HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee:	**Care, Learning and Housing**
Date:	**29 May 2019**
Report Title:	**Community Services Performance Report – 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019**
Report By:	**Director of Community Services**

1   Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1   This report provides information on housing performance for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2019.

2   Recommendations

2.1   Members are invited to:

    I.   **note** the information provided on housing performance for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019; and

    II.   **agree** that a Housing Revenue Account property at Achow, Lybster, be declared surplus and available for disposal on the open market.
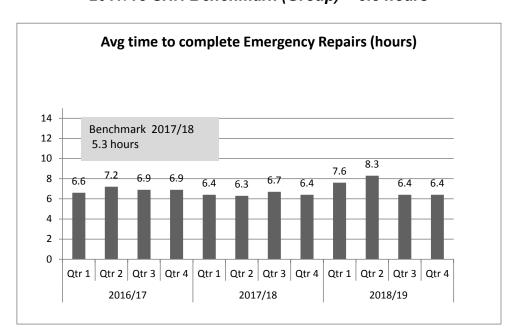
3 Background

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

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.

3.4 Scottish Housing Network (SHN) 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 2017/18 figures.
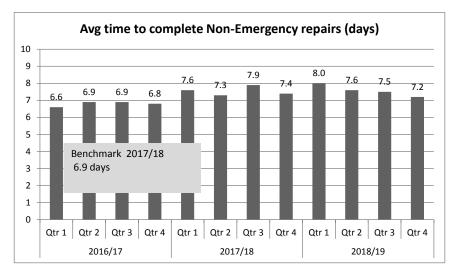
4.3 ***Table 1: Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs (hours)***
Target 14 hours
2017/18 SHN Benchmark (Group) – 5.3 hours

4.4 Performance on emergency repairs remains within the Highland target. Highland geography needs to be taken into account when comparing the Highland figure with the national benchmark on completing emergency repairs. There were some issues with the administration of individual repairs in quarters 1 and 2 of 2018/19, and corrective action was taken during the year. This has resulted in stabilisation of
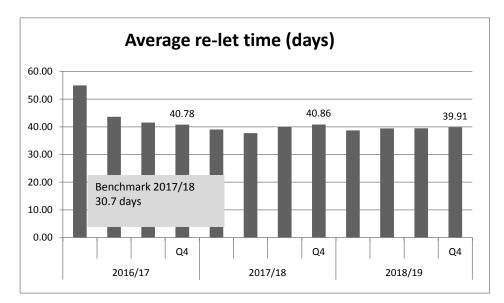
performance.

4.5 ***Table 2 – Average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs (days)***
Target 8 days
2017/18 SHN Benchmark (Group) – 6.9 days

Avg time to complete Non-Emergency repairs (days)

	2016/17				2017/18				2018/19			
	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4
	6.6	6.9	6.9	6.8	7.6	7.3	7.9	7.4	8.0	7.6	7.5	7.2

Benchmark 2017/18 6.9 days

4.6 Average performance on non-emergency repairs remains within the target timescales, and is around the national benchmark. We have seen a gradual improvement in performance throughout 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 (days) Target 35 days***
2017/18 SHN Benchmark (Group) – 38.2 days

Average re-let time (days)

	2016/17			2017/18			2018/19		
			40.78			40.86			39.91
			Q4			Q4			Q4

Benchmark 2017/18 30.7 days

5.3 Performance on reletting times remains above our Highland target of 35 days and has shown only a marginal improvement during 2018/19. Local repairs and housing options teams continue to prioritise reletting empty homes. There have been some local issues with volumes of relets associated with initial lets to new build projects and

some properties requiring major repairs of adaptations. These local issues continue to be reported and considered by Local Committees. Low demand continues to be a challenge in North West Sutherland and in Caithness Wards. Excluding these 3 wards the average reletting time for 2018/19 was 32.15 days.

5.4 Improving reletting times continues to be a key priority for all local housing teams. Within Caithness, the choice based letting scheme has helped to some extent, however there remain underlying issues about low demand for housing that have been subject to more detailed discussion by local Members.   Arising from this it is recommended that one Housing Revenue Account property in Caithness, at Old School, Achow, Lybster, be declared surplus and available for disposal on the open market.

