

Report Title:	ForHousing Annual Update Report
Report Sponsor:	Colette McKune, CEO
Report Author:	Martyn Hague, Director of Neighbourhoods
Report For:	Salford City Council

Report Purpose:
The purpose of the report is to inform the full council on the activities of ForHousing in Salford on behalf of the ForHousing Board members.

Report Recommendations:
For information and comment as required

1.1	<p>ForHousing On the 1st April 2019, the ForViva Group implemented a new simplified structure, with a single social housing arm and a commercial arm. Villages Housing Association, and Villages Community Housing Association transferred their engagements to City West Housing Trust, which subsequently changed its name to ForHousing.</p>
1.2	<p>COVID-19 Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, and the various iterations of restrictions, we have continued to adapt and adjust to ensure that services continue to be delivered in the most effective way, whilst also identifying and responding to the most vulnerable, providing the support which they require.</p> <p>ForHousing have worked with partner agencies to provide a collaborative response which includes examples such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The successful initiative of a pharmacy collection and delivery service, in conjunction with SCVS and CCG. This initiative supported around 600 patients to receive vital medications which they were unable to obtain themselves due to vulnerability or shielding. • The partnership approach to the Spirit of Salford helpline, where ForHousing tenants who made contact directly with the Spirit of Salford helpline were directly referred to ourselves in order for support to be provided. • Provided SCC with an additional 125 properties for use as temporary accommodation for the homeless. Of these 125, 37 were converted into ForHousing tenancies, with 88 remaining with SCC as dispersed temp accommodation. • Undertaking thousands of proactive welfare calls to tenants both in response to Covid-19, but more recently in respect of Winter Welfare. The intelligence gained from the Covid-19 welfare calls has enabled a targeted approach in ensuring that the most vulnerable are being

	<p>contacted and provided with the support which they need to remain safe and well throughout the winter period.</p> <p>Our flexible and agile way of working to ensure that services continue to be delivered in the most effective and efficient way will continue, along with our proactive approach to collaborative working to ensure partner agencies are supported and residents of Salford receive the support which they require throughout these unprecedented times.</p>
1.3	<p>Building Safety and Compliance</p> <p>We are currently maintaining high levels of compliance despite the current Covid related restrictions and the consequent increased difficulty in gaining access to properties. Risk assessments and work method statements in this regard are continually reviewed to ensure that staff are working safely and not exposing tenants to any unnecessary risk.</p> <p>Currently there is only 1 out of date LGSR as the tenant is shielding due to health concerns and ECIRs are in excess of 97% compliant. All other building safety areas are fully compliant</p>
1.4	<p>Growth in Salford</p> <p>The ForHousing development programme continues to deliver a significant number of new high-quality homes across the City. To date, since April 2020, 75 new homes have been developed in Salford, including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barton Lane, Eccles – 48 apartments (27 x 2 bed & 21 x 1 bed) for Affordable Rent, completed on 1st December 2020. The total investment for this scheme is £6.151m. The development is now known as Crown House. • Somerset Road, Eccles - 15 x 1 bed 1 person apartments under the ForFutures branding to prevent homelessness – This scheme completed on 10th September 2020. The total investment for this scheme is £1.60m. Now referred to as Chariot Close, these sub-Social rent apartments are rented at £67.20 per week, furnished and the rent includes utilities costs and WIFI. • Vicars Street, Eccles, – 12 x 1 bed apartments, again under the ForFutures brand, and is the third scheme delivered under this homeless prevention model. The scheme completed on 10th December 2020. Total investment for this scheme is £1.21m
1.5	<p>The ForHousing development programme is on-going and the further current live developments on site, in Salford are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boardman Street, Eccles – 39 x 1 and 2 bed apartments for Social Rent, near Eccles Town Centre. This scheme started on site in March 2020 and is due for completion in November 2021. Total investment for this scheme is £4.89m. • Dock 5, Ordsall Lane, Ordsall – PRS development of 394 apartments, with associated communal facilities. The site between Ordsall Lane and the banks of the River Irwell started on site in early 2020 with delivery over a 3-year timescale. Total investment for this scheme is £72m, with future rental income profits from this investment positively supporting the business plan for further social rental developments.

