



BROXBURN LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE

HOUSING CUSTOMER AND BUILDING SERVICES

REPORT BY HEAD OF HOUSING CUSTOMER AND BUILDING SERVICES

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide the Local Area Committee with an overview of the service activities within the Broxburn ward.

B. RECOMMENDATION

The Local Area Committee is asked to note Housing, Customer and Building Service activity as detailed in the ward report for the period 1st July to 30th September 2019.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs. Being honest, open and accountable. Providing equality of opportunities. Making best use of our resources. Working in partnership.
II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 Housing (Scotland) Act 2010
III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None
IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators	There is no impact
V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	There are positive impact on the following SOA indicators: SOA4 – we live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities SOA8 – we make the most effective use of resources by minimising our impact on the built and natural environment
VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	None
VII Consideration at PDSP	Yes
VIII Other consultations	N/A

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D1. Housing Performance Information

The purpose of this report is to provide the Local Area Committee with an overview of the activities of Housing, Customer and Building Services, specific to the Broxburn ward.

Property Void & Let Performance: Mainstream Tenancies

Void Period	Jul 2019	%	Aug 2019	%	Sep 2019	%	WL Target %
0-2 weeks	22	71%	11	52%	4	36%	55%
2-4 weeks	4	13%	1	5%	1	9%	30%
4+ weeks	5	16%	9	43%	6	55%	15%
Total Lets	31	100%	21	100%	11	100%	100%

Property Void & Let Performance: Temporary Tenancies

Void Period	Jul 2019	%	Aug 2019	%	Sep 2019	%	WL Target %
0-2 weeks	1	20%	5	38%	1	17%	55%
2-4 weeks	2	40%	5	38%	3	50%	30%
4+ weeks	2	40%	3	24%	2	33%	15%
Total Lets	5	100%	13	100%	6	100%	100%

Delays in re-letting can occur for a variety of reasons. The type or location of the property the completion of void work or the identification of additional works not visible during the initial inspection. Ensuring that vulnerable persons are appropriately supported through the viewing and sign up process can also add to timeframes. Some of our applicants have specific support requirements which require detailed planning and co-ordination by both social work and housing services prior to tenancy commencement.

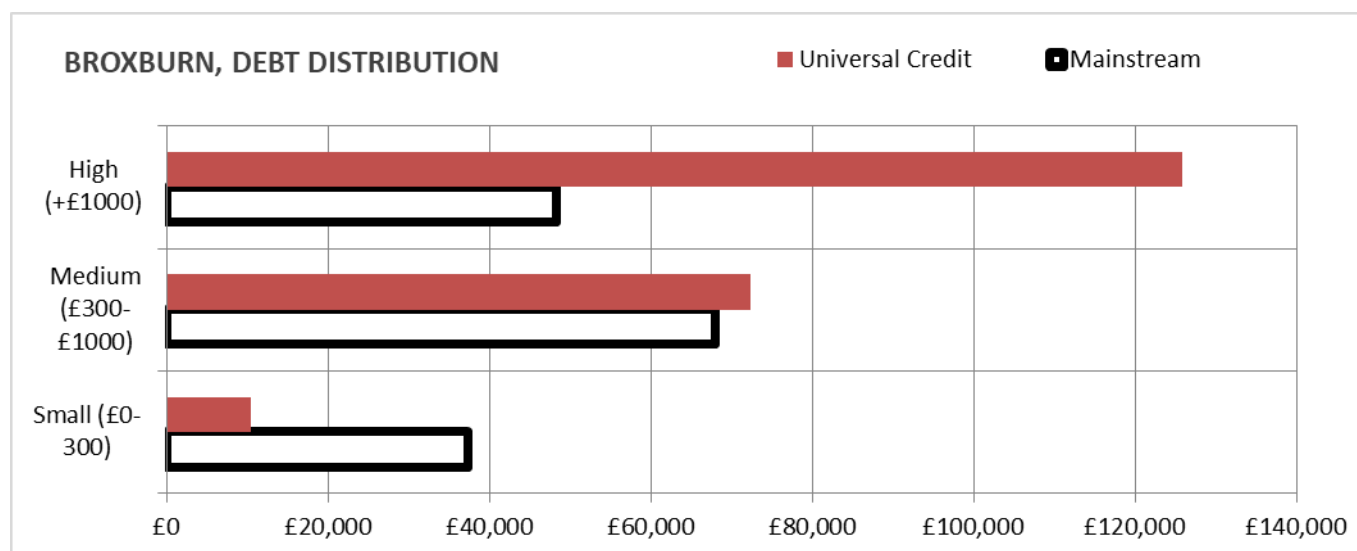
There were 11 policy voids in the ward for this period a reduction in last reporting period.

Void period	Number of properties	PV reasons
<4 weeks	1	Asbestos
4 – 12 weeks	7	electrical, asbestos, upgrading, infestation
13 – 16 weeks	3	asbestos, upgrading
26+ weeks	2	X2 decants, 1 of which due to return for letting

D2. Arrears

For the Broxburn ward the collection rate for the year to date in Q2 remains excellent at 93.7%. Broxburn has collected £2,736,634 of an overall rent charge of £2,920,604.

