

**HOUSING, COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO
Councillor Les Phillimore****Foreword**

The teams across the Portfolio continue to experience a high demand for their services this year with the ongoing impact of the national increase in homelessness numbers, asylum and refugee accommodation demands, the rise in general living costs, an increased focus on private rented housing sector standards alongside continued delivery of the core aims of the business.

The work undertaken by the group has ranged from regulatory inspections such as food safety, through to drop-in sessions providing advice and guidance to residents on cost and energy efficiency measures.

Housing Services specifically have continued to respond to the increased numbers of households that are presenting as homeless by, where possible, utilising external funding streams to recruit into fixed term posts to meet the additional need presenting and trying to find an appropriate accommodation solution as quickly as we are able.

The team continue to provide homeless households, including those with complex needs and those who face losing their homes, with a safe place to stay. In addition to this the team have successfully secured 1.3 million in grant funding to provide more suitable, self-contained, temporary accommodation for residents facing homelessness.

The Community Services team has employed a Welfare Support co-ordinator to bring together Council and external services to support residents through the continued cost of living crisis. This has resulted in new webpages, a series of roadshow events, the setting up of a fuel bank, support for Warm Spaces and successful bids for funding to provide Beat the Chill services.

Our aim to ensure compliance with the Serious Violence Duty has seen the refocusing of the Childrens Worker services to provide preventative input in schools (wellbeing, inclusion, healthy relationships, ASB Busters, Healing Together and Safety Crew) alongside their regular therapeutic work, commissioning of LCFC to provide Leicester City in the Community sports sessions and commissioning targeted work at several hotspot locations.

The Community Safety team has also been involved in several prosecutions for breaches of Community Protection Notices which has been an additional draw on staff time.

There has been a backdrop to our services of heightened community tensions throughout the year with increased risk arising from the current Israel/Hamas situation

and earlier in the year, the threat of activism from far-right groups related to the war in the Ukraine and immigrant accommodation issues.

The Environmental Health team have managed to get back onto the full inspection programme well within the target date set by the Food Standards Agency, ensuring standards of food and health & safety within the district are being effectively monitored. In addition to the routine work Environmental Health have also been heavily involved in the Homes for Ukraine scheme ensuring that all houses participating in the scheme meet the required standard.

The Environmental Services team have continued to undertake monitoring and work towards a new, long term management plan for the Huncote site whilst delivering the new Car Parking Strategy, and the DEFRA grant funded projects.

The Green Officer has continued to work as the lead officer for Solar Together for the County and supported external funding opportunities for future green projects. Alongside this the Green Officer has applied for grant funding and installed workplace EV chargers at the main offices and worked with other services on the electrification of the fleet and the depot. The Green Officer has also delivered members masterclass training and launched an updated Net Zero Action Plan.

A key priority across the portfolio areas of Net Zero, Community Safety and Housing in the coming year will be to maximise the external funding opportunities to deliver key priorities and services.

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Les Phillimore

**Senior Officer: Environmental Health, Housing & Community Services
Group Manager**

Portfolio Total

Housing, Community and Environmental Services - Total	2023/24 Approved Budget	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2024/25 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£2,233,397	£2,275,176	£2,391,150	£157,753 7.06%	£115,974 5.10%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£775,332	£2,287,790	£1,159,652	£384,320 49.57%	-£1,128,138 -49.31%
3. Direct Income	-£1,029,773	-£1,300,678	-£1,264,291	-£234,518 22.77%	£36,387 -2.80%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£1,978,956	£3,262,288	£2,286,511	£307,555 17.31%	-£975,777 -28.84%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	48.17	50.17	48.01	-0.16 0.33%	-2.16 -4.31%

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This portfolio incorporates the establishment and operational costs in respect of Housing, Community Services, and Environmental Health & Services. The establishment budget for 2023/24 allowed for a 3% pay award. Following protracted negotiations, a flat rate increase of £1,925 for employees on grades 1 to 9 has been agreed with the trade unions. The nationally agreed pay award for Chief Executives and Chief Officers was 3.5%.