	<p>The latest programme in terms of delivery on-site will therefore see a further 433 new homes, of a variety of tenures, with a total additional investment of over £75m. This is in addition to the previous 1018 homes developed or acquired in Salford since 2014, which in total has involved over £110m of capital investment.</p>
1.6	<p>The immediate pipeline of approved new developments currently in or due in for Planning and procurement are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodlands Garage, Barton Lane, Eccles – This scheme of 24 Social Rent apartments is in for Planning currently, with a projected start date of March 2021. Homes England grant is already secured and the start on site is pending Planning being approved. Total investment for this scheme is £3.16m • Hallsworth Road, Peel Green, - This scheme of 48 Social Rent apartments is still in the early design stages, however agreement is in place with Salford CC to acquire the site once Planning is in place and grant secured from Homes England’s recently launched new AHP 2021-26 funding programme. Start on site is forecast in late Summer 2021. Total investment for this scheme £6.97m • Grange Place Apartments, Cadishead – This proposal will see the acquisition of 4 existing apartments that have been managed under the Salford Lease & Repair programme. Originally established in 2015, at the end of the 5-year lease term, the Landlord has agreed to sell the properties to ForHousing. The existing tenants will remain in the properties under a new ForHousing Affordable Rent tenancy, which will see a rent reduction from the previous ethical rents that were applicable under the L&R scheme. • Next Steps Accommodation Programme – with funding secured through the Salford Council’s NSAP bid, ForHousing have secured £690k of capital grant funding and £132k of revenue funding to acquire and refurbish 5 existing 3 bed houses into 10 self-contained flats for the purpose of move on accommodation. The overall objectives of the Next Steps Accommodation Programme are to reduce rough sleeping and to seek to ensure rough sleepers brought into emergency accommodation in response to COVID-19, do not return to sleeping rough. Investment for this scheme is £1.41m along with revenue support funding of £132k over the next 3 years following occupation. <p>These 3 developments will provide a total of 76 further homes to let at Social or Affordable Rents and see further investment of some £10.50m in Salford by ForHousing.</p> <p>Further new pipeline developments continue to be being worked up for internal approval, in order to bid for the new grant available from the £7.4bn Homes England Affordable Housing Programme 2021-26, available from April 2021.</p>
1.7	<p>Prevention and Reduction of Homelessness ForHousing supports the prevention and reduction of homelessness and is an active member of the Homelessness Strategy Monitoring Group led by SCC.</p> <p><u>Responsible Landlord</u></p>

	<p>ForHousing’s primary aim is to support tenants to access quality homes in areas where they feel safe and can contribute positively to building resilient communities. There remains a strong positive relationship between the Neighbourhoods Team and key officers in Salford City Council (SCC). Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, we supported SCC in enabling them to discharge their duty, through 20% direct nominations. This was initially intended to be a 3-month pilot to assist in the challenges faced by SCC. However, due to this proving to be a success, we have continued to receive direct nominations for 20% of available stock.</p> <p><u>New build ‘Forfutures’ scheme</u> Three new build developments (as referred to in 1.4 above) offering affordable ‘sub’ social rent accommodation to people with a history of rough sleeping, and on a pathway into settled accommodation have been developed. All 39 properties across 3 schemes are occupied, with the tenants receiving vital wrap around support to assist them in maintaining their tenancy, improve wellbeing and reach their aspirations. ForHousing worked in collaboration with both SCC Supported Tenancies and Housing Options Teams and received direct nominations to ensure that the properties were allocated to those who were best matched to the schemes and the support that they have to offer.</p> <p><u>Care Leavers</u> Over the last two years ForHousing have worked successfully with Next Steps Leaving Care Service to equip young people with the skills and confidence that they would need to manage and run a home. This has been achieved through the implementation of the Resettlement Passport programme, along with a direct offer of accommodation in the area of their choice, before their placement terminates at the age of 18 and they need to leave and move into independent accommodation. Building on the existing successful partnership, ForHousing have developed and led a Salford Registered Providers approach to supporting Care Leavers throughout the development and implementation of “Care Leaver Pledges”.</p> <p><u>Housing First</u> Working in conjunction with the Housing First support provider, ForHousing have so far housed 10 people who were living on the street, providing them with their own independent tenancy, whereby they can begin recovery and receive support to overcome complex needs.</p> <p><u>Temporary Accommodation</u> The local authority has a duty to temporarily house some people who lose their home, and for that rely on properties being made available to them. ForHousing have increased the properties offered for this purpose bringing the total number of ForHousing properties leased to SCC to 157.</p>
1.8	<p>Tenancy Support & Sustainment The TSS service has continued to operate throughout the Covid period and demand for Tenancy Support and Sustainment has continued to grow as the effects of Covid-19 and lockdown started to affect tenants. The economic effects have started to impact with tenants being furloughed and losing their employment and social isolation associated with lockdown has impacted on the</p>

