the £16k underspend, what were the reasons for the underspend and how did it compare to other years?

Response: A number of overspends and underspends were listed at paragraph 3.3 of the report. The largest single variance being Investment Interest income due to the Bank of England base rate maintaining much higher levels than expected, this would not be the case in the new year as the budgets had been amended to reflect our Treasury advisors estimates. There were a number of variances each year, things happened throughout the year that could not be predicted, further details of all major variances can be found within Appendix B.

Question: With reference to the £27,420 carry forward in relation to tree works procured but undelivered in 2023/24. What did this mean?

Response: The work had been procured but, due to contractor capacity, it had not been delivered in 2023/24. The money would be carried forward to 2024/25 so that the work could be completed.

Question: Referred to the Housing Repairs deficit of £289k. What was the deficit compared to last year, had there been any improvement?

Response: The outturn for 2022/23 was a deficit of £222k which was £67k less than 2023/24.

Comment: The Housing Repairs deficit should be discussed at Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee.

Question: Referred to the General Fund year end variances in relation to Building Regulations, Land Charges and Development Control income pressures. Was there a loss and if so what measures were being looked at to remedy this?

Response: There was a combined income loss last year of £209k. The loss was predominantly due to the cost of living crisis. The impact from this had seen record inflation levels driving up the cost of labour and materials which impacted both business resources and household income and stifled development. The Medium Term Financial Strategy had been adjusted to take into account the continued downturn into 2024/25, plus additional resources contributed at outturn to the Income Volatility reserve to cushion any continued volatility into 2024/25 and beyond.

Comment: It was important that the Central Market broke even by the end of the year. There should be some key performance measures introduced for the Central Market.

Response: The current draft business plan was based on achieving a profit from running the market. Now that the market was operational the actual costs and income would be assessed to establish the revised business plan (including income and occupancy levels) to inform the Councils Medium Term Financial Strategy planning work in September 2024. As was the normal process, the performance targets would be agreed with the Portfolio Holder and would be reported as part of the quarterly performance monitoring.

Question: Referred to the £30k transfer to reserves for consultancy support for Yarborough Leisure Centre Swimming Pool capital project. What would this money be used for?

Response: It was proposed to use some of the underspend on some professional consultancy to run the project on the basis the grant received did not include any provision for this.

Question: Had the Council acquired 279 properties?

Response: No, the 279 related to £279,000 of expenditure, which related to 3 properties that had been purchased in the last quarter.

RESOLVED that:

1. The provisional 2023/24 financial outturn for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, Housing Repairs Service and Capital Programmes as set out in sections 3-7 of the report and the reasons for variances be noted.
2. The General Fund carry forward requests as detailed at paragraph 3.7 of the report be noted.
3. The proposed transfer to General Fund and HRA earmarked reserves detailed in paragraph 3.8 and 4.7 of the report be noted.
4. The changes to the General Investment Programme and Housing Investment Programme as approved by the Chief Finance Officer as detailed in paragraphs 7.6 and 7.13 be noted.
5. The changes to the General Investment Programme and Housing Investment Programme as detailed in paragraphs 7.5, 7.11 and 7.12 be noted.

9. **Treasury Management Stewardship and Actual Prudential Indicators Report 2023/24 (Outturn)**

Laura Shipley, Financial Services Manager:

- a) presented a report to Performance Scrutiny Committee on the Council's treasury management activity and the actual prudential indicators for 2023/24
- b) explained that the Council held £17.543m of investments which was £19.142m million lower than at 31 March 2023 as detailed within the investment profile at Appendix A, and section 4.3
- c) highlighted that the Council's total debt (including leases and lease-type arrangements) at 31 March 2024 was £107.742m as detailed within Appendix A, and section 4
- d) invited members' questions and comments.

Councillor Preston gave thanks to officers for the information and reassurance provided within the report given the financial pressures faced by many Councils. She referred to the report that stated that during quarter 3 there was a short

period where liquid funds dipped slightly below the target £5m liquidity level. Why did the funds dip?

Laura Shipley Financial Services Manager responded that there was a short period of a few days where the liquid funds dipped below £5m, it was expected and was monitored daily. A decision was made not to call in an investment early as it was only for a few days. She further provided assurance that cash flow was monitored on a daily basis.

RESOLVED that the report be noted

10. Quarter 4 2023/24 Operational Performance Report

Councillor Murray left proceedings at 7pm.

Michelle Hoyles, Business Manager – Corporate Policy and Transformation:

- a) presented a report to Performance Scrutiny Committee with an outturn summary of the council's performance in Quarter 4 of 2023/24
- b) explained that the full report was attached as Appendix A of the report, with the full list of performance measure outturns and supporting performance commentary provided at Appendix B of the report
- c) invited members' comments and questions.

Question: There were some Council properties that had their recycling facilities removed, would they be restored?

Response: Those properties that no longer had recycling bins were predominantly flats where there had been a significant amount of contamination. If the recycling had continued it would have resulted in the whole round being rejected by the waste recycling centre. The Government would be mandating recycling in the future, therefore the facility would be reinstated in due course.

Question: With reference to the number of live cases open in relation to Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour (PPASB), what constituted a live case? What was Officers capacity to reduce the number of live cases and how were they prioritised?

Response: The cases were categorised across all PPASB services and would be prioritised with the urgent cases being dealt with first. There were two new Officers within the team funded by the Safer Streets Fund. Their primary focus at the moment was to tackle issues in the City Centre. There was a commitment to retain them when the funding ended in March next year which would provide additional resource to the team.

Comment: Pleased to see that the PPASB Officers were doing good work within the City Centre, however, the problems were then dispersed to areas outside of the City.

Response: It was important that residents reported incidents of anti-social behaviour. The Police were reactive when the incidents were reported.

Question: What would be the waste recycling provision for the new waste contract?

Response: The specification for the new contract included the current recycling provision. Provision for food waste would be provided from September 2026.

Discussions were taking place with Lincolnshire County Council on paper and card collection.

Question: Under the new waste collection contract could the new bins include a warning sticker regarding leaving bins on the street?

Response: The new contractor would take over the existing bins. The process was that the waste contractor would put an initial sticker on the bins and if this was ignored it would be escalated for PPASB enforcement action.

Question: How long would it take to be escalated if the resident ignored the warnings?

Response: The process was that a tag would be left on the bin, followed by two letters then a fixed penalty notice. A stepped approach was taken to allow time for the resident to address the issue.

RESOLVED that:

1. The report be noted and forwarded to Executive for approval.
2. The format of the performance report continued to meet the committee's requirements.

11. **Work Programme 2024/25**

Emily Holmes, Assistant Director – Transformation and Strategic Development advised that due to the General Election being called, all committees were being looked at. A revised work programme would be circulated following the meeting.

The Chair requested that performance measures on the new central market be reported to Performance Scrutiny Committee in future.

Simon Walters, Director for Communities and Environment confirmed that some performance measures for the new central market were currently being developed and they would be reported to Performance Scrutiny Committee in due course.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

Present: Councillor Gary Hewson (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Pat Vaughan, Councillor Alan Briggs,
Councillor Liz Bushell and Councillor Loraine Woolley

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Mark Storer

34. Confirmation of Minutes - 2 November 2023

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a true record.

35. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

36. Lincoln Tenants' Panel Annual Report

Mick Barber, Chair of LTP updated Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee as follows:

Lincoln Tenants Panel had continued to maintain and introduce business activities through a mixture of face to face and virtual meetings. In addition to this, Lincoln Tenants Panel Chair had secured a place on the department for levelling up/housing and communities Social Housing Quality Resident's Panel.

Members of Lincoln Tenants Panel (LTP) provided an overview of the activities and achievements of the LTP for the period from December 2022 to December 2023:

The Lincoln Tenants' Panel over the last year has been involved in a wide range of activities. These included:

- Contributed towards the development of the 30-year business plan.
- Contributed to the 30-year business plan estate regeneration work stream consultation.
- Contributed to the kitchen refurbishment programme choices.
- Continued to engage with the Repairs Service Managers to review schedule of repairs programme.
- Continued to engage with Investment to review the communal door replacement programme.
- Continued to carry out tenants' inspections for void properties.
- Continued to engage with tenancy services and to attend estate inspections.
- Continued in the development of the HRA Business Plan and Asset Management Strategy.
- Continued to carry out quarterly reviews to assess complaints and ASB processes and procedures.
- Reviewed and revised Lincoln Standards policy.
- Reviewed and revised Tenants Involvement Strategy action plan matrix.
- Reviewed and revised communal area policy.

- Reviewed annual performance and targets.
- Reviewed garage and rents.
- Monitored performance and challenged the council over issues.
- Worked with Tenancy Services to apply and secure ASB Accreditation status.
- Joined TPAS – Tenant Participation Advisory Service
- Attended HSSC meetings and represented tenants where possible.
- Attended fire safety engagement exercises delivered in partnership with Lincolnshire Fire & Rescue and City of Lincoln Council at Trent View.
- Attended training sessions delivered by TPAS and **Four Million Homes** programme (*funded by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities*).
- Attended ARCH conference.

Members of LTP provided a further overview of their work plan and priorities for the next 12 months as follows:

- Complaints monitoring.
- Review of Tenant Involvement Strategy action plan matrix.
- Tenant inspection of void properties.
- Tenant estate inspections.
- Performance monitoring.
- Implementation of Tenant Satisfaction Measures.
- Review of tenancy services complaints.
- Review of ASB related complaints.
- Continual review of ASB accreditation recommendations.
- Continual review of schedule of repairs.
- Continue to review communal door investment programme.
- Review of tenancy agreement.
- Review of pet policy.
- Review of rechargeable repair policy.
- Arrange for TPAS to deliver bespoke training programme.

The Chair of LTP thanked our tenants' representatives, councillors and officers for their work in supporting our panel.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

37. **Aids and Adaptations Policy**

Amy Larder, Interim Maintenance Manager:

- a) presented a report to provide information and guidance on our Aids and Adaptations service, providing clarity for service providers and users, and to seek approval for the introduction of the Aids and Adaptations Policy attached at Appendix A
- b) reported that the policy identified regulatory requirements, who was eligible to use the service, and types of adaptations that could be provided through the service, together with the approvals process and timescales for approved works

- c) described the key aims of the policy to enable the provision of a high quality and cost-effective adaptations service to assist those in need of adaptations to make informed choices about their housing options, raise awareness of the service and identify our approach in handling requests for adaptations
- d) advised that the City of Lincoln Council offered tenants permanent and temporary adaptations to their homes to ensure their homes remained suitable for their individual needs, working with partners and agencies, including Lincolnshire County Council to provide adaptations to our housing stock
- e) highlighted that within the last financial year 2022/2023 we received 221 referrals for adaptation to properties, 95 of those referrals were for major adaptations to our properties, including wet room installations
- f) emphasised that the Council was committed to ensuring council tenants and their immediate family who had a disability could as far as possible continue to live safely and independently and be able to carry out day to day activities
- g) described in further detail the contents of the aids and adaptations policy, which identified the regulatory and legal framework for who was considered for the policy, covering the following main topic areas:
 - Minor Adaptations
 - Major Adaptations
 - Referral Areas
 - Approval
 - Funding
 - Performance Monitoring
 - Communications
- h) requested agreement for implementation of the policy for Aids and Adaptations to provide clarity and to communicate the policy as identified in section 4.9 of the officer's report

Members discussed the content of the report in further detail.

The following questions/comments emerged from the discussions held:

- Question: Was it possible for items such as lever operated water taps and handrails on both sides of internal staircases to be installed as standard in council dwellings?
- Response: A new tap design was in the process of being sourced, however, lever taps were specifically designed to an individual's medical needs and could not be installed as standard. The standard issue was for one handrail to be installed, however, bespoke rails were also added to dwellings to suit individual medical needs.
- Comment: It would be helpful to include the availability of aids and adaptations in the Tenancy Agreement so that residents knew there was an option to offer assistance in later life.

RESOLVED that the policy for Aids and Adaptations, including communication as identified in section 4.9 of the officer's report be agreed and progressed to Executive for formal approval.

38. Allocations Breakdown April-December 2023

Alison Timmins, Acting Assistant Director, Housing Management:

- a) provided statistical data relating to the allocation of Council accommodation at the end of Quarter 3, April-December 2023 for member's information
- b) highlighted that:
 - With respect to lettings by band, the Council was required to ensure that any household who was homeless or threatened with homelessness was prioritised for accommodation.
 - In addition, the Council held a quota for transfer applicants to move into more suitable accommodation that met their changing needs. The target for transfers was 25% of all lettings, we were looking to increase the number of properties advertised with preference to transfers in quarter 4, to remain on target to ensure that we met local needs and Government priorities.
- c) advised that during April-December 2023, the Council allocated 410 properties, listed within her breakdown of figures by type of applicant and branding to which successful bids were made
- d) also listed further analysis of allocations by property type
- e) noted that the majority of properties allocated were flats and that the supply of houses, particularly large houses, continued to be in short supply
- f) invited members comments on the content of the report

Members discussed the content of the report in further detail.

The following comments/questions from members were responded to as follows:

Question: Of the 2,020 people currently on the housing register list, what percentage was added to by homeless people?

Response: The officer would investigate further and respond to members via email.

Question: Did homeless people include 'rough sleepers' and 'sofa surfers'?

Response: Yes, anyone with unsatisfactory housing including sofa surfers were included if they made a homeless application. Additional support was offered to rough sleepers with government funding, however, they were not offered any different housing proposal and treated the same as others on the housing register.

Question: Why didn't the Council build more bungalows to release larger houses for families?

Response: This was an option, however, bungalows tended to need a larger footprint and were more expensive to build.

Question: Were those people in temporary accommodation included in the number of people on the housing register?

Response: Yes. There were 60-70 households in temporary accommodation. Approximately 20 families were staying in hotels/bed and breakfast accommodation. Even if a homeless application had been submitted, an application to go on the housing register must also be made.

Question: People were able to register as homeless 56 days before they officially became homeless. Of these 60-70 households in temporary accommodation, how many struggled to find a property and were living in hotels/bed and breakfast accommodation?

Response: There was a constant turnover in available accommodation which included private sector housing, people moving away or going to live with relatives.

Question: Was it possible to use units similar to those being utilised at RAF Scampton?

Response: The Housing Department were looking at a range of options for temporary accommodation, however, this would have to be a last resort, being in a worst case scenario than the present situation.

Question: Was there an option to use existing buildings such as the former West Parade Police Station and Unity Square to convert into accommodation?

Response: The Housing Authority was tied by planning restrictions and some vendors potentially not always wishing to sell properties for this type of accommodation. Some buildings were not appropriate for change of use having too many shared areas for conversion to suitable accommodation. The government issued a consultation paper earlier today on changes to local allocation policy. We would wait to see what this consultation brought to the table.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

39. Estate Inspections- Feedback Process

Paula Burton, Acting Assistant Director, Housing Management:

- a) provided information to Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee as to how feedback was given about issues raised during annual estate inspections
- b) advised that each year a programme of Estate Inspections was carried out by Officers from Tenancy Services, Members and representatives from Lincoln Tenant's Panel (LTP); in 2023 there was also the addition of officers from the Investment Team and Housing Repairs Service
- c) highlighted that questions had been raised through Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee and Lincoln Tenants Panel about the process for providing feedback to members and tenants regarding progress on identified work
- d) stated that much of the information was recorded on spreadsheets as the current IT system could not specifically record issues raised during inspections, and due to the number logged it would be very time

consuming for officers to check manually whether the job had been completed or was in progress

- e) proposed an alternative opportunity with the implementation of a new IT system to enable the process for estate inspections to be fully recorded, to allow actions to be easily identified and reported
- f) referred to the opportunity for greater involvement of LTP members in the monitoring process, subject to consultation with LTP, taking the form of a sub-group focussed on checking outcomes
- g) offered a commitment to provide feedback to all Members on any issue raised at estate inspections for their area within 8 weeks of it being completed, also a report into Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee on the number of estate inspections completed, works raised, progress on completion dates and confirmation that Members had been provided with information relevant to their area
- h) added that clear information would be provided on whether works identified would be progressed individually or as part of Estate Regeneration programmes
- i) requested Member's feedback on the content of the report.

