

Agenda Item	5.
Report No	PEO 41/17

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: People Committee

Date: 6 December 2017

Report Title: Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2017 to 30 September 2017

Report By: Director of Community Services

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides information on housing performance up to 30 September 2017.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are invited to note the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2017 to 30 September 2017.

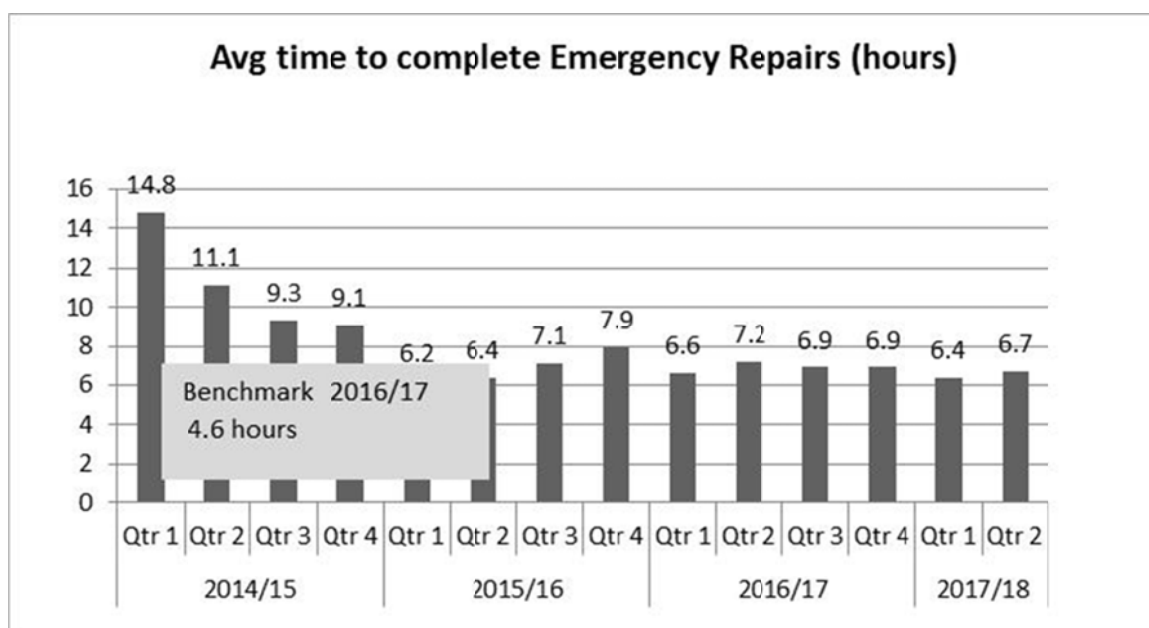
3. Background

- 3.1 The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has set out the performance indicators that it will use in its scrutiny of landlords.
- 3.2 This report provides key performance information based on the reporting framework recommended by the SHR.
- 3.3 Further performance information by Council Ward can be found on the Highland Council Intranet ward reporting pages.
http://www.highland.gov.uk/staffsite/info/13/members_intranet/37/ward_reporting/2
- 3.4 In accordance with the Scottish Social Housing Charter guidance, the Repairs, Tenancy Management and Rent Arrears figures are cumulative, while the Homeless Presentations figures are given for each separate quarter.
- 3.5 Scottish Quality Network (SQN) benchmark information, derived from the performance of all Scottish Landlords, has also been provided where available.

4 Housing Repairs

- 4.1 The key indicators for measuring repairs performance are considered to be the average time taken to complete Emergency repairs and Non-emergency repairs.
- 4.2 Table 1 details performance on the average time taken to complete emergency repairs and Table 2 details the average time taken to complete non-emergency repairs. Both graphs contain national benchmark figures for these indicators based on published 2016/17 figures.

