

## ***Report to the Council***

**Committee:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 28 October 2021  
**Subject:** Housing Services  
**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor H Whitbread

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### **Recommending:**

**That the report of the Housing Services Portfolio Holder be noted.**

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### Cleaning and Caretaking

A project to improve the working environment for the staff has been ongoing for 6 months and is now nearing completion. The following has been implemented:

- The team will have a relaunch in October with new ways of working in teams and new uniforms
- Investment in specialist cleaning equipment
- As part of the relaunch we now have an all-electric fleet of the 4 vehicles we use.
- For the first time the vans will have sinks installed and will have hot water on demand to clean blocks.
- The Cleaning team are also receiving specific hoarding training to aid them in the extra works they now undertake in relation to hoarded properties level 1-5.

### Neighbourhood team

The team have been working with colleagues to improve compliance. Some of the excellent achievements include

- The Neighbourhoods team have now fully integrated all our ASB work on to M3 PP to allow a more joined up approach with safer communities.
- Neighbourhoods got the Councils first injunction to force entry to a property to allow a gas safety check and have another 1 awarded with another two due at court. This is to continue our commitment towards ensuring we are a 100% compliant with gas safety.
- In the last 3 months we have had two very successful high level hoarding cases completed one resulting in our specialist working with a tenant and bring the property to a successful conclusion with the tenant returning home and continuing to keep there home in good order. The second case was dealt with by an officer who spotted a desperate need for two elderly tenants to move from a level 9 hoarded property and have now been relocated to a sheltered scheme and are receiving support daily.

- The Neighbourhoods team in conjunction with safer comms have issued another 3 closure orders in the past 3 months and another 3 due at Court in the coming month.

### Council Housebuilding

Our council House Build programme is well underway with 4.1 and 4.2 on site. 4.3 schemes are intended to start on site in January. We are affected by the industry wide problems with material and trade supply, but we are working closely with our contractors to work through these challenges. We are additionally currently reviewing phase 5 plans of a total of approx. 12 schemes which we are working on with our architects. Project teams will be developed internally to involve all internal stakeholders in our plans whilst sharing our early proposals with residents.

### **Estate and Land**

#### Resident Involvement

A new Resident Involvement Strategy is under development, which aims to deliver a new framework for resident involvement, offering a wide range of resident involvement opportunities, enabling opportunity for residents to be involved and empowered as much or as little as they may wish.

We are working on a new Microsite (webpages) to handle resident involvement appertaining to the Council's Landlord function, which will offer a one stop shop, promoting resident involvement opportunity, keeping residents informed about housing related projects and that affect them, handle consultations, showcase past projects, promote resident involvement and much more.

Our new Resident Involvement Facebook page is gaining momentum, with more followers joining every week. If Members would like to join this group, please search our Epping Forest District Council Resident Involvement page @EFDCGetInvolved.

We continue to arrange our Property and Housing webinars for residents. Our next Housing Webinar is 21<sup>st</sup> October 2021 at 12:30pm and Members are welcome join this session if they wish. To request an invitation, please email our Resident Involvement Officer at [GetInvolved@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:GetInvolved@eppingforestdc.gov.uk). The intention is to arrange a dedicated Webinar for Members in due course.

#### Leasehold team

The team having been working with the asset and property team to understand the direction of travel with Major works over the next 5-10 years.

There are blocks of flats throughout the district which require major works to maintain the structure and the fabric of the building. There are also areas throughout the district which require regeneration.

The Council appreciate that such programmes of work can prove costly to the leaseholder and therefore the Home Ownership Team are working alongside colleagues to produce a policy

“Improving Payment Options for Leaseholders”.

The Council are working towards offering more affordable payment plans in the future reducing any financial pressures to Leaseholders whilst creating a more desirable area to live.

### Income Team

The team have achieved amazing results, rent arrears are now down to 1.39% this is excellent performance by the team.

The team is continuing to work closely with our tenants to support them and working closely with our partners to take a collaborative approach. Working alongside this is the focus on embedding a prepayment culture so that our tenants develop financial resilience.

Home visits are taking place again, we feel that this is the best way to support our residents (lynchpin of the Income Recovery Strategy and Policy).