

**Report for:** Housing Scrutiny Committee 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023

**Title:** Housing Improvement Plan Update

**Report authorised by:** David Joyce, Director of Placemaking and Housing

**Lead Officer:** Jahedur Rahman, Operational Director of Housing Services and Building Safety

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**1. Describe the issue under consideration**

1.1 This report provides an update on the Housing Improvement Plan progress which was approved at Cabinet on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 2023.

**2. Introduction**

2.1 Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny is recommended to note this report

**3. Update on the progress to the Housing Improvement Plan**

3.1 This report provides a progress update on the Housing Improvement Plan agreed by Cabinet in April 2023 to the Housing Scrutiny Committee.

3.2 The Housing Improvement Plan is a two-year plan attached as Appendix 1. Main progress includes:

3.2.1 New Governance structures have been established in Housing Services to oversee delivery of the plan, with five priority boards established specifically to oversee delivery (Repairs, Housing Management, Building Safety and Compliance, Capital, and Housing IT).

3.2.2 The Members Housing Improvement Board have also been meeting regularly to oversee progress of the plan, along with conducting “deep dive” reviews of specific areas of interest. The Board is chaired by the Chief Executive and attended by the Cabinet Member, ward members and cross party members.

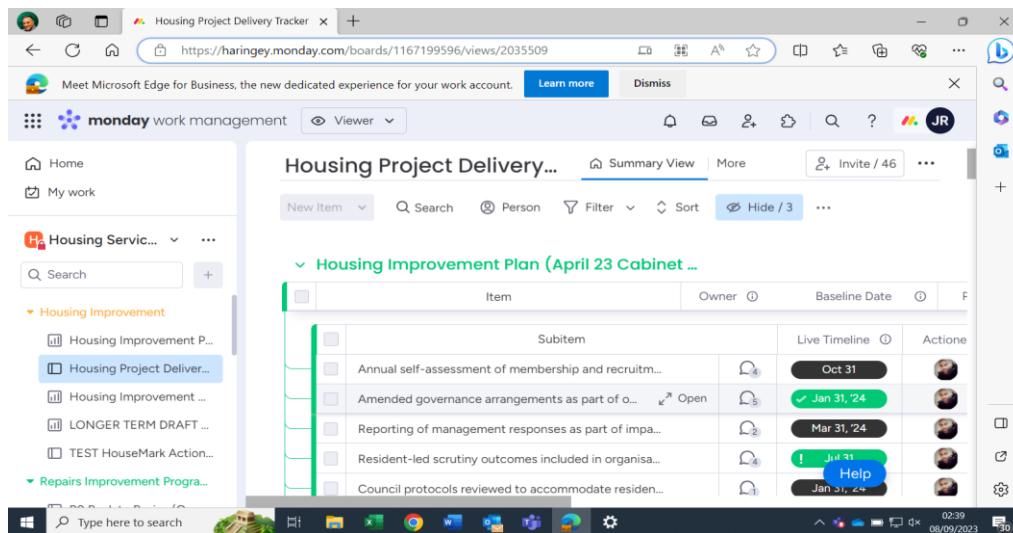
3.2.3 Three new senior programme managers are being recruited to coordinate delivery of the plan, with two who started in Sept 23 (and interviews for final role also scheduled in Sept).

3.2.4 The Plan includes approximately 180 actions being delivered across 13 housing teams / areas in Housing Services and Building Safety. The

delivery of the 180 actions across the 13 housing teams are monitored and managed through a new project management tool introduced corporately – Monday.com. This is now used by Housing Services and Building Safety, which allows the teams to focus on executing tasks, projects, and process efficiently and achieve shared goals at scale.

3.3 Table 1 shows an illustration of the project management system used by Housing Services to monitor and deliver the Housing Improvement Plan.

**Table 1**



3.4 The Programme Status on table 2 highlights the high level progress on the plan. The programme status on table 3 and the RAG indicator compromises the overall status of the team specific progress which takes into consideration the individual milestone due dates and progress to complete each of the milestone.

3.5 Whilst table 2 provides service specific updates, the following milestones have been implemented between April to August 2023:

### 3.6 Income Recovery

3.6.1 The Income Recovery process was previously manually driven, a move to automation has been delivered with target dates for automation weekly. This includes Letter 1 automated. Notice Seeking Possession, Notice to Quit letters are now also automated.

3.6.2 There was a specific milestone to utilise data and technology more effectively to "proactively" help tenants reduce their debts. - Policy in Practice LIFT

dashboard is now being used to identify households with unclaimed welfare benefits such as Pension Credit (PC) and Attendance. It is estimated that there are 277 households who are entitled to PC but not claiming and 90 households not claiming Attendance allowance.

