

Agenda Item	5.
Report No	CLH 03/18

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Care, Learning and Housing

**Date:** 30 May 2018

**Report Title:** Community Services Performance Report  
1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018

**Report By:** Director of Community Services

### **1. Purpose/Executive Summary**

1.1 This report provides information on housing performance up to 31 March 2018.

### **2. Recommendations**

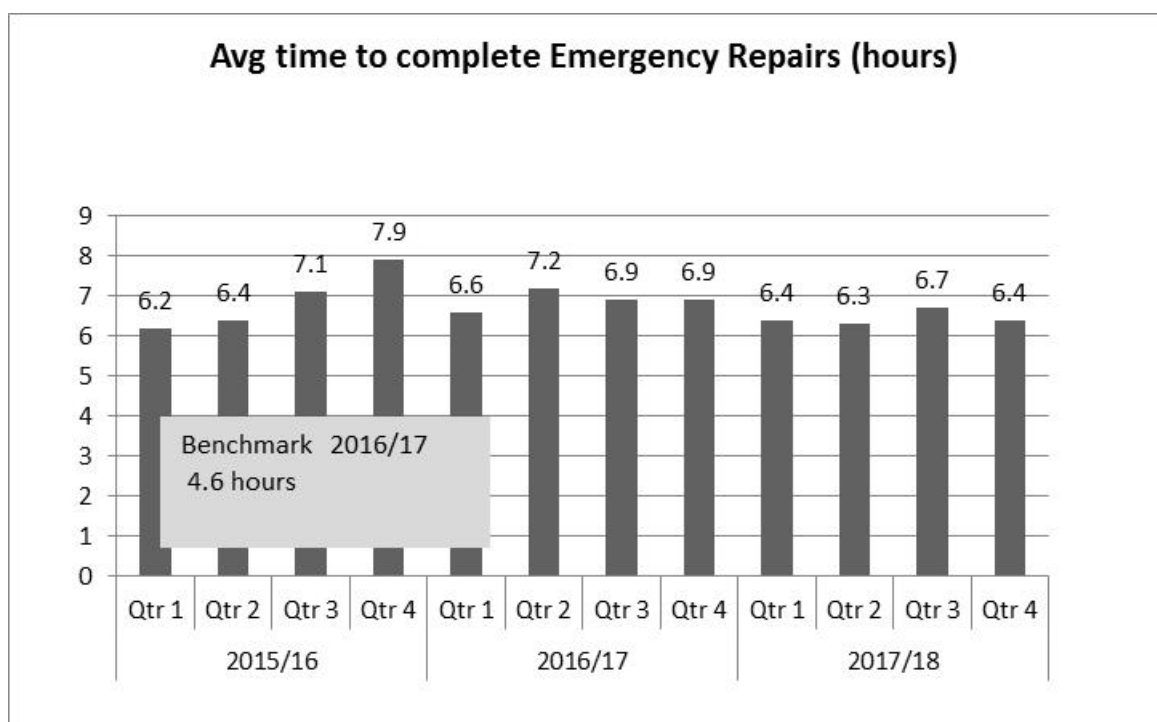
2.1 Members are invited to note the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

### 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 performance information based on the reporting framework recommended by the SHR. 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](http://www.highland.gov.uk/staffsite/info/13/members_intranet/37/ward_reporting/2)
- 3.3 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