The overall increased arrears in comparison to last year are as a result of Full Service Universal Credit being introduced in West Lothian from May 2018, along with other Welfare Benefit reforms and the current economic climate.



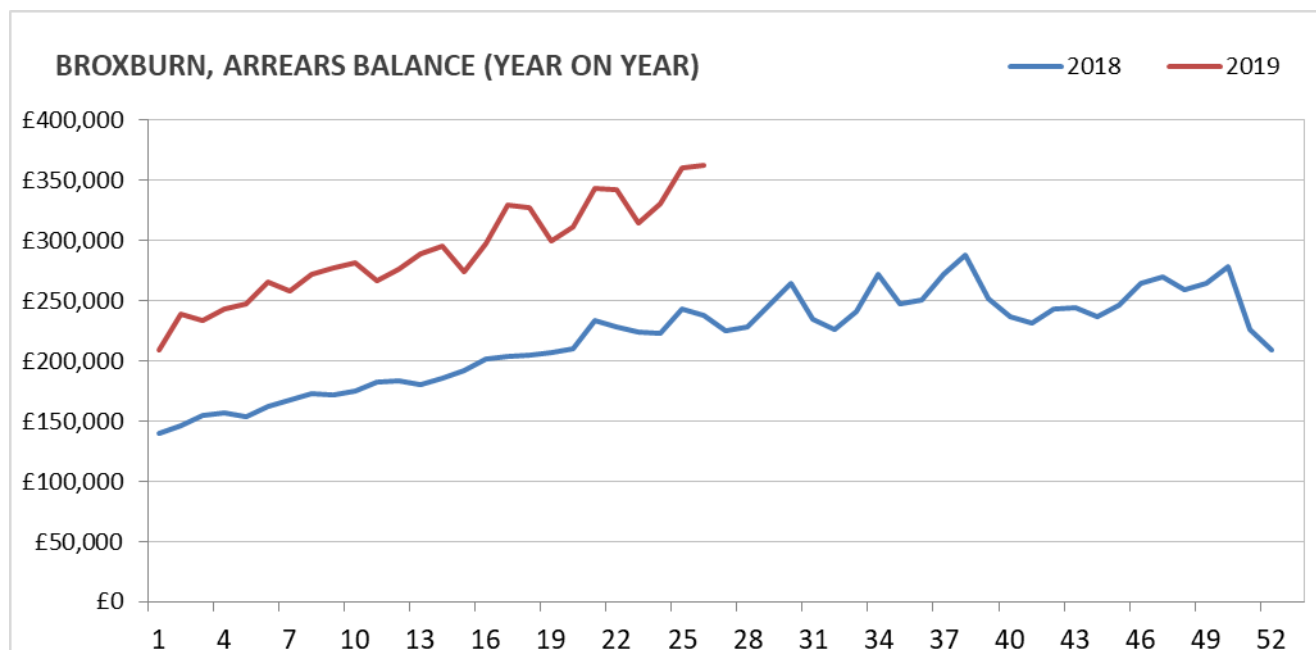
In the same week last year Broxburn ward had 104 Universal Credit (UC) households. Since then the number of UC households has increased by 257.7%.

The number of tenancies in arrears in this ward has increased by 135 since last year. Small debt cases (£300 or less), account for 52.3% of households.

There are 99 serious arrears cases (+£1000 in arrears). These cases are 13.5% of all households in arrears in this area, containing 48.1% of the debt.

	2018/19 (WK26)				2019/20 (WK26)			
	Mainstream		UC		Mainstream		UC	
Arrears Banding	Balance	#	Balance	#	Balance	#	Balance	#
£0.01 to £99.99	£7,255	164	£575	9	£6,695	148	£1,228	19
£100.00 to £299.99	£33,807	186	£3,027	17	£30,666	167	£9,302	49
£300.00 to £499.99	£22,213	58	£6,458	16	£24,714	62	£21,554	55
£500.00 to £749.99	£17,654	29	£15,404	27	£20,868	34	£30,640	51
£750.00 to £999.99	£11,227	13	£7,844	9	£22,356	26	£20,127	23
£1000.00 to £1999.99	£47,109	35	£35,353	24	£34,424	24	£75,969	55
£2000+	£25,113	9	£4,899	2	£13,931	4	£49,852	16
Group Total	£164,378	494	£73,559	104	£153,655	465	£208,673	268
Movement					(-) £10,724	(-) 29	(+) £135,114	(+) 164
Overall Total	£237,937		598		£362,327		733	
Overall Movement					(+) £124,390		(+) 135	

The arrears position for Broxburn Q2 is £362,327. This is an increase of £124,390 on last year's position. The West Lothian overall position is currently £3,383,810.



During the course of this year we plan to focus on the following:

Making best use of resources by considering communicating more with customers through SMS, email and telephone

Benchmarking with other local authorities to ensure we identify and consider implementing any best practice

Performance Monitoring and Reporting will be reviewed and where appropriate streamlined to ensure information is meaningful and robust to assist with improving rent arrears due.