Members discussed the content of the report in further detail.

The following questions/comments emerged from the discussions held:

Comment: Members of LTP expressed their disappointment that figures were not currently available, however, they looked forward to the implementation of a new IT system moving forward in a positive format with information on issues raised at estate inspections.

Comment: Members offered thanks to senior officers for their presence on the housing ward walks which made a huge difference, there were however still lengthy outstanding issues.

Question: When would the IT upgrade be implemented to enable estate inspection to be recorded?

Response: This would be between May-June 2024. Long term asset investment would commence later in September 2024. We must address previous missed opportunities from estate inspections conducted and the improved technology would assist, alongside making staff more accountable in attending call-outs. There had been numerous staffing vacancies recently which had not helped, however, these posts were now filled. A senior officer would be present at each estate inspection and would carry out an audit of what happened the previous year. We were in a stronger position moving forward to provide meaningful reports.

Question: How many estate inspections would be held each year. Engagement with tenants was very important.

Response: There would be one estate inspection and a follow-up conducted by estate officers 6-7 weeks later. Officers would endeavour to give as much prior notice of the dates to Members.

Comment: Tenants came out of their homes to talk during estate inspections, often providing valuable information for officers.

RESOLVED that:

1. The content of the report be noted.
2. The proposal for Members to receive feedback on the outcome of estate inspections completed in their areas within 8 weeks be agreed.
3. The outcomes of future estate inspections be reported annually and programmed into Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee future work programmes.

40. Work of Tenancy Sustainability Team

Paula Burton, Acting Assistant Director, Housing Management:

- a) provided a report to update Members regarding the current position in regard to tenancy sustainment within Tenancy Services
- b) highlighted that sustainment of tenancies and keeping people in their homes was a key priority for the City of Lincoln Council (CoLC), with benefits for our tenants and for us as a landlord in terms of reduced void costs, reduced income loss and decreased management costs, together with benefit to the General Fund as tenant's facing eviction were likely to apply for rehousing or assistance via the Homelessness Team
- c) reported that since the introduction of the Welfare Reform Act in 2012 tenants had faced challenges to their income such as introduction of the 'spare room subsidy', benefit cap, Universal Credit, and Personal Independence Payments
- d) added that the Pandemic in 2019, had led to a further erosion of income, not only for those on benefits, but also for those who worked full time who had seen a continued erosion of available income due to the cost-of-living crisis
- e) reported that in April 2022, Tenancy Services introduced three Housing Officers on two-year contracts, dedicated to working on our sustainment objectives to address these issues up to March 2024
- f) explained the four phases covered within the pilot Tenancy Sustainment Team and an analysis of how the project had performed against each phase at paragraphs 3 and 4 of the officers report
- g) advised that since April 2022, the team had only been fully resourced for 20% of the project; recruitment had proved difficult and when appointments had occurred, staff retention had again proved challenging due to the temporary nature of the contract
- h) emphasised that this had impacted on the service available to customers in curtailing substantial portions of its pro-active work to solely focus on income related activities which was the strength of the current Tenancy Support Team member

- i) reported that the existing Tenancy Sustainment Officer post would be extended by 6 months up to 30 September 2024
- j) advised that the Tenancy Support Team service would be reviewed and opportunities to improve overall effective sustainability of tenancies be actioned
- k) highlighted changes to the system to allow better reporting of cases and the ability to measure whether behaviour had changed as a result of interaction with the service moving forward
- l) requested Members feedback on the content of the report.

Members discussed the content of the report in further detail.

The following questions/comments emerged from discussions held:

Question: Reference was made to the Void Support Team being able to offer a considerable proportion of 'Phase 1: pre-tenancy support for vulnerable tenants' with additional training and asked whether additional staff would be required?

Response: The support would be carried out by the Voids Admin Team and not the workforce. Some of the workload was already undertaken by the Welfare Support Team together with a degree of overlap with other services. There would be a rethink of other approaches for providing sustainability support through collaboration with other sources and different mechanisms to working effectively.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report including an update on the work completed by the Tenancy Support Team be noted.

41. Review of Empty Garages

Paula Burton, Acting Assistant Director, Housing Management:

- a) presented a report to update Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee on the number of empty garages and subsequent loss of income resulting from this
- b) reported that the Council's Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, approved by Executive in November 2023, set out the long-term income and expenditure plans for delivery of council housing and assets in the city over the next thirty years
- c) explained that:
 - The Council owned 1,134 purpose-built garages situated within 88 garage sites, with an additional 16 garage plot sites.
 - The majority of the garage stock was constructed more than 40 years ago. These garages were designed for cars which were often smaller than the average car today.
 - Car usage had also changed over time with many households requiring additional parking facilities for multiple cars.
 - Our current provision of garages was not always the best solution to resolve parking issues in our estates.

d) reported on current garage usage as follows:

- 775 of the garages were tenanted amounting to 68% of stock,
- 72 garages were available to let, 15 of which were in the process of signing new tenancies
- 204 garages required repairs
- 83 were unavailable to let
- This had resulted in a void loss of £165,099 from April to December 2023

e) highlighted the reasons for garages remaining void this year due to a lack of need on some sites or major works being required, with a decision to be made as to whether repairs were financially viable or whether disposal or alternative use for the sites should be considered

f) advised that a Working Group had been in place for the last year exploring options available for garage stock

g) outlined the potential alternative options identified by the Working Group available for each garage site, which fitted within the priorities of the HRA Business Plan and the Council's Vision priorities:

- Development of housing
- Investment to provide better quality garages
- Alternative parking provision
- Change of use to provide community spaces such as play areas, green spaces etc

h) advised that a revised Draft Garage Strategy/Action Plan would be circulated for information in due course following consultation with LTP Members and interested parties

i) requested members feedback on the content of the report.

Members commented/asked questions in relation to the report as follows:

Comment: It was important to look at the marketing element of our existing garage stock, including availability of electrical points and cost effectiveness. Greater usage could reduce Anti-Social Behaviour.

Response: It was planned to include criteria for hire of available garage space at the time when people applied for a tenancy. There was also the potential to charge differing rent for residential/ private sector use.

Comment: There were a great deal of empty garages in good condition which could be re-let. Members in Birchwood Ward would be happy to conduct site visits with the Garage Officer in their area to identify garages fit for re-use. An advertising promotion for the garages would be useful.

Response: Officers had already completed this piece of work, although the Garage Officer would be happy to meet Birchwood councillors on site. We were looking at advertising garages using the same process as letting properties.

Comment: Could the remaining empty garages be given notice to be used for building houses?

Response: This was already being considered as part of the Garage Strategy process and also by the Strategy and Investment Team.

Comment: Different areas would involve different solutions.

Response: The Action Plan in the Draft Garage Strategy would offer a variable pricing policy. Marketing would also help.

Comment: Some residents parked their cars irresponsibly on grass verges/paths. Caged tree planting in some areas had helped.

Response: The Garden Strategy/Action Plan would look at differential pricing, aggregation, greening up of estate areas, leasing parking bay areas and carbon reduction. This review had revealed more information about garage stock than was ever known before. This involved a large piece of ongoing work.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted with thanks.

42. Housing 30-Year Business Plan: Summary of Initial Tenants' Consultation

Paula Burton, Acting Assistant Director, Housing Management:

- a) presented to Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee the results of the recent tenants' consultation, linked to the Council's Housing Revenue Account 30-Year Business Plan
- b) reported that the Council's HRA Business Plan approved by Executive in November 2023 set out the long-term income and expenditure plans for delivery of council housing in the city over the next thirty years, and was developed in partnership with Savills
- c) advised that the Lincoln Tenants' Panel had been involved in development of the business plan since its inception during summer 2023, prior to seeking Executive approval for the business plan, the Council also undertook a wider consultation with tenants to seek their views on their local neighbourhoods
- d) concluded that this report briefed the Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee on the Council's approach to the tenants' consultation, and summarised the responses received.

Members commented on the low response to the consultation at 4% which was disappointing, although it was encouraging to see a different type of approach.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted with thanks.

43. Review of the Pet Policy

Paula Burton, Acting Assistant Director, Housing Management:

- a) presented information relating to impact on the Pet Policy following the recent changes to the Schedule of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, relating to XL Bully dogs
- b) explained that the Government added XL Bully dogs to the list of banned dogs on 31 December 2023, followed by the second part of the ban which came into force on 1 February 2024 which made it a criminal offence to

own an XL Bully dog in England and Wales without a Certificate of Exemption

- c) referred to some City of Lincoln Council tenants who already had an XL Bully dog at their home, with a need to adopt a clear corporate policy position on the rules and responsibilities for our tenants
- d) advised that the current Pet Policy document required review in full to ensure it reflected all legislation, took into account the City of Lincoln Council's reasonable approach to keeping pets in properties and recent evidence relating to emotional support that animals could provide to tenants.

Members discussed the content of the report in further detail.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. The Pet Policy be reviewed in full to ensure it was up to date with legislation by 31 March 2024.
- 2. The council allowed current XL Bully owners to retain their pets, subject to them:
 - Obtaining permission from us to keep a pet
 - Meeting all Exemption criteria
 - Not allowing their pets to cause a nuisance.

44. Tenancy Policy

Paula Burton, Acting Assistant Director, Housing Management:

- a) presented at Appendix 1 to her report, the contents of the City of Lincoln Council's (CoLC's) Tenancy Policy for members consideration prior to its implementation and publication
- b) reported that it was a requirement under the Localism Act 2011 for each local authority to produce a Tenancy Strategy, also all Registered Providers must publish a Tenancy Policy that aligned with the Tenancy Strategy; the Council as a Registered Provider was required to produce and publish a Tenancy Policy
- c) advised that the Tenancy Policy specified the different types of tenancies, licences and non-secure tenancies to be granted to new and existing Council tenants and provided a framework for which tenancies the Council would grant and the exceptions to granting the most secure form of tenure
- d) highlighted that the policy ensured the tenancy granted was compatible with the purpose of the accommodation provided, considered the housing needs of individuals and households, sustainability of the community and made best use of housing stock
- e) referred to the main content of the policy which the following areas:
 - Introductory tenancies
 - Secure tenancies

- Non-secure tenancies
- The use of Licenses
- The use of Demoted tenancies
- The use of Family Intervention tenancies
- Granting of joint tenancies, succession and assignments
- New tenancy process

f) requested members consideration of the Tenancy Policy prior to implementation and publication.

Members discussed the content of the report in further detail.

Members queried how many non-secure tenancies were in existence?

Officers advised that non-secure tenancies were given for a temporary period and therefore did not have the rights of secure tenancies. The number of non-secure tenancies would be reported back to members under separate cover.

RESOLVED that the Tenancy Policy be agreed and forwarded to Executive for approval prior to publication.

45. Adi's Legacy/Hartsholme Community Garden

Paula Burton, Acting Assistant Director, Housing Management:

- a. presented a report to update Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee regarding the request made by Adi's Legacy to lease the land to the rear of Hartsholme Shops, Morton Drive for them to manage and maintain as a community garden at a nil or peppercorn rental cost per annum
- b. advised that the land was owned by the Housing Revenue Account, as indicated in yellow at Appendix A (244m²)
- c. highlighted that due to historical anti-social behaviour, the land (and other land in the vicinity) was fenced off to prevent fly tipping, vandalism and people gathering and causing a nuisance to the shops and residents in the community
- d. reported that in September 2023, Adi's Legacy CIC approached the City of Lincoln Council and requested use of the land to create a community garden for public use in the city
- e. described Adi's Legacy (CIC):
 - A registered non-profit community interest company which provided a unique service to individuals across the city.
 - It catered to all in the community including those sleeping rough and those who had previously slept rough or living in hostel/temporary accommodation.
 - It supplied home packs, food and toiletry packs and also supported anyone in need of extra help.
 - Adi's Legacy pre-loved shop opened on 5 August 2023 and was situated at 72 Hemswell Avenue, Lincoln

- f. reported that Adi's Legacy's main aim was to bring the community together and create a safe multipurpose outdoor space for local residents to use, to help prevent loneliness and isolation and make a positive impact on those living in the community; it aimed to involve the community in the upkeep of the area including gardening tasks, grass cutting and litter picking.
- g. stated that Adi's Legacy pre loved shop would supply drinks and snacks from the kitchen area of the shop free of charge; it currently offered hot drinks and breakfast snacks in the shop, and intended to use the utilities from the shop to provide electric for tools and water for the garden as needed
- h. advised that Adi's Legacy aimed to secure a formal lease for the land to enable them to bid for available funding to encourage community participation in looking after the garden, with assistance from volunteers already working for Adi's Legacy preloved shop and use the garden for events for the local community including barbecues, teddy bear picnics, family picnics, coffee and chat sessions, providing seating areas for all ages
- i. requested that members note the content of the report and support the granting by officers of a lease to Adi's Legacy at a peppercorn rent.

RESOLVED that the grant of lease of land to Adi's Legacy to the rear of Hartsholme Shops under delegated powers to officers at a peppercorn rent for a term of seven years or less, being terminable at the end of any year of lease or earlier should there be a breach of lease conditions be supported by members of Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee.

46. Work Programme 2023/24

The Senior Democratic Services Officer:

- a. presented the work programme for Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee for 2023/24 as detailed at Appendix A of the report
- a. advised that this was an opportunity for Committee to suggest other items to be included on the work programme.

RESOLVED that the content of the Work Programme for 2023/24 be noted.

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- Present:** Councillors Councillor Gary Hewson (*in the Chair*), Alan Briggs, Mark Storer, Pat Vaughan and Loraine Woolley
- Apologies for Absence:** Councillor Liz Bushell
- Also in Attendance:** Mick Barber (Chair of LTP), Caroline Coyle-Fox (Vice Chair of LTP), Mike Asher (Member of LTP), Sean Newton (Member of LTP) and Debbie Rousseau (Member of LTP)

47. Confirmation of Minutes - 1 February 2024

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2024 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a true record.

48. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Pat Vaughan declared a Personal Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 3 - 2023/24'.

Reason: His granddaughter worked in the Finance Department at City of Lincoln Council and his daughter worked in the Benefits Department at the City of Lincoln Council.

Councillor Pat Vaughan declared a Personal Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'Housing Financial Performance - Quarterly Monitoring'.

Reason: His granddaughter worked in the Finance Department at City of Lincoln Council and his daughter worked in the Benefits Department at the City of Lincoln Council.

Councillor Pat Vaughan declared a Personal Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'Target Setting 2024/25'.

Reason: His granddaughter worked in the Finance Department at City of Lincoln Council and his daughter worked in the Benefits Department at the City of Lincoln Council.

49. Change to Order of Business

RESOLVED that the order of business be amended to allow the 'Report by Councillor Nannestad, Portfolio Holder for Quality Housing' to be considered as the next agenda item.

50. Report by Councillor D Nannestad, Portfolio Holder for Quality Housing

Councillor Donald Nannestad, Portfolio Holder for Quality Housing:

- a) presented a report to Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee covering the following main areas:

- Homelessness
- Tenancy Services
- Voids

- Housing Repairs
- Housing Investment
- New Build
- Decarbonisation
- Lincare Control Centre

b) highlighted that some areas were performing better than others, however, even those areas recorded as 'red' were showing as good performance when compared to other authorities, with all areas up and down the country facing the same problems

c) invited questions and comments from Members of the Committee

Members of Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee considered the content of the report in further detail. Comments and questions were responded to by the Portfolio Holder for Quality Housing and officers as follows:

Question: It was stated that 20% of new build properties within the Western Growth Corridor (WGC) development would be affordable homes and managed by social housing regulators. Were all new builds going to be affordable housing?

Response: The type of new build housing was dependent on the purpose for which finance was awarded to us by Homes England. If more funding was given for social housing then we would consider if there was opportunity to deliver a higher percentage of affordable or social homes. Affordable Housing products included affordable rented, shared ownership, first homes and some supported accommodation. These could be delivered by a registered provider and Local Housing Authority. The site at WGC was to be a mixed tenure site with market housing also captured within the development.

