

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



## **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 Quarter 4, 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

##### **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.

To ensure that our properties are being re-let and that we were meeting our duty under homeless legislation, the Housing Team has continued throughout the Covid19 pandemic prioritising resources to complete the letting process for both temporary and mainstream properties

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

Void Period	Jan 2021	%	Feb 2021	%	Mar 2021	%	WL Target %
0-2 weeks	0	0%	2	50%	0	0%	55%
2-4 weeks	0	0%	1	25%	2	40%	30%
4+ weeks	5	100%	1	25%	3	60%	15%
<b>Total Lets</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

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

Void Period	Jan 2021	%	Feb 2021	%	Mar 2021	%	WL Target %
0-2 weeks	0	0%	1	17%	3	33.3%	55%
2-4 weeks	0	0%	3	50%	3	33.3%	30%
4+ weeks	3	100%	2	33%	3	33.3%	15%
<b>Total Lets</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>5</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	1	Specialist clean
4 – 12 weeks	0	
13 – 16 weeks	7	Decant, Fire, upgrading, asbestos
26+ weeks	3	Legal issues, structural

## D.2 Broxburn - Financial Summary

For the Broxburn ward the collection rate for the YTD in Q4 remains excellent at 98.5%. Broxburn has collected £6,012,122 vs a charge of £6,102,154.

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 256 Universal Credit (UC) households. Since then the number of UC households has decreased by 0.4%.

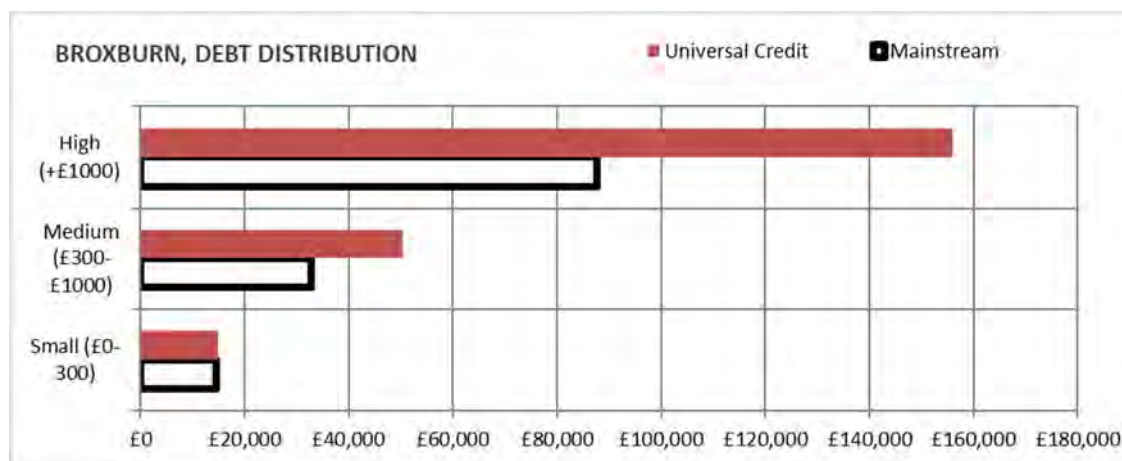
The number of tenancies in arrears in this ward has decreased by 45 since last year. Small debt cases (£300 or less), account for 48.6% of households.

There are 101 serious arrears cases (+£1000 in arrears). These cases are 20.6% of all households in arrears in this area, containing 68.4% of the debt.

The arrears position for Broxburn Q4 is £356,390. This is an increase of £50,419 on last year's position. The West Lothian overall position is currently £2,978,530.