	<p>mental health of many. Operational processes have been adapted and the majority of contact is now via telephone or other virtual means with provision for emergency face to face visits taking place when essential, with adherence to safe working practices. This year the team have started to work in closer partnership with Mustard Tree (where we have provided funding of £70k for two posts to provide support in Salford) and Motiv8 to provide a more holistic offer of support. This joint approach has enabled more support to be provided and enabled access to services such as the food/furniture club and provided opportunities for tenants to learn new skills and gain employment.</p> <p>Some key headline statistics for the Tenancy Support and Sustainment Team since April 20:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 205 support cases opened since April 20 • Financial wellbeing is the highest support need with 59% of cases requiring support in this area. • Advice and support from the team has attracted £195,710 in financial awards for tenants with debt written off totalling £76,051.
1.9	<p>Income Maximisation</p> <p>The Income Maximisation team has 34 full time equivalent staff. The service is responsible for maximising income and reducing the incidence and severity of rent arrears which has been a significant challenge over the last nine months. Following a recent staff engagement exercise, it was clear that staff have had the opportunity, since March, to focus more on developing trusting relationships with tenants and that they valued the prospect of having more flexibility and autonomy around decision making on a case by case basis. This has now been reflected in changes to our Income Maximisation processes which focus more than ever on engagement and the de-escalation of cases.</p>
1.10	<p>The current economic environment has significant challenges, with tens of thousands of residents in Salford furloughed with an uncertain employment future, the availability of apprenticeships and jobs falling, the damage caused to self-employment particularly and the ongoing changes to the housing benefit and welfare system. These challenges continue with the introduction of the Job Support Scheme in local lockdown areas (now withdrawn) and the second phase of furlough. Our approach is to work proactively in partnership with tenants and other support agencies to reduce the overall adverse impact of these economic problems on tenants and the organisation through effective, preventative action, advice and support and challenge where appropriate.</p>
1.11	<p>We continue to monitor and manage the challenges brought by the programme of welfare reform. The number of tenants claiming UC now stands at 5,041 with more than a quarter of those claims being made since the start of the pandemic. We have a dedicated resource who supports our most vulnerable tenants through the early stages of their UC claim, and we have found this an effective use of resource, valued by tenants. Even during the highest rate of claims during the early impacts of the pandemic, we were able to verify rent levels for UC claims within 24 hours and every tenant making a new claim for UC continues to be offered support within 3 working days of them making the claim. We aim to help every tenant to get their claim off to the best possible start.</p>