Question: Would new tenants living in old council stock still be classed as affordable housing tenants? Many would not be able to stretch to affordable housing rents. How would this be managed?

Response: There were no current plans to convert existing social rented tenants over to affordable rents. However, if a tenant moved they would sign up to the terms of the property they were signing for. For example if this was an affordable rented property, this would be the terms and this communicated to them. Financial assessments on affordability took place before the tenant signed up to the terms of the tenancy.

Question: Was the way forward that if a person was already a tenant and moved house, their payments were set at affordable rent and not social housing rent?

Response: A blanket approach did not exist, it would all depend on the property they were moving to and how and when this had been purchased/built. For example new builds were often funded via the affordable homes programme and let at affordable rent, whereas if someone was moving to a house which had been a council property long term these would normally remain as social rents. When purchasing properties or building new homes, the financial viability was also dependent on government intervention rates, for example better intervention rates from government to deliver more social rents could help the Housing Authority determine the rent type and if we were to introduce social rents rather than affordable rent again in the future. The housing authority could not operate at a loss and needed to ensure the rents and intervention rates covered costs incurred and likely to be incurred for ongoing future maintenance.

Comment: There could be a situation whereby affordable rent was applied to one house whilst the house next door paid social housing rent.

Response: Transparency came into action through the Joint Homefinder Scheme. A prospective tenant had the choice whether or not to bid on an affordable property. There were of course safeguards built into the system to ensure people were financially able to afford prospective bids.

Comment: Western Growth Corridor (WGC) land owned and sold to contractors for social housing would now be used for affordable housing.

Response: There had been no sale, there had been a land swap. The first 52 WGC homes would not be affordable, they were mainly on Housing Revenue Account (HRA) land and received funding from Homes England. There had to be a mix of homes built in order to make the scheme financially viable.

Question: Was the 38 day performance target for voids achievable?

Response: This was dependent on the condition of the properties when they became available for re-let. It was becoming increasingly difficult to meet the targets due to the availability/cost of labour and materials. There had unfortunately been a large number of deaths in our properties, which resulted in access to the properties being delayed for legal reasons. It was more realistic to increase the number of days than to set unmanageable targets.

Question: It was understood that it was written into the Tenancy Agreement that officers would access council homes once a year for inspection, although this hadn't been universally applied. A record of how many visits we made to each property for whatever reason would be beneficial, also to make tenants aware of their responsibilities.

Response: Some tenants had lived in the same property for many years and did not welcome improvement works to their homes. We now had a new Tenancy Services Manager in post committed to spending more time on property inspections. There was more that we could and wanted to do here. Those properties that hadn't reported repairs for more than 10 years would be targeted first as most at risk.

Question: At the last Voids meeting the performance target had been increased by 3 days and the reason for this action was understood. Was there anything that could be put in place to avoid hoarding in council properties and improve the way that a minority of people lived?

Response: Pre-tenancy support was an important factor here. We also needed to improve our recharging regime for damage caused and the bad state of repair that some properties were vacated in. There may be a need to temporarily put a hold on 'transfers' to reduce the number of void properties at any one time.

Question: Had building work commenced yet on Garfield Close?

Response: The date was moving forward. Queen Elizabeth Road was one of the earlier developments being planned for the housing pipeline, hopefully starting in 2025-26. A report on the housing pipeline was due to be presented to Executive which set out the Council's anticipated sites and potential delivery timescales.

Question: The number of properties having a valid gas safety certificate at 98.29% was very high, however, the 93 homes that did not have one also seemed high in terms of fire risks?

Response: The figures were comparable to other areas. The problem was in gaining access to some properties.

Question: It was now a year since Ward Paddock had been built. Had snagging issues been addressed at a reasonable settlement to the council?

Response: Officers were in discussions with the developer to look at any defects. A list of liable work to be completed by the developer was being established. All this work was documented.

Question: Would temporary homes be introduced to help deal with the influx of people at RAF Scampton requiring accommodation?

Response: This was very early days and the impact was unknown until the site was operational. If people secured rights to remain it was believed through historic information from other similar schemes that they relocated/settled to where friends or family lived in larger conurbations and not necessarily local areas. This would be monitored once this site was fully in operation to understand the impact to City of Lincoln Council (CoLC).

Response by LTP Chair: It needed to be placed on record that 85% of tenants were very responsible people. There were 15% of properties with issues and we were working to alleviate these problems.

RESOLVED that the report be noted with thanks.

51. Lincoln Tenants Panel Project Updates

Mick Barber, Chair of Lincoln Tenants Panel (LTP), provided a written report highlighting the Panel's continued work on a variety of projects with tenancy services, fire safety assurance, maintenance, business management and resident involvement teams. The briefing note, designed as a regular update to members of Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee, covered the following areas:

- LTP continued to hold quarterly meetings to review service areas.
- The Complaints and ASB Review Group continued to implement recommendations and a positive impact on complaint processes and procedures had been seen.
- A meeting had recently been attended with contractors and it was confirmed that installations of kitchens/bathrooms/communal doors were on target.
- A robust tenant journey had been implemented which ensured communication took place on a regular basis.
- The working group had been tasked to create a satisfaction survey for current investment installations.
- The Schedule of Repairs (SOR) Working Group had again received positive information relating to performance with repair timescales and damp and mould procedures.
- LTP continued to hold quarterly meetings with the Voids Team Leader reviewing void inspections and targets. The number of voids inspections had increased and they had all, again surpassed standards.
- LTP had reviewed the following:
 - 1) Caretaker Review for low and high rise
 - 2) Tenancy Agreement Review
 - 3) Pet Policy
 - 4) Aids and Adaptations Policy
- A new member of LTP had been recruited and joined in January 2024.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

52. Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 3 - 2023/24

Michelle Hoyles, Business Manager, Corporate Policy:

- a) presented Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee with a summary on performance indicators for the Directorate of Housing and Investment (DHI) for Quarter 3 of 2023/24 (October -December)
- b) added that regular monitoring of the Council's performance was a key component of the Local Performance Management Framework and supported its ongoing commitment to continuous improvement of Council services
- c) confirmed that there was a total of twenty-one performance indicators monitored by DHI; an overview of performance for the third quarter of 2023/24, against such indicators, was attached at Appendix A to the report
- d) reported that of the 21 measures in total; nine had met or exceeded their agreed target, five had performed close to target and six had performed below target
- e) highlighted that three of the measures found to be performing close to target were 'year-end' measures and included two measures that cumulatively recorded expenditure in maintenance and capital works
- f) added that the third and final year-end measure related to the proportion of homes not at 'decent homes standard'; performance against this measure, whilst formally recorded at year end, was currently exceeding target
- g) referred to Appendix A of the report which attempted to simplify the overall analysis by listing performance on a service functional basis (rents, repairs, etc) and then showing the source of the indicator (reason)
- h) confirmed that further detailed information on the areas highlighted was provided within the report
- i) invited Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committees questions and comments.

Members of Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee considered the content of the report in further detail. Comments and questions were responded to by officers as follows:

Question: There was no reference to performance on electrical safety?

Response: That measure would be commenced in the 2024-25 meeting cycle and would be reported on a quarterly basis.

Comment: Reference was made within the report to 'two weeks free rent', This was not free rent as the rent charges for the whole year were averaged out over 50 weeks rather than 52.

Response: Apologies were made for the terminology used within the report which was incorrect.

Question: The Customer Contact Centre had been closed due to a fault on the system. What measures were being taken to improve the response times?

Response: A response to this query would be fed back by the officer under separate cover.

Comment: The target for response times to formal complaints made was not showing as performing well.

Response: Some complaints were being recorded as formal complaints that were actually service requests when the nature of the complaint was not known.

Comment: Performance on rental income was very good news. Congratulations to the officers concerned in achieving this figure.

RESOLVED that:

1. A response to the measures being taken to improve Customer Contact Centre response times be fed back to members under separate cover.
2. The current performance outcomes during Quarter 3 of the financial year 2023/24 to date, be noted.

53. **Housing Financial Performance - Quarterly Monitoring**

Adam Oxley, Principal Finance Business Partner:

- a) presented a report to Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee with a summary of the third quarter's performance (up to 31 December 2023), on the Council's

- Housing Revenue Account
- Housing Repairs Service
- Housing Investment Programme

- b) provided information on the Council's

- **Housing Revenue Account** — for 2023/24 the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) net revenue budget was set with a planned contribution from balances of £58,930, resulting in estimated general balances at year-end of £1,125,517, after allowing for the 2023/24 outturn position, at Q3 the HRA was currently projecting a forecast overspend of £13,787, which would result in HRA balances of £1,111,730 as at the end of 2023/24 (Appendix A provided a forecast Housing Revenue Account summary). Although the forecast position was an overspend there was a number of significant variations in income and expenditure. Full details of the main variances were provided at Appendix B.
- **Housing Repairs Service** – For 2023/24 the Council's Housing Repairs Service (HRS) net budget was set at zero, which reflected its full cost recovery nature. At quarter 3 the HRS was forecasting a deficit of £552,062 in 2023/24. Full details of the main variances were provided at Appendix C.
- **Housing Investment Programme** – the revised programme for 2023/24 amounted to £16.862m following the quarter 2 position. At quarter 3 the programme had been decreased by £0.742m to £16.120m as shown at paragraph 6.2 of the report. The overall

expenditure on the Housing Investment Programme at the end of quarter 3 was £7.029m, which was 41.85% of the 2023/24 revised programme. This excluded expenditure relating to Western Growth Corridor, which was currently shown on the General Investment Programme (GIP), to be apportioned at year end (current forecast outturn £1.97m) as detailed at Appendix G of the report. A further £0.525m had been spent as at the end of January 2024.

c) invited Housing Sub-Committees questions and comments.

Members of Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee considered the content of the report in further detail. Comments and questions were responded to by officers as follows:

Question: Why was rental income higher than anticipated?

Response: This was due to a higher than budgeted opening housing stock at the start of the financial year with voids turned around more quickly. The Rookery Lane new build development had been allocated quickly providing higher occupancy and rent levels.

Comment: It would be much preferred if we could carry out our own repairs without having to rely on sub - contractors.

Response: With current inflationary pressures, everything was more expensive. A piece of work was currently ongoing giving far greater allocation of where service vehicles were deployed and reviewing productivity with the workforce. Recruitment for a Maintenance Manager was also in process.

Comment: It would be great to see an increase in the take-up of apprenticeships, which had declined lately.

Response: The Housing service was looking at increased apprenticeships in the form of work experience and succession planning. We would provide practical day to day job experience coupled with a training grade. A meeting would be held with Lincoln College in due course to discuss this further.

RESOLVED that the financial performance for the period 01 April 2023 to 31 December 2023 be noted.

54. Target Setting 2024/25 (To Follow)

Michelle Hoyles, Business Manager – Corporate Policy and Transformation:

- a) presented a range of proposed performance measures for the upcoming financial year 2024/25, intended to support Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee to effectively scrutinise the Council's role as a social landlord
- b) requested approval of the range of performance indicators as attached at Appendix A of the report for presentation to the Sub-Committee on a quarterly basis
- c) advised that there were a total of thirty-seven measures for the Sub-Committees consideration; a significant increase on twenty-one measures reported in 2023/24
- d) explained that the increase in the number of performance measures was largely due to the introduction of new national reporting requirements, and

recognition that some of these reporting requirements added value to the council's scrutiny process by providing context to support existing measures

e) summarised the proposed changes to performance measures, proposed to be deleted and new measures as detailed at paragraph 3 of the report

f) invited Housing Sub-Committees questions and comments:

RESOLVED that the performance measures proposed at Appendix A of the report be approved for inclusion in the quarterly performance reporting for 2024/25.

55. Update on Insurance Claims Paid- Disrepair Claims Lodged (Verbal Report)

Adam Oxley, Principal Finance Business Partner, provided a verbal update in relation to insurance claims paid for disrepair claims lodged, covering the following main points:

- The Council was seeing an increase in disrepair claims and associated costs, increasing from 12 claims in 2019 to 42 cases in the current financial year, exacerbated by claim farming solicitors who cold-called and targeted specific areas.
- The total estimated cost of disrepair claims to date, (since 2019), including current cases amounted to £668,000, with the Council successfully defending against around 50% of claims. On average tenants received less than 10% of this amount, the lions share being paid to solicitors on both sides.
- We were currently in discussions with our legal representatives, regarding intervention before any claim was submitted, if for example during the complaint stage we had accepted repair delays we could look to offer compensation prior to tenants going to a solicitor, generating savings in solicitors fees (this incentivised tenants to come to us first rather than approach a claim farm).
- The authority continued to network nationally with other social landlords on best practice to tackle disrepairs and how best to defend them. We had provided feedback to the Association of Retained Council Housing that claim farm firms needed to be more regulated and we were exploring property technology to increase our identification of building use and defects.
- The Council was also making efforts to improve the defence rate of disrepair claims by improving record keeping and system processes, getting to the root cause of damp and mould and being more proactive in re-arranging operative visits cancelled by tenants.
- Around 80% of claims settled during the financial year across the Council (value wise) were disrepair claims, around £150k to date, this being a direct cost to the Housing Revenue Account.

The Chair requested that a comparison be provided at the next scheduled meeting in June 2024 of disrepair claims paid between 2022/23 and 2023/24.

The Assistant Director, Asset Management reported that the introduction of a compensation policy to reimburse customers directly would generate savings. Also, damp sensors were being fitted in disrepair claim properties to assist customers who needed support.

RESOLVED that:

1. Members be provided with a comparison of disrepair claims paid between years 2022/23 and 2023/24 at the next meeting of Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee scheduled for 12 June 2024.
2. The content of the verbal update be noted with thanks.

56. Timescale for Scheduled Repairs (Verbal Report)

Amy Larder, Interim Maintenance Manager, provided a verbal update on the current timescales for scheduled repairs, covering the following main points:

- Following the Scheduled repair performance review report in June 2023 one of our recommendations for development of the service was to reduce the weekly cycle from 12 weeks to 9 weeks.
- It was envisaged due to the number of repairs in certain areas that the cycle of new calendar areas would be broken down to the following:

North	2 weeks
East	2 weeks
Central	3 Weeks
South	2 weeks

- We agreed that we would review our calendar and look to implement the new schedule repair calendar by December 2023.

Introduction of New Calendar

- Following the review, work started throughout August 2023 to create a new scheduled repair calendar based on the agreed weeks mentioned previously. This was produced to start from the new cycle starting in the North area on 2 October 2023 now for the reduced 2-week period.
- Once the calendar was created this was communicated with the necessary teams including customer services, housing officers and issued to the Communications team.
- A large amount of work had to be done to input the calendar changes made to our scheduling system to enable customer service to still be able to offer appointments at the point of call in most cases and within the newly defined appointment slots for each area.
- We went live with the new calendar and booking schedule from 2 October 2023.

Comparison on Data since Changes

- We had not seen a drop in service delivery through these changes being implemented and when comparing Q3 performance this year compared to 22/23 data we had completed an additional 1571 scheduled repairs.
- Quarter 3 Comparison
 - 2022/2023 - 2364 completed repairs, 99.24% completed in target.
 - 2023/2024 - 3935 completed, 99.70% completed in target.

- The central area remained consistently large reporting on average 7% more repairs than the other areas so we had no intention currently to reduce this any further.

RESOLVED that the content of the verbal report be noted with thanks.

57. Tenant Involvement Strategy Action Plan

Donna Lyons, Resident Involvement Manager:

- a) presented a report to update the Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee on the progress of the Tenant Involvement Strategy Action Plan 2022 to 2025
- b) explained that the Tenancy Involvement Strategy Plan 2022 to 2025 was reviewed by Lincoln Tenant Panel on an annual basis
- c) gave an overview of the main achievements over the last twelve months as contained at paragraph 3 of the report
- d) referred to paragraph 4 of the report and explained how the action plan would be delivered and how the outcomes of the strategy would be monitored
- e) advised that the City of Lincoln Council Landlord Services had successfully progressed to silver star status in co-design services with residents, expanded the way residents could get involved, facilitated community involvement and had progressed to gold star status in co-regulation with Lincoln Tenants Panel
- f) invited Housing Sub-Committees questions and comments:

RESOLVED that the contents of the revised Tenant Involvement Strategy and action plan assessments 2023 be noted.

