

**REPORT BY COUNCILLOR DONALD NANNESTAD, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR QUALITY HOUSING****INTRODUCTION**

In this report I set out performance data for service areas which come under my portfolio which covers the Council's own housing stock, regulation of private sector housing and health. There is a separate report on this agenda covering fire safety and I don't go into any detail in this report save to say we are 100% compliant in carrying out fire safety checks to both our high rise and our low-rise flats.

The major changes since my last report to this committee have been the Regulator of Social Housing (ROSH) expanding to cover local authorities from 1 April this year and policy announcements by Government since the July General Election.

ROSH will be inspecting each Council HRA every four years on consumer standards whereas other registered providers are also inspected on governance and value for money. For consumer standards the outcomes are graded from C1 (highest) to C4 (lowest). The majority of inspections so far have produced either C2 or C3 results with the occasional C1 and C4. ROSH requires a range of Tenancy Satisfaction Measures which we also scrutinise within our own Council through the Housing Scrutiny Committee. ROSH comes with a fee of around £64,000 a year payable to the Regulator.

In terms of Government announcements, the changes in Right to Buy will help. However, in the period between the autumn statement and the deadline for applications to be made under the previous system, we had over 90 applications. That is equivalent to the number which would normally be sold in around two years.

Our 30 year Housing Revenue Account Business Plan is in place with the priorities being neighbourhood regeneration, delivering new homes, addressing climate change and developing and improving core services.

There continues to be a housing crisis in the city. Although Local Housing Allowance (the amount available to be claimed for a property under housing benefit) has increased we are still in a situation where the vast majority of private sector rents are beyond the reach of anyone on housing benefit.

Homelessness numbers continue to increase and the cost of temporary accommodation (which falls on the General Fund rather than the Housing Revenue Account) is a continuing challenge not just for our Council but for all Councils up and down the country.

**HOMELESSNESS**

Homelessness continues to be a significant issue reflecting the situation that there is a housing crisis both locally and nationally. In Q2 there were 328 homelessness approaches to the City Council. This number has more than doubled since Q2 of 2021-22 when there were 145 approaches.

The percentages of successful preventions and relief of homelessness against the total number approaching the Council as homeless decreased to 36.14% This reflects the difficulty in finding accommodation in the city.

The number of people on the housing register at the end of Quarter 2 was 2,076 which is an increase of 164 on Q2 last year reflecting the continuation of the city's housing crisis.

There were 13 rough sleepers at Q2 end.

#### TENANCY SERVICES

The City Council has just under 7,800 properties of its own housing stock, of which 45% are houses and 42% flats with the remainder made up of maisonettes, bungalows and sheltered housing. The ratio between houses and flats has been skewed out of proportion by Right to Buy which has seen us lose a significantly higher number of family homes with a lesser number of flats bought by tenants. Eight out of 10 of our homes were constructed before 1974.

Tenancy services has recently began a pilot scheme with specialist teams of rent collection, anti-social behaviour and tenancy matters and it is too early to see how this is reflected in performance indicator data.

The percentage of rent collected to the end of Q2 was 96.37% which is red. A truer picture will emerge at the of Q3 when the non-payment Christmas weeks are included. Arrears 4.47% of the annual rent debit which is outside the low target of 4.15%. This reflects a national picture and correlates with other similar types of collection data E.G Council Tax.

#### VOIDS

The three performance indicators covering voids remain in red. The low target for re-let time (keys in to keys out) for all homes including major works is 45 days whereas the Q2 figure is 51.59 days. There are reasons for this in the commentary accompanying this report but this is an area that needs to show improvement. The percentage of rent lost due to vacant dwellings in Q2 was 1.36% with a low target of 1.1%. Again, this reflects the picture nationally and locally.

#### HOUSING REPAIRS

At the end of Q2 99.89% of priority (one-day repairs) were carried out within the time limit with a target of 99.5% putting this in the green category.

The percentage of urgent (three day) repairs completed on time in Q2 was 97.24% which is in the acceptable category and although is a slight reduction on Q1 this is an improvement on the data presented in my last report.

In Q2 99.27% of appointments were kept compared to a target of 98%. The percentage of priority and urgent repairs completed on first visit was 98.68% which is above the target of 92%. Both of these are also green.