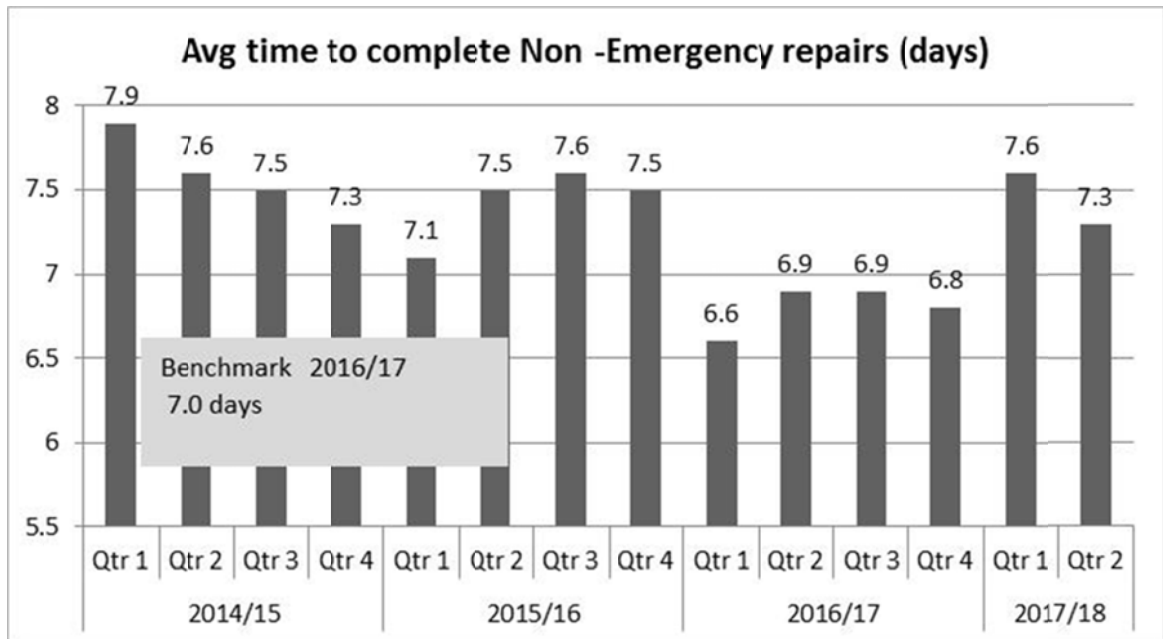
4.3 **Table 1: Average time to complete Emergency Repairs (Target 14 hours)**



- 4.4 Performance on emergency repairs remains within the Highland target.

4.5

Table 2 – Average time to complete Non-Emergency Repairs (Target 8 days)

