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## **BATHGATE LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE**

### **HOUSING, CUSTOMER AND BUILDING SERVICES UPDATE**

#### **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 Bathgate ward.

##### **B. RECOMMENDATION**

The Local Area Committee is asked to note Housing, Customer and Building Services activity as detailed in the ward report for the period Quarter 2 – 1<sup>st</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

##### **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 impacts 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 Housing Services 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 Bathgate Ward. Tables 1 and 2 provide details on letting performance.

**Table 1: Property Void & Let Performance: Mainstream Tenancies**

Void Period	July 2022	%	Aug 2022	%	Sept 2022	%	WL Target %
0-2 wks	2	28.6%	2	20%	0	0%	55%
2-4 wks	0	0%	0	0%	2	16.7%	30%
4+ wks	5	71.4%	8	80%	10	83.3%	15%
<b>Total Lets</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 2: Property Void & Let Performance: Temporary Tenancies**

Void Period	July 2022	%	Aug 2022	%	Sept 2022	%	WL Target %
0-2 wks	1	20 %	2	50%	0	0%	80%
2-4 wks	1	20%	0	0%	0	0%	15%
4+ wks	3	60%	2	50%	6	100%	5%
<b>Total Lets</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>4</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 23 policy voids in the ward for this period, 2 more than the last reporting period.

**Table 3: Policy Voids**

Void period	Number of properties	PV reasons
<4 weeks	2	2 x upgrades

4 – 12 weeks	6	6 x upgrades
13 – 16 weeks	8	7 x upgrades 1x police investigation
26+ weeks	7	2 x Wardens Offices 2 x held for decant 3 x upgrades

## D2. Arrears

For the Bathgate ward the collection rate for the YTD in Q2 remains excellent at 94.4%. Bathgate has collected £4,567,332 vs a charge of £4,835,991.

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 Bathgate ward had 392 Universal Credit (UC) households in arrears. Since then the number of UC households in arrears has increased by - 1.3%.

The number of tenancies in arrears in this ward has increased by 68 since last year. Small debt cases (£300 or less), account for 56.4% of households.

There are 134 serious arrears cases (+£1000 in arrears). These cases are 13.9% of all households in arrears in this area, containing 60.6% of the debt.

The arrears position for Bathgate Q2 is £577,804. This is an increase of £99,099 on last year's position. The West Lothian overall position is currently £4,780,804.

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

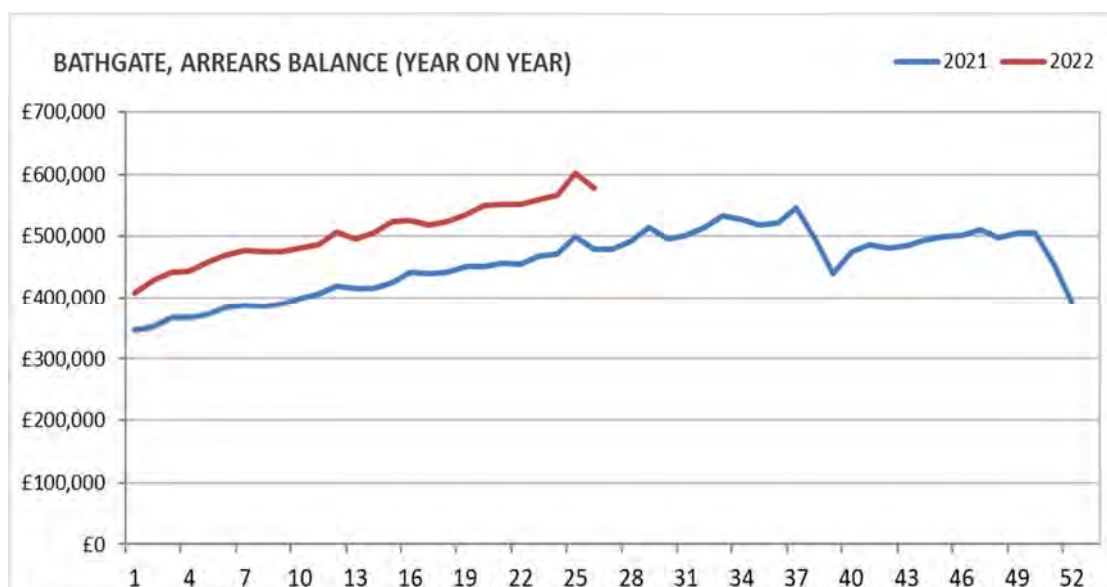
- Making best use of resources by considering communicating more with customers through SMS, email and telephone
- Benchmarking with other local authorities to ensure we identify and consider implementing any best practice
- Performance Monitoring and Reporting will be reviewed and where appropriate 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 and telephone payments.