58. Progress Report: Draft Downsizing Policy (Verbal Report)

Paula Burton, Assistant Director, Housing Management provided a verbal update on the Draft Downsizing Policy, covering the following main points:

- All Housing Officers had been asked to promote the downsizing scheme to people it may benefit.
- All tenants in receipt of Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) to cover 'bedroom tax' had received letters in the last two weeks saying that DHP was only a temporary payment and would be withdrawn, but that a downsizing scheme was available to help them move to a more suitable property.
- The web form was up and running and we had received 4 expressions of interest so far, which had been passed to Housing Officers/Tenancy Sustainment Officer to follow up as per the policy.
- The downsizing panel met on 29 February 2024 to discuss the first case that had been assessed fully. It was approved and would free up a 3-bed ground floor flat with a wet room (& clear approx. £2300 arrears). The vulnerable tenant would be assisted with referrals for white goods and furniture from charities and having new floor coverings fitted at any new property.

Members of Lincoln Tenant's Panel hoped the scheme would encourage tenants to downsize and asked whether there would be a questionnaire feedback form available both for those taking part and those who didn't take up the scheme.

Paula Burton, Assistant Director, Housing Management advised that she would implement a feedback questionnaire form as part of the review of the pilot scheme. A further update would be scheduled in at the end of the pilot scheme

RESOLVED that:

1. Enquiries regarding the implementation of a feedback questionnaire form be pursued by officers.
2. A further update on the pilot Downsizing Policy be reported to Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee at the end of the pilot scheme.
3. The content of the verbal update be noted with thanks.

59. Tenancy Strategy

Paula Burton, Assistant Director of Housing Management and Andrea Ripley, Housing Strategy Officer

- a) tabled a quick guide which assisted members to understand the different purposes of the Tenancy Strategy, Tenancy Policy and Tenancy Agreement
- b) presented the draft Tenancy Strategy for review prior to consideration by Executive
- c) gave the background of the report as detailed at paragraph 2 of the report and advised that the main purpose of the strategy was to make the best use of existing housing stock with mechanisms such as flexible tenancies, succession rights and affordable rented tenures
- d) advised that consultation of the draft strategy was sent out to all known registered providers operating within the City during December 2023; the responses were contained at Appendix 2 of the report
- e) referred to the draft Tenancy Strategy contained at Appendix 1 of the report and advised that it focussed on the following areas:
 - Fixed/Flexible Tenancies
 - Reviewing Fixed Tenancies
 - Starter/ Introductory tenancies
 - Assured Tenancies
 - Secure Tenancies
 - Non-Secure Tenancies
 - Licenses
 - Family Intervention Tenancies
 - The Use of Demoted Tenancies
 - Existing Social Tenants, Security of Tenure
 - Succession

- Affordable Rent
- Intermediate Rent
- Tenancy Reviews

f) explained that the Tenancy Strategy would be reviewed every three years to ensure compliance with current legislation and as part of a validation exercise to ensure that Registered Providers were letting homes in line with the Tenancy Strategy

g) invited Housing Sub-Committees questions and comments:

Members discussed the content of the report in further details, asked questions, made comments and received relevant responses from officers as follows:

Question: When would demoted tenancies be used and what would this mean for existing tenants encountering more Anti-Social Behaviour in their local communities?

Response: Demoted tenancies were introduced in the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, to enable housing providers to demote a tenancy as a positive tool to help anti-social behaviour to be managed and controlled, as an alternative to eviction. This was a stepped mechanism, once a final warning was issued, if breached then the possession action route would be used as a last resort.

Question: Was a period of twelve months not a long time to take to alleviate such problems?

Response: The tenancy could remain demoted up to twelve months; possession action could be taken at any time during this period. if breaches of the tenancy occurred. A demoted tenancy would either go to Court or revert back to a periodic secure or assured tenancy.

Question: Was it possible to take away a tenancy without making a Court application?

Response: No There must be a possession order in place from the Courts.

Comment: We needed a strategy to address issues of tenancies being sub-let to family members. There were instances where tenancies were being sub-let at the same time as housing benefit was being claimed by the individual not living there, although it was difficult to prove. We needed to know who our tenants were.

Question: Could surveillance be carried out on properties via interaction with the DWP?

Response: Subletting was a breach of tenancy and taken seriously by the Council and where evident, enforcement action was taken. Often the Councils first indicator of proven fraud cases was when Housing Benefit ceased. The DWP worked independently to the Council due to data protection law which restricted information being shared so the Council would not be aware of surveillance levels for these cases.

RESOLVED that the contents of the Tenancy Strategy be supported.

60. **Acquisitions Policy (To Follow)**

Andrea Ripley, Housing Strategy Officer:

a) presented the revised Acquisition Strategy (Appendix 1) for review prior to consideration by Executive

- b) highlighted that the renewed Acquisitions Policy represented a refresh of the old one
- c) advised that the sale of council homes continued to create pressure to replace sold properties via Right to Buy (RtB) and to ensure that capital receipts were utilised within the required timescales for the purposes of replacing social housing
- d) explained that the process of purchasing homes from the open market or via direct approaches continued to work well; to date the policy had facilitated the purchase of 99 homes and this number would continue to increase following the structured process set out in the revised Acquisitions Policy
- e) summarised the amendments made to the Acquisitions Policy as set out in paragraph 3 of the report
- f) advised that following the budget update by Government the previous week, up to 50% of capital costs could now be apportioned to the Right to Buy (RtB) fund
- g) invited Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committees questions and comments.

Members discussed the content of the report in further detail. Questions raised were responded to by officers as follows:

Question: How did the Housing Authority use the 50% costs it was apportioned?

Response: Rtb receipts could be used for 50% of the capital costs for the purchase and repair of a property or new build development/acquisitions. Each purchase would undergo financial viability modelling on funding and revenue with delegated authority in place to authorise before proceeding with a purchase. Each year the government determined the level of RtB receipts the Council was able to retain from the sales of council properties. The receipt and spend of these funds was tracked by Finance and Housing Strategy to ensure compliance and to reduce any risk to pay back unspent funds within the required timescales. As only 50% of each purchase could be funded via the RtB receipts the remaining cost was funded via prudential borrowing or direct revenue financing. The Housing Strategy team would provide members with an example of how funding had been apportioned and potential future availability of funding for 2024/2025.

RESOLVED that:

1. A breakdown of Rtb receipts apportionment and potential future availability of funding to be forwarded to members of Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee.
2. The revised Acquisition Policy be supported and referred to Executive for approval.

61. **Work Programme- 2024/25**

The Senior Democratic Services Officer:

- a) presented a draft outline work programme for Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee for 2024/25 as detailed at Appendix A of the report
- b) advised that the draft work programme for 2024/25 would be circulated to the Chair/Vice Chair of the Housing Scrutiny-Sub Committee and the Chair/Vice Chair of Lincoln's Tenant's Panel for individual input/comments, once membership was confirmed for the new Municipal Year
- c) highlighted that the work programme would be used as a working document and could be added to or amended at the Sub-Committee's discretion at any time during the 2024/25 Municipal Year
- d) reported that the work programme included those areas for scrutiny linked to the strategic priorities of the Council and themed housing matters, to ensure that the work of the committee was relevant and proportionate
- e) referred to a copy of the Terms of Reference for Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee attached to the report for information.

RESOLVED that the content of the draft outline work programme for 2024/25 be noted.

Portfolio Holder Responsibilities

Economic Growth

1. Building Control
2. Car Parks
3. Climate Change (linkage to Local Plan)
4. Commercial Development
5. Contaminated Land
6. Cultural Activities Including:
 - Christmas Market
 - Christmas Lights
7. Economic Development and Growth, including:
 - Western Growth Corridor
 - Sustainable Urban Extensions
8. Heritage
9. Innovation and Inward Investment including:
 - Lincoln Science and Innovation Park
 - Smart City initiatives
10. Markets
11. Planning, including:
 - Central Lincolnshire Local Plan
 - Regional and National Planning Policies
12. Public Realm including:
 - City Centre Masterplan
 - Cornhill Area Redevelopment
13. Regeneration Including:
 - Neighbourhood Revitalisation
 - Community Planning
14. Small Business Support
15. Tourism and Marketing
16. Transport including:
 - Transport Hub
 - Connectivity
 - Infrastructure

Reducing Inequality

1. Anti-Poverty Strategy
2. Asylum Seekers
3. Benefits Advice and take-up, including:
 - Housing Benefit
 - Council Tax Support
4. Community Cohesion Strategy
5. Community Strategies and Policies
6. Corporate Social Responsibility including:
 - Hate Crime
 - Lincolnshire Safer Communities
7. Discretionary Rate Relief Policy
8. Equality and Diversity:
 - Employer perspective
 - Service user perspective
9. Financial Inclusion, including:
 - Adult Learning;
 - Young People.
10. Prevent
11. Public Protection including:
 - Antisocial Behavior
 - Noise Nuisance
 - CCTV
 - Domestic Violence
11. Skills and Training, including The Network;
12. Social Value Policy
13. Universal Credit
14. Welfare Advice
15. Welfare Reform

Portfolio Holder Responsibilities

Quality Housing

1. Affordable Housing
2. Discretionary Housing Payments
3. Estate Management
4. Fleet Management
5. Health and Wellbeing, particularly its links to good quality housing
 - Physical and Mental Health
 - Suicide
6. Homelessness Prevention
7. House Building
8. Housing Investment and Decent Homes
9. Housing Repairs and Maintenance
10. Housing Revenue Account and Landlord Services including:
 - Tenant Engagement
 - Housing Stock Options
11. Lettings and Allocations including:
 - Rogue Landlords
 - Trusted Landlord Accreditation Scheme
12. Rough Sleepers
13. Strategic Housing
14. Supported Housing

Remarkable Place

1. Allotments
2. Cemeteries and Crematorium
3. Community Centres
4. Environmental Contracts including:
 - Refuse Collection and Recycling

- Highways
 - Open Space and Grounds Maintenance
 - Public Conveniences
 - Cleansing
5. Food Health and Safety
 6. Licensing
 7. Low Carbon Agenda
 8. Parks and Recreation
 9. Pollution Control
 10. Sport and Leisure facilities to promote physical activity

Our People and Resources

1. Asset Management
2. Civic and Twinning
3. Corporate Communications and Media Relations
4. Corporate Strategy including
 - Strategic Plan (Vision 2020)
 - Annual Report
 - Strategic Partnerships
5. Corporate Health and Safety
6. Emergency Planning
7. Finance including:
 - Financial Strategy
 - Financial Position
8. Human Resources including:
 - People Strategy
 - Apprenticeships
 - Trade Union Liaison
 - Organisational Culture and Core Values
9. Legal Services (excluding Electoral and Democratic Services)
10. Procurement (excluding social value)

Portfolio Holder Responsibilities

- 11. Regional and Sub-Regional Governance Arrangements including Devolution
- 12. Revenues
- 13. Risk Management and Governance including
 - Insurance
- 14. Specific Major Projects (Excluding Major Developments)
- 15. Towards Financial Sustainability including Commercialisation

Customer Experience and Review

- 1. Audit
 - 2. Central Support Services
 - 3. Complaints Handling
 - 4. Corporate Reviews
 - 5. Customer Engagement including:
 - Customer Services
 - Contact Centre
 - 6. Democratic and Electoral Services including
 - Voter Registration
 - Democratic Engagement
 - 7. ICT
 - 8. Performance including Systems and Process
 - 9. Strategic Information including:
 - Corporate Evidence Bases
- Lincoln City Profile

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Update report by Cllr Sue Burke - Portfolio Holder for Reducing Inequality

1	Introduction
1.1	<p>Since my previous report in November 2023, the challenges driven by the cost of living pressures have continued to impact on our residents and businesses, with our services seeing a high volume of customers seeking advice and guidance from the council to help them through this difficult time.</p> <p>In my role as the Portfolio Holder for Reducing Inequality, I have seen first-hand the level of support services provided and the positive impact of this. Providing such a high level of support to our residents would not have been possible without the continued commitment and dedication of our staff and members. I would like to thank all for continually going the extra mile during such challenging times.</p> <p>I would also like to thank the council's partners, especially within the third sector, who play a fundamental role in ensuring our residents receive the support they require. This partner support has been provided at a time when they are facing many challenges themselves as a result of the current economic climate.</p> <p>In the following pages of my report I have provided an update on each of the service areas, which fall under the responsibility of my portfolio. These updates focus on the period following my previous report to committee (November 2023 to June 2024).</p> <p>Where available performance information has been included within the service area updates I have provided. Appendix B also includes the latest performance measure outturns and supporting service area commentary for those strategic performance measures under my portfolio.</p> <p>I would like to thank officers for their support in helping to produce this report.</p>
2	Welfare and Benefits Advice
2.1	<p>The Welfare Team perform a vital role and are part of our LINK shared service, working across both Lincoln and North Kesteven, providing advice and assistance in claiming benefits, with a focus on helping residents to navigate the complex rules and entitlement conditions of the full range of welfare benefits. Additionally, the team provides advice on pensions, grants, charitable payments, and tax credits.</p>
2.2	<p>The debt casework undertaken by the team is managed within the regulations set out by the Financial Conduct Authority and the council is a member of the Community Money Advice organisation who provide training for the debt advisers and who monitor our quality by undertaking regular visits and an annual report.</p> <p>As per the 2023 report, the January 2024 report was also positive and congratulated the advisers on their work. A file audit was undertaken with a 100% rating for quality of advice given and outcome achieved. Some of the policies and</p>