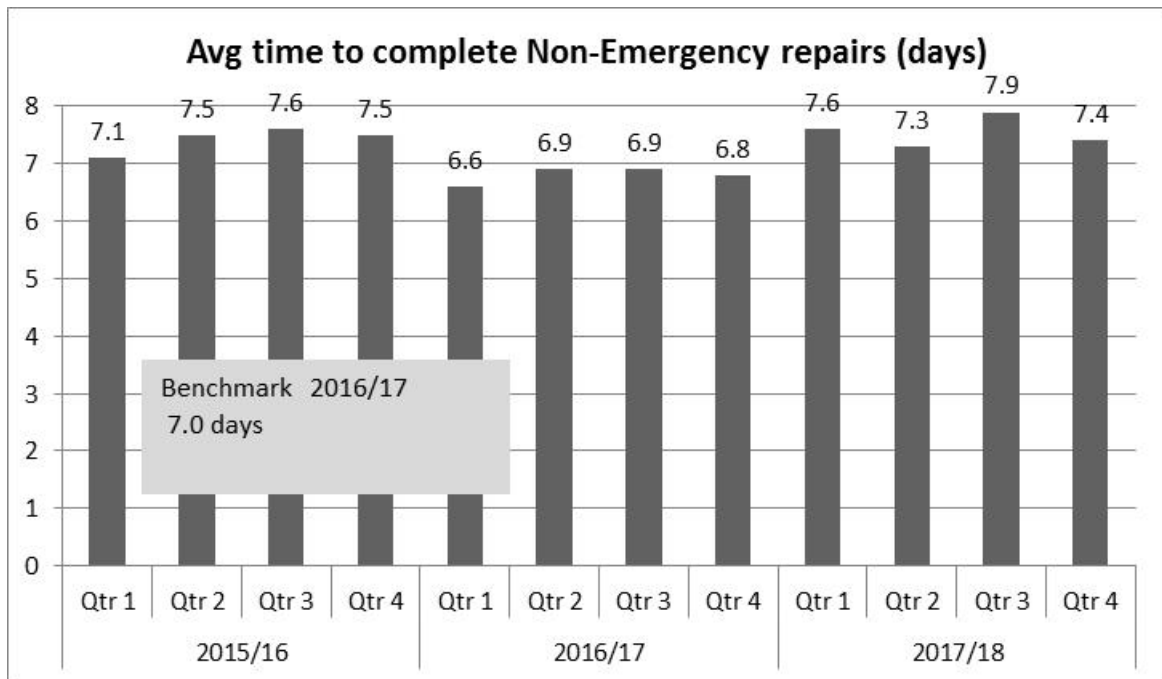
- 4.1 The key indicators for measuring repairs performance are considered to be the average time taken to complete Emergency repairs and Non-emergency repairs.
- 4.2 Table 1 details performance on the average time taken to complete emergency repairs and Table 2 details the average time taken to complete 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. Highland geography needs to be taken into account when comparing the Highland figure for the

national benchmark on completing emergency repairs.