### Table 4: Arrears Banding

**Table 5: Arrears Balance**

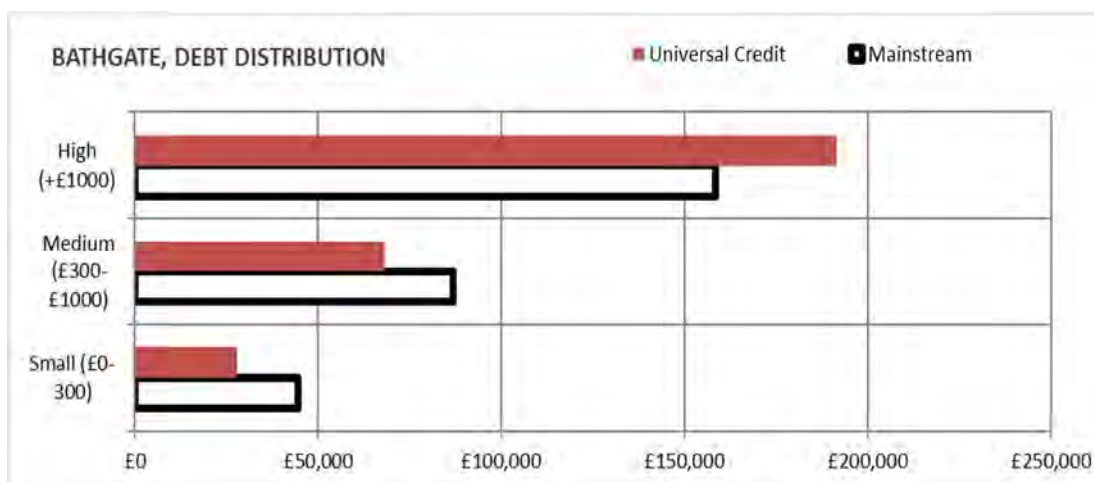
Arrears Banding	2021/22 (WK26)				2022/23 (WK26)			
	Mainstream		UC		Mainstream		UC	
	Balance	Cases	Balance	Cases	Balance	Cases	Balance	Cases
£0.01 to £99.99	£6,535	154	£4,584	74	£7,443	157	£4,064	68
£100.00 to £299.99	£34,423	185	£24,979	128	£37,173	198	£23,830	121
£300.00 to £499.99	£22,202	56	£29,369	74	£27,848	72	£30,550	77
£500.00 to £749.99	£24,671	41	£17,844	30	£33,291	54	£18,630	31
£750.00 to £999.99	£21,533	25	£21,451	25	£25,694	30	£19,194	23
£1000.00 to £1999.99	£29,827	22	£46,197	33	£53,372	39	£40,207	30
£2000+	£89,925	22	£105,165	28	£105,175	28	£151,332	37
<b>Group Total</b>	<b>£229,116</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>£249,589</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>£289,996</b>	<b>578</b>	<b>£287,808</b>	<b>387</b>
<b>Movement</b>					(+) £60,880	(+) 73	(+) £38,219	(-) 5
<b>Overall Total</b>			<b>£478,706</b>	<b>897</b>			<b>£577,804</b>	<b>965</b>
<b>Overall Movement</b>							(+) £99,099	(+) 68

**Table 6: Debt Distribution**



D3.

**Bathgate Area Team Activity**



As part of office remobilisation procedures, officers in the Housing team have been working to the council's flexible/hybrid working arrangements since April 2022. The focus on rent arrears activity has continued to be a weekly priority task for the team and they will continue to work with all our tenants 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.

During quarter 2, officers have continued to work closely with colleagues in Building Services, engaging with tenants to ensure that health and safety work has been completed and all necessary compliance work is undertaken in tenancies to ensure that these meet legislative requirements. As a result, we have identified a number of tenants requiring support.

Officers have been working to support a number of tenants in the area alongside colleagues from other service areas and agencies, dealing with a range of tenancy management issues and supporting tenants sustain their tenancies. This can range from being involved in complex care management cases alongside colleagues in social policy to being involved in assisting to resolve neighbour disputes with police and Safer Neighbourhood colleagues.

#### **D4. Capital Programme and New Build Council Housing**

To date, the Council has had 313 new build completions and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) have had 129 completions in the ward.

**Table 7: New Build Activity**

<b>WLC New Build Activity</b>	<b>Site</b>	<b>No of units</b>	<b>Site Start</b>	<b>No. of Houses Handed Over</b>	<b>Site Completion</b>
WLC	Standhill	22	Jan-20	22	Mar-22
WLC	Hopetoun Street (Conversion of former Newlands House)	4	Apr-21	0	Nov-22
WLC	Marjoribanks Street	6	TBC	0	TBC
WLC	Mid Street	5	TBC	0	TBC
<b>RSL Build Activity</b>	<b>Site</b>	<b>No of units</b>	<b>Site Start</b>	<b>No. of Houses Handed Over</b>	<b>Site Completion</b>
West Lothian Housing Partnership	Jarvey Street	42	Mar-17	42	Mar-22

#### **D5. Tenant Participation Update**

Tenant Participation continued throughout the quarter via digital and seen the return of face to face meetings (once a month).

