

Annual Report for Housing & Property Services 2022/23

Welcome & Foreword - Cllr Warhurst

Welcome to our first Annual Report from the new Housing, and Property Services Team which outlines how we performed in 2022/23 against the standards set by the Social Housing Regulator.

The team have begun an impressive journey of change over the past 2 years. I am pleased to report on the improvements they are making in challenging times by working together and putting you our tenants needs at the forefront of everything they do.

A key achievement over the last 12 months has been to develop our Homes Improvement programme. We have focused our efforts to carry out improvements to your home as well as to make it energy efficient to reduce your running costs and our carbon emissions.

We have seen a rise in people presenting to us as homeless. We have continued to review and implement new ways of working to meet this increased pressure particularly in temporary accommodation. We are committed to end placing families in Bed & Breakfast accommodation.

We will continue to improve communication with all tenants and strengthen the tenant voice across housing services, increasing opportunities to participate and influence the provision of services.

As well as summarising our performance in 2022/23, the report sets out some of the actions we will be taking during 2023/24 in order to respond positively to the challenges we face and ensure that we achieve our goal of being a top performing landlord.

Portfolio Holder
Councillor Craig Warhurst



Road map to change

2022/23 saw the start of a 5-year investment plan



£12m to provide new kitchens, bathrooms, plus rewiring

£5m for electrical installation, smoke detection, door entry & security upgrades, fire & structural repairs

£4m to provide more efficient central heating systems. By 2030 all our properties will have a minimum EPC rating of C or better

£3m to install new windows, external doors & new roofs

£1.75m for equipment to help people with mobility issues live independently & safely. Nov 2022 a new contract was awarded to reduce the waiting time for adaptations

Laurel Close completed, increased insulation to cavity & roof areas plus window improvements



Day-to-day repairs: we listened to your feedback that waiting times for calls to be answered was too long. We agree. A new dedicated calls handling team started summer 2023

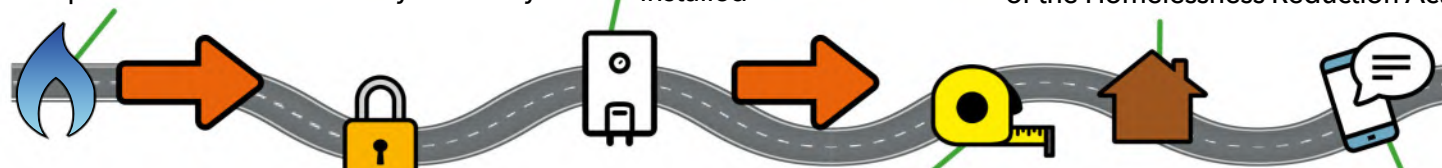
We received funding from Worcestershire County Council for energy efficiency improvements. This meant we could replace old lighting in stairwells & communal areas at 120 sites

Phase 1 of the High Trees Project: enhancement of footpaths, car parking facilities & refuse collections. Phase 2 will include works to balconies

100% of properties have a valid gas certificate. It is vital that you let us in to complete this work to ensure your safety

171 of new energy efficient boilers installed

Worked with colleagues to increase the supply & provision of temporary accommodation as part of the Homelessness Reduction Act



Improved intercom system installed at Batchley flats, for added security & peace of mind

We surveyed all of our properties to gather information to update our maintenance programme & reduce the number of day-to-day repairs

Implemented Phase 1 of a new housing management IT system which will improve communications with tenants about rent, reporting repairs & ASB

Condensation, mould & damp

We have changed the way we deal with condensation, mould and damp in your home. Please report it us online or call us on **01527 64252** or **534123**. Watch our movie on how to take steps to manage condensation in your home at: www.redditchbc.gov.uk/condensation

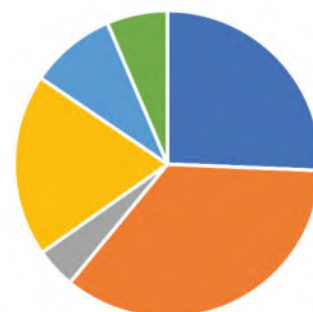
Keeping you safe

There are **270 blocks of low rise flats in Redditch**. Each month we complete a health and safety check as part of our new program of neighbourhood estate inspections and estate walkabouts.

