

**Report of Chief Officer, Property and Contracts**

**Report to Housing Advisory Board**

**Date: 20<sup>th</sup> June 2017**

**Subject: Disrepair Progress Report**

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes   x No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes   x No
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes   x No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes   X No

**1. Summary**

- 1.1. The report provides an update to HAB on progress made in preparing and implementing an Action Plan following the previous report dated 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017.
- 1.2. The report notes a decrease in the open cases from 365 at the start of the year to 251 as of 6<sup>th</sup> June 2017.
- 1.3. The report identifies the progress made in drafting and implementing the action plan to enable focused application of resources and training to address both the causes of claims and the case management process
- 1.4. The report recommends that HAB note the progress made in developing the action plan.

**2. Purpose of the Report**

- 2.1. The report has been prepared to update HAB on actions following the Report on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017.
- 2.2. The report identifies the current case load status, performance for the previous financial year, and defines objectives agreed within Housing Leeds, what actions are underway and progress to achieving the objectives.

### 3. Background Information

- 3.1. Housing Leeds reviewed its case management process in September 2016 and introduced the Fast Track process in November 2016. This process is designed to significantly reduce the time taken to process a case and thereby reduce cost, enhance the ability to either defend or reject cases and make Leeds a less attractive target for claims handlers.
- 3.2. The Council received 524 claims in the year 2016/17. The average cases received per month doubled in November 2016 from 31 cases per month to 62. It was not clear at this time whether the increase was in reaction to the new process or coincidental.
- 3.3. In February 2017 it became clear that this increase in case load was sustained. A report was issued to HAB for the February meeting and an Action Plan was prepared to address the increased volume. Progress against this action plan is detailed in section 5 below.
- 3.4. The Fast Track process has led to a 38% reduction in costs per case to the Council with significant reduction in both compensation payments and claimant's legal costs.

### 4. Current Case Status

- 4.1. The Current Status on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2017 is that the total number of open cases has reduced from 365 to 251 since the start of the year.
- 4.2. Table 4-01 below shows the total number of open cases at the end of each month from May 16 to 6<sup>th</sup> June 17.

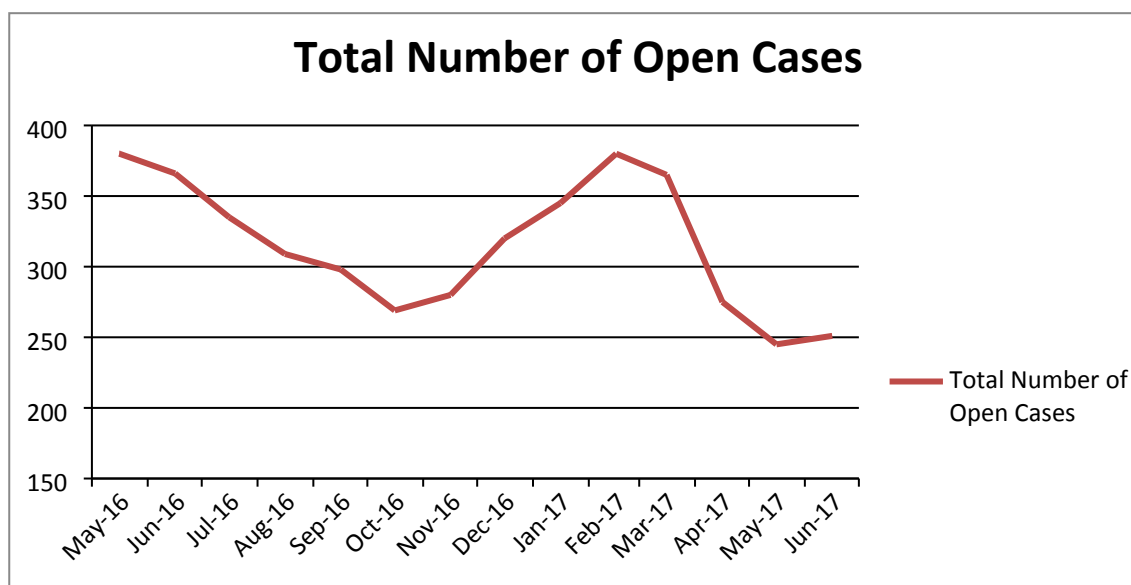


Table 4-01 Total Number of Open Cases May 16 – May 17

- 4.3. The Council has received 119 new cases in the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 6<sup>th</sup> June