The customer experience team and tenant participation team have worked together to ensure the best possible service is delivered to our tenants. They have jointly implemented improvements and communication.

### **Tenants Panel**

Tenant members continued to take part in monthly digital meetings with senior managers and the Head of Service, discussing service improvements and developments and receiving updates from each service area. They have been provided with the HRA and Capital Overview and have been involved in performance scrutiny over the quarter.

### **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.

These meetings ensure that tenants' views are heard and offer another scrutinising service delivery method.

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

Members meet to ensure Tenant Participation stays high on the services agenda, looking at ways of engaging with more tenants. This group have worked with the Tenant Participation Team to review and agree the roles and remit of each working group. They have worked hard to produce a new 5 year Tenant and Customer Participation Strategy.

The TPDWG completed their work on the animated video to increase engagement. This has now been launched and widely recognised by TPAS and TIS. This was an excellent piece of work.

### **Editorial Panel**

This quarter the members have been involved in the collation of the Winter edition of Tenants News. The members continue to review the tenant's handbook online to ensure it is still relevant and current.

### **TP Facebook Group**

The Tenant Participation team continue to see a steady rise in the number of tenants engaging with Facebook posts. The members have recently reviewed what content should be shared on the Facebook page and how the 397 members would like to be involved in Tenant Participation. These discussions have resulted in implementing the tenant's talk scheme, where tenants become experts on our social media platforms. We share our surveys in digital form on the Facebook page for tenants to complete. We will soon be investigating how we can implement focus groups using the Facebook group.

## **D6. Safer Neighbourhood Team**

The Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) officers continue to work across the nine multi member ward areas as an integral part of the Community Safety Unit, as part of their working remit to reduce noise and antisocial behaviour (ASB). Partnership working

involves the local housing team, council officer within 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 voluntary organisations including West Lothian Youth Action Project, mental health advisory workers and private landlords in order to reduce antisocial behaviour.

### Bathgate Ward Data

The following tables set out details of the number of new cases opened each month, overall number of active cases; number of cases resolved. Not all incidents become a case and officers will open a case where further investigations are necessary.

**Table 8: Cases and Incidents**

<b><i>Cases and Incidents</i></b>	<i>Apr</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Jun</i>	<i>Jul</i>	<i>Aug</i>	<i>Sep</i>
Incidents reported to SNT	70	76	65	54	62	41
Number of new cases	3	2	6	1	2	1
Number of active cases	12	7	10	11	5	10
Number of resolved cases	7	7	3	0	6	2

The following table provides an overview of the types of incidents that are being reported to the SNT.

**Table 9: Incident Types**

<b>Incident Categories</b>	<i>Apr</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Jun</i>	<i>Jul</i>	<i>Aug</i>	<i>Sep</i>
ASB Part 2 Complaint	26	46	47	37	38	28
ASB Part 5 Noise Complaint	34	21	8	14	15	8
Dog Barking	0	0	0	0	0	0
ENV Health Complaint	0	0	0	1	1	0
Non ASB Noise Complaint	5	3	1	0	1	1
SST Section 3 Tenancy Management	5	6	9	2	7	4
Youth Disorder	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unauthorised Encampment	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>41</b>

The following table provides numbers of ASBO that are current in ward and compared to all of West Lothian.

**Table 10: Anti-Social Behaviour Orders**

ASBO	<i>Q1</i>	<i>Q2</i>
Number of ASBO's current	<i>1 Interim</i>	<i>1 Interim</i>
All of West Lothian	<i>7 plus 1 Interim</i>	<i>8 plus 1 Interim</i>
Age of perpetrator	<i>37</i>	<i>37</i>

### West Lothian Ward Data

The following table provides number of all active cases and total number of incidents for West Lothian

**Table 11: Active Cases and Incidents**

West Lothian	<i>Apr</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Jun</i>	<i>Jul</i>	<i>Aug</i>	<i>Sep</i>
Total Number of Active Cases	45	47	51	61	51	58
Total Number of Incidents	309	339	323	326	333	229

### Examples of SNT work during Quarter 2

Partnership working is essential to reaching outcomes. **Joint visits** with Housing Operations, Social Policy, Police and SRFS have taken place across the Ward. A recent **walk about** was carried out in a new build estate with Housing Officer, Safer Neighbourhood Officer and Police Scotland to encourage residents to report anti-social behaviour. **Warnings** have also been issued to residents for excessive noise and also following a police enquiry. Various **letter drops** have also been carried out in specific areas, these are used to assist SNT to gather further information from neighbourhoods when officers have difficulty obtaining independent corroboration and seek witnesses to come forward with information.

## E. CONCLUSION

Housing staff have adapted well to working hybrid arrangements and further embraced new ways of working whilst continuing 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, financial issues and working with Building Services to ensure essential compliance work is progressed in tenant's homes to keep them safe.

## F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

None

Appendices/Attachments:  
None



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**14<sup>th</sup> November 2022**