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

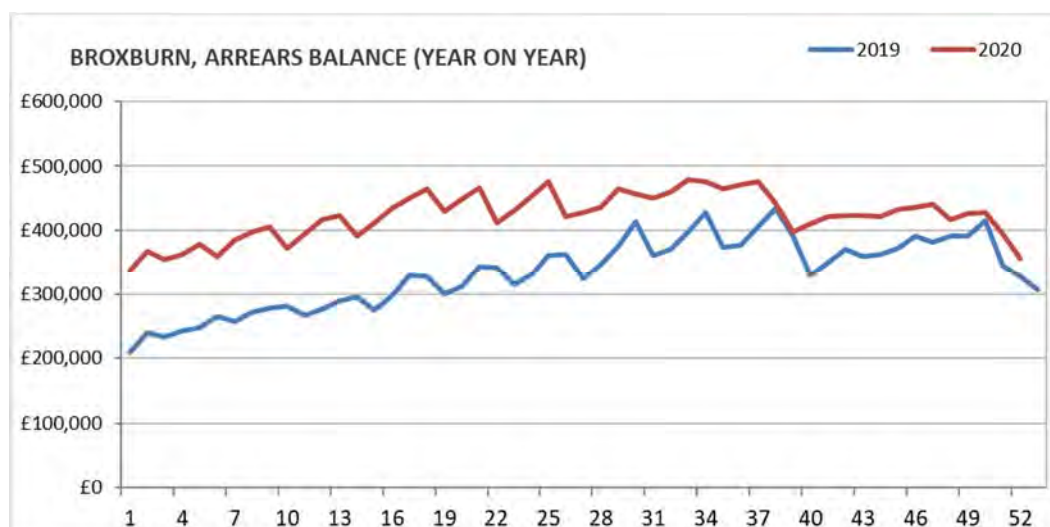


	2019/20 (WK53)				2020/21 (WK52)			
	Mainstream		UC		Mainstream		UC	
Arrears Banding	Balance	Cases	Balance	Cases	Balance	Cases	Balance	Cases
£0.01 to £99.99	£4,135	87	£1,811	30	£3,169	74	£1,632	31
£100.00 to £299.99	£15,140	80	£11,871	59	£11,385	63	£13,328	70
£300.00 to £499.99	£15,266	39	£15,916	42	£13,633	33	£15,345	40
£500.00 to £749.99	£21,915	35	£23,667	39	£10,008	17	£18,477	31
£750.00 to £999.99	£8,870	10	£18,244	21	£9,227	11	£16,589	19
£1000.00 to £1999.99	£25,646	19	£61,096	46	£25,366	19	£41,709	30
£2000+	£22,376	9	£60,017	19	£62,373	18	£114,148	34
<b>Group Total</b>	<b>£113,348</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>£192,622</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>£135,161</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>£221,228</b>	<b>255</b>
<b>Movement</b>					(+) £21,813	(-) 44	(+) £28,606	(-) 1

**Overall Total**  
**Overall Movement**

**£305,971**   **535**

**£356,390**   **490**  
(+) £50,419   (-) 45



### D.3 Broxburn Area Team Activity

Over the period Q4 officers in the team have had a blended working approach, predominantly working from home but also out in the ward on a duty basis or as required undertaking essential tasks, such as letting properties, supporting vulnerable customers and dealing with priority issues which have arisen. We continue to work with our Health & Safety advisor and Trade Unions to ensure we have safe operating systems, risk assessments and personal protection equipment so that we are safe guarding our staff whilst undertaking key essential tasks at this time.

The focus on rent arrears activity continues to be a weekly priority task for the team and officers will continue to work with all our tenants in offering 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.

There are also ongoing staffing changes within the team and recruitment is in progress

#### **D.4 Capital Programme and New Build Council Housing**

There is ongoing general capital activity in all areas such as assisted decoration scheme, fencing, rhones etc.

#### **D.5 Tenant Participation**

During the winter months, the TP Team continued to carry out the schedule of meetings with tenants using online resources to ensure TP continues in all aspects of service delivery.

##### **Tenants Panel**

Tenant members continued to take part in monthly meetings with senior managers and the Head of Service, discussing service improvements and developments as well as receiving updates from each service area on implementing the changes imposed by the pandemic to deliver services and changes to working protocols. Members have also been involved in performance scrutiny, questioning information and results over this period.