1.12	We continue with our Financial Support offer which consists of two dedicated officers who provide expert advice and assistance to staff and offer pro-active and dedicated guidance to tenants who may need to challenge external agencies on the regulations and legislation of any areas of Welfare Reform. We continue to work with Local Authorities and GMCA in providing a consistent communications message to all residents which included the development of a good practice guide for managing arrears in the private sector, for example, to help reduce homelessness.
1.13	We have continued to support the Illegal Money lending team and the Council with the Stop Loan Sharks campaign through a variety of methods, including updating our social media platforms, and we have recently embarked on a Pension Credit awareness raising campaign and will be working with partners such as Welfare Rights and Debt Advice to promote this welfare benefit which is hugely underclaimed in Salford.
1.14	<p>Extra Care / Supported Housing</p> <p>The Extra Care and Supported Housing teams have remained working on schemes since the commencement of the pandemic ensuring tenants feel supported, safe and continue to be connected to each other, their families and the wider ForHousing services. Additional building safety measures have been implemented such as regular enhanced cleaning, safety screens and access to PPE to ensure continued safety of tenants, families, external visitors and staff. Communal areas in Extra Care and Sheltered Housing remain closed in accordance with local restrictions with a robust re-mobilisation plan in place agreed with Public Health. Tenants continue to have essential visits from family and friends who are part of their support bubble.</p>
1.15	<p>To prevent isolation, adapted approaches have been put in place around the delivery of social activities to ensure a strong and dedicated focus on tenant wellbeing. Regular newsletters and isolation packs have been delivered to keep tenants active and external providers have been commissioned to deliver activities in the gardens, such as balcony bingo and VE day singalong celebrations. The introduction of digital approaches have seen successful tenants meetings taking place using conference call facilities and virtual visiting rooms being created within Amblecote Gardens and Bourke Gardens.</p> <p>Regular liaison with local Public Health & Adult Social Care teams continues to ensure Covid safe measures are implemented and any outbreaks are managed effectively.</p>
1.16	The Extra Care Team provided a positive response to the request from Salford Council to participate in a Covid testing pilot in Extra Care Schemes. The Housing team received training and led on the testing of over 179 tenants and staff to reduce the risk of transmission and ensure the effective management of infection rates within the schemes.
1.17	<p>Tenant Voice 2020-25</p> <p>The ForHousing Tenant Voice strategy was approved by the ForHousing Board in May 2020 and provides direction to strengthen our relationship with tenants, increasing tenant influence and improving our organisational accountability. The deliverables for the first year of the strategy are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To put things right when a tenant or customer complains about our

	<p>service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify a wide diversity of voices, including key stakeholders and young people • To co-produce key priorities for investment with tenants • To improve services in response to the tenant voice • To improve tenant oversight arrangements to hold us to account • The ensure the delivery of the Tenant Voice Strategy is overseen by tenants.
1.18	<p>TPAS Pro- Landlord Accreditation in Tenant Engagement 2020-2023 In September 2020 the organisation was re-accredited with the TPAS pro-landlord accreditation, achieving 36 Pass units and 2 partial pass units.</p>
1.19	<p>Community Conversations The Community Conversations project is a far reaching project that aims to engage with a diverse range of tenants in order to co-produce organisational priorities, linked to investment priorities for the Wellbeing Strategy and the Corporate Plan. The project started delivery in July 2020 and is scheduled to complete in April 2021.</p>
1.20	<p>Wellbeing Strategy 2020-25 The key aim of the Wellbeing strategy is to “create the best possible environment for people and communities to thrive and fulfil their potential”, and the delivery of this aim is supported by a number of key ‘enablers’ and ‘activities’. ‘Enablers’ are the conditions which the organisation feel are useful for supporting people to be responsible for their own wellbeing, and ‘activities’ are interventions delivered to influence or inspire a change.</p> <p>There are four enablers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stability- Tenancies of homes that are safe and well maintained 2. Learning- Opportunities to learn 3. Digital access- Closing the digital divide 4. Choice- A person centred approach with a choice of activities and interventions, most likely to work for the individual <p>Which are supported by three activity themes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prosperity- To reduce poverty and increase wealth through improved employability, improved career prospects, reducing or avoiding debt, accessing essentials such as food, clothes and accommodation and accessing affordable warmth 2. Health- Improved physical and mental health through being physically and mentally active, to live independently, to support people to feel safe and to improve access to green space 3. Connections- Appreciate and value the diversity within communities, be active citizens in matters of local importance and decision making, co-design priorities for investment, assist communities to directly deliver locally important activities and to give through fundraising and volunteering