In Q2 satisfaction with repairs (a ROSH measure) was 71% which is based on a survey of 150 tenants. 22% indicated dissatisfaction with the remaining 8% neither one way of the other.

#### HOUSING INVESTMENT

At the end of Q2 the percentage of council properties that were not at the Decent Homes standard (excluding refusals) (HI1) was 0.64% placing this in the green category with the target for the year end being 1%. We have 243 refusals (HI2).

In Q2, 99.27% of properties have a valid gas certificate (HI3) with a target of 99 % - again placing this as green. Cases where the tenant refuses access for the gas safety inspection are, as a matter of course, referred to legal services for the appropriate action to be taken to ensure we gain access. In the small number of cases where it is necessary to go to court to obtain an order we obtain an injunction for the life-time of the tenancy.

## NEW BUILD

11 new homes in Hermit Mews, consisting of six three-bed and five two-bed properties, have been completed and tenanted. The energy efficiency measures for these homes include air source heat pumps; triple glazing; and water butts to reuse rainwater. The use of a local contractor reduced carbon emissions and travel to work. Each of the properties has EV charging points and parking spaces. In addition, there is a biodiversity net gain of 17% through introduction of grassed gardens, additional landscaping, and removal of some tarmac hardstanding.

Work has continued on the first phase of the Western Growth Corridor development. This will see the construction of 3,200 new homes of which 640 (20%) are scheduled to be affordable homes. The first affordable homes to be constructed are in phase 1B which is to be accessed off Tritton Road. This phase plans to deliver 120 affordable homes and work has already started on the bridge which gives access to that area.

## DECARBONISATION

Our short-term objective is to have every home at EPC C rating or better by 2030 and work has commenced on our decarbonisation strategy.

A high proportion are currently EPC rating B or better and we have submitted an application for Government grant SHDF3 scheme to fund work on 200 homes which are either EPC D or below. If successful the Council will embark on a £4m+ project to retro fit these homes.

As at 2 January this year 6,646 of our Council housing stock were rated at Band C or above. That is 85.3% of our houses. The average score across all our dwellings is 72.04. Band C covers between 69 and 80. The 14.7% of properties below Band C are as follows: Band D - 1,133; Band E - 4; Band F - 2; Band G - 0.

In terms of our older stock (80% of which was built pre-1974) we are committed to review the Lincoln Homes Standard to improve energy performance. We have recently contracted to inspect 20% of our properties each year.

## CONTROL CENTRE

There are two performance measures for the Control Centre which are related to the Lincare Housing Assistance service.

In Q2 the percentage of customers satisfied with their new Lincare Housing Assistance service connection to the Control Centre was 100% out of 24 responses and the same outcome was achieved in Q1 from 60 responses.

The percentage of Lincare Housing Assistance calls answered within 60 seconds in Q2 was 98.95% which is above target and almost identical to Q1 which was 98.97%.

#### PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING

Within private sector housing the Council has a regulatory role over landlords which includes dealing with housing condition complaints and HMO licensing. The work of this team also includes Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs), HIMO licensing, bringing long-term empty private sector homes back into use and carrying out checks on properties referred to us by the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Recruitment has been an issue in this area, and it has only been this autumn that we have had a full complement of staff. This should be reflected in improved performance as the year goes on.

The Good Home Lincs resource, which ourselves and other districts are funding along with the County Council, was launched recently. This provides information, advice and support for homeowners on maintenance, improvements and repairs. One of the immediate effects appears to be an increase in DFG referrals not just in Lincoln but in other districts.

Performance measure PH1 refers to Disabled Facilities Grant cases and the length of time taken between receiving notification from an occupational therapist to completion of the required work.

In Q2 of 2024-25 this was 32 weeks which is a deterioration on Q1 which was 30.9 weeks and on Q2 of 2023-24 which was 29.9 weeks. The low target is 26 weeks, so this is in the red category. 20 grant applications were completed in Q2 including three prolonged cases which took over 52 weeks. Without these three cases the average would have been around 28 weeks.

A Technical Support Officer has been employed to assist in processing and managing DFG cases which should start to show an improvement.

In the first two quarters of this year 42 grant assistant cases have been completed with a value of £405,000 and since then 11 more cases have been completed. A further £505,000 has been committed and approved which means we are on target to spend our annual DFG allocation and reduce some of the unspent amount from previous years. The number of referrals has been increasing recently which is likely to relate to the launch of the Good Home Lincs resource earlier in the autumn.