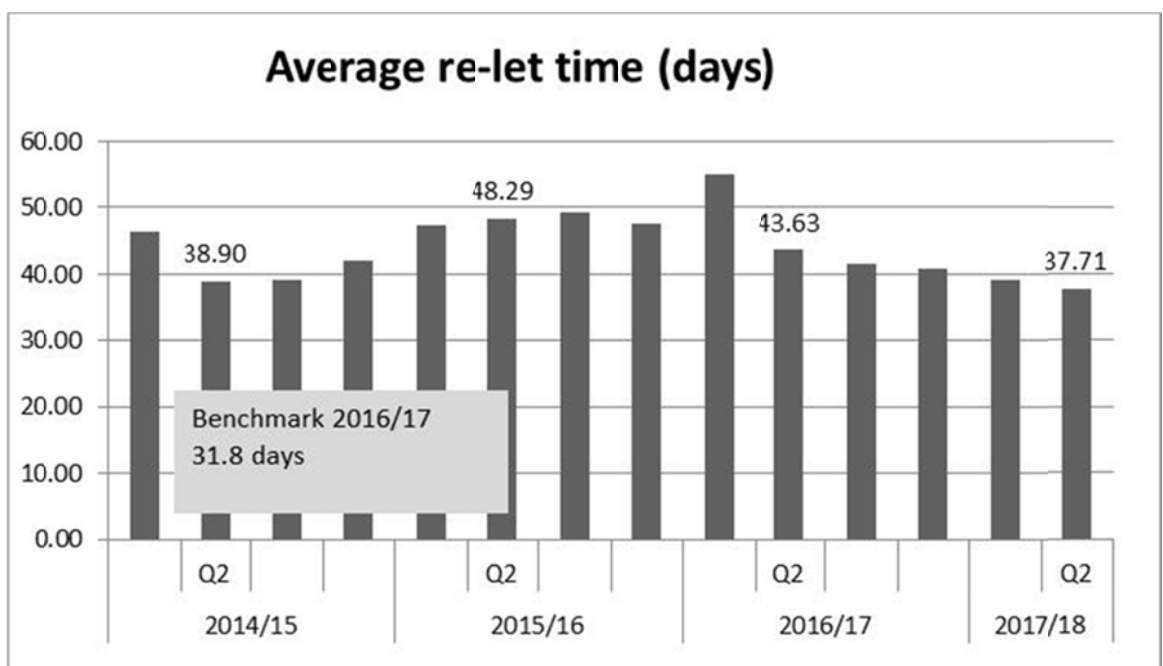


4.6 Average performance on non-emergency repairs remains within the target timescales.

5 Tenancy Management

5.1 Table 3 below provides information on the average re-let time showing the trend back 3 years and highlighting the same quarter in previous years for comparison.

5.2 Table 3 – Average re-let time (Target 35 days)



5.3 There has been a continuous improvement in average reletting times over the last

year, although performance remains above our Highland target.

5.4 There are continuing issues of low demand for housing in some areas of Caithness and Sutherland which has a disproportionate impact on overall performance on reletting empty homes. We operate a different approach to allocating housing within Caithness, where a “choice based letting policy” applies. Further discussion is due to take place with Caithness Members on approaches to dealing with low demand property.

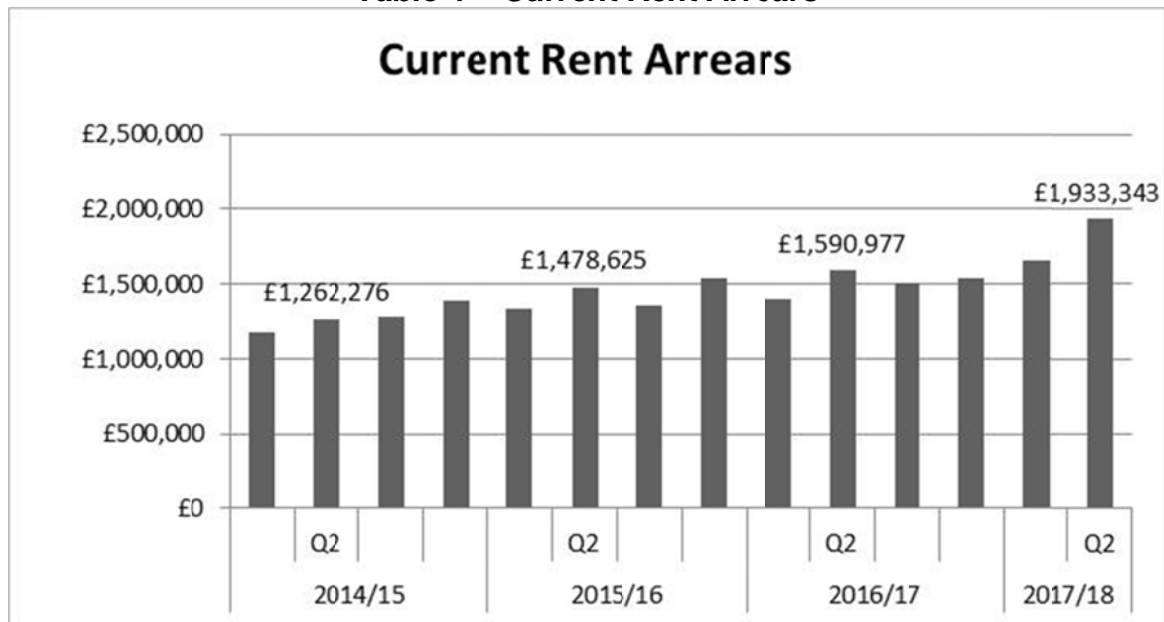
5.5 Improving reletting times continues to be a key priority for local housing teams.

6 Rent Arrears

6.1 The key performance indicator for rent arrears is considered to be the value of current arrears. Table 4 below provides information on current rent arrears going back 3 years and shows the comparative figure for the same quarter in previous years.

6.2

Table 4 – Current Rent Arrears



6.3 As previously reported we are seeing a gradual increase in rent arrears. This does reflect a national trend and there are likely to be a number of external factors involved, mainly the impact of welfare reform.