### 5. Main Issues

- 5.1. An action plan has been prepared to proactively address the current high level of cases. This plan engages all elements of Housing Leeds and those members of legal services engaged in defending cases on behalf of the Council. The Action Plan focuses on the following priorities
  - 5.1.1. Enhance Capacity - Resources

- Legal Services are recruiting additional resources in to the service to ensure that cases are dealt within the time frame defined in the fast track process
- Additional surveying capacity is being recruited to work within Property and Contracts to investigate repeat damp related repair requests
- Expert training scheduled in May and early June for all technical officers, housing management disrepair champions, surveyors and legal officers engaged in the case work

#### 5.1.2. Responsive Repairs Process

- Analysis undertaken on repair records and surveys underway on those properties that have had multiple damp related repair requests
- Post inspection process focused on damp related repairs to ensure correct diagnosis and repair

#### 5.1.3. Capital Investment

5.1.3.1. The capital investment programme has been reviewed and additional capital resources have been injected in to the programme to support the strategic approach. Using the intelligence gained from the repairs data ensures that resources are targeted at those properties with a high risk of damp due to either physical or occupational factors.

5.1.3.2. The following capital investment programmes are either underway or in detailed development

- Internal Insulation of Back to Back and solid wall properties
- Option Appraisal and investment to Wykebeck estate
- Target installation of mechanical ventilation to high risk properties

#### 5.1.4. Proactive Housing Management

- The Housing Management team are closely engaged in the action plan process. Disrepair Champions have been identified in each office.
- Training of the Champions has taken place. Focused training for each Housing Office encompassing all staff is underway and will be completed by 10<sup>th</sup> August.
- The Annual Home Visit form has been updated to cover all repairs related matters. This is designed to limit liability to the date of the visit.
- Advice and support documentation is now included within all the welcome packs and pre tenancy training providing advice on managing condensation and damp within the property. This is discussed with all new tenants as they move into their home.

### 5.2. Engagement with Leeds Beckett University

5.2.1. A meeting was held with Dr David Glew and Fiona Fylan on 17<sup>th</sup> May. Leeds Beckett University (LBU) is engaged with the Capital Investment programme providing input and support to the design team.

5.2.2. Proposals are to be developed to identify how LBU can assist Housing Leeds in engaging with tenants to support tenants in dealing with some of the lifestyle issues that can lead to properties going in to disrepair.

### 5.3. Disrepair Case Management

5.3.1. The process for managing disrepair cases has been reviewed. This has led to the following amendments to the process

- Categorisation of cases has been simplified to enable a more efficient case closure process.
- Clear performance reporting framework in place directly related to the fast track process enabling management to track each element of the process and address any blockages that occur
- Additional technical resource recruited to support the post settlement build
- A key driver is the reduction in the level of expenditure incurred due to claimant's compensation and solicitor fees. As identified in 3.4, these costs have been reduced by 38%.

## 6. Conclusions

6.1. There has been a reduction in the number of open cases since the start of the financial year. However, the volume of new cases is continuing at the same level as the previous year.

6.2. Housing Leeds has prepared and implemented an Action Plan to develop the response to both the claims and the causal factors leading to the claims. The action plan addresses resources, the responsive repairs process, the capital investment programme, and the role of the Housing Management team in the management of property condition.

6.3. The Action Plan has identified clear outputs against each of the above elements and good progress has been made. Training is in place for staff, the inspection and review programme is in place, the capital programme has commenced and Housing Management has made the changes in their information and activities to better support tenants in managing their homes and enabling the Council to better defend and reject claims in cases where the Housing Leeds is not at fault.

## 7. Recommendations

7.1. That HAB note the progress made by Housing Leeds in implementing the Action Plan and the reduction in the total open cases achieved.