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

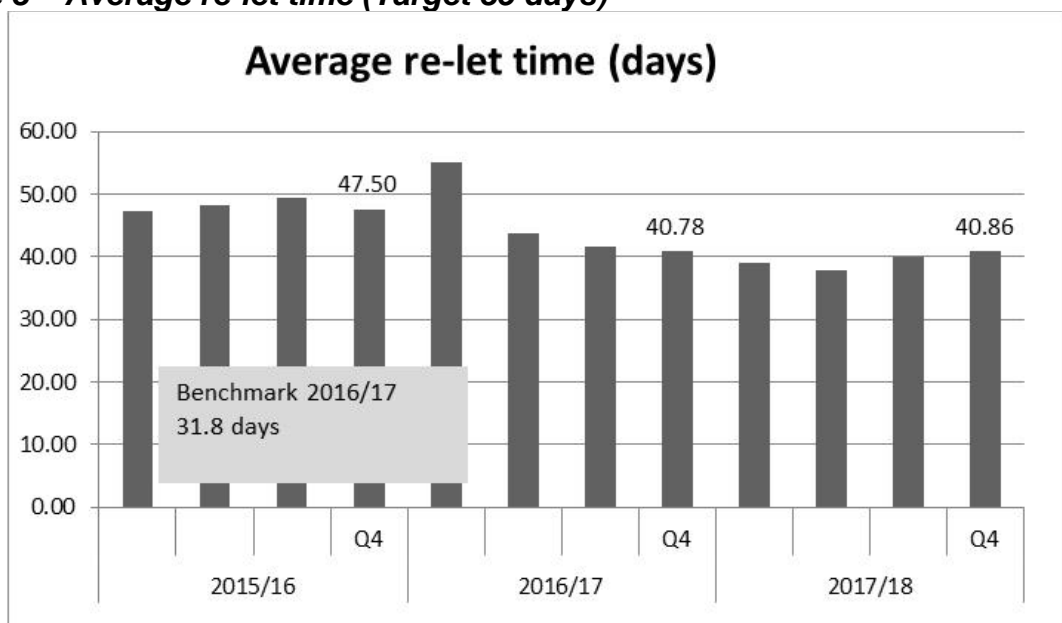


4.6 Average performance on non-emergency repairs remains within the target timescales, and is around the national benchmark. Average completion times have been slightly greater in 2017/18 compared to 2016/17. There is no single reason for this but it should be noted that this has been a period of significant change in the repairs and maintenance service. We have recently strengthened the management capacity within the service and expect to see a renewed focus on performance in 2018/19.

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 Performance on reletting times remains above our Highland target of 35 days. The significant improvement in performance during 2015/16 has, unfortunately, not been sustained during 2017/18. Again, changes to the repairs and maintenance service have contributed to our inability to improve further on the 2016/17 performance.

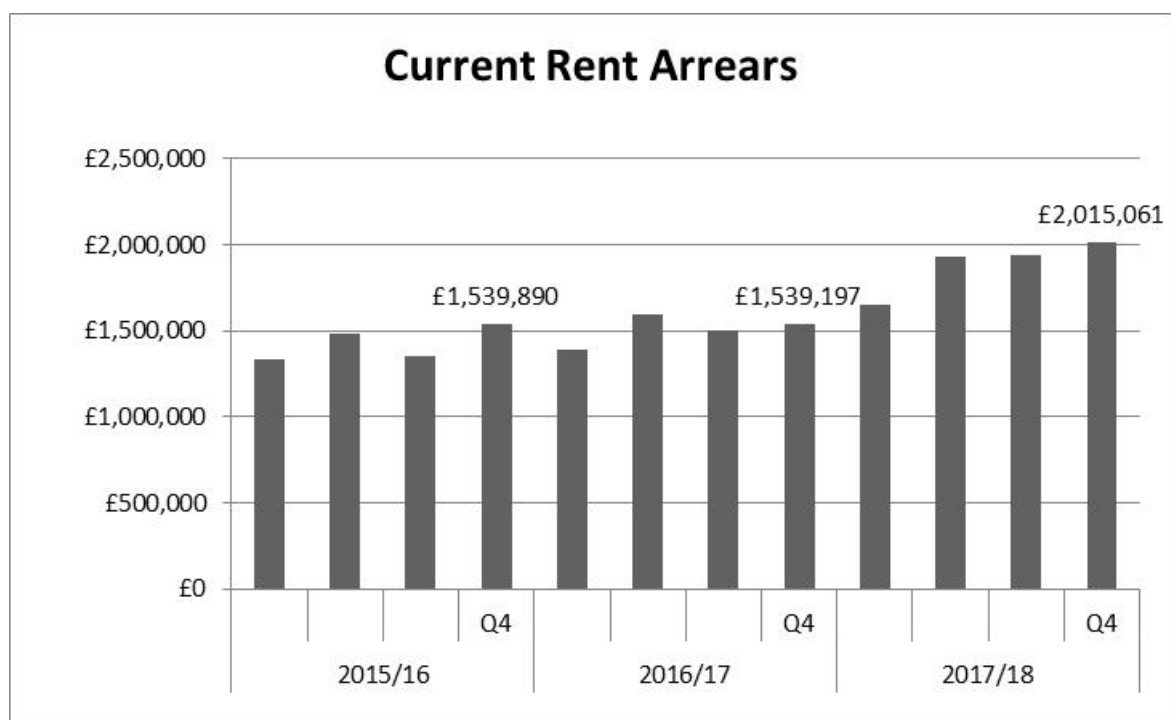
5.4 It should also be noted that reletting times vary considerably across local areas. There are continuing issues of low demand and high turnover of properties in some areas of Caithness and Sutherland, which has a disproportionate impact on overall performance on reletting empty homes. The rate of refusal of tenancy offers also affects reletting times. Refusal rates for tenancy offers were over 50% in parts of Northwest Sutherland in 2017/18. If reletting times in the 3 wards of North, West and Central Sutherland, Thurso and Northwest Caithness, and Wick and East Caithness were excluded the average reletting time for the rest of Highland would be 30.24 days.