6.4 In the last report it was projected that the overall rent arrears for mainstream Council properties could reach £2.1m by March 2018. At the end of September 2017 the Highland wide rent arrears were £1,933,343.

6.5 Between June 2017 and September 2017 the overall rent arrears for known Universal Credit (UC) cases increased from £988,687 to £1,244,065, an increase of £255,378 (26%). It is important to note that these figures include any arrears prior to the UC claim.

6.6 A Rent Arrears Officers Working Group has been set up within Community Services to review the impact of Universal Credit on council tenancies. In particular this group has revised the wording of the standard rent arrears reminder letters issued to tenants to make specific reference to actions/advice appropriate to tenants in receipt of UC.

6.7 Guidance has also been produced for staff on specific advice and information to be

provided, and on the approach to rent payment advice to tenants in receipt of Universal Credit in order to take account of the very different circumstances involved with UC payments. This feeds into the pre-action requirements for potential legal action against tenants in arrears.

- 6.8 This means that each case will be considered individually before a decision is made on whether legal action on rent arrears is appropriate and reasonable. The focus will continue to be on encouraging tenants to discuss their rent arrears/UC claims and to offer advice and assistance.
- 6.9 Two full time equivalent Intensive Support Officers have been employed within the Welfare Support Team since April 2017. These posts are funded from the Housing Revenue Account. The job role involves mitigating the impact Welfare Reform through intensive budgeting and income maximisation support for Council tenants. In the first 7 months of implementation 103 referrals have been received with 70% of households engaging with the service. Staff have actively managed £291,938 of customer debt of which £71,280 related to rent arrears, and achieved benefit gains in excess of £145,000.

