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**REPORT TO: ECONOMIC GROWTH, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE ON 8 JUNE 2021**

**SUBJECT: PERFORMANCE REPORT (HOUSING AND PROPERTY SERVICES) – PERIOD TO MARCH 2021**

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND FINANCE)**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the performance of the service for the period from 1 January to 31 March 2021.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to the Economic Growth, Housing and Environmental Sustainability Committee following a decision of Moray Council on 17 June 2020 to agree a simplified committee structure as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in the case of this committee the combining of the delegated responsibilities of (Economic Development and Infrastructure, Community Services (Housing and Property) and Finance (budget, capital and revenue monitoring) (para 9 of the minute refers).

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 **It is recommended that Committee scrutinises performance in the areas of Service Planning, Service Performance and other related data to the end of March 2021:**
- (i) **notes the actions being taken to improve performance where required.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 On 7 August 2019, the Moray Council, approved a revised Performance Management Framework for services (para 5 of the minute refers).

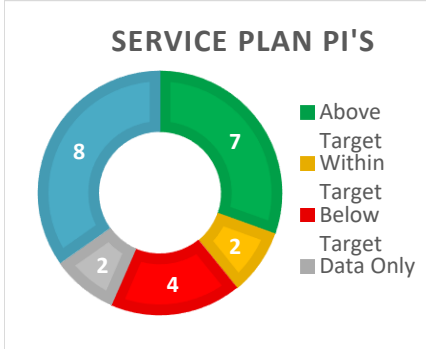
**4. SERVICE PLANNING**

- 4.1 Each service plan sets out the planned strategic and service level priorities and outcomes it intends to deliver in the coming year aligning closely with financial planning, corporate and community planning partnership strategic priorities. This report provides an interim update on progress on the service plan, key outcomes and performance indicators. Committee is invited to

review progress to secure assurance that is satisfactory and to provide scrutiny and further direction where performance requires attention.

- 4.2 The narrative included is by exception, however links to backing tables for all Housing and Property Services [Service Plan Actions](#) and [Performance Indicators](#) are provided.

SERVICE PLAN PRIORITIES		RAG
STRATEGIC LEVEL	Assess and respond to the housing needs of older people in partnership with IJB.	35%
	Prepare a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.	100%
	Investigate and better understand the reasons for poor satisfaction rates as identified in Best Value Audit	30%
SERVICE LEVEL	Ten actions - 3 overdue	45%
RECOVERY & RENEWAL	Work to progress provision of employment land and industrial units in Forres and expansion or development of industrial units in Speyside/east of Moray	26%
<b>OVERALL PLAN PROGRESS</b>		<b>42%</b>
<b>Comment</b> Progress is measured over the 3-year plan period. Annual progress is measured by milestone achievements. At the end of year 1 the plan is on target.		



**SERVICE PLAN PI'S**

- Above Target
- Within Target
- Below Target
- Data Only

### Strategic Outcomes - successes

- 4.3 The Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030 and Action Plan were approved at the meeting of Moray Council on 10 March 2021 (item 12 of the Agenda refers) where the next steps were then set out. (**ACTION** HPS20-22.S4.2.1).

### Strategic Outcomes – challenges and actions to support

- 4.4 The other 2 strategic outcomes remain on track (**ACTIONS** HPS20-22.S4.1.1, S4.3.1).

### Service Level Outcomes - successes

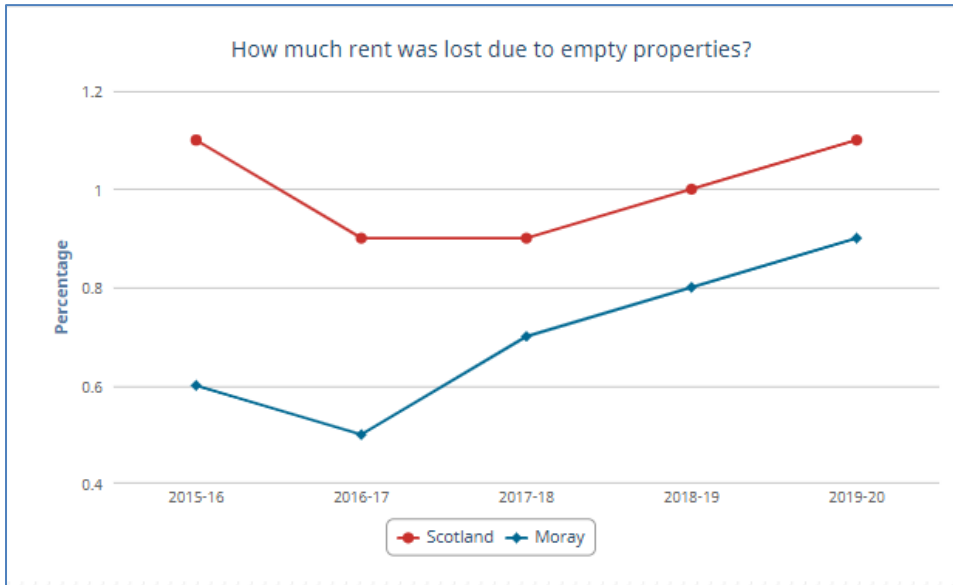
- 4.5 Providing an adequate supply of affordable housing in Moray is making excellent progress. The target of 102 new affordable houses, 30% of which were to be specialist housing, was met. Furthermore, the target to deliver 50 new council houses each year is on track, with 164 completions projected over the next 3 years; 79 houses are currently under construction (**ACTIONS** HPS20-22.S5.01.1.1, 01.1.2, 01.1.4).
- 4.6 There has been a marked improvement in customer satisfaction in respect of response repairs. The latest performance information available for quarter 3 shows that 100% (324 customers) expressed satisfaction with the service during this period. The service reduced to emergency only repairs between April and September 2020 and from January 2021, as a result, responses are