1.21	<p>The following provides an update on activities which are currently live. Other activities, including youth clubs, The Prince's Trust Team Programme and social activities in Supported Housing and Extra Care schemes are currently on hold due to COVID-19 restrictions and are being regularly reviewed. Overall, there is still a wide range of activities taking place to improve the wellbeing of tenants and customers, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The playstreets project was delivered in August, October and December. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the initiative moved to delivering sessions via pre-recorded or Facebook live videos on the Community Development Facebook page, with 360 activity packs delivered to families across Salford. In December the Community Development team are supporting local CVS groups to deliver their festive support and activity programme with the donation of funds.• Kickstart CIC is delivering Smart Choices, a mentoring project for primary school children, at three schools in Salford, namely St Paul's Peel, Westwood Park Primary and Barton Moss. This is delivered within the schools, adhering to the school COVID-19 guidance. Pupils are nominated to attend by teaching staff.• In Salford, the Community Fund has distributed £22,842.80 to 43 groups across the west of the city.• School Links, which provides construction training for school students, has remained open throughout COVID-19 restrictions, with input from our internal health and safety and Salford Council to risk assess the provision against Government guidelines. Students are attending again for this academic year, although we have reduced capacity to a maximum of 12 students per day (from 20) which will impact our outcomes and income. We continue to re-assess provision to ensure we follow any new guidelines and we are exploring new spaces to expand capacity. On the programme we have 29 students who are attending 1-4 days a week. We currently are registering students on a new BTEC qualification and we're three months into a partnership with Next Level Learning delivering functional skills in English and Maths.• Three Family Clubs are being delivered in Salford at St Paul's Peel, Westwood Park Primary and Barton Moss Primary. Provision is digital with families completing a booking form to access pre-recorded videos and an activity pack. The target number of families is 20 per school and the project is currently supporting 75 families.• Cash Chats is a 1.5hr webinar delivered via Zoom platform, which is targeted at tenants whose rent account has been negatively impacted by COVID-19. This is targeted using the COVID codes that are applied to rent accounts where the tenant has confirmed that their circumstances have been changed or affected by the pandemic. The webinar provides information, advice and guidance for those affected by financial shock, or those who need additional support, enabling those who attend to gain a greater understanding and
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	<p>confidence around financial issues. Between November and March ForHousing will be hosting 3 sessions in Salford, with referrals coming from the income, tenancy sustainment and neighbourhood teams.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Motiv8 employment pathway has received an extra £4.3 million from July and we aim to review the contract again in September 2021. This aims to support another 500 people within the Salford and Bury area over the next 12 months. Motiv8 aims to tackle the root causes of poverty, promoting social inclusion and driving local jobs and growth across the region. We currently have a case load of 121 participants. • Do Your Own Thing, which offers self-employment advice and support, is now delivered virtually and there are 67 participants on the programme. • The Skills Support for Employment, work placement programme, has 22 active cases currently receiving advice, support and learning. Most delivery is virtual within the business however the option of physical placement within the skills centre is now available, following COVID safe guidelines. • ForHousing are aiming to participate in the Governments 'Kick Start' employability programme for young people. Over 30 placements across the business have been allocated and job descriptions agreed with relevant managers. The application has been submitted and were on track to start the first placements in March 21.
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2	Conclusion
2.1	<p>This report is provided to the full council on behalf of the ForHousing Board members. The report covers any areas that been identified as being important and of interest.</p> <p>If any further clarification is needed on specific items or if other issues arise that are of interest, then we are happy to discuss them at any point.</p>

Report Author:	Martyn Hague, Director of Neighbourhoods
Contact Number:	0161 605 7501
Date	January 2021
Email:	martyn.hague@forhousing.co.uk