

Report to: **LEVELLING-UP SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Relevant Officer: Vikki Piper, Head of Housing

Date of Meeting: 4 October 2023

LEVELLING-UP – HOUSING UPDATE

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To provide an overview on the progress of the Blackpool enforcement pilot, funded as part of the Levelling Up programme, and update on other key housing projects.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To note the progress being made following the previous updates in June 2023.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 To ensure that the Committee are aware of the latest developments.

3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 None.

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is

- "Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience"
- "The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool"

6.0 Background information

6.1 Housing - Decent Homes Enforcement Pilot for the Private Rented Sector (PRS) Update

Following the agreement with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to pilot the new Decent Homes Standards for the PRS, with £1.2m of support, the pilot team is now fully staffed and trained, and comprises of:

- 6 Decent Homes Standard (DHS) Pilot Enforcement Officers
- 1 Team Leader Team
- 2 experienced Housing Enforcement officers have been appointed to provide additional support and guidance to new staff
- 2 named support workers allocated to the project to support the most vulnerable
- Dedicated legal support

The pilot team will work together to put pressure on landlords who operate below current minimum standards, and also provide advice to landlords on potential future standards.

A set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were agreed with DLUHC at inception, providing essential property and performance data to both the council and DLUHC. The performance data for Quarter 1 is presented in the table below.

The data shows that a significant proportion of properties inspected in Quarter 1 did not meet the existing Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) standards or the newly proposed DHS ones. However, it is important to note that a considerable portion of the Quarter 1 data comprises inherited reactive inspections (complaints), which should be taken into account. It is anticipated that Quarter 2 data will offer a more balanced reflection of property conditions as a result of increased proactive inspections.

During the first quarter, several barriers related to existing enforcement powers were identified, including challenges with processes for Rent Repayment Orders and timescales for Civil Penalties. However, through the pilot, we have established meaningful dialogue with policy makers at DLUHC and are actively collaborating to improve these processes.

Table 1: Quarterly Pilot Monitoring Profile

		Quarter 1				
		Houses	Flats	HMOs	HMO units	Total
1	Total number of visits carried out	46	1	5	28	80
2	Number of visits where informal advice given for HHSRS	46	1	5	28	80
3	Number of visits where informal advice given for breach of licence	0	0	0	0	0

	conditions					
4	Number of repeat visits required	45	1	5	28	79
5	Number of visits where DHS not met	39	1	5	N/K	39
6	Number of visits where Cat 1 hazards identified	42	1	5	28	76
7	Total number of Cat 1 hazards identified	51	3	10	5	69
8	Number of Enforcement Notices issued	4	2	8		14
9	Number of prosecutions for breach of Housing Act	0	0	0	0	0
10	Number of prosecutions for breach of licence conditions	0	0	0	0	0
11	Number of Civil Penalties issued	0	0	0	0	0
12	Number of Rent Repayment Orders applied	0	0	0	0	0
13	Number of Rent Repayment Orders successfully issued	0	0	0	0	0
14	Number of landlords exited the market as a result of action taken					
15	Number of properties not meeting The Blackpool Standard	32	0	0	0	32
16	Number of visits requiring support intervention	6	0	0	0	6
17	Number of people who engaged with Support Officers	10	0	0	0	10

6.2 Housing - Foxhall Village and Grange Park Update

At Foxhall Village, Great Places have commenced the final phase of the previously stalled development. With support from the council, the aim is to have an additional 88 homes and is scheduled for completion by August 2025.

At Grange Park, the first residents have already moved into their new homes. While there are some challenges due to rising costs, the remainder of the development is progressing as planned.

Regarding damp and mould issues, the council has engaged with all the requirements from the Secretary of State in respect of damp and mould reports and actions, both in the private rented sector and in our own housing stock.

6.3 Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

7.0 List of Appendices

7.1 None.

8.0 Financial considerations

8.1 None.

9.0 Legal considerations

9.1 None.

10.0 Risk management considerations

10.1 Failure to continue to support our Levelling Up Pilot will jeopardise the chances of securing further investment for the regeneration of Blackpool.

11.0 Equalities considerations and the impact of this decision for our children and young people:

11.1 None.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 The development of these facilities will incur carbon emissions both in the construction and operation phases. Following approval of the Council's Climate Emergency Action plan in 2019, consideration is given to balancing the cost of these projects with their impact on the environment. Ultimately the housing work will lead to more energy efficient properties which will reduce the proportion of carbon emissions arising from the domestic sector in Blackpool.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 None.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None.