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.
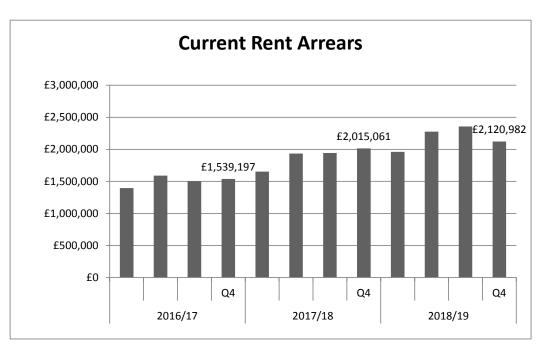
6.2

Table 4 – Current Rent Arrears

6.3 The impact of Universal Credit continues to be a factor in the level of rent arrears. The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) continues to introduce improvements to the system. For example the introduction of the two week extension of housing benefit for new Universal Credit claimants is being reflected in the average rent arrears per household on universal credit gradually reducing. This is currently £620 compared to £679 at the end of 2017/18. This compares to an average rent arrears figure of £182 per household for those on full or partial housing benefit. Between Q4 2017/18 and Q4 2018/19 the proportion of households receiving Universal Credit that are in arrears has reduced from 76.5% to 68.3%.

6.4 The reduction in rent arrears across Q4 2018/19 can be attributed to a number of factors including; the 28 December 2018 payment schedule from the DWP was not received until 7 January 2019; an increase in income from the DWP as more tenants request direct landlord payments through Scottish Choices; and the Council continuing

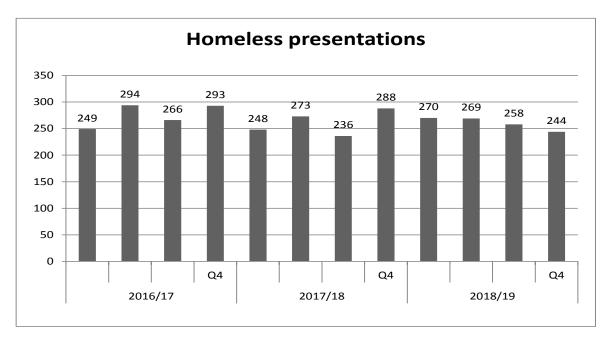to request direct payments in respect of vulnerable tenants.

6.5   The DWP has committed to reviewing the payment mechanism to social landlords during 2019 which we hope will result in the Council receiving the housing cost element on the same day as the claimant receives their benefit entitlement. This change could potentially reduce arrears further. Officers continue to work with the DWP on a number of projects to help minimise the overall impact of tenants and the Council.

7   Homelessness

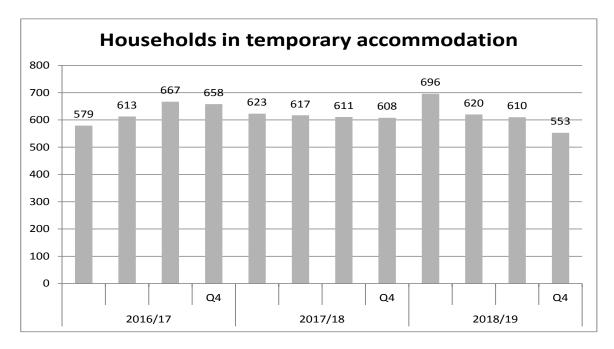7.1   Performance information on homelessness is noted in tables 5 and 6.

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

Homeless presentations

| | 2016/17 | | | | 2017/18 | | | | 2018/19 | | | |
| 249 | 294 | 266 | 293 | 248 | 273 | 236 | 288 | 270 | 269 | 258 | 244 |

(Q4 markers shown at end of each year)

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

Households in temporary accommodation

| | 2016/17 | | | | 2017/18 | | | | 2018/19 | | | |
| 579 | 613 | 667 | 658 | 623 | 617 | 611 | 608 | 696 | 620 | 610 | 553 |

(Q4 markers shown at end of each year)

7.4   We are seeing a slight reduction in the numbers of people presenting as homeless and

in the number of cases in temporary accommodation, reflecting continuing efforts to prevent people becoming homeless and the effectiveness of housing options services. Further more detailed information on homelessness services is contained in a separate report to this Committee on the Council's Rapid Rehousing Transitions Plan.

8   Scottish Housing Regulator Engagement

8.1   On 1 April 2019 the Scottish Housing Regulator published engagement plans for all social landlords in Scotland. This marks the first of the changes introduced under the new Regulatory Framework which came into effect on that date. These plans reflect key challenges for 2019/20 including the priority being placed by the Scottish Government on homelessness and also improving the lives of gypsy / travellers in Scotland.

8.2   Highland Council's Engagement Plan is available on the weblink at:-
http://directory.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/2019%20Documents/Highland%20Council%20EP.pdf

8.3   We will liaise on a regular basis with the Regulator to provide evidence of our progress against issues, including performance in 2018/19 which will be submitted as part of our Annual Return of the Charter on 31 May 2019.

9   Implications

9.1   Resource - There are no resource implications arising from this report.

9.2   Legal - There are no legal implications arising from this report.

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

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

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

9.6   Gaelic - There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

Designation: Director of Community Services

Date: 20 May 2019

Author: David Goldie, Head of Housing and Building Maintenance

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