low; but to date 99% (633 out of 637) of customers have provided positive feedback. Despite the restrictions in place, the service continued to complete emergency repairs within the 4-hour target and non-emergency repairs within the 10-day target and all repairs appointments in the reporting quarter were kept. (**ACTION** HPS20-22.S5.06.1.2 **INDICATORS** H2.7, H2.8 & H2.12).

### **Service Level Outcomes – challenges and actions to support**

- 4.7 The restrictions that have been put in place to control the spread of COVID-19 have impacted on the progress of the following priorities.
- 4.8 Delivery of the programme to implement the Scottish Government funding allocation of £9.633m has been delayed; at the end of quarter 4, expenditure was £6.842m (**ACTION** HPS20-22.S5.01.1.3).
- 4.9 Two of the actions contributing to transforming the approach to address homelessness have stalled. The Council increased its temporary accommodation stock to meet increased demand in the numbers of homeless people, including rough sleepers, presenting. This ensured demand was met but, as a consequence, the annual target of reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation by 10 could not be achieved. Despite the increases, just 2.3% of temporary or emergency accommodation offers were refused and of those households homeless in the last 12 months, all were satisfied with the accommodation provided. Similarly, the service has been unable to appoint three Housing Support Workers required to support tenancy sustainment but hope to appoint within the next 6 months (**ACTIONS** HPS20-22.S5.02.1.1, HPS20-22.S5.02.1.3 **INDICATORS** H4.7, H4.8, H4.9).
- 4.10 Improving the management of void Council houses has slipped due to a slowdown in allocations and utility issues in voids, albeit there has been improvement on previous quarterly results, the average time to re-let empty properties was 61 days against a target of 32 days. Rent loss due to voids has risen to 1.24% as at February 2021, again due to the delays in allocations. Recently published Local Government Benchmarking Framework results show that in 2019/20, rent loss due to voids at 0.9% remained below the national average of 1.1%, although the loss to Moray Council has been rising steadily each year from 0.5% in 2016/17 (Figure 1). In 2019/20 Moray had the second highest loss due to voids out of the 8 councils in our family group. Only Angus at 2.3% losses was higher, although no data was reported by Argyll & Bute or Scottish Borders. A Change Management Plan has been implemented within the service on 7 June 2021 with a focus on improving responsibilities and procedures within the void process. The implementation will be monitored to assess continuous improvement until the COVID restrictions are fully lifted. (**ACTION** HPS20-22.S5.05.1.1, S5.05.1.2 **INDICATORS** HS.4, HS.6).

Figure 1 (Local Government Benchmarking Framework data)



- 4.11 A report against the Improvement Action Plan to make the best use of the Council’s property assets was due to be submitted to this committee at its meeting on 16 February 2021. The Office Review has been redrafted to take account of the impact of the roll out of ICT equipment and the expected new ways of working. The draft Depot Review has been circulated and agreed by senior officers and a business plan will now be developed for each proposal. The Head of Education Resources & Communities is recruiting to her team to progress the School Asset Management Plan. An update of the Property Asset Management Appraisal is due to be submitted to Full Council 30 June 2021 (**ACTION** HPS20-22.S5.10.1.1).
- 4.12 In 2019/20, 90.7% of housing stock met the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) against a national average of 94.9%, achieving a ranking of 24<sup>th</sup> of 26 councils reporting results. In 2014/15 and 2015/16 all of Moray’s housing stock met the standard, but since then there has been a gradual decline in the compliant proportion (Figure 2). Those properties failing to meet standard are either already included on a heating replacement contract or will be included in a future works programme. In recent years the quality of housing provided by Scottish councils has been gradually improving, when measured against the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (Figure 3) achieving an average score of 94.9% in 2019/20. However, in 2019/20 Moray recorded the third lowest score (90.7%) of all councils who reported on this indicator (6 councils did not provide data). The significant failing in meeting the SHQS standard relates to achieving the required energy standard and it is recognised that significant investment is required to address this. A review of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan will begin in June 2021 to develop a sustainable investment plan to bring the current stock up to meet the SHQS and continue with a new build programme. The revised Business Plan will be reported to this committee. (**INDICATOR** H2.1).

Figure 2