The revised estimate for establishment allows for additional posts in Community Services and Housing Services. In Community Services, this relates to a fixed term post that has been removed for 2024/25. Homelessness Prevention Grant from central government is covering a fixed term post in Housing Services. The Licensing Team have transferred from Environmental Services to Environmental Health following a management restructure that was approved in 2022/23. Other Gross Direct Expenditure has increased in 2023/24, partly because of unspent budget brought forward from 2022/23, and partly because of homelessness pressures. Increasing numbers of families and individuals presenting as homeless continue to require bed and breakfast accommodation, although around 70% to 75% of the additional cost is met from housing benefit.

Direct income has increased due, mainly, to additional homelessness grant receipts and housing benefit contributions towards the cost of bed and breakfast accommodation. This is partially offset by a reduction in car parking fees and charges, to reflect a fall in usage since the pandemic.

Environmental Health and Environmental Services

Environmental Health	2023/24 Approved Budget	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2024/25 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£1,031,672	£1,013,821	£1,090,048	£58,376 5.66%	£76,227 7.52%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£311,670	£1,133,070	£290,612	-£21,058 -6.76%	-£842,458 -74.35%
3. Direct Income	-£614,666	-£463,278	-£447,776	£166,890 -27.15%	£15,502 -3.35%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£728,676	£1,683,613	£932,884	£204,208 28.02%	-£750,729 -44.59%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	22.17	22.17	22.01	-0.16 0.72%	-0.16 0.72%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions. The revised estimate reduction is due to a change in hours for the externally funded Air Quality Monitoring Officer.
2. Budget and external funding carried forward from 2022/23 for specific projects is included within the revised estimate.
3. The income budget for car parking has been reduced to reflect the downturn in footfall following the pandemic.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. Minor changes in hours.

Community Services

Community Services	2023/24 Approved Budget	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2024/25 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£421,501	£447,521	£445,858	£24,357 5.78%	-£1,663 -0.37%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£36,615	£178,380	£35,100	-£1,515 -4.14%	-£143,280 -80.32%
3. Direct Income	£0	-£13,100	£0	£0 0.00%	£13,100 -100.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£458,116	£612,801	£480,958	£22,842 4.99%	-£131,843 -21.51%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	8.50	9.50	8.50	0.00 0.00%	-1.00 -10.53%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions. The revised estimate includes a fixed term post which is removed from the budget for 2024/25.
2. One off budget provision carried forward from 2022/23 is included in the revised estimate to fund specific projects.
3. Revised Estimate includes external contributions towards Resident Support service expenses, and youth provision. Neither of these are included in 2024/25 due to uncertainty over external funding.
4. This represents the net impact of the variances listed above.
5. See 1 above.

Housing Services

Housing Services	2023/24 Approved Budget	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2024/25 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£663,008	£696,618	£729,652	£66,644 10.05%	£33,034 4.74%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£425,007	£974,300	£831,900	£406,893 95.74%	-£142,400 -14.62%
3. Direct Income	-£415,107	-£824,300	-£816,515	-£401,408 96.70%	£7,785 -0.94%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£672,908	£846,618	£745,037	£72,129 10.72%	-£101,581 -12.00%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	16.00	17.00	16.00	0.00 0.00%	-1.00 -5.88%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions. The revised estimate includes a fixed term post, funded from the Homelessness Protection Grant which ends in March 2024.
2. Revised includes unallocated Grant funding received in the year and Government grant funding carried forward from 2022/23 to be used for reducing homelessness. Both years reflect a significant increase in bed and breakfast accommodation costs.
3. This represents income from Housing Benefit for households placed in temporary accommodation as well as Government grant funding.
4. This represents the net impact of the variances listed above.
5. See establishment – revised estimate includes fixed term post as per Note 1.