	procedures that have been developed by the team have been shared across the organisation as best practice.																		
2.3	<p>Since my last portfolio report, the team have completed recruitment to their vacant roles and are now fully staffed and able to support residents with their benefit and money issues. In the last financial year, the team advised 7,000 individual customers and helped them to secure £31,246 of additional weekly benefit payments.</p> <p>In most cases these payments continue to be paid throughout the year and assuming that these all continue in payment, the annual income of the people helped has increased by £1,624,800. I look forward to reporting an even greater level of success at the end of this year.</p>																		
3	Welfare Reform and Cost of Living Support																		
3.1	<p>Our Welfare Reform Support Team has continued to provide vital support to residents of Lincoln. The small but dedicated team working on cost of living support has been bolstered by a Cost of Living Co-Ordinator on a 1-year fixed term role, funded through strategic plan monies, to help deliver vital initiatives to assist with emergency needs and longer term cost of living initiatives. Provided below is an update on elements of support provided by the Cost of Living Support Team (previously known as Welfare Reform Support Team).</p>																		
3.2	<p><u>Household Support Fund</u></p> <p>A significant initiative which has continued to be delivered by the Cost of Living Support Team has been the Household Support Fund. The initiative is a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) funded scheme, which is being delivered throughout Lincolnshire. The scheme has been delivered working closely with Lincolnshire County Council and other district councils.</p> <p>Household Support Fund wave 4 was delivered in Lincoln in the second half of 2023/24. Applications for support were taken from our referral partners and vouchers / payments allocated accordingly.</p> <p>Additionally, for those in receipt of Housing Benefit and not entitled to the national Cost of Living payment, vouchers were issued (via the Post Office) to these households in three waves / amounts; £301, £300 and £299.</p> <p>Officers worked with partner organisations to deliver these monies promptly to those identified / referred as being most in need, with nearly £800,000 being delivered. The table below outlines the allocation of these payments:</p> <p>City of Lincoln</p> <table><tr><th>Household Composition</th><th>Households with a Disabled Person</th><th>Households with Children</th><th>Households with a Pensioner</th><th>Other</th><th></th></tr><tr><td>Number of Households Helped</td><td>270</td><td>556</td><td>1,660</td><td>1,582</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Amount of Award</td><td>£51,578</td><td>£78,949</td><td>£478,596</td><td>£185,339</td><td>Total Paid £794,462</td></tr></table>	Household Composition	Households with a Disabled Person	Households with Children	Households with a Pensioner	Other		Number of Households Helped	270	556	1,660	1,582		Amount of Award	£51,578	£78,949	£478,596	£185,339	Total Paid £794,462
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	<p>In the Spring 2024 budget, the Government confirmed that a further £421 million would be made available to county councils and unitary authorities in England via the Household Support Fund (HSF) for the period 1st April to 30th September 2024. This fund includes an allocation of £5,464,685.20 for Lincolnshire - the element of City of Lincoln being in the region of £300,000 (final amount to be confirmed, as at the time of writing). These funds are already being delivered to residents of Lincoln, again working with partner organisations to reach as many cohorts as possible.</p>
3.3	<p><u>Council Tax Support Fund 2023/24</u></p> <p>In December 2022, central government provided guidance to local authorities regarding a £100 million Council Tax Support Fund for 2023/24, whereby awards of up to £25 are to be made to Council Taxpayers in receipt of Council Tax Support, with an element of funding also to be made for discretionary local funds in 2023/24. The funding allocation for City of Lincoln, being £222,303.</p> <p>Payments of up to £50.00 (the prescribed maximum was £25.00) were made to City of Lincoln and taxpayers as part of the 2023/24 Council Tax annual billing process.</p> <p>Remaining funding was then delivered by a local discretionary scheme in 2023/24 to those identified in need of assistance through this fund.</p>
4	Housing Benefit / Council Tax Support
4.1	<p>The council's Benefits Team continues to administer a significant number of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support claims – the caseloads currently being 3,803 and 8,299 respectively. Following a sharp rise in the council's Council Tax Support caseload following the initial Covid-19 lockdown, caseloads have returned back to pre-pandemic levels. However, there is the potential that the number of Council Tax Support recipients may begin to increase again as a result of the ongoing cost of living pressures.</p>
4.2	<p>Despite the challenges, pressures and demands on the Benefits Team, including significant numbers of Universal Credit related documents requiring action, New Claims and Changes of Circumstance for Housing Benefit continue to be processed promptly, with positive average processing times being achieved.</p> <p>In 2023/24 New Claims were processed within an average of 14.32 days and Changes of Circumstance in 3.42 days. These rates of performance compare favourably ahead of national average processing times. The latest available national figures (in respect of quarter 3 2023/24) are New Claims average 18 days and Changes of Circumstance average 8 days.</p>
4.3	<p>The council's Benefits Team also process Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) applications. These payments assist customers requiring additional help with housing costs, usually on a short-term basis only. Payments are limited to a fund provided by central government each year. Any payments above this figure are a direct cost to the council.</p>
4.4	<p>Despite rising rents in the city as well as a national 'freeze' on Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates (used to assess Housing Benefit and Universal Credit housing costs entitlement), funding has decreased in recent years, meaning officers regularly</p>

	need to review guidance regarding making awards. LHA rates have been unfrozen for 2024/25, as announced in the Autumn Statement 2023.																												
4.5	On 15 th March 2024, DWP announced Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) government grants for 2024/25. For City of Lincoln this is exactly the same amount as for 2022/23 and 2023/24.																												
4.6	<p>The table below includes the confirmed allocations for the years 2012/13 to 2024/25.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th><th>City of Lincoln Council central government DHP grant</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2024/25</td><td>£132,330</td></tr> <tr> <td>2023/24</td><td>£132,330</td></tr> <tr> <td>2022/23</td><td>£132,330</td></tr> <tr> <td>2021/22</td><td>£186,707</td></tr> <tr> <td>2020/21</td><td>£250,113</td></tr> <tr> <td>2019/20</td><td>£178,674</td></tr> <tr> <td>2018/19</td><td>£208,624</td></tr> <tr> <td>2017/18</td><td>£242,505</td></tr> <tr> <td>2016/17</td><td>£173,675</td></tr> <tr> <td>2015/16</td><td>£139,678</td></tr> <tr> <td>2014/15</td><td>£194,308</td></tr> <tr> <td>2013/14</td><td>£199,741</td></tr> <tr> <td>2012/13</td><td>£98,865</td></tr> </tbody> </table>		City of Lincoln Council central government DHP grant	2024/25	£132,330	2023/24	£132,330	2022/23	£132,330	2021/22	£186,707	2020/21	£250,113	2019/20	£178,674	2018/19	£208,624	2017/18	£242,505	2016/17	£173,675	2015/16	£139,678	2014/15	£194,308	2013/14	£199,741	2012/13	£98,865
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4.7	In 2023/24 all of the £132,330 government allocation was spent, plus a further £9,872, a total of £142,202.																												
5	Discretionary Rate Relief Policy																												
5.1	The council's Business Rates Growth Policy, approved by Executive in July 2023, provides a time-limited rate relief discount to new and extended business premises within the city, in the interest of building the Business Rates base, supporting economic growth and job creation. Eligibility for this scheme is dependent on the extent of the business premises creation or extension, location and the impact of the new business or expansion plans on the local economy. The impacts of Covid-19 meant applications under this policy reduced.																												
5.2	In 2021/22, a total of £19,338 was awarded under this policy. However, in 2022/23 eight businesses received this relief, totalling £42,345. In 2023/24 relief was awarded																												

	to seven businesses and this totalled £55,566. Currently for 2024/25, £29,894 has been awarded to six businesses.
6	Financial Inclusion
6.1	Financial inclusion continues to be a key objective and factor in many areas of our Revenues and Benefits Service's work. The Lincolnshire Financial Inclusion Partnership (LFIP) brings together organisations and partners to promote and raise the profile of financial inclusion across the county. The partnership is currently chaired by the Assistant Director Shared Revenues and Benefits for City of Lincoln Council and North Kesteven District Council.
6.2	Two key areas of high-profile engagement by LFIP in 2024/25, will be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ordination of 'Talk Money Week' activities in Lincolnshire during November 2024 - https://maps.org.uk/en/our-work/talk-money-week • A conference to be held in February 2025, date and venue to be confirmed, to follow-up from the highly successful conferences held at the Jakemans Community Stadium in Boston in February 2023, and Jubilee Church Life Centre in Grantham in February 2024.
6.3	In terms of the well-documented ongoing national cost of living pressures, our council continues to review and update web pages dedicated to initiatives to try and assist our residents with cost of living support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.lincoln.gov.uk/benefits/cost-living-support
6.4	A proportion of UK Shared Prosperity Funding has been allocated to help deliver cost of living initiatives, a total of £128,334, covering 2022/23 through to 2024/25 (inclusive). Projects have already been delivered, including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lincoln Community Grocery vouchers for new tenants of City of Lincoln Council or placed in accommodation by the local authority - Christmas food initiatives through Acts Trust and Bridge Church - Emergency fuel vouchers - A nursery school breakfast snacks shortfall. <p>A range of extended and new initiatives are currently being progressed by officers, working with key partner organisations in the city.</p>
6.5	Officers have continued to work with the Greater Lincolnshire Food Partnership (https://lincolnshirefoodpartnership.org), regarding how City of Lincoln Council may support the aspiration of 'Food as a public good'. So far, progress has been made in this area through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household Support Fund projects with Abbey Access Training and GoGro - cooking classes, provision of funded slow cookers / air fryers • Support for Lincoln Community Grocery through funded vouchers and promotion / communications • Working with DWP and Lincoln College to identify joint-working opportunities to achieve moving into work / in-work progression • Promotion of Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) scheme (https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/school-pupil-support/holiday-activities-food-programme) through Lincolnshire Financial Inclusion Partnership

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ongoing action on Food for the Planet (https://www.foodfortheplanet.org.uk/) and Planning for the Planet (https://www.foodfortheplanet.org.uk/planning/).																				
7	Safeguarding																				
7.1	<p>Progress continues to be made with embedding safeguarding across the council. The number of internal referrals from officers has increased which reflects the improved knowledge and awareness of safeguarding across the authority. For safeguarding adult referrals there was a 55% increase in the last 12 months and for children, 70% and overall increase of 58%.</p> <table><tr><td>Safeguarding referrals</td><td>2020/21</td><td>2021/22</td><td>2022/23</td><td>2023/24</td></tr><tr><td>Adults</td><td>93</td><td>69</td><td>154</td><td>240</td></tr><tr><td>Children</td><td>10</td><td>4</td><td>27</td><td>46</td></tr><tr><td>Total</td><td>103</td><td>73</td><td>181</td><td>286</td></tr></table>	Safeguarding referrals	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Adults	93	69	154	240	Children	10	4	27	46	Total	103	73	181	286
Safeguarding referrals	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24																	
Adults	93	69	154	240																	
Children	10	4	27	46																	
Total	103	73	181	286																	
7.2	<p>Safeguarding training is a mandatory requirement for all employees and forms part of the corporate induction process. A full training needs review was conducted in 2023/24. This matches every job role in the Council to available training courses so that all staff have the knowledge and skills necessary to identify and report safeguarding concerns. For most staff this training comprises a suite of mandatory training courses agreed with the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (LSCP), Lincolnshire Safeguarding Adults Board (LSAB) and the Domestic Abuse Partnership (DAP).</p> <p>Two safeguarding Member training sessions were delivered in 2023 and further training and briefing sessions will take place this year.</p>																				
7.3	<p>A refreshed internal process has been introduced for complex cases that cross services which means that these can be screened internally and referred into the correct multi-agency meeting for support and further action.</p> <p>A Lincoln Vulnerable Adults Panel has also been established by the council for a multi-agency panel for the most vulnerable adults in the city so that they can be offered the right support.</p>																				
7.4	<p>Lincolnshire County Council's Section 11 Children Audit was undertaken and the authority demonstrated it met all aspects of the audit and a high level of assurance has been achieved. The final report is expected in the Autumn.</p>																				
7.5	<p>The authority continues to participate in multi-agency working, including child exploitation and domestic abuse.</p>																				
8	Rough Sleeping																				
8.1	<p>The rough sleeping numbers in the city have increased in recent weeks, which is generally anticipated as the weather improves and tourist footfall in the city increases. The Housing Solutions Team continue to work closely with our partners to identify and connect with rough sleepers in an attempt to ensure their time on the street is as short as possible and that we support them into suitable accommodation and appropriate services.</p>																				

8.2	The team has worked with a specialist consultant to develop a new Homelessness Strategy for the city. This is now complete and will go through our Member approval processes over the summer.
9	Asylum Seekers and Refugees
9.1	The council has been actively involved in the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme during the past couple of years, having provided accommodation for two families from Syria and three families from Afghanistan. Although we have not as yet welcomed any further families into the area, the council has continued to work closely with the Strategic Migration Partnership, our partner councils and the Home Office to implement the various Refugee Resettlement Schemes where possible.
9.2	Additionally, the council has also been heavily involved in the response to the conflict in Ukraine, working closely with Lincolnshire County Council and the other districts to undertake property checks and safeguarding processes to ensure Ukrainian Refugees are coming to safe and suitable accommodation in the area. In recent months the council has seen a significant drop in the number of applications received although we continue to help to support those Ukrainian citizens who are already in the city.
10	Neighbourhood Working
10.1	<p>Sincil Bank Revitalisation Programme</p> <p>Since my previous report work has continued on the key projects agreed as part of the Sincil Bank Revitalisation Programme.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Team has had slightly reduced capacity this year as the Neighbourhood Manager has been seconded for two days each week to support the Communities and Place element of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) programme.</p> <p>Included below is an update on the progress of this work.</p>
10.2	<p><u>Highways Infrastructure</u></p> <p>Funded by the Towns Fund, Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) has received £3.1m to make changes to the highway's infrastructure in the area.</p> <p>LCC is leading on the improvements to Sincil Bank and the City of Lincoln Council is leading on the improvements to four key gateways into the area. Following a consultation event in November 2023, the gateways that have been prioritised are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portland Street / High Street • Portland Street / Canwick Road • Sincil Bank / LNER Stadium • Sincil Bank / Tentercroft Street <p>Work is likely to commence on these projects towards the end of the summer.</p>

10.3	<p><u>Hermit Street</u></p> <p>The Hermit Street element of the revitalisation programme will see the creation of eleven family homes in the Sincil Bank area.</p> <p>Works started in October 2023 and the scheme remains on track to be completed by the end of September 2024.</p>
10.4	<p><u>Cleaner Safer Streets</u></p> <p>Work has continued within the Sincil Bank area to reduce incidents of fly tipping.</p> <p>Alongside regularly reporting incidents of fly tipping, the team has funded an additional CCTV camera to cover one of the fly tipping hot spots in the area. This project has been supported by National Grid who have allowed the council to use the power from the nearby substation and funded the removal of graffiti from this area.</p> <p>Further engagement is planned with the community in July 2024 aimed at increasing awareness of how to dispose of unwanted items and also to raise awareness of the enforcement powers that the council has if people are found to fly tip in the area.</p>
10.5	<p>Other key updates linked to the Sincil Bank Revitalisation Programme</p> <p>Alongside these physical interventions, the Neighbourhood Team has continued to work hard to engage with the community and build trusted relationships.</p> <p>An update on some of the engagement activity continuing in the area is provided below.</p>
10.6	<p><u>Sincil Bank Community Hub</u></p> <p>The Sincil Bank Community Hub, which is located on Portland Street, has continued to build relationships with residents and is established as a well-known location to seek advice. The team estimate over 75% of customers they support through the Hub do not speak English as their first language.</p> <p>Whilst at the Hub customers receive help and guidance on a wide range of topics and are also supported to understand local information, such as initiatives taking place to improve the local area.</p> <p>Between the period January 2019 and January 2024 the Hub welcomed 4,906 visitors. While the visits covered a wide range of issues, common themes include visiting –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for general information and advice • to meet with other residents / organisations • to report fly tipping / litter • to apply for resident parking permits.
10.7	<p><u>Lincoln Embracing All Nations (LEAN)</u></p> <p>To help ensure support is available for our culturally diverse communities, the Neighbourhood Team has been instrumental in creating an organisation called Lincoln Embracing All Nations (LEAN).</p>

	<p>Alongside supporting residents and groups within Sincil Bank, LEAN is also a city-wide service supporting residents and groups outside of the Sincil Bank area including the Islamic Association and Arabic School.</p> <p>LEAN has now appointed three members of staff to advance the organisation and assist the various groups that support our communities in the city.</p> <p>Following my previous report, monthly immigration surgeries have continued to be delivered, which remain at capacity. LEAN has also continued to support groups to host events.</p> <p>Additionally, work has continued towards the longer term aspiration of LEAN, which is to have a city wide location that will act as a focal point for our diverse communities. Current options for this space include St Botolph's and St Peter at Gowts Church Hall.</p>
10.8	<p><u>Community events and activities</u></p> <p>The Neighbourhood Team supported three main events in the area over the past twelve months. Following on from a successful event organised by the team in February 2020 to recognise the hard work of volunteers and the acts of kindness that make Sincil Bank a great place to live, support was given to Lincoln City Foundation to host a similar event in March of this year.</p> <p>The team also supported the Foundation to organise a Community World Cup in May 2024. The team helped to attract funding from the Dawber Trust and also from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Community Grants Scheme. The tournament attracted eighteen different teams representing countries from all over the world.</p> <p>An event titled "Festival of Lights" was held at the end of last year to assist in bringing our diverse community together. This event was supported by the team and it was pleasing that this was the second time that the event has taken place in the area. The first event was funded by the Neighbourhood Team and it is hoped that these events will become regular events in the community for many years to come.</p> <p>Collectively this highlights the relationships that the team has built up with communities over many years.</p> <p>Alongside these larger events, the team have supported Lincolnshire County Council who held a consultation event to gain people views on improvements to the Highway in the area and a second event was organised by the Neighbourhood Team to gain people's views on designs to enhance the key gateways into the Sincil Bank area.</p>
10.9	<p>Neighbourhood Working Evaluation</p> <p>As we start to think about our exit strategy from Sincil Bank (currently March 2025), Rose Regeneration has been commissioned to measure the impact of the interventions in the area, provide advice on the legacy of the work in the area, advise on the phased exit from the area and document any lessons learnt that could inform the next phase of Neighbourhood Working.</p>

