



**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 1<sup>st</sup> October to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019.

**C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

<b>I Council Values</b>	Focusing on our customers' needs. Being honest, open and accountable. Providing equality of opportunities. Making best use of our resources. Working in partnership.
<b>II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)</b>	Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 Housing (Scotland) Act 2010
<b>III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers</b>	None
<b>IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators</b>	There is no impact
<b>V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement</b>	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
<b>VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)</b>	None
<b>VII Consideration at PDSP</b>	Yes
<b>VIII Other consultations</b>	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	Oct 2019	%	Nov 2019	%	Dec 2019	%	WL Target %
0-2 weeks	7	50%	7	46%	9	69%	55%
2-4 weeks	3	21%	4	27%	1	8%	30%
4+ weeks	4	29%	4	27%	3	23%	15%
<b>Total Lets</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### Property Void & Let Performance: Temporary Tenancies

Void Period	Oct 2019	%	Nov 2019	%	Dec 2019	%	WL Target %
0-2 weeks	1	14%	2	22%	1	25%	55%
2-4 weeks	2	29%	6	67%	1	25%	30%
4+ weeks	4	57%	1	11%	2	50%	15%
<b>Total Lets</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

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	7	Asbestos & upgrades
4 – 12 weeks	2	Decant, asbestos
13 – 16 weeks	1	infestation
26+ weeks	1	decant

## D2. Arrears

For the Broxburn ward the collection rate for the year to date in Q3 remains excellent at 96.1%. Broxburn has collected £4,207,241 vs a charge of £4,375,846.

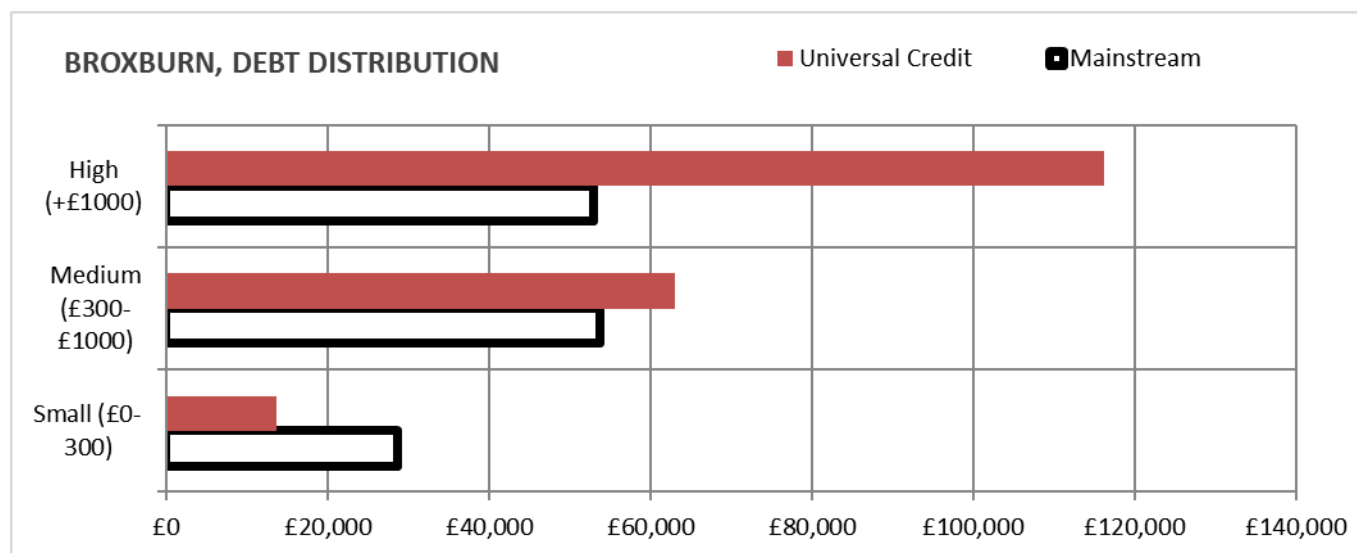
The overall increased arrears in comparison to last year are as a result of Full Service Universal Credit being introduced in West Lothian from May 2018, along with other Welfare Benefit reforms and the current economic climate.

In the same week last year Broxburn ward had 144 Universal Credit (UC) households. Since then the number of UC households has increased by 177.1%.