3.6.3 These targeted campaigns will be rolled out by Financial Inclusion in the week commencing 4th September. Financial Inclusion will also be hosting a Downsizing Event on Tues. 26th Sept – which will target the 489 tenants who are under occupying and are affected by the bedroom tax.

3.6.4 A new permanent Head of Income Management has been appointed and is in post.

### **3.7 Voids**

3.7.1 One of the milestones within the voids plan was to procure an additional supply-chain to compliment internal resources to clear the backlog and enable peaks in demand to be smoothed. Contractors are due to commence works in October 2023.

3.7.2 The productivity of the DLO void team has improved significantly with August seeing the largest number of properties made ready for let with a month-on-month increase since January 2023.

3.7.3 A new lettings and tenancy sign up was piloted and is now implemented with the tenancy management team undertaking new tenancy sign ups.

### **3.8 Repairs**

3.8.1 Whilst most of the repair milestones related to the repairs service are not yet due, we are noting a challenge in the job market for skilled trade operatives with neighbouring boroughs offering higher rates for agency workers with competing demands and an overall shortage in the labour workforce.

3.8.2 Surveying capacity is due to be increased imminently due to a successful tender to supply surveying resources.

3.8.3 Impressed van stock has been completed with electricians and plumbers and carpentry to be completed in September.

### **3.9 Compliance**

- 3.9.1 A new compliance system went out for tendering on 4<sup>th</sup> September with a 30-day tender period and we will evaluate in October with a view to award the contract by the end of October.
- 3.9.2 The milestone to ensure gas safety records for communal boilers are displayed in communal areas is now complete.
- 3.9.3 We have developed a detailed catch-up programme project plan, with appropriate milestones, to clearly show how we will achieve the March 2023 target date with the Regulator. This overview was shared with the Regulator of Social Housing
- 3.9.4 A data validation exercise which includes downloading the full asset list from Northgate into a data validation workbook is now complete. The team are now conducting further checks to confirm properties that are outside of the programme have a valid reason for it. E.g., Right to Buy Properties or stock disposal.
- 3.9.5 All FRAs completed by internal fire risk assessors are now 100 per cent quality checked to provide assurance around the quality and consistency of FRAs.

### **3.10 Estate Services**

- 3.10.1 Weekend cleaning is now in place - focus is on properties with lifts and chutes, Post Tottenham Stadium event cleaning,
- 3.10.2 We are also at the early stages of the recruitment process to launch a deep cleaning programme across the borough.

### **3.11 Tenancy Management**

- 3.11.1 Introductory Letter from Housing Officers and Housing Liaison Officers have been issued to all residents explaining their role and providing contact details and setting out our service standards.
- 3.11.2 Notice Boards have been updated with cleaning and grounds maintenance specification and frequency, estate walkabout and contact details.
- 3.11.3 A new permanent Head of Tenancy has been appointed and is in post.

### 3.12 Homeownership Services

3.12.1 The Implementation of property purchase and service charge module project went live with the Project team on 15 July 2023.

3.12.2 A new permanent Head of Homeownership Service has been appointed and is in post.

### 3.13 Resident Engagement

3.13.1 We have now recruited around 60 residents to form the groups within the engagement structure. This is part of the milestone to create resident-led continuous improvement groups to co-design improvement plans.

**Table 2**

Programme status		
	R/A/G	Comments
<b>Overall RAG</b>	GREEN	Plan currently evaluated at green overall, as while 3 of the 13 areas are currently amber, there has been good progress against the planned actions set out in the Cabinet report.
<b>Schedule</b>	GREEN	Some slippage against individual milestones across 180 plus actions in plan – all seen as recoverable in overall schedule of plan.
<b>Budget</b>	GREEN	Budget agreed and allocated to Heads of Service as set out in Cabinet report. Spend understood to be in line with plan up to the current time.
<b>Risks / Issues</b>	AMBER	Risk re: impact of the work required to deliver Housing Ombudsman recommendations drawing resource from the programme. Issue re: gap in programme management resource for repairs but recruitment in progress.
<b>Resources (people)</b>	AMBER	Recruitment in progress for new repairs programme manager.
<b>Benefits</b>	GREEN	Plan benefits at green as seen as achievable, and new programme managers being brought in will help team capacity to track and report on benefits.