	<p>This report is due for completion later in the summer and therefore findings included in this report are only draft. So far, Rose Regeneration have conducted surveys with groups / organisations who have received funding from the team. 80% of respondents rated that the support provided to individual residents as being very strong or strong, and 77% rated the impact on building the capacity of local residents to run activities and events as being very strong or strong.</p> <p>Below is an example of feedback received –</p> <p><i>“There has been a definite change in perception about the Portland Street area and that things can be achieved here.”</i></p>
10.10	<p>Rose Regeneration have also conducted more in depth interviews with projects that the team have supported. Below are two examples of notable quotes from these interviews:</p> <p><i>“LEAN wouldn’t have happened without the Neighbourhood Working Team – they get it, they see the need and they invest in looking at good practice outside of Lincoln and how to make it happen in Sincil Bank... they play the long game.”</i></p> <p><i>“Residents are willing to help with maintenance and ongoing works and that community ownership will bring sustainability.”</i></p>
10.11	<p>The report also highlights the work that the team has played in connecting with external organisations and bringing together organisations in ways that have harnessed resources and investment for the local area that would not have happened without this intervention.</p> <p>As part of this evaluation, Rose Regeneration has looked at capturing the less tangible outcomes delivered through the work in the area. The current analysis shows for every £1.00 invested in Neighbourhood Working, over £3.00 of social value has been generated.</p> <p>A first draft of this report should be complete before the end of the summer.</p>
10.12	<p>UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Community Grants Programme</p> <p>The overall UKSPF programme reports directly to the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, however many of the workstreams are cross cutting. A Community Grants Scheme was introduced last year to ensure that funding was directed across the whole city. The programme was based on the Community Chest that has been used in areas supported by Neighbourhood Working for many years.</p>
10.13	<p>Alongside a contribution of £150k from the UKSPF programme, match funding was received from Investors in Lincoln. This has resulted in ensuring that up to £25k is available to fund projects in each of our eleven wards.</p>
10.14	<p>Panels of up to eight people were established that were made up of ward councillors, local residents and representatives of agencies working in those areas.</p>
10.15	<p>So far, panels have funded a variety of projects totalling an amount of £194,399.19. This leaves an amount of £80,600.81 (29.3% of the budget) left to allocate to</p>

	community projects. This will be done at a final round of panel meetings set to take place at the end of the summer.
11	Equality and Diversity
11.1	<p><u>Employer perspective and service user perspective</u></p> <p>The Equality and Diversity Group is an internal advisory working group formed of officers and councillors focused on overseeing all aspects of equality and diversity at the council.</p> <p>A review of our portfolio responsibilities proposes moving the areas of Equality and Diversity employer perspective to the Leader's portfolio and the service user perspective to the Customer Experience and Review portfolio.</p> <p>Working with and encouraging equality and diversity within our communities remains integral to the Reducing Inequalities portfolio.</p> <p>As my report is retrospective, I include the employer and service user perspective below.</p>
11.2	<p>The council's workforce as of 31st March 2024 stood at 625 staff members, of which 280 were males and 345 were females*.</p> <p>31 members of the workforce declared a disability and 22 were from all other ethnic groups combined. The largest age group was 50 to 59 years of age, with 171 staff members in this age group.</p> <p>*Please note for formal HMRC purposes employees can only be recognised as male or female, and non-binary genders are not recognised in the UK, however, should an employee wish to be recognised as non-binary we take a supportive approach. For example, allow gender neutral pro-nouns in emails and gender neutral language in policies etc.</p>
11.3	<p>The Human Resources Team has continued to offer support, advice and guidance on equality, diversity and inclusion at the council, and there has continued to be focus on employees health and wellbeing whereby:</p> <p>The council's Health and Wellbeing pages on the Hub have been redesigned and updated to provide a digital version of the previous 'Our Health Matters' booklet.</p> <p>There are subsequently now dedicated Hub pages for Women's Health, Men's Health, Financial Wellbeing, Mental Health, Being Active and Resilience. Examples of specific events and / or support recently delivered include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andy's Man Club, a men's suicide prevention charity, has delivered a presentation to employees at Hamilton House. • The Health and Wellbeing Café (women through the ages) has continued, with plans to re-promote / refocus the group. • Financial Wellbeing (start of career to mid-career) courses along with Planning for Retirement Courses have been promoted and delivered to employees.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human Resources work closely with managers and corporate health and safety to support and advise on Occupational Health recommendations for reasonable adjustments to support disability or health conditions that may be covered by the Equality Act.
11.4	<p>Recruitment training for managers is currently being progressed. This training provides support and guidance to our managers on recruitment processes and ensures good recruitment practices are in place.</p> <p>The training has dedicated sections relating to equality and diversity including information on Neurodiversity, the Equality Act 2010, the types of discrimination, unconscious bias, and also covers information on our accreditations as a Mindful Employer, Disability Confident Employer, and Carers Quality Award.</p> <p>In addition to the accreditations above, the council has also received Foster Friendly Employer accreditation.</p> <p>To support the activities above, the Human Resources Team has also recently updated the council's Leave Policy to include provisions to support employees undergoing fertility treatment.</p>
11.5	The council's Gender pay gap is published on an annual basis and based upon a snapshot date of 31.03.2023 the Mean gap was at 0.6% and the Median gap at 3.6%.
11.6	The Human Resources Team has continued to provide advice and guidance, monitor recruitment and workforce data and review HR policies and procedures.
11.7	The Equality & Diversity Advisory panel plays a key role in monitoring the council's progress towards meeting its five equality objectives, whilst also helps to ensure the council continues to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. This collective activity assists in ensuring the services we provide remain accessible to all our customers.
11.8	<p>The council's current equality objectives were introduced in 2020 in line with the council's refreshed strategic plan, Vision 2025. The current objectives will remain in place until the end of 2024. An exercise will take place during 2024 to review the objectives to ensure they remain suitable and are in line with the council's new Vision 2030 strategic plan. As a reminder the council's equality objectives currently in place are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our services are accessible and do not discriminate on any unjustifiable grounds - Local communities, partners and stakeholders are empowered to influence the way our services are provided to them - Equality and Diversity is at the heart of decision making at all levels within the city council - Our workforce at all levels reflects the makeup of the local community - Equalities, Social Inclusion and Community Cohesion have all improved within our communities
11.9	On an annual basis the council produces an Equality Journal. The Journal provides an overview of the equality and diversity focused activity undertaken by the council over the previous year towards meeting the above objectives and towards meet the

	<p>requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty. Additionally, the Journal includes the latest demographic data for Lincoln, together with the council's workforce data as at the end of the year the Journal is reporting upon.</p> <p>The latest Journal covering the period April 2023 to March 2024 is currently being produced and is scheduled to be presented to the Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel in October 2024 and to Council in November 2024. The Journal will then be published on the council's staff intranet and website.</p>
12	Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour
12.1	<p>The Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour Team (PPASB Team) operates to protect individuals, the community, and the amenity of the city. The team operates over a broad range of areas, with the core services providing a combination of both proactive and reactive activities.</p> <p>These areas covered by the service include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accumulations of waste • Animals • Anti-Social Behaviour • Bins on streets • Fly-tipping investigations • Licensing consultations • Littering Fixed Penalty Notices • Management of the Safety Warden Service • Noise • Pests / conditions of gardens
12.2	<p>Enforcement Action</p> <p>In most cases it is possible for the team to resolve complaints without taking formal enforcement action. This is done through advice and guidance, through letters, visits, informal mediation, agreeing parameters and seeking support from partners.</p> <p>For the period November 2023 to June 2024, the PPASB Team served a total of 190 Community Protection Warnings (CPW's). These warning are the first stage of formal enforcement action in most cases. In a few cases it is necessary to undertake formal enforcement. This could be the service of a legal notice requiring action, the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice, seeking an injunction, seeking a closure order, or working with Housing to seek possession or a prosecution. Appendix A provides a breakdown of the enforcement action undertaken during the period November 2023 to June 2024.</p> <p>Over the period covered in this report improving communication and joint working opportunities between the Housing and PPASB Teams has continued to be a focus. This has allowed for effective problem solving using the tenancy agreement alongside the tools and powers available to the PPASB Team.</p> <p>The majority of the council's high risk ASB cases that are referred into the Anti-Social Behaviour Risk Assessment Conference (ASBRAC), originate from Housing. Weekly PPASB and Housing tasking meetings are now in place, where resources are shared and problems are solved at an operational level.</p>

	<p>A referral process has been set up to ensure that we can monitor the amount of cases that are referred into PPASB by Housing. This system went live in April 2024, so there is a lack of any useful data to present at this time.</p>
12.3	<p>Safer Streets Funding</p> <p>During the period of the report, a successful bid was submitted to the Safer Streets 5 fund. This project includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City Centre Safety Warden Service • 2x City Centre PPASB Officers • 1x City Centre Licensing Officer • Additional CCTV staffing • £50,000 to improve CCTV infrastructure • 1x Part time funding for a Trading Standards Officer <p>All the above resources have been in place since early 2024. The resources have been allocated specifically to the City Centre with a focus around community safety and engagement. Feedback from the community, businesses and partners has all been positive around the project. The extra resources have allowed for proactive work in the City Centre, such as joint operations with the Police in the night time economy. The Safety Wardens, PPASB Officers and Licensing Officer are receiving training from the Children's Society to help to spot signs and to assist in the tackling of child sexual exploitation. They also form part of the day time and evening city centre management groups.</p> <p>The PPASB Officers have made connections with the Scampton Police and site management teams. They have completed Asylum seeker / refugee training, which covered safeguarding elements such as measures to tackle trafficking and exploitation.</p> <p>A steering group was set up to help effectively utilise the Safety Warden service. This group has representation from the University, Police, Lincoln BIG, PPASB, Licensing, the Safety Wardens and the Student Unions. This has allowed us to set priorities, identify hotspots and respond to trends in the nighttime economy. The Wardens have partnered up with the Police and Transport Police to help to safeguard individuals in both the day time and night time economy.</p>
12.4	<p>City Centre Management</p> <p>City Centre Tasking Meetings enable information sharing, priorities to be decided, resources to be coordinated and understood, and emerging issues to be identified and fed into the City Centre and Uphill Management Meeting.</p> <p>CCTV, Police, Car Parking Services, Lincoln BIG, Project Compass and the Rough Sleeper Team meet on a fortnightly basis to discuss ongoing and emerging issues within the city centre and our multi-Story Car Parks. This group share intelligence and formulate an operational response to issues, alongside setting and reviewing priorities for the two weeks ahead at each meeting.</p> <p>During the period of this report (November 2023 to June 2024), the following enforcement action has taken place in the City Centre:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Protection Warnings – 17 • Community Protection Notices – 4 • Fixed Penalty Notices – 2 • Youth ASB warnings – 40 <p>The PPASB Team will always offer support to individuals prior to commencing enforcement action. There have been recent changes to prison release policies, which is suspected to be the driver behind a rise in rough sleeping and associated ASB in the City Centre. The PPASB Team work with partners to patrol the City Centre to ensure that support is provided where possible and enforcement action is taken where needed. Conversations have begun with Lincolnshire Recovery Partnership to improve joint working and to build processes for supporting individuals who display alcohol or drug misuse issues. The team is also engaging with homeless support partners in the hope of providing a place for homeless individuals to go during evening hours.</p>
12.5	<p>Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO)</p> <p>There are currently three active PSPOs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A PSPO that covers the City Centre (and wider) that prohibits the consumption of intoxicating substances or having an open container of alcohol. This PSPO has been renewed for a further 3 years. 2. A PSPO that covers three Multi-Storey Car parks. This PSPO has been extended for a further three years, with no changes to the prohibitions or location, as of October 2023. 3. A PSPO, which prevents access to St Peters Passage. This PSPO is in force until October 2024 and the process for the renewal of this PSPO is underway.
12.6	<p>Safer Lincolnshire Partnership</p> <p>The Safer Lincolnshire Partnership has continued to have strategic overview of three key areas. These areas are Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), Serious and Organised Crime and Reducing Offending, with cross cutting themes of Mental Health and substance misuse. During the period of this report, City of Lincoln Council has continued to have representation on the Strategic Group and the ASB Core Priority Group (ASB CPG). The ASB CPG has produced a Youth ASB protocol, a Noxious Odour Policy and is working on improving the county wide response to noise nuisance complaints. These processes were put into place prior to the period of this report but have been used effectively during the period.</p>
12.7	<p>PPASB Service Forward Look</p> <p>Over the next 12 months the focus will be on continuing to improve working relationships with Housing to tackle ASB within the council's Housing stock. There will also be a focus on continuing to improve on an already effective relationship with the partners of the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership.</p> <p>PPASB will continue work with the Lincolnshire Recovery Partnership, the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership and homelessness support organisations to improve our referral and support mechanisms.</p>

	<p>Demand across all services provided by the team is expected to remain high. This puts pressure on the team to respond, investigate and enforce against 4,000 plus service request per year.</p> <p>The removal of the ASB Co-Ordinator role by Lincolnshire Police was a previously noted risk to the service. This risk has now reduced due to the effectiveness of the staff that have been acquired through the Safer Streets funding.</p> <p>The Police and Crime Commissioners Office has received funding to provide a visible presence in identified hot spots of the city. PPASB and the Police are working to feed in data and operational awareness for where those resources would be best allocated.</p>
13	CCTV Service
13.1	<p>From November 2023 to June 2024 the council's CCTV service monitored over 7,000 incidents, a 20% increase on the 2023 figures for this period. This can be accounted for by the return to double staffing of the CCTV control room. During this period the service also processed 328 reviews, a slight increase on the previous period. Significantly, 518 Police evidence disks have been produced for criminal prosecutions as part of the council's ongoing support for the police and commitment to public safety, which is an increase of 17%. It should also be noted that 118 internal and external reviews were completed indicating an increase in support for other council services and a growing demand for freedom of information requests.</p>
13.2	<p>The CCTV service continues to engage with multi-agency working to support the day and night time economy in the city and the service has continued to develop closer working relationships and present a transparent service as part of this work.</p>
13.3	<p>Lay Visitors have continued to visit the Control Room on a monthly basis. This has helped to ensure the service has been working to the required standard and has remained transparent in the work they undertake.</p> <p>Visits to the Control Room from stakeholders, community groups and recently elected councillors remain popular and have continued to increase.</p>
13.4	<p>As included within the PPASB service update above, the CCTV service has benefitted from additional Safer Street funding, which has enabled an extensive recruitment process attracting a record number of applicants for vacant positions in the service.</p> <p>As a result, the service has been able to successfully fill these positions with high quality individuals. The new recruits have completed the SIA course and are now working alongside experienced operators as they continue to develop into the role.</p>
13.5	<p>Safer Street funding has also allowed the service to install 9 new cameras to the system. The camera locations were decided in consultation with the Police and Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour Team with the aim to cover further areas of the city.</p> <p>A server room upgrade to support the addition of extra cameras to the system has also been completed and cameras have been installed internally and externally at the refurbished Central Market.</p>

	Plans are underway to upgrade and adopt the CCTV system at the council run managed workspace on Limekiln Way.
13.6	<p>Alongside the city centre, the service has continued to monitor various council sites including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arboretum • Birchwood Leisure Centre • Boultham Park • City Hall • Derek Miller Court • Hamilton House • Hartsholme Park • Jarvis House • St Botolph's Court • Trent View • Yarborough Leisure Centre
13.7	<p>Events hosted in the city have also been supported by the CCTV service, including football matches, the Lincoln 10k, cycling events, Lincoln Pride, Christmas lights switch on and any marches or protests.</p> <p>Footfall data for key events in the city including Steampunk and the Lincoln History weekend continues to be requested. This data enables officials to make informed decisions to ensure that these and any future events can take place with minimal issues.</p>
13.8	<p>The figures below provide a reminder of the incident numbers for the last 3 years recorded by the CCTV service, which are relatively consistent -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2021 - 9,637 • 2022 – 9,566 • 2023 – 9,905
13.9	Fly tipping incidents have remained high, and the service continues to produce evidence disks for prosecution. The Public Protection & Anti-Social Behaviour Team have issued penalty notices to individuals who have been identified and so it is envisaged this robust enforcement approach to fly tipping will dissuade offenders moving forward.
14	Lincoln Community Lottery
14.1	Lincoln Community Lottery is an effective tool to help local good causes raise additional funds to support their work locally. So far the lottery has raised over £210k for local good causes. There is no cost to a cause to sign up to the use the lottery. 81 local causes are currently using the lottery to support their fundraising.
14.2	50 pence of every £1 lottery ticket purchased directly goes to the supporters chosen good cause. A further 10 pence also supports the Lincoln Lottery Community Fund. Supporters of the lottery also have the option of selecting the Lincoln Lottery Community Fund as their good cause and in these cases the full 60 pence supports this fund.