##### **Capital & Repairs Working Group (CaRs)**

Managers from Building Services and the Strategy & Development Team met with tenant members to discuss major improvement works, update them on the various projects being carried out and share benchmark information. Building Services provided an overview of Complaints, Processes & Analysis at the January meeting and the Central Void Team (CVT) pilot in March; tenant representatives were very impressed with the way the CVT are processing void properties.

These meetings ensure that tenants views are taken onboard and offers another method of scrutinising service delivery.

##### **Tenant Participation Development Working Group (TPDWG)**

Members meet to ensure TP stays high on the services agenda, looking at ways of engaging with more tenants. They have also been reviewing the current TP Strategy with an emphasise on digital engagement and inclusion. The TP Team have carried out a review of the roles and remit of each group and discussed this with members for their understanding and approval.

##### **Editorial Panel**

With the use of Adobe Reader, members are now able to review publications and propose changes online prior to meeting. This was carried out in February/March for the spring edition of Tenants News, which will be solely published online on the council website in April 2021. The Editorial Panel have also been involved in reviewing letters and online information intended for tenants, with regard to the new Housing Allocations Policy

##### **Consultations**

Tenants were supported by staff from Housing, Strategy & Development and the TP Team to complete two consultation in January and February. The first from the Scottish Housing Regulator on the EESSH" Indicators for the Annual Return on the Charter and the second on New Build Heat Standard Consultation. These were completed, agreed and submitted online during the course of the meetings.

##### **TP Facebook Group**

The TP team continue to see a steady rise in the number of tenants following posts on the TP Facebook Group Page. The team post useful information from various sources such as Scottish Government, NHS and the Council's Corporate websites as well as queries from tenants and light-hearted quotes and phrases. The team are working with the Tenant Participation Development Working Group to ensure they have a method of communicating with fellow tenants.

### **Tenants Panel New Build Planning & Progress Meeting**

Housing, Strategy and Development met with the members of the Tenants Panel to provide an update on the progress and planning of current and future new build sites. The Panel will meet six monthly for updates on these projects.

## **D.6 Safer Neighbourhood Council Officer Ward Information**

The outcome returns for Quarter 4 – January, February, March 2021 are from both teams in the West and East zones. Officers continue to add their details of enquiries/incidents and ASB cases onto the Open Housing system.

During Quarter 4, the Covid19 pandemic continued to have an impact on the service that officers were able to provide although constraints were lifted slightly during the restrictions. Since October 2020, when Service Recovery Plans enabled the Safer Neighbourhood Team Officers to be able to be mobilised again, SNT officers have had the ability to take formal legal action where necessary for some enquiries. Officers have continued to work a blended model of working, carrying out some home working as well as office and community-based work for enquiries.

Within communities and within agreed safety guidelines, SNT officers could speak to complainers and alleged perpetrators, gather witness statements and evidence for enquiries and be able to witness some antisocial behaviour. They were also able to (distantly) meet with Police and other partners for joint visits.

From home, officers continued to provide a telephone service were able to telephone complainers and alleged perpetrators as well as corresponding with written letters and e-mails. They have provided advice and assistance, telephone mediation, issued warning letters where there was evidence to do so and increase partnership working.

### **Noise and Letter drops**

Advice was given on reporting loud music when ongoing to SNT and Police Scotland in order that it can be witnessed and action taken.

### **Warnings**

Warnings were issued to three tenants all involved in a neighbour dispute making allegations and complaints against each other.

A 2nd Stage ASB warning was served against a perpetrator in Uphall as part of an ongoing case.

A 1st stage ASB warning and letter drop regarding a tenancy in Broxburn was carried out and two other 1st stage warnings were issued to an ongoing cases regarding loud music, one of which was in Winchburgh.

A final warning was served on a tenant following complaints by neighbours.

We currently hold 6 ASBOs in the ward area.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

Officers are now well adapted to working from home and have embraced new ways of working and continued to support vulnerable customers in our communities. In addition, officers have continued to provide advice and support on a range of issues such as anti-social behaviour, moving into new homes and financial issues.

Officers have continued to work with colleagues in other services areas to ensure that service delivery has continued as far as possible.

**F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

None

Appendices/Attachments:

None

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