The number of tenancies in arrears in this ward has increased by 80 since last year. Small debt cases (£300 or less), account for 51.6% of households.

There are 96 serious arrears cases (+£1000 in arrears). These cases are 15.4% of all households in arrears in this area, containing 51.5% of the debt.

The arrears position for Broxburn Q3 is £328,151. This is an increase of £91,085 on last year's position. The West Lothian overall position is currently £2,982,863.



	2018/19 (WK40)				2019/20 (WK40)			
	Mainstream		UC		Mainstream		UC	
Arrears Banding	Balance	#	Balance	#	Balance	#	Balance	#
£0.01 to £99.99	£5,937	140	£639	11	£5,118	111	£1,047	25
£100.00 to £299.99	£25,581	145	£5,689	27	£23,527	126	£12,612	59
£300.00 to £499.99	£16,081	42	£10,923	27	£17,070	44	£21,073	52
£500.00 to £749.99	£19,136	31	£10,509	18	£18,926	31	£18,438	30
£750.00 to £999.99	£10,468	12	£19,023	22	£17,687	21	£23,516	27
£1000.00 to £1999.99	£36,009	24	£45,933	31	£40,595	29	£57,838	43
£2000+	£10,592	4	£20,544	8	£12,320	5	£58,385	19
<b>Group Total</b>	<b>£123,805</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>£113,261</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>£135,243</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>£192,908</b>	<b>255</b>
<b>Movement</b>					(+) £11,438	(-) 31	(+) £79,648	(+) 111
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>£237,066</b>		<b>542</b>		<b>£328,151</b>		<b>622</b>	
<b>Overall Movement</b>					(+) £91,085		(+) 80	

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**

<b>Ward 2 Broxburn, Uphall and Winchburgh Broxburn</b>	Almondell Road	Upgrade rear enclosure	95%	All environmental works are complete including demolitions, tree removal and new paths and lights. The only 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.

<b>New Build</b>	<b>Site</b>	<b>Number of Units</b>	<b>Site Start</b>	<b>No. of houses handed over</b>	<b>Site Completion</b>
	Vion Site	14	Mar - 2019	15	Completed December 2019

#### **D6. Tenant Participation October – December 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.

### **Housing Networks**

In the past few months members of the group were interested to learn about our Landlord Registration Service and updates on RRTP and Housing First. Members also carry out any consultation from the Scottish Government or other tenant organisations.

### **Danny Mullen Good Neighbour Awards**

The ninth annual award ceremony was held in October with seven members of our communities being recognised for the thoughtfulness and helpfulness to others. Tenants were asked in the summer edition of Tenants News and through the Tenant Facebook Group to nominate people they felt were 'Good Neighbours' before members of the Tenants Panel reviewed each application. Each nominee and those who put them forward were invited along to a lunch time event in the Civic Centre to be recognised for their efforts. They each received a bouquet of flowers and a framed certificate from Services for the Executive Councillor for Services to the Community, George Paul.

### **Tenant Led Inspection**

Within this period, three tenant inspections were signed off as completed. Inspectors were given an update on each inspection carried out previously. These were inspections into New Build Council Houses, Safer Neighbourhood Team and the Housing Needs Service. Inspectors met in separate meetings with senior members of staff to discuss the recommendations and were satisfied with the action plans and to sign off each inspection. The Dampness and Condensation TLI has been reported back to senior managers and a date has been arranged to discuss the action plan early in the New Year.

### **Editorial Panel**

This group meet regularly to discuss changes to letters, leaflets and any written information intended for our tenants and customers. In the course of this three month period panel members reviewed letters from our allocations section, the Tenants Satisfaction Survey, items of the Tenants Handbook and the second edition of Homeless News.

### **Tenant Satisfaction Survey**

This biennial survey was prepared and sent out to every council tenant in West Lothian giving them the chance to tell us what they think of the services they receive from HCBS and help guide decisions that shape and improve services.

## **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. Officers also deal with noise nuisance calls as part of their working remit.

An ASBO was granted against a male within the ward area, which was granted for a 3 year period. Within the Broxburn ward now we hold 4 ASBO's.

SNT officers attended a meeting at Strathbrock Partnership Centre with Housing as there are a number of cases ongoing at present.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

Over this period we have still seen the turnover of properties reduce as the current new build programme in the area draws to an end. 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 and award of ASBO's.

## **F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

None

Appendices/Attachments: None

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Date: 6<sup>th</sup> March 2020