Promote Alternative payment methods, particularly the Tenant's Self Service Portal

D4 Broxburn Area Team Activity

Officers in the team have a number of tenancies under supervision for issues such as child & adult protection, anti-social behaviour and poor tenancy conditions. Our officers' work with a range of services and agencies to ensure tenants and residents are fully supported, tenancies maintained and sustained as far as possible and appropriate action taken where necessary.

Rent arrears activity continues to be a weekly priority task for the team and will continue to work with all our tenants in offering the support, advice and assistance. Such assistance includes referrals for money and debt advice, benefit health checks, completion of income and expenditure to help set up a sustainable payment plan and where appropriate, assist with applications for Discretionary Housing Payments.

D5. Capital Programme and New Build Council Housing

Ward 2 Broxburn, Uphall and	Almondell Road	Upgrade rear enclosure	94%	All environmental works are complete including demolitions, tree removal and new paths and lights. The only
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Winchburgh Broxburn				outstanding position is the repair of the tall rear wall which is being affected by plants and trees growing in the cavity, causing potential collapse.
	Midhope Place	Firewalls	69%	Firewalls are identified across the district as needing done, and are to be carried out to increase safety.

New Build	Site	Number of Units	Site Start	No. of houses handed over	Site Completion
	Vion Site	14	Mar - 2019	6	Dec – 2019 (est)

D6. Tenant Participation July to September 2019

The TP Team continue to engage with tenants at various forums and regular meetings which include, Housing Networks, Tenants Panel, Capital and Repairs Working Group and Editorial Panel.

Meet and Greet on The Street

The TP team joined forces with the local housing staff to carry out a programme of events on the streets of West Lothian, promoting Tenant Participation and a variety of services such as, home security, Assisted Decoration Scheme, Aids and Adaptations and assistance with rent and applying for a council house.

There were eight pop up events carried out over the summer months and many people benefited from first hand advice and information.

Blackburnhall Tenants

Following on from the Meet and Greet events, tenants from the new build site in Blackburn had shown an interest in forming a tenants group. The TP team and local Housing staff arranged a meeting in August where fifteen tenants came to discuss various concerns about their homes and the surrounding area. A further meeting was planned for October to identify the interest in setting up a tenants group.

Eastfield Tenants

There had been some interest from tenants on the new build site in Fauldhouse and the local housing staff to establish a tenants group. All tenants were invited to attend a meeting to look at the way forward but unfortunately only one person attended. The housing staff will continue to seek interest and monitor the requirement for a tenants group should it arise.

The Big Lunch

Following on from the Homeless Housing Network, members have developed an innovative approach to engaging with customers who are in the homeless route, either from temporary tenancies or B&B accommodation. The lunch is provided by 'The Larder' a social enterprise cook school who aims to help people change lives through food.

Customers have an opportunity to have a hot meal and spend some time in a social setting with access to services such as, the Advice Shop and Housing Services.

Tenant Led Inspection

A new inspection commenced in September with three inspectors looking at the Dampness and Condensation process carried out to council homes by Building Services. The team of three have interviewed operatives and managers, visited homes and had demonstrations of the testing kits available. The final report will be delivered to senior managers early in November.

D7. Safer Neighbourhood Council Officer Ward Information

The Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT's) continue to work in two teams across the nine multi member ward areas as an integral part of the Community Safety Unit. In all the wards, partnership working involves the local housing team, youth worker, council officer with the SNT and officers from Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service all working together to tackle antisocial behaviour. When necessary, the partners will liaise with partners from the voluntary organisations including Mental Health advisory workers and private landlords in order to reduce antisocial behaviour. The Safer Neighbourhood team of 9 officers now work in two zones, the East and the West zones. All the officers now deal with noise nuisance calls as part of their working remit.

SNT have been busy conducting joint visits and having discussions with Police Scotland officers and Housing officers regarding day to day tenancy and ASB management issues. Examples of activity are as follows

A warning notice was administered for a tenant in the ward area. A final ASB warning was issued to a council tenant and the case is currently being submitted to legal to consider an ASBO application.

A case was sent to legal to seek for an interim ASBO against a council tenant following repeated complaints of ASB and numerous police/SNT visits. This was finally secured and now in force.

An Investigation of a case for ongoing noise nuisance in the ward area has resulted in sufficient evidence being gathered for a summary application to be written. Once complete, an Interim ASBO application will be made.

CONCLUSION

Over this period we have still seen a higher than normal turnover of properties due to ongoing new build programme which is drawing to a close. Officers continue to work hard to ensure as far as possible that properties are turned round as quickly as possible.

Officers provide tenants with as much advice and assistance as possible to prevent and manage rent arrears. We have a number of cases where there is very good joint working with our colleagues in the Advice Shop.

Various activities have been undertaken with our tenant participation team engaging with our tenants.

We have had successful progress and outcomes with a number of cases in the ward with Safer Neighbourhood Team working with police and local office in addressing issues of anti social behaviour.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

None

Appendices/Attachments: None

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Date: 15th November 2019