14.3	<p>The Lincoln Lottery Community Fund is allocated in the autumn each year. For the 2023 fund, an application and selection process took place during October and November 2023.</p> <p>The funding is being used by three causes to support projects focused on the topics 'green spaces' and 'homelessness'. These topics were chosen by supporters of the lottery and residents through a consultation exercise in autumn 2023.</p>
14.4	<p>One further good cause also received a share of the 2023 fund, however, due to a change of circumstance, the cause is unfortunately unable to deliver their proposed project. The funds initially allocated to this cause will be reallocated as part of the Lincoln Lottery Community Fund 2024 allocation process taking place in the coming autumn.</p>
14.5	<p>The council continues to consider the impacts of gambling and ensure where the lottery is promoted, that this is done so responsibly and in line with the Licence Conditions and Codes of Practice set by the Gambling Commission.</p> <p>Promotion of the lottery by the council focuses on attracting new good causes to use the lottery as a fund raising tool rather than promoting the prizes on offer to attract supporters. Whilst this can have an impact on the number of supporters purchasing tickets for the lottery, this approach helps to support responsible gambling and ensure the council is not actively encouraging residents to take part to win prizes.</p>
14.6	<p>To ensure the lottery remains fair for all causes and supporters, all good causes are required to meet set criteria to join the lottery. All good causes are also asked to formally declare each year that they continue to meet this criteria to remain on the lottery as a good cause.</p> <p>More information on Lincoln Community Lottery, including the terms all causes must meet to be a lottery good cause, is available via the lottery website - https://www.lincolnlottery.co.uk/</p>
15	Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter
15.1	<p>Following on from the success of the Lincoln Living Wage Campaign, in 2018 the council launched the Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter. The charter gives recognition to local organisations going beyond the statutory minimum to support their employees and the local community.</p>
15.2	<p>To gain accreditation to the charter, organisations must meet set criteria, which differs depending on the size of the organisation. All organisations must have a base in the city and / or employ staff who live within the city boundary.</p> <p>At the time of writing this report 107 local organisations had gained accreditation to the charter, with each demonstrating their commitment towards corporate social responsibility and going beyond the statutory minimum to support their employees and the local community. Organisations accredited range from small to large and cover a wide range of sectors.</p>
15.3	<p>Following accreditation, the council continues to be in contact with organisations accredited to the charter, and on an annual basis all organisations are required to complete a reaccreditation questionnaire. This questionnaire helps to ensure the</p>

	charter remains fair for all organisations, whilst also helps the council to keep up to date with the great socially responsible activities taking place locally.
15.4	<p>All accredited organisations to the charter are actively promoted by the council via a number of routes, with the primary routes being via the council's social media channels and via a dedicated area on the council's website.</p> <p>Promotion includes sharing case studies and videos giving an insight into why some organisations chose to undertake socially responsible activities and gain accreditation to the charter. All new signees to the charter also receive a welcome post on the council's social media channels.</p>
15.5	<p>A directory of all charter signees is also available on the council's website - https://www.lincoln.gov.uk/people-community/lincoln-social-responsibility-charter-1/6. Included within the directory are the web addresses of charter signees, a location map and signee case studies providing information on why local organisations choose to undertake socially responsible activities and the positive impact of these. All organisations are presented in the directory under the sector they operate within. The aim of the directory is to provide a central list of organisations committed to corporate social responsibility locally and accredited to the charter, which can be used by the council and other organisations when procuring services.</p>
15.6	<p>Alongside the promotion undertaken by the council, all accredited organisations receive an accreditation certificate endorsed by the Mayor of Lincoln, which is reissued every three years, together with a promotional window sticker for the organisation to display within their premises. All accredited organisations are also provided with promotional logos for use on e-mail and letter footers to raise awareness of their accreditation and commitment to the charter.</p>
15.7	<p>As highlighted in my previous report, City of Lincoln Council continues to be proud to undertake a range of socially responsible activities itself, above the statutory minimum, to support our employees and the local community.</p> <p>Further information on the charter is available on the council's website – www.lincoln.gov.uk/socialresponsibility.</p>
16	Looking ahead
16.1	<p>With the cost of living challenges remaining, the council will need to ensure residents and businesses continue to receive the support they require to help them navigate these challenging times. This must remain a top priority.</p> <p>Providing this support will unfortunately be at a time when resources continue to be stretched. However, from directly working with service areas and seeing the outstanding work they undertake, I am confident we will be able to overcome the challenges ahead and ensure our residents and businesses continue to receive such a high level of support.</p>

Cllr Sue Burke
Portfolio Holder for Reducing Inequality

APPENDIX A – Enforcement Action - 1st Nov 2023 to 31st May 2024

WARNINGS	
Community Protection Warnings	78
ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	
Fly tipping Community Protection Warnings	10
Fly tipping Community Protection Notices	1
Fly tipping Fixed Penalty Notices	15
Bins on streets Community Protection Warnings	112
Bins on streets Community Protection Notices	42
Bins on streets Fixed Penalty Notices	21
NOISE ISSUES	
Noise Abatement Notices	1
GENERAL ASB ISSUES	
ASB Community Protection Notices	10
CONDITION OF PROPERTY RELATED ISSUES	
Prevention of Damage by Pests Notices	2
Community Protection Notices	1
OTHER ENFORCEMENTS	
Microchipping notice	2

APPENDIX B – Performance Monitoring

Below provides the latest performance measure outturns and supporting service area commentary for those performance measures linked to my portfolio. The data presented is for Quarter 4 2023/24.

Status Key



Service Area	Measure ID	Measure	Unit	High or low is good	Low target	High target	Previous data period	Previous outturn	Quarter 4 2023/24 outturn	Status		Service area supporting commentary
Housing Benefit Administration	BE 1	Average days to process new housing benefit claims from date received (cumulative)	Days	Low is good	18.00	16.00	Q4 - 22/23	15.85	14.32	G	▲	In the final quarter there has been a further decrease in the number of days to process new housing benefit claims from date received. During the year, with the extra pressure residents are feeling due to cost of living challenges we have been careful to monitor and prioritise new claims. Overtime has been offered to staff to ensure the level of outstanding work has been managed. Despite the number of customers awaiting assessment increasing during this quarter due to annual rent and income changes, new claims have been targeted to ensure they are assessed promptly.
Housing Benefit Administration	BE 2	Average days to process housing benefit claim changes of circumstances from date received (cumulative)	Days	Low is good	6.00	4.50	Q4 - 22/23	3.08	3.42	G	▼	In final quarter performance has improved due to the number of changes made in advance of the quarter end (these count as 1 day), as customers report increases in rent and income due to the new financial year.

Service Area	Measure ID	Measure	Unit	High or low is good	Low target	High target	Previous data period	Previous outturn	Quarter 4 2023/24 outturn	Status		Service area supporting commentary
Housing Benefit Administration	BE 3	Number of Housing Benefits / Council Tax support customers awaiting assessment	Number	Low is good	1400.00	1300.00	Q4 - 22/23	1,792	2,274	R	▼	At the end of quarter 4, 2,274 customers were awaiting assessment. Of these customers 1,944 were awaiting a first contact. The final quarter of the year always sees an increase in work being received. This is due to reports of annual changes in rent and income.
Housing Benefit Administration	BE 4	Percentage of risk-based quality checks made where benefit entitlement is correct (cumulative)	%	High is good	91.00	94.00	Q4 - 22/23	95.26	93.05	A	▼	Throughout quarter 4, the Benefit and Subsidy Team have carried out over 800 checks on Benefit Assessments. This is a larger figure than usual due to the end of the financial year. There has been more checks carried out on Homeless cases due to the Final Subsidy claim being carried out at the end of March. There have been more checks carried out this quarter and the percentage rate has increased. Performance has improved throughout the year.
Housing Benefit Administration	BE 5	The number of new benefit claims year to date (Housing Benefits/Council Tax Support)	Number	N/A	Volumetric	Volumetric	Q3 - 23/24	3,255	4,189	V		The total number of Housing Benefit new claims processed this year is 1,072. The total number of new Council Tax Reduction claims processed this year is 3,117.
Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour Team	PPASB 1	Number of cases received in the quarter (ASB cases only)	Number	N/A	Volumetric	Volumetric	Q3 - 23/24	111	131	V		This is a 13% increase when compared with Q4 of 22/23. It is an increase of 18% when compared with Q3 23/24.
Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour Team	PPASB 2	Number of cases closed in the quarter (across full PPASB service)	Number	N/A	Volumetric	Volumetric	Q3 - 23/24	1,006	1,014	V		This outturn is stable when compared to Q3 23/24. It is a 22% increase when compared with Q4 of 22/23.

Service Area	Measure ID	Measure	Unit	High or low is good	Low target	High target	Previous data period	Previous outturn	Quarter 4 2023/24 outturn	Status		Service area supporting commentary
Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour Team	PPASB 3	Number of live cases open at the end of the quarter (across full PPASB service)	Number	Low is good	240.00	200.00	Q3 - 23/24	226	279	R	▼	This is a 23% increase when compared to Q3 23/24. The team has increased in size by two officers during this quarter. The two new officers are dealing with complex cases within the City Centre, which in turn has increased the amount of cases left open at the end of the quarter.
CCTV	CCTV 1	Total number of incidents handled by CCTV operators	Number	N/A	Volumetric	Volumetric	Q3 - 23/24	2,887	2,852	V		Incidents numbers are at the same level as the previous quarter. Arrests rose 10%, there was a 33% increase in Mental Health incidents, and Burglary/Theft increased by 43%. January and February were slow as is the usual case, but the number of incidents rose by 36% between February and March. There was also a 24% rise in evidence discs produced for the Police over the quarter. We now have four new members of staff, all progressing well. This is reflected in that proactive arrests were up 39%.

Source – COLC Performance Information Management System (PIMS)

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SUBJECT: CENTRAL LINCOLNSHIRE JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE/LOCAL PLAN ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

DIRECTORATE: COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT

REPORT AUTHOR: TOBY FORBES TURNER, PLANNING POLICY MANAGER

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide members with an annual report detailing work undertaken by the Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee (CLJSPC) over the period April 1st 2023 through to 31st March 2024.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Joint Planning Committee reached its fourteenth year over the course of 2023/24. This year has followed the adoption of the second Central Lincolnshire Local Plan in April 2023.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Local Plan (adopted in April 2023) sets out the planning policies for Central Lincolnshire (including the City) and this involves allocating parcels of land for development as well as identifying land which should be protected from development. The Plan includes a set of 84 policies which guide decision makers i.e. planning committee on future planning applications for the City

4. Summary of Progress

Note: clicking on the dates below will take you to the relevant CLJSPC meeting minutes, or alternatively go to:
<https://democracy.n-kesteven.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=729&Year=0>

- 4.1 The following progress occurred in 2023/24:
- 4.2 The AGM meeting took place on [26 June 2023](#) (please click the links in the bulleted list below to view the items considered), with Cllr Wright (North Kesteven District Council) being voted in as Chair for the year. At the meeting the following items were considered:
- Local Plans Team Annual Report;
 - Central Lincolnshire Budget Update; [and](#)
 - Draft Planning Obligations SPD for consultation.
- 4.3 At this meeting, the Committee approved the annual report as a fair reflection of the activity of the Committee over the year. The Committee also approved the budget for the Local Plans Team for 2023/24 and agreed with the recommendation to undertake a review of the contribution levels from the Central Lincolnshire

authorities. It also approved the draft Planning Obligations SPD to go out to consultation.

- 4.4 The Committee's meeting was postponed from 18 September to [16 October 2023](#) to allow for the responses to the Planning Obligations Consultation to be collated and reviewed by officers. At this meeting the Committee considered items on:
- Planning Obligations SPD Proposed for Adoption; and
 - Update on Government Consultation on changes to Plan-making.
- 4.5 The Committee considered the responses to the consultation on the draft Planning Obligations SPD and decided to adopt the document. The Committee received a detailed update on the proposals from Government to change the plan-making system. This was followed by a discussion about the impacts of the proposals and what this would mean for Central Lincolnshire. The Committee noted the government proposals.
- 4.6 The next and final meeting took place on [18 March 2024](#). At this meeting the Committee formally recognised the contributions of Cllr Metcalfe to the joint Committee to mark his retirement. It also considered items on:
- Local Plans Update, Authority-wide Design Code and Local Development Scheme;
 - Biodiversity Net Gain update; and
 - 2024-29 Central Lincolnshire Housing Delivery Plan.
- 4.7 The Committee noted the contents of the Local Plans update and approved the Local Plans Team to start preparing an Authority-wide Design Code and approved the publication of a revised Local Development Scheme and Local Plans Timetable. The Committee noted a report and presentation on Biodiversity Net Gain, including an in-depth discussion about the new rules with the shared Principal Ecologist. The Committee also approved the publication of the 2024-29 Central Lincolnshire Housing Growth Delivery Plan.
- 4.8 Since the Local Plan was adopted in April 2023, the Local Plans Manager has successfully recruited two Planning Policy Officers, one Principal Planning Policy Officer and one Principal Wildlife and Ecology Officer to the team. This provides a full accompaniment of staff for the core Local Plan and statutory Biodiversity Net Gain Duties at this time.
- 4.9 These roles are now well established and are officers are progressing planning activities across Central Lincolnshire, strengthening the service of the Local Plans Team and assisting in the implementation of the plan.
- 4.10 The Team has also been successful in securing government funding to deliver an integrated mapping and engagement system to further enhance the service. This is currently in the early stages of being set up.
- 4.11 **Forward Look**
- 4.12 Since the Local Plan was adopted, the focus has been on rebuilding the team and on establishing monitoring arrangements for the plan. Significant progress has

been made with these with all vacant roles now being filled and a monitoring framework having been developed and agreed with officers at the districts.

4.13 The Central Lincolnshire Team continue to support development management colleagues at the Central Lincolnshire Partner Authorities in applying the plan in decision-making.

4.14 Work has also now commenced on preparing an Authority-wide Design Code and setting up the mapping and engagement system and this will involve a number of stages of engagement this year as the Design Code is shaped and developed as a framework for Central Lincolnshire.

4.15 With the new change in National Government there is much uncertainty about what will happen with planning at a national level. This situation will be closely monitored and a key aim of the Local Plans Team will be to be ready to act to ensure that Central Lincolnshire has robust and up to date planning policy.

4.16 **Budget Position**

4.17 Appendix 1 to this report sets out the expenditure for last financial year (2023/24) and compares it against the expected expenditure for the year.

4.18 This shows that there was a substantial underspend of £56,286 (£284,414 spent against an anticipated £340,700). This underspend was a result of factors including staffing costs being lower than expected, partly due to recruitment not completing until part way through the year and consultancy costs being lower than expected

4.19 As was reported in last years report, and as agreed by Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee, the next budget review cycle will consider the funding levels from the Partner Authorities and the role of establishing and maintaining a reserve fund for future years. For the 2025/26 financial year additional partnership funds must be secured to ensure that the partnership is fully funded over the forecast 10-year term.

4.20 At its committee meeting on 31st July 2024, the Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee will be considering a budget report prepared by the Local Plans Manager with input from Chief Finance Officers (including Lincoln) and Heads of Planning Officers (including Lincoln) with a proposal to have a phased increase in partner contributions starting at £138,000 in 2025/26 up to £153,533 in 2028/29.

Strategic Priorities

5.