Management & Administration

Group Manager	2023/24 Approved Budget	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2024/25 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£117,216	£117,216	£125,592	£8,376 7.15%	£8,376 7.15%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£2,040	£2,040	£2,040	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
3. Direct Income	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£119,256	£119,256	£127,632	£8,376 7.02%	£8,376 7.02%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	1.50	1.50	1.50	0.00 0.00%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions.
2. No change.
3. No income in respect of this cost centre.
4. Net impact of the variances listed above.
5. No change.

Portfolio Priorities

Housing Services

- Increasing the supply of Affordable Homes.
- Investigate and try to identify a longer-term and more appropriate solution to the current temporary accommodation on offer.
- Provide more self-contained temporary accommodation to reduce the time that families are accommodated in hotels / B&B.
- Provide specialist housing for vulnerable groups.
- Continue to work to prevent homelessness and end rough sleeping.
- Continue to work to minimise the environmental impact of the existing and future housing stock.

Community Services

- Complete the Prevent Action Plan in light of new statutory guidance
- Review the Serious Violence Duty Action Plan annually
- Deliver our Community Safety Partnership Strategy Action Plan
- Support the Community Safety Team in the LLR wide procurement of a new joint ASB recording system
- Procure a case recording system for Community Services.

Environmental Health

- Ensure the statutory food inspection programme is continued to be delivered in line with the Council's Food Safety Service Plan 2023/2024.
- To continue to tackle Envirocrime across the district using marketing campaigns, social media, partnership working and enforcement.
- To review the engagement and enforcement with owners of empty properties within the district.
- To ensure private rented housing sector standards are maintained/improved within the district.
- To promote a positive health and safety culture in workplaces across the district through campaigns of advice and enforcement.
- To ensure that the Licensing service have sufficient capacity to process and service the large increase in licensed taxi drivers and vehicles due to the recent policy changes

Environmental Services

- Continue to deliver the long-term strategy for managing the landfill gas at the Huncote Leisure Centre site, and other sites within the district.
- Implement the objectives of the new contaminated Land Strategy for the district
- Declare a new Air Quality Management Area, Revoke 3 Existing Air Quality Management Areas and develop a new Air Quality Action Plan for the district.
- Continue to implement the objectives of the Car Parking Strategy.

Green Initiatives/Actions

- Deliver our 2030 Net Zero Council Action Plan.
- To maximise external funding opportunities to support local businesses and residents to work towards net zero.

Key points

<p>Doing things differently – plans for the coming year</p>	<p><u>Housing Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To continue to influence housing requirements on major planning applications• Assess temporary accommodation options across the district• Improve housing statistics reporting and information management• Enabling new supported provision within the district• Continue to operate an effective private rented sector service for both tenants and landlords <p><u>Environmental Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliver the required processes to enable us to declare a new Air Quality Management Area• Deliver the required processes to enable us to revoke 3 current Air Quality Management Areas due to a consistent reduction in recorded levels.• Devise and start to implement a new Air Quality Action Plan for the district.• Deliver the 2030 Net Zero Council Action Plan• Deliver the Contaminated Land Strategy <p><u>Community Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To produce the Annual Community Safety Partnership Strategy Action Plan for 2024-25• To maintain compliance with the Serious Violence Duty• To review the Prevent Action Plan• To increase the reach of Community Safety campaigns and messages• To ensure that vulnerable people get the right support, at the right time, in the right way <p><u>Environmental Health:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To continue to deliver the Envirocrime work plan, liaising with colleagues from the Neighbourhood Services Team and partners across the county.• To increase core competencies across a wider range of staff within the team to increase resilience.• To explore opportunities of collaborative working and shared efficiencies.
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Income generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car parks • Licensing for animal health • Taxi Licensing • Permitted process income • Regulatory income • Provision of Accommodation certificates • Food Hygiene Re-Score requests. • Provision of Food Product Export Certificates • Focus on identifying unlicensed HMO's • Seeking to establish Primary Authority agreements where possible with businesses in the district
Capital plans for the portfolio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £40,000 included for routine works to landfill gas monitoring system.