Measure PH2 relates to the regulatory role the Council has in the private rented sector and is the average time from date of inspection of accommodation to removing a severe hazard to an acceptable level. The average time taken in Q2 was 22 weeks with the target being a minimum of 20 weeks. This is a deterioration from Q1 (19 weeks) and from Q2 of 2023-24 (21 weeks). During Q2 the team resolved and closed 25 housing disrepair / condition cases. By mid-November 113 cases had been resolved and closed – the main complaints being disrepair

(62 cases), HMO licensing inquiries (20) and HMO complaints (13). Complaints about damp and mould in private sector homes has increased in each of the last four years from 49 cases in 2020-21 to 98 in 2023-24. By mid-November there were 55 cases.

PH3 which is the number of empty homes brought back into use. This is an area where we have had some success and by the end of Q2 the Council had brought back into use 23 long-term (two year plus) empty privately owned properties which is above the high target of 18. The number of four-year or more empty properties is 63. Some of these are extremely challenging to resolve.

## HEALTH

We have a key role in improving our residents' health through the services we provide. These fall into 5 broad areas of housing & homelessness, environment & sustainability, activity & wellbeing, economic inclusion and community engagement. Although there are not specific performance indicators relating to health, the programmes and services will be monitored for specific health impact where possible. An example of this is the EGYM at Yarborough Leisure Centre where we can see data such as 29.3% increase in strength in the first 3 months and percentage reduction in bioage for users. Another example is the Lincs4Warmer Homes scheme that supported 32 households with an income below £31,000 or living with a health condition to be more energy efficient. Some of our impact on residents' health and wellbeing will be seen at an individual level, others will take generational change to show an improvement in the health data.

The City Council does not have any specific performance indicators relating to health but we have a key role in improving our residents' health through the services we provide. The provision of good quality, safe, affordable housing is the most important factor within the City Council's remit as housing conditions have a huge impact on people's health and education. Leisure services, play areas and green spaces such as our parks and commons also have roles in improving both physical and mental health.

The UKSPF ward community chest money is another area we have been able to affect health with several ward panels funding community cuppa-type start-ups. These events help reduce loneliness.

The main sources of data for Lincoln's health can be found from the Office of National Statistics (ONS), the Lincolnshire Health Information Hub (LHIH) and the Department of Health and Social Care's fingertips data.

On occasions health data is published almost as historical information rather than real time. For example, my report to this committee in January referred to the health index score for Lincoln for 2021 which was published by the ONS and described as an experimental statistic and has not been updated. Lincoln was given a score of 85.3 in comparison with the overall score for England of 100.8. with the Lincoln score down on the previous year and the overall score for England improving.

I've included the Lincoln health profile from the DHSC in the appendices to this report as well as the profiles for the two primary care networks neighbourhood teams which cover the city – Lincoln City South and Lincoln North.

The city profile shows that Lincoln is below both the East Midlands and the England levels for each of the eight indicators published. We are the worst in the country for under 75 mortality rate from cancer and the second worst in the country, behind West Devon, for suicide. For suicide the analysis is based on the home postcode of the deceased rather than the place of death.

Lincoln, over a number of years, has consistently had one of the highest suicide numbers per 100,000 population. The 2022 Lincolnshire suicide audit shows three electoral wards in Lincoln had five or more registered deaths from suicide over the period of 2020-22. Only two other wards across the whole of the county had that level – one in East Lindsey and one in South Holland.

The Lincolnshire Suicide Prevention Conference held in September was told that there is some evidence to suggest that suicide rates reduce in relation to the proximity to areas where there is a higher level of mental health support. For instance, the figure for Inner London is 7.5 per 100,000 and no Inner London borough is above the national average. Research is to be carried out looking at whether the level of support available locally is a factor in the levels experienced in Lincoln and the wider county.

To conclude I wish to thank all members of the Council's staff working in the areas covered by my portfolio. They do an excellent job at a time when all local authorities are under increasing financial pressures. Secondly a thank you to our Tenants Panel who have carried out very valuable work over the last year.

To be added as appendices along with the Housing portfolio Q2 performance data

[Local Authority Health Profiles - Data | Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care](#)

[LincolnCSouth-Neighbourhood-Team.pdf](#)

[LincolnNorth-Neighbourhood-Team.pdf](#)

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