5.1 Let's drive inclusive economic growth

The Local Plan continues to support sustainable levels of growth and regeneration for the City and Central Lincolnshire area and will provide a positive planning policy approach to help stimulate local economic growth.

5.2 Let's reduce all kinds of inequality

The Local Plan sets a target for and supports the provision of affordable housing across Central Lincolnshire thereby helping reduce housing inequality across the City.

5.3 Let's deliver quality housing

The Local Plan sets ambitious be deliverable targets for the provision of new houses across the City through specific site allocations contained in Policy LP48 (Sustainable Urban Extensions) and Policy LP49 (Residential allocations in the Lincoln area). Policy LP11 in the Local Plan sets a target for and supports the provision of affordable housing across Central Lincolnshire.

5.4 Let's enhance our remarkable place

At the heart of the Local Plan sits the vision of 'a prosperous, stronger and sustainable Central Lincolnshire' and this vision and the policies contained within the plan will help to achieve enhancing the City through growth and regeneration.

5.5 Let's address the challenge of climate change

The Local Plan sets in place a number of ambitious policies which seek to reduce carbon emissions from new developments as well as encouraging renewable energy that will seek to reduce the impact of climate change.

6. **Organisational Impacts**

6.1 Finance (including whole life costs where applicable)

The Local Plan contains policies that will have longer term financial implications for the City and Council as a whole most notably housing growth including affordable housing, infrastructure provision, employment and regeneration. The financial implications will be incorporated into the MTFS as the Local Plan is applied.

The revised partner contributions from 2025/26 onwards, as set out in paragraph 4.20 above, will result in the following budget increases over the current MTFS period:

	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £
Current MTFS	98,900	100,880	102,900	104,960
Revised contribution	138,000	145,067	148,333	153,533
Increase	39,100	44,187	45,433	48,573

These increases will need to be factored into the revised MTFS 2025-2030 and will form part of the next annual budget setting process. Corresponding savings in other cash-limited budgets will be required to offset these increases.

6.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules

None arising from this report

6.3 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

The Public Sector Equality Duty means that the Council must consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

It requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

The Local Plan is accompanied by an Integrated Impact Assessment that assesses the potential impact of proposals (strategies, policies, programmes, projects, plans or other developments) on issues that previously may have been assessed separately, such as economic, environmental, sustainability, equal opportunities and health and wellbeing.

7. Risk Implications

7.1 (i) Options Explored

Not applicable

7.2 (ii) Key risks associated with the preferred approach

None

8. Recommendation

8.1 That this Annual Report be noted by members as a fair summary of activity of the CLJSPC during 2023/24

Is this a key decision? No

Do the exempt information categories apply? No

Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply? No

How many appendices does the report contain? 1

List of Background Papers: None

Lead Officer: Toby Forbes Turner, Planning Policy Manager
Telephone (01522) 873804

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Appendix 1

	2023/24 Approved	2023/24 Actual
<u>Description</u>	£	£
Salaries	205,400	181,124
National Insurance	22,500	20,136
Superannuation	49,300	43,565
Honorarium	3,000	2,826
Employee - NI P11D	100	5
Cost of Homeworking	1,200	180
Staff Advertising	400	-
Training Expenses	600	2,746
Health Care Plan	1,900	353
Professional Subscriptions	1,200	1,446
Health Shield (Cash Plan)	-	65
Miscellaneous Employee Exp	-	17
Occupational Health Costs	100	15
CRB Checks	100	-
	285,800	252,477
Premises	1,500	-
Car Allowances	1,700	2,008
Essential User	5,000	5,356
Public Transport	500	609
Car Parking	500	796
	7,700	8,769
Equipment,Furniture & Mats	900	149
Subsistence & Conference	500	423
Subscription	2,400	1,500
Printing	1,500	6,351
Postages	500	20
Telephones	500	59
Books & Publications	100	-
IT Hardware Purchases/Maintenance	1,000	92
Software Licences	8,200	-
Miscellaneous Insurances	100	318
	15,700	8,911
Consultancy	30,000	2,066
Legal Advice	-	(4,200)
Examination Costs	-	15,997
	30,000	13,863
Graphics	-	103
Reprographics	-	291
	-	394
<u>Net Expenditure</u>	340,700	284,414
<u>Funded by</u>		
Third Party Grants & Income	(300,900)	(300,900)
Costs Recoverable	0	(3,184)
Balance Transfer from Balance Sheet	(39,800)	19,670
	(340,700)	(284,414)
<u>Reserve Balance</u>	291,838	351,308

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SUBJECT:	INCOME AND ARREARS MONITORING
DIRECTORATE:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND TOWN CLERK
REPORT AUTHOR:	MARTIN WALMSLEY, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR – SHARED REVENUES AND BENEFITS

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Members on the position with regard to amounts of monies owed to the City Council as at 1st April 2024, (and Business Improvement District (BID) levy to the end of June 2024).

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This update is provided to Members of this Committee each year once all figures have been collated.
- 2.2 The report summarises the in-year collection of Council Tax, Business Rates, the Business Improvement District (BID) levy, Housing Rents, Former Tenant Rent Arrears, Sundry Debtors and Housing Benefit Overpayments to the 31st March 2024, and sets out the arrears brought forward position at 1st April 2024, (BID to the end of June 2024).
- 2.3 The impacts of Covid-19 and also ongoing cost of living challenges, understandably, have been significant in terms of collection monies due to the Council – with many businesses and taxpayers suffering financial hardship in recent years. This in turn impacts on officers' ability to recover monies in as prompt manner as would have been the case in previous years. Officers are committed to making realistic payment arrangements, aiming to avoid undue exceptional hardship to residents and businesses wherever possible.

3. Background

- 3.1 2023/24 was another year of significant demands for the Revenues and Benefits service, with ongoing impacts from cost of living challenges affecting residents' incomes with rising prices of energy, fuel, food etc.

4. Council Tax Collection

- 4.1 The Council Tax net collectable debit for 2023/24 after Council Tax Support, discounts and exemptions had been granted was £53,541,919. This is an increase of £2,795,216 from 2022/23.
- 4.2 Total payments received in respect of 2023/24 were £50,352,612. This is an increase of £2,575,779 from 2022/23.

- 4.3 For the financial year 2023/24, in-year collection is down by 0.11%, compared to 2022/23. 2023/24 in-year collection is 94.04%, compared to 94.15% in 2022/23. Although performance has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels of collection, the outturn collection rate is still a positive achievement in light of the significant impacts of the well-documented ongoing cost of living challenges locally and nationally.
- 4.4 Council Tax arrears brought forward on 1st April 2023 and 1st April 2024 are shown below:

Council Tax @ 1.4.2023	Brought-forward 1st April 2023	Council Tax	Brought-forward 1st April 2024	Increase/ (Decrease)
Value of accounts in credit for the years before 2022/23	-£1,210,805	Value of accounts in credit for the years before 2023/24	-£1,404,636	Increase £193,830
Value of accounts in debit for the years before 2022/23	£6,454,072	Value of accounts in debit for the years before 2023/24	£7,642,565	Increase £1,188,492
Value of accounts in credit in 2022/23	-£973,578	Value of accounts in credit in 2023/24	-£1,233,251	Increase £259,673
Value of accounts in debit in 2022/23	£4,064,857	Value of accounts in debit in 2023/24	£4,601,728	Increase £536,871
Overall credits brought forward into 2023/24	-£2,184,383	Overall credits brought forward into 2024/25	-2,637,887	Increase £453,503
Overall debits brought forward into 2023/24	£10,518,929	Overall debits brought forward into 2024/25	£12,244,293	Increase £1,725,363
Number of arrears cases	18,199	Number of arrears cases	18,739	Increase 540

The balance of debits brought forward into 2023/24 was £10,518,929 and this increased to £12,244,293 by 31st March 2024, an increase of 1,725,363.

The balance of credits brought forward into 2023/24 was £2,184,383 and this increased to £2,637,887, an increase of £453,503.

- 4.5 The new arrears figure of £12,244,293 brought forward represents; the balance of arrears outstanding from previous years at 31st March 2024 as set out in 4.4 above, the Council Tax due in 2023/24 and not collected, court costs raised in 2023/24 and still unpaid, other adjustments made in 2023/24 in respect of previous years, and excludes any credits held.
- 4.6 In terms of the amount of Council Tax written-out during the financial year 2023/24 (which could be outstanding Council Tax from any financial year), the figure was £171,305. This compares to £159,153 written-out during 2022/23.
- 4.7 It is important to note that just because a debt has been written-out, this does not mean it cannot be written back on and collected if new information is received.

During 2023/24, £29,500 was written back on.

5. Business Rates Collection

- 5.1 The Business Rates net collectable debit for 2023/24 after empty voids, charity entitlements and other reliefs had been granted was £37,813,724. This is a decrease of £4,231,533 from 2022/23. Recent years are not wholly comparable due to changes in eligible reductions in respect of Expanded Retail Discount / Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief, in addition to reassessments of properties by the Valuation Office.
- 5.2 Total payments received in respect of 2023/24 were £37,178,567. This is a decrease of £4,527,377 from 2022/23. A key reason again for this, was eligibility for Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief (previously Expanded Retail Discount) and some reassessments by the Valuation Office.
- 5.3 Business Rates arrears brought forward from all previous years at 1st April 2023 was £1,207,542. By 31st March 2024 these arrears had increased to £1,209,511.
- 5.4 The table below shows comparisons between 2022/23 and 2023/24 in respect of; in-year collection rate, arrears brought forward and number of arrears cases.

Business Rates	2022/23	2023/24	Increase/ (Decrease)
Collection Rate	99.19%	98.32%	(0.87%)
Arrears @ 1 st April (Value)	£1,207,542	£1,209,511	Increase £1,969
Arrears @ 1 st April (Cases)	329	455	Increase 126

Despite a reduction in collection, this still remains high - which is positive, particularly in light of the economic climate and significant challenges for businesses in recent years, also due to the Retail Hospitality and Leisure Relief of 75% in 2023/24, 50% in 2022/23 (Expanded Retail Discount was 100% from 1st April 2021 to 30th June 2021, then 66% from 1st July 2021 to 31st March 2022).

- 5.5 The new arrears figure of £1,209,511 brought forward represents; the balance of arrears outstanding from previous years at 31st March 2023 as set out in 5.3 above, the Business Rates due in 2023/24 and not collected, the balance of court costs raised in 2023/24 and still unpaid, any other adjustments made in 2023/24 in respect of previous years, and excludes credits.
- 5.6 In terms of the amount of Business Rates written-out during the financial year 2023/24 (which could be outstanding Business Rates from any financial year), the figure was £209,239. This compares to £26,278 written-out during 2022/23.
- 5.7 As with Council Tax, it is important to note that just because a debt has been written-out, this does not mean it cannot be written back on and collected if new information is received. During 2023/24, £9,260 was written back on.

6. Business Improvement District (BID) Levy Collection 2023/24

- 6.1 Members will be aware that the Authority is responsible for the administration and collection of the BID Levy.
- 6.2 The BID financial year runs from July to June and the figures given below represent collection up to the end of June 2024.
- 6.3 The 2023/24 net collectable debit raised in respect of the Levy was £454,595.
- 6.4 A comparison of in-year collection rates between the BID financial years ending 30th June 2023 and 30th June 2024 is shown in the table below, with collection remaining high.

Year ending 30 th June 2024	97.42%	Increase 0.21%
Year ending 30 th June 2023	97.21%	

7. Housing Rents Collection

- 7.1 The net Housing Rent debit for 2023/24 (collectable rent) excluding Housing Benefits, Universal Credit and other adjustments was £32,606,752 of which 99.69% was collected. This is a decrease of 0.05% on 2022/23 collection of 99.91%.
- 7.2 For administration purposes, Housing Rent arrears are split between 'current' and 'former' tenants. The table below shows comparisons between 2022/23 and 2023/24 in respect of: in-year collection rate, arrears brought forward and number of arrears cases.

Housing Rents	2022/23	2023/24	Increase/ (Decrease)
Collection Rate (including arrears/credits b/f)	96.88%	96.83%	(0.05%)
Collection Rate (excluding arrears/credits b/f)	99.91%	99.69%	(0.22%)
Arrears @ 1 st April (Value)	£2,038,070	£1,885,306	(£152,764)
- Current	£1,031,048	£1,009,951	(£21,097)
- Former	£1,007,022	£875,355	(£131,667)
Arrears @ 1 st April (Cases)	2,530	2,599	69

- 7.3 Tenancy Services continues to focus on rent collection and income maximisation for tenants and are committed to reducing the arrears whilst sustaining tenancies.

Year collection as of the end of March 2024 stood at 99.69%, a slight decrease from 99.91% at the end of the previous year. There was an overall reduction in current arrears from £1,031,048 to £1,009,951, a reduction of £21,097.

Arrears as a % of the debit stood at 2.88% as of the end of March 2024, compared to 3.40% the previous year, an improvement of 0.52%.

Evictions increased to 25 being carried out in 2023/24 compared to 20 being carried out in 2022/23.

- 7.4 Former tenant arrears collection for 2023/24 was 31.45% (compared to 2022/23 25.64%).

8. Sundry Debtors Collection

- 8.1 A total of 12,521 new debtor accounts were raised in 2023/24 amounting to £17,511,640 in cash terms.

- 8.2 The table below shows comparisons between 2022/23 and 2023/24 in respect of arrears brought forward and number of arrears cases.

Sundry Debtors	2022/23	2023/24	Increase/ (Decrease)
Arrears @ 1 st April (Value)	£3,241,803	£4,583,954	Increase £1,342,151
Arrears @ 1 st April (Cases)	5,508	5,931	Increase 428

Sundry debt invoices to the value of £2,012,138 were raised in March 2024, with expectation that some of these would not be paid in year (i.e. in 2023/24). (Raised in March 2023 £1,182,880) The collection rate for 2023/24 was 81.73% - this is a decrease from 2022/23 of 87.50%. The issue of raising large invoices towards the end of the financial year has been an ongoing problem for collection as these invoices are not due to be paid for approximately 28 days and businesses do not generally pay as soon as they get the bill. Therefore raising an invoice in March 2024 would generally mean that this is not paid before 1st April 2024.

In March 2024, there were a total of 1,198 invoices raised, of which 462 were paid in full and 33 invoices were part paid.

9. Housing Benefit Overpayments Collection

- 9.1 The balance of outstanding Housing Benefit Overpayments as at 1st April 2024 was £2,199,302 and compares to £2,458,227 at 1st April 2023, a decrease of £258,925.

9.2 A total of £715,490 in Housing Benefit overpayments was raised in 2023/24. Total credits received in 2023/24 were £846,401 – this includes card payments, direct deductions from ongoing benefit, payments from our collection agents, underlying entitlement and payments via attachments from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and employers.

9.3 The total number of cases with a debt outstanding in the Debtors system at the 1st April 2024 was 1,222.

The table below shows comparisons between 2022/23 and 2023/24 in respect of arrears brought forward and number of arrears cases in the Debtors system.

Housing Benefit Overpayments	2022/23	2023/24	Increase/ (Decrease)
Arrears @ 1 st April (Value)	£2,458,227	£2,199,302	(£258,925)
Arrears @ 1 st April (Cases)	1,287	1,222	(65)

10. Strategic Priorities

10.1 Let's reduce all kinds of inequality: The Revenues and Benefits Service has a key role in reducing poverty and disadvantage; by ensuring residents receive the benefits they are entitled to, providing money/debt advice, as well as collecting monies due to the Council in line with a Fair Collection and Debt Recovery Policy.

11. Organisational Impacts

11.1 Financial: Prompt and efficient recovery of amounts due to the Council helps to ensure that income receivable is collected in order to finance critical services.

11.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules: There are no direct legal implications from this report.

12. Risk Implications

12.1 A Risk Register is in place for the Revenues and Benefits shared service.

13. Recommendation

13.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

Key Decision No

Do the Exempt No

Information Categories
Apply?

Call in and Urgency: Is the decision one to which Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply? No

How many appendices does the report contain? None

List of Background Papers: None

Lead Officer: Martin Walmsley, Assistant Director – Shared Revenues and Benefits, Telephone 01522 873597

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