Key Performance Indicators

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2021/22	2022/23	2023/2024 YEAR TO DATE	COMMENTS
Number of cases where homelessness has been prevented	260	287	221	The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) places a duty on the Council to work with applicants for longer to help prevent them from becoming homeless. The figure currently remains consistent with previous years.
Number of homelessness	849	948	706	<p>The total number of homelessness approaches to the Council continues to rise year on year.</p> <p>This figure represents all approaches and takes account of both prevention, relief and main duty cases that the team are managing.</p>
Number of Affordable Houses	77	51	46	Delivery remains consistently slow with overall house building. However we are expecting completions on all affordable schemes which should result in over 100 completions by the end of the financial year.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2021/22	2022/23	2023/2024 YEAR TO DATE	COMMENTS
Number of ASB cases reported in Blaby	687	562	323	These are Police figures of total ASB reported from April 2022 to September 30, 2022 (the most up to date figures available). The trend data is downward for ASB and has been for 4 years both locally and nationally. However, there has been a corresponding rise in the number of crimes reported, particularly following the move out of lockdown. In 20/21 the ASB spikes corresponded to periods where covid restrictions were lifted and there were consequently high number of youth ASB reported. It must be noted that each report is counted although they may refer to the same incident.
Support services (Resident Support/Childrens Worker/Domestic Abuse)– number of people supported		478	222 (year to date)	Figures are to the end of October. Children Workers figures are down due to the work stream being redesigned and a new programme of group work sessions are being run – 20 more sessions are now booked in to run until the end of the year. There were fewer referrals to Domestic Abuse in house services in the early qtrs. of this year, but since a change in the Police working procedures, this has started to pick up although it should also be noted that there has been a reduction in the number of cases referred from our in-house housing service since the Domestic Abuse Act burdens funding was used to strengthen housing related DA support, options and mechanisms directly within the team.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2021/22	2022/23	2023/2024 YEAR TO DATE	COMMENTS
Total number of long-term (6 months+) empty properties in the district. Figures reported on annually in October.	383	269	390	Unusually low figure in Oct 2022. Likely to be primarily due to the impact of market forces when coming out of the covid pandemic. Oct 2023 figure is more comparable with 2020 (413) and 2021 (383).
Number of large fly tipping incidents	812	665	516 (year to date)	At the same point last in 2022 the figure was 438 which represents an increase of 18%. In particular there were more incidents over the summer months in 2023 compared to the corresponding months in 2022.
Number of food premises with a rating of 3 or above (satisfactory)	594 out of 611 relevant food outlets 97.2%	592 out of 611 relevant food outlets. 96.9%	592 out of 611 relevant food outlets. 96.6%	The proportion of compliant food businesses (rating of 3 or above) has been very consistent over the last three years with a difference of just 0.6%. The overall number of registered food businesses has dropped since April 21 which is in part due to officers regularly reviewing the food register to make sure it is up to date.

Customers:

- Community Services carry out an annual Community Safety Partnership survey asking residents for their views on how safe the district is and what their community safety priorities are.
- Licensing have and will be continuing to consult on changes in Policies and Practices within the Licensing function.
- Information on how many ASB reviews and their outcomes are now on the website and the approach is continuing to be reviewed.

Risks:

- Recruitment and retention of qualified staff.
- Lack of temporary accommodation and appropriate temporary accommodation options.
- Impacts of the rising costs such as energy, food, maintenance etc on businesses within the districts and their standards.
- Introduction of new legislation or workstreams that increases the workload of the teams.
- Lack of affordable housing will increase homelessness.
- Any reduction in the homelessness grant funding will impact on service delivery.
- The increase in homelessness cases has and will continue to impact on the availability of temporary accommodation within the district which is further impacted by the homes for the Ukrainian scheme and resettlement programmes.
- Lack of supported provision for single households with complex needs will increase the time some people stay in temporary accommodation.
- A reduction in affordable housing funding or strategic partnership funding will impact upon new affordable housing for both general needs and supported accommodation.
- Lack of land availability or suitability for Registered Providers to acquire land will result in a drop in new affordable housing units and available public subsidy being repositioned elsewhere.
- Key personnel leaving or reducing their hours within the key frontline services currently experiencing very high demand.