5.5 Improving reletting times continues to be a key priority for all local housing teams. The Sutherland Team is trying out different approaches within the allocations policy to better target offers of housing and reduce the refusal rate. Within Caithness the choice based letting scheme has helped to some extent, however there remains underlying issues about low demand for housing that require further consideration by local Members.

**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.

6.4 Rent arrears associated with Universal Credit continues to create a pressure on rental

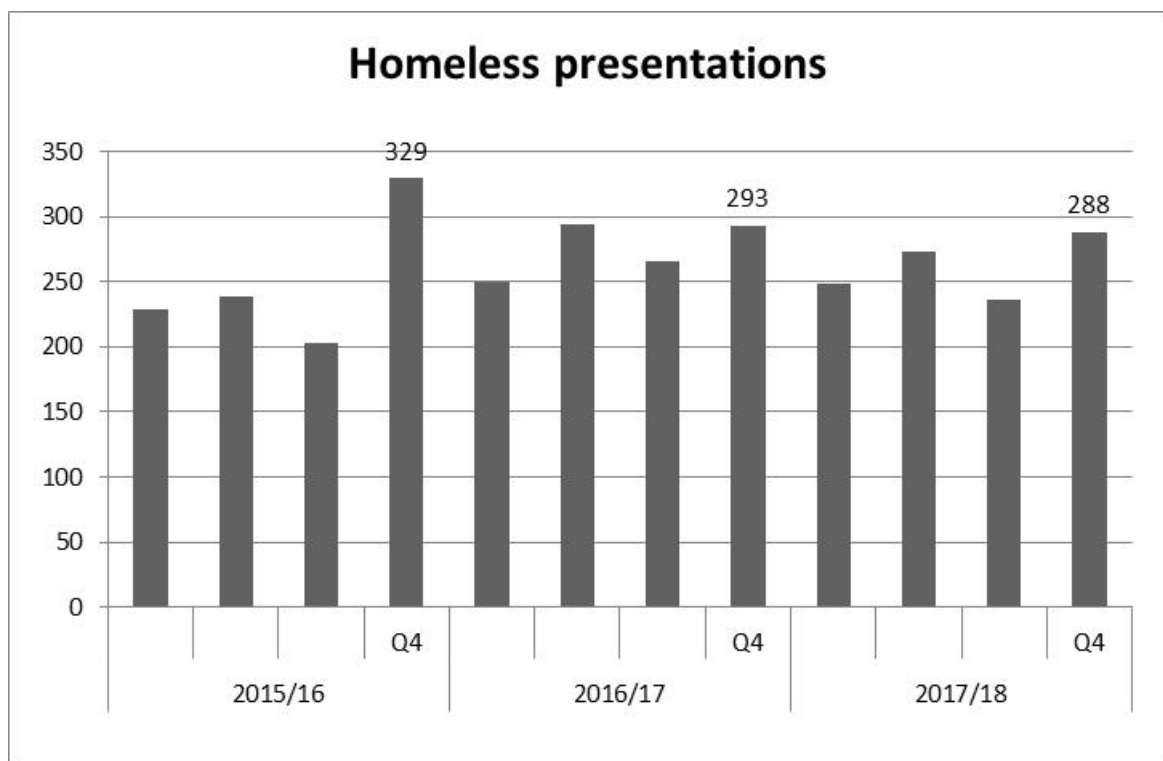
income. Between quarter 4 of 2016/17 and 2017/18 there has been a 125% increase in the number of known Universal Credit cases in mainstream accommodation, rising from 915 to 2,060 cases over the period. The average rent arrears for households in receipt of Universal Credit is currently £679, compared to £180 for households on full or partial housing benefit.