**Table 3**

Programme status		
Projects	R/A/G	Summary Progress Comments
<b>Resident Led Improvement</b>	GREEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Approx 60 residents now recruited to form the groups within the engagement structure.</li> <li>- Training dates set for September-December 2023.</li> <li>- Other actions on track.</li> </ul>
<b>Income Management Improvement</b>	GREEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Additional Income officers recruited.</li> <li>- Income figures improved in July (awaiting August figures)</li> <li>- Proposal re: new rent analytics tool being prepared for IT board.</li> </ul>
<b>Voids Improvement</b>	AMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Voids service is struggling to recruit some of the resources set out in the plan.</li> <li>- Sign up processes have been updated.</li> <li>- Void reports and voids data available on NEC and Total Mobile systems is being scrutinised and cleansed with cross team assistance.</li> </ul>
<b>Repairs Improvement</b>	AMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Repairs resources being brought in broadly in line with plan.</li> <li>- Repairs backlog starting to reduce.</li> <li>- Total Mobile development work in progress.</li> </ul>
<b>Home Ownership Improvement</b>	GREEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Additional staff being recruited in line with plan.</li> <li>- Service charge module project underway.</li> </ul>
<b>Building Safety and Compliance Improvement</b>	GREEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Building Safety Strategy went to Place Making and Housing Board and the feedback from the board was to do a peer review on the strategy, so this will be taken forward.</li> <li>- Compliance system - went out for tendering on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> September with a 30-day tender period and we will evaluate in October with a view to award the contract by the end of October.</li> <li>- Improved compliance performance and good progress against Penningtons recommendations.</li> </ul>
<b>Estates Improvement</b>	GREEN	<p>Work in progress to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish Deep Cleaning programme on Estates and Blocks.</li> <li>- Communicate Service Standards and Cleaning schedule.</li> <li>- Expand Estate Watch to additional estates.</li> </ul>

<b>Tenancy Management Improvement</b>	GREEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work in progress to update vulnerability policy and associated approach to vulnerability.</li> <li>- Options re: establishing tenancy support / sustainment team being assessed.</li> </ul>
<b>Asset Management Improvement</b>	GREEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 23/24 programme agreed and new Asset Management Strategy being reviewed by Resident panel for final draft in September (and included in the forward plan for Cabinet)</li> <li>- (Work on this particular strand being delivered under Capital board and not being coordinated by Housing Change team).</li> </ul>
<b>Policy and Procedure Improvement</b>	AMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Delay to recruitment of policy officer to Policy and Strategy team likely to impact on timelines for this strand; however, work underway on key housing policies including safeguarding and vulnerability (linked to tenancy management strand above).</li> </ul>
<b>Culture Improvement</b>	GREEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- FTC resource to lead on culture projects agreed.</li> <li>- Successful Housing Leadership Forum held with Housing Ombudsman and Regulator presenting.</li> <li>- Staff Conference being planned for early 2024.</li> </ul>
<b>Sheltered Accommodation Improvement</b>	GREEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work in progress with Comms to improve information available to sheltered housing residents.</li> <li>- Work to carry out an in-depth service review to establish current service capacity in early stages.</li> </ul>
<b>Damp and Mould Improvement</b>	GREEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In previous months, Damp and Mould policy and process agreed, staff training provided, and dedicated phone line and email address established, etc.</li> <li>- Agreement has now been reached on approach to bringing in new case management system, and this will be led by the Digital Services team as a separate project under the RX programme.</li> </ul>

### RISKS (all Medium and High)

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Previous R/A/G</b>	<b>Current R/A/G</b>	<b>Mitigation plan and actions undertaken</b>
Impact of the recently received Housing Ombudsman report and recommendations which need to be delivered in the next three months diverting Housing Change team capacity away from a	AMBER	AMBER	Progress against Ombudsman recommendations tracked at bi-weekly damp and mould meetings chaired by Jahed, to ensure progress is being made and staff resources are not

focus on delivery of the Housing Improvement Plan.			excessively diverted from Housing Improvement Plan delivery.
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<b>Current open (all Medium and High ) ISSUES</b>			
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Previous R/A/G</b>	<b>Current R/A/G</b>	<b>Actions undertaken to reduce and eliminate the issue</b>
Gap in programme team resourcing due to candidate offered repairs senior programme manager role withdrawing and team needing to go back out to recruit.	AMBER	AMBER	Detailed transition plan developed by outgoing interim resource and handover arranged with Head of Repairs & Maintenance and Portfolio Manager, to ensure work can be reallocated on temporary basis until new PM in post.

#### 4. Contribution to the Corporate Delivery Plan 2022-2024 High Level Outcomes

4.1 The confirmed continued improvements and reviews contributes to Theme 5 of the Corporate Delivery Plan Of Homes for the Future specifically the vision of a borough where everyone has a safe, sustainable, stable and affordable home.

#### 5. Statutory Officers comments

##### 5.1 Finance

As this is an update report, there are no financial implications arising.

##### 5.2 Procurement

As this is an update report, there are no procurement implications arising.

##### 5.3 Head of Legal & Governance

As this is an update report, there are no legal implications arising.

##### 5.4 Equality

As this is an update report, there are no further equalities implications arising.



**6. Use of Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Housing Improvement Plan