Value for money

How we spend money collected from rents:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Repairs and Maintenance | Repayment interest |
| Housing Services | Debt repayment - rent arrears current & former |
| Debts | New build investment |



Bedsit	£71.09	5 bed house	£114.34
1 bed flat	£78.80	6 bed house	£139.48
2 bed flat	£87.71	1 bed bungalow	£88.35
3 bed flat	£96.46	2 bed bungalow	£103.27
1 bed house	£83.08	3 bed bungalow	£94.72
2 bed house	£93.35	1 bed maisonette	£95.96
3 bed house	£101.19	2 bed maisonette	£84.80
4 bed house	£109.53	3 bed maisonette	£94.78

Average weekly rent (excluding service charges)

It has been an extremely difficult year for many with huge cost increases in energy, transport, and food.

Many people struggled to buy those big essential items. **We supported 214 tenants through referrals to the Household Grant Fund** for help in purchasing cookers, fridges and washing machines.

The Home Finance Service helps our tenants

who are experiencing financial difficulties, struggling with debt and unable to pay their rent.

Our team successfully secured £134,000 of additional financial support for these residents.

The Tenancy Ready Team helped 150 new incoming tenants get their tenancies off to the best possible start, supporting them with everything from furniture recycling schemes, through to help in claiming benefits and to be "move in ready".

The Intensive Housing Management Team provides short term intensive support for tenants in crisis. This support and guidance includes advice on reducing hoarding and neglected homes, mental and physical health issues, substance misuse issues and coordinating longer term specialist support from our partner agencies. **75 tenants were helped in this way over the last 12 months.**



87 Notice Seeking Possessions served

26 Court Suspended Possession Orders

1 Eviction

We have adopted an early intervention approach which provides support to our new tenants and new Universal Credit customers working across all the specialist teams.

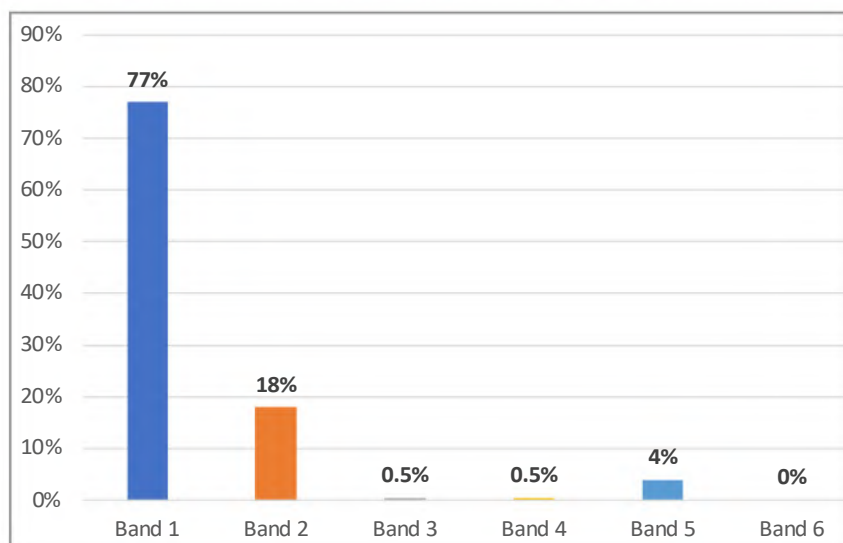
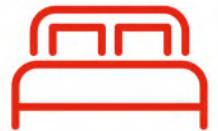
Acting against tenancies for rent arrears is always a last resort when people refuse to engage with us.

Housing Solutions

225 people were placed into emergency short term B&B accommodation.

The Temporary Accommodation Team **moved 97 families into good quality self-contained emergency accommodation.**

2363 housing applications were received.



Lettings

We have a limited number of homes that become available each year so we must ensure these are allocated to those in the greatest need. We do this through our Housing Allocation Policy.

Banding results

The information in the graph gives you a good idea of how long you may be waiting to be rehoused.

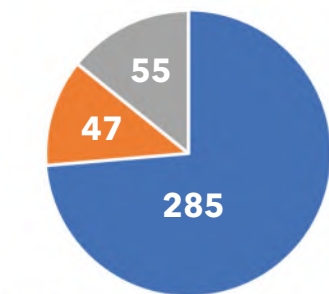
Band 1 = **77%** Band 2 = **18%**

Band 3 = **0.5%** Band 4 = **0.5%**

Band 5 = **4%** Band 6 = **0%**

The allocations made to those in the lower bandings are not for family sized accommodation but for retirement housing which is in lesser demand.

Applicants in Band 1 are direct matched to the next available suitable property. All other bandings can bid on properties as that are available for advertising through our choice based letting service.



- New Council Tenancies
- Nominations
- Mutual Exchanges

The average turnaround time for void properties was 31 days. Our target for this year is 22 days, so we can rehouse people in difficult circumstances as fast as possible and keep our void rental income losses to a minimum.

100% of introductory tenants achieved secure tenancies - we are getting the let "right first time" to help people achieve sustainable tenancies.

We are key partners in the Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Partnership. We have 5 units of designated safe accommodation for people fleeing their home due to domestic abuse.

Keeping neighbourhoods safe

We want all our estates to be nice places to live and somewhere our tenants feel safe.

We have a dedicated phone line so you can speak directly with an officer to report any concerns, and have developed an app for tenants to report ASB issues online.

We have developed a Prevention and Enforcement Group who have regular meetings with the Police, to ensure a co-ordinated approach to addressing ASB, nuisance, county line drug dealing and cuckooing.

53 Tenancy Enforcement Actions taken in 2022

5 Tenants were evicted due to ASB

1 Property Closure order

4 Civil injunctions to address ASB

Providing new affordable homes

The demand for housing is high and we are working hard to increase the supply of new homes.

Work has started on the Edgeworth Close site development providing 19 new homes for rent, due to be completed by late summer 2023. This will be the first council house build in over 30 years.

Planning approval has been given for a further 9 sites providing over 60 new homes from 2024 to 2026.

We also plan to review how we are best using our existing housing stock and land.



Housing Policy

We have reviewed and developed a full suite of policies and processes which clearly sets out how we approach the landlord services we provide to our residents. These include our approach to collecting rent and other housing debts, tenancy and neighbourhood management, repairs and disabled adaptations, empty homes and managing temporary accommodation.

The Housing Ombudsman



We published a new complaint process which recognises the importance of working with residents and Members. This allows to "get it right" when handling complaints and identify emerging issues so that they can be addressed at an early stage. We also use data and actively encourage resident engagement to improve our services.

We welcome your views. We like you to tell us what you think of our services. It is good to hear when things have gone right - and when they've gone wrong.

The Complaints Standard has a 2-stage resolution process:

Stage 1 - If you remain unhappy with the service's findings at Stage 1 you can ask for it to be escalated to our second and final stage.

Stage 2 - Your request to escalate your complaint will be reviewed by the Service Managers or the Head of Service, who will usually give you a decision within 20 working days.

You can approach the Housing Ombudsman Service at any time during your complaint, or after your complaint has been fully investigated through our internal complaints procedure, if you remain unhappy with our final response. *(Continued on next page)*

It is your right to ask the Housing Ombudsman to carry out an independent investigation of how we have handled your complaint. They can be found at: <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk>

You can find a copy of our Complaints Standard, along with the results of our Annual Self Assessments, against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code of Guidance, and details of how to make a complaint at: www.redditchbc.gov.uk/my-home/housing-complaint-or-enquiry

Road map for looking ahead

Our next priority is to refresh our approach, ensuring tenants have a say in how services are shaped. We will be working with TPAS over the next 12 months to develop a Tenant Involvement Strategy and action plan so that all of our tenants can be involved in providing the best housing service offer.

Home Standard



We will continue to invest in our assets.

We will continue to meet our statutory inspection and testing obligations under housing legislation, including fire protection, water safety, electrical, gas servicing, heating and hot water.

We will continue to review our contracts, with robust performance management ensuring objectives are met.

Neighbourhood, Tenancy & Community Standard



Summer 2023 saw the start of consultation of a new improved tenancy agreement, setting out clear and fair new rights and responsibilities for you as our tenants and our commitments to you as the landlord.

We will also continue to implement a new housing management system into the service, which will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of how we manage our tenancies and improve the housing services tenants receive.

We will join tenants and partners in walkabouts of our neighbourhoods and work together to maintain or improve the appearance of and cleanliness of our estates, implementing joint action plans for improvement where necessary.

We will use The Tenants Charter for Social Housing in relation to the management of neighbourhoods and ASB. We will do this in partnership with the Police, wider Council, and health services, to tackle and reduce crime and ASB in our neighbourhoods, and improve the way we engage with residents, measuring satisfaction with services robustly and holistically.

By working together, and with other services, we will also continue to support our most vulnerable tenants, who are at risk of losing their tenancies, by providing early intensive supportive interventions, ranging from supporting new tenants to be ready to move into their new homes, to making sure our lettings are sustainable, advice on health and wellbeing and help with the impact of the increases in the cost of living.

Develop a Temporary Accommodation Strategy to end the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation for any homeless households.

Review how we are using our existing housing stock and land, to make best use, and developing new homes for local people.

Feedback

We would appreciate your feedback on this report, what did you like, what didn't you like and would you like to know more? Please tell us your views which will help us in writing future reports.

Visit <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/TenantsAnnualReportFeedback22-23/> to complete the survey.

If you need this information in another language or format, please contact us to discuss how we can best meet your needs, on equalities@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk or 01527 548284.