- 6.5 Although the number of cases impacted by Universal Credit has significantly increased during 2017/18, since December 2017 the average rent arrears per Universal Credit household and the percentage of households in arrears has reduced. In the main this can be attributed to the timing of direct payment schedules from the DWP in December, the fact that many Universal Credit claimants did continue to pay their rent during the two charge free weeks at Christmas, and the removal of the 7 waiting days for new Universal Credit claims.
- 6.6 There is clear evidence locally and nationally that Universal Credit has a significant impact on rent arrears. Although changes such as the two week extension to housing benefit for new Universal Credit claimants, and the option for claimants to receive 100% advance payments which include the housing cost element may well see the average arrears value per Universal Credit claimant reduce, this average value is likely to remain significantly higher than tenants on Housing Benefit, and the effect of increasing numbers of people in receipt of Universal Credit will lead to an increase in the overall value of arrears.

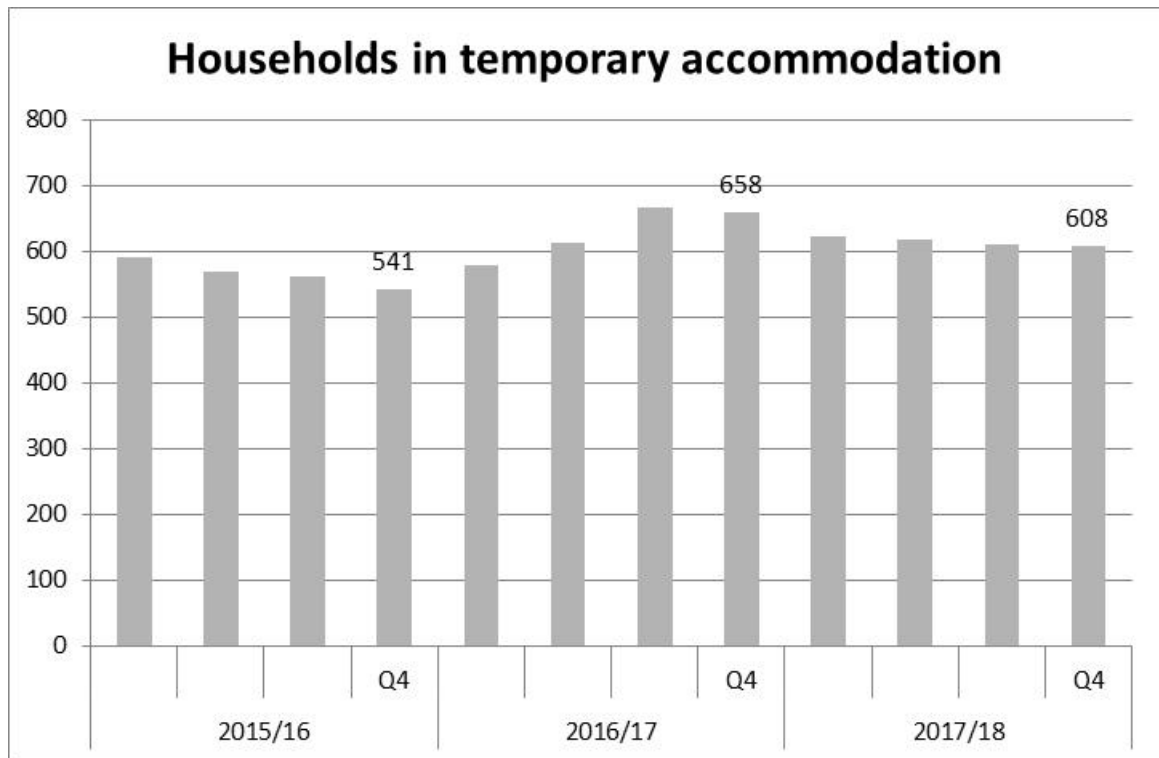
## 7 Homelessness

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

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



7.3 **Table 6 – Households in Temporary Accommodation (not cumulative)**



7.4 We are continuing to see high levels of homeless presentations together with a high level of temporary accommodation use. High numbers of households in temporary accommodation are largely a result of the lack of housing to make offers of permanent accommodation. More detailed reports will continue to be reported separately to Committee.

## 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: 15 May 2018

Author: David Goldie Head of Housing and Building Maintenance

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