7 Homelessness

7.1 Performance information on homelessness is noted in tables 5 and 6.

7.2 **Table 5 - Homeless presentations per quarter (not cumulative)**

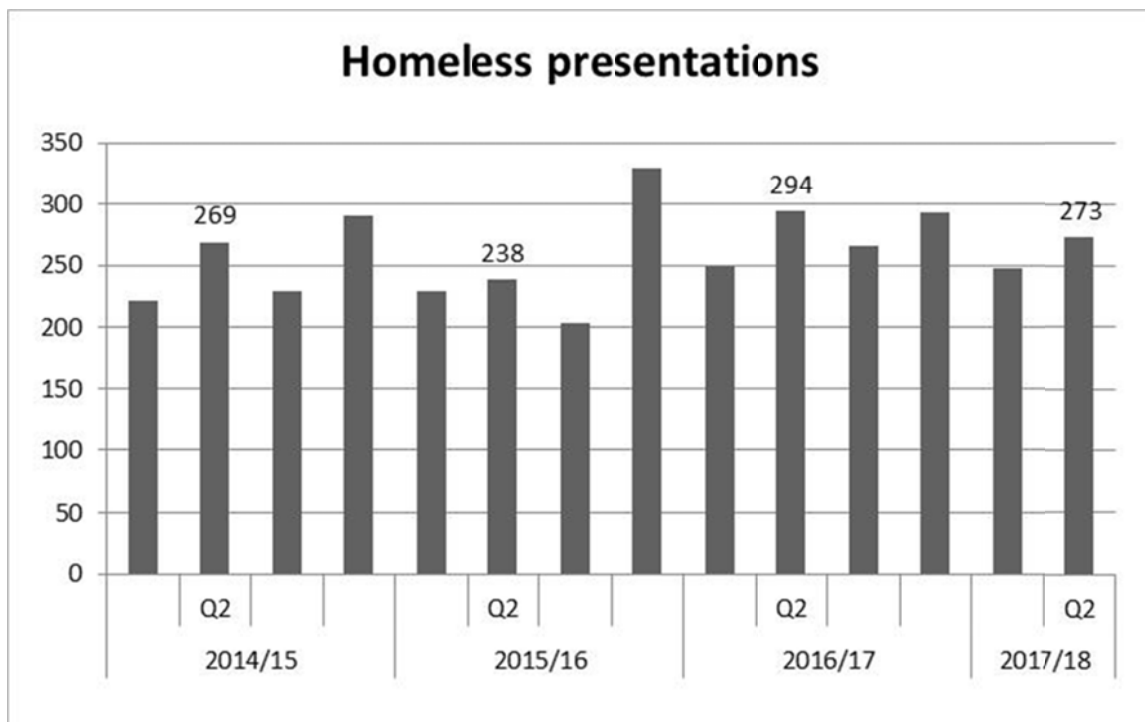
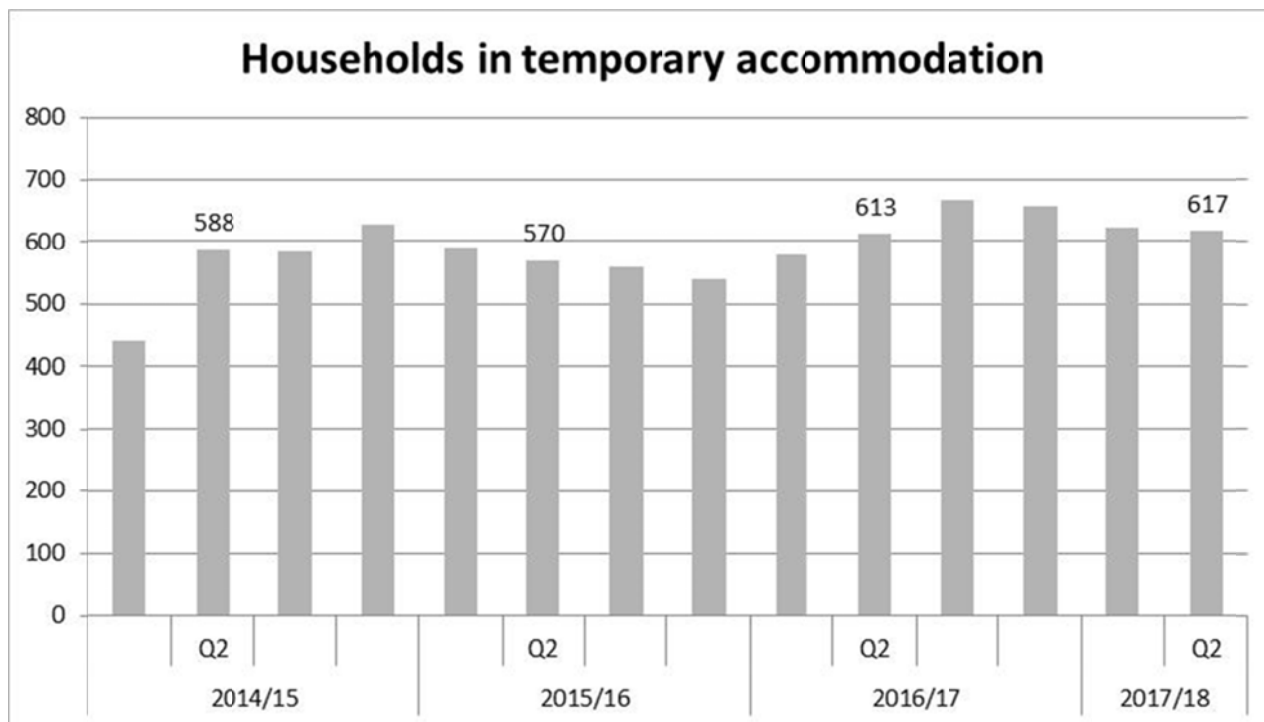


Table 6 – Households in Temporary Accommodation (not cumulative)

7.3



7.4 We are continuing to see high levels of homeless presentations together with a gradual increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation. High numbers of households in temporary accommodation are largely a result of the lack of housing to make offers of permanent accommodation. These issues are most acute in Inverness. A separate report on homelessness is contained on the agenda.

8 Implications

8.1 Resource: There are no resource implications arising from this report.

8.2 Legal: There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural): There are no equality implications arising from this report.

8.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever: There are no climate change/Carbon Clever implications arising from this report.

8.5 Risk: Risk is managed through regular review and reporting to allow corrective action to be taken if necessary.

8.6 Gaelic: There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

Designation: Director of Community Services

Date: 28 November 2017

Author: David Goldie Head of Housing and Building Maintenance

Background Papers: Scottish Housing Regulator: The Scottish Social Housing Charter: Indicators and Context Information