

## **Kingston Council Housing Services end of year performance report 1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022**

### **Welcome and introduction from Cllr Emily Davey - Portfolio Holder for Housing**

Welcome to our second annual review and report to Housing Residents, where we are able to set out our performance over the last year from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

We are very pleased that post-pandemic we have been able to resume face to face services with residents and we have redesigned the housing management service to better serve our community.

We know that circumstances are still difficult for residents and the current cost of living issues have been exerting additional financial pressures, so we are especially thankful to our residents to be able to report rent arrears of just 2.4% for the year - an historical low. At the same time we have increased overall customer satisfaction on repairs to 88% up from 84% last year March of 2021.

We know there is more to do, for example in optimising re-letting of vacated properties and managing the transition needed with the regeneration of the Cambridge Road Estate, but we remain committed to providing excellent service and affordable, sustainable homes in the right places to meet the needs of our communities into the future.

Best regards  
Councillor Emily Davey.

### **Alarm Response Service Report - Housing for Older People**

The Alarm Response Service answers when an older person activates their pull cord to request assistance. Historically, this service has been operated by Milton Keynes Council to a high level. However, to ensure value for money, we are putting this out to tender. We wanted to encourage residents to have a real stake and greater influence in the future of the services they receive. So, in March 2022 we held drop-in sessions for our residents living in sheltered accommodation to discuss the renewal of the Alarm Response contract, working with us to draw up the specification and give their input to the design of the service. The feedback received will help improve service provision in the future.

Lesley Turnbull is one of the residents taking part and told us : "I was very happy to take part in the process of drawing up the specification for the Alarm Response contract. The drop-in sessions to which all residents were invited were also appreciated. I felt part of the process instead of it being dictated to me"

Paula Wray  
Lead Officer - Housing for Older People

**\* If you are interested in joining the older people's group, to discuss and monitor service delivery please contact us on [involvedinhousing@kingston.gov.uk](mailto:involvedinhousing@kingston.gov.uk)**

## **Rent collection**

- Total arrears for the year 2.4%
- Target 2.4%

Arrears for the year were just 2.4% of total rent charged throughout the year. This is a record low figure for the borough and we thank our residents for helping us achieve this.

## **Financial Inclusion Team (FIT)**

The Council offers help with rent and benefits through our Financial Inclusion and Welfare Reform Teams. You can contact FIT on 020 8547 5591 or email: [financialinclusion@kingston.gov.uk](mailto:financialinclusion@kingston.gov.uk)

The Financial Inclusion Team generated £388,834 total income for the period April 2021 - March 2022

### **Details**

- £68,645 Housing support fund applications completed
- £122,508 Income maximisation successful benefit applications
- £197,681 Housing Benefit and Universal Credit housing element successful applications

## **Lettings and Housing Register**

Total number of social housing lettings 207  
Live applications on the Housing Register 3711

The number of all social housing lettings in 2021/22 was 207 (140 Council and 67 Registered Provider). Of these 142 were in general purpose accommodation and 65 sheltered housing for elderly.

As at 31 March 2022 there were 3711 live applications on the Housing Register.

### **Re-letting properties**

The average number of days it has taken to re-let homes up to 31 March 2022

General needs

- 51 days to let - target 23 days

Homes for older people

- 144 days to let - target 28 days

The Council has undertaken a full review of the suitability of existing sheltered housing and has further plans to address the issue of time taken to re-let properties.

### **Empty Homes**

We are working hard to get vacant properties back into use. The numbers for empty homes does include those properties vacated as part of the Cambridge Road Estate regeneration and these are shown as non-lettable.

#### **Empty available for letting / not available for letting**

**0 - 6 weeks** 11 available for letting / 11 not available for letting

**6 weeks to 6 months** 23 available for letting / 27 not available for letting

**Over 6 months** 36 available for letting / 122 not available for letting

Total homes empty and available for letting 70

Total homes empty and not available for letting 160

**TOTAL homes empty 230**

### **Right to Buy Applications 2021-22**

The Council received 71 applications last year, the highest number we've received since 2016-17. During the same period there were 19 Completions on Right to Buy.

### **Losing your home (Eviction)**

Total number of evictions: 10

We have carried out 7 evictions for rent arrears, 2 for anti-social behaviour and 1 for property abandonment.

It is the council's focus to deal with anti-social behaviour quickly and effectively. Eviction is a last resort as we try to resolve cases through other measures such as Community Protection Warnings and ASB.

## **Resident Engagement**

### **Alpha Road fly tipping clearance day**

Many residents share our concerns about fly tipping and some have taken the lead to work with us on new initiatives to tackle the problem.

On Saturday 26 February 2022, Alpha Road Estate Residents' Association held its' first Bulk Clearance Day. Our Estates Services Team placed its tipper truck in two locations, allowing residents to bring bulky items for disposal/recycling.

Residents' Association member Mary Parmar said: 'We were very pleased with the positive feedback from both residents and local councillors and we hope that we can arrange this again.'

The council will be looking to carry out similar events for other estates in the future.

## **Customer satisfaction with responsive repairs**

Kingston received 79 formal complaints in the last 12 months. The volume of complaints regarding repairs remains small compared to the total number of repairs ordered.

Customers satisfied with repairs 88% (Target 87%)

From 1 July 2021 Axis took over the call centre for repairs. This has reduced the call answer times for residents, enabling Axis to follow up on and focus on urgent repairs.

## **Complaints Analysis**

### **Stage 1 Complaints**

Block estate or communal repairs	6
General service issues or complex complaints	7
Managing Anti-Social Behaviour	3
Repairs and servicing of your home	28
Staff attitude, conduct or behaviour	9
Wish to move home	2
Formal complaints	79

### **Stage 2 Complaints**

Block estate or communal repairs	3
General service issues or complex complaints	6
Repairs and servicing of your home	9
Staff attitude, conduct or behaviour	3
Other complaints	3

The council had one stage 3 complaint to the Ombudsman and a determination was made against the council. As a result, we have carried out a number of measures to improve our handling of Anti-Social Behaviour complaints and these include:

- Implementing ASB (ECINS) monitoring system in all cases
- 3-monthly reviews on all open ASB cases
- Training for all Housing Officers on ASB cases
- Review of template letters used in ASB cases
- Staff training on hate crime and managing cases of harassment

**\*We ask tenants to please respond to the council customer satisfaction text messages for repair jobs, as it is important for us to monitor and improve the repairs service.**

## **Business Assurance and Compliance**

Business assurance is designed to detail what legislation we must adhere to. This includes guidance and processes to ensure we meet these requirements as a landlord.

### **Inspections completed**

Health & Safety inspections - 100% (carrying out Housing health and safety checks)

Gas Safety - 99.95% (properties with a valid gas certificate)

Electricity Safety - 93.92% (carrying out Housing Electrical inspections)

Fire Safety Inspection 100% (properties with a valid fire risk assessment)

**\*We ask tenants to please allow access to your property for inspections to take place.**

### **Other areas of compliance 100% complete:**

Fire Safety Equipment servicing

Emergency lighting programme

Lightning Conductor Testing  
PAT tests  
Lift servicing  
Asbestos surveys and management programme  
Water Monitoring

## **Home improvements and adaptations**

### **Homes benefitting from improvements**

406 new energy efficient boilers installed  
49 window replacement programme which is still ongoing  
33 new modern roofs with improved insulation  
28 new kitchens installed  
18 new bathrooms installed

### **Adaptations**

There were a total of 64 home adaptations completed for council housing using the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) funding in 2021-22 and 5 communal part installations.

## **Where every £1 of rent is spent**

Below is a breakdown of how housing revenues was spent

Contributions to future major stock repairs and maintenance 29p  
Housing Staff 15p  
Repairs & Maintenance 17p  
Debt Charges 13p  
Corporate Services (central recharges) 11p  
Premises 4p  
Legal & Professional Fees 3p  
Miscellaneous eg transport/insurance 3p  
Grounds maintenance 2p  
Bad Debts 2p  
Office costs/Banking/Telephones/IT 1p

## **Resident engagement**

Kingston council is committed to working with residents to improve service delivery, so give us your feedback or even better, get involved and tell us what you want. If

you have feedback on housing services or want to find out more about our complaints process, please go to our website  
[www.kingston.gov.uk/council-democracy/feedback-complaints-complements](http://www.kingston.gov.uk/council-democracy/feedback-complaints-complements)

**Are you interested in joining one of our engagement groups?**

Please get in touch with the Communication and Engagement specialist lead, by emailing: [involvedinhousing@kingston.gov.uk](mailto:involvedinhousing@kingston.gov.uk) and ensure you write 'engagement groups' in the subject title.

The groups are:

- The Repairs Group
- The ASB (Anti -social behaviour) Group
- The Housing for Older People Group.
- The Homeownership Group
- The Scrutiny Group

**Thanks for reading!**

For further details on housing visit our website:  
[www.kingston.gov.uk/housing-regeneration](http://www.kingston.gov.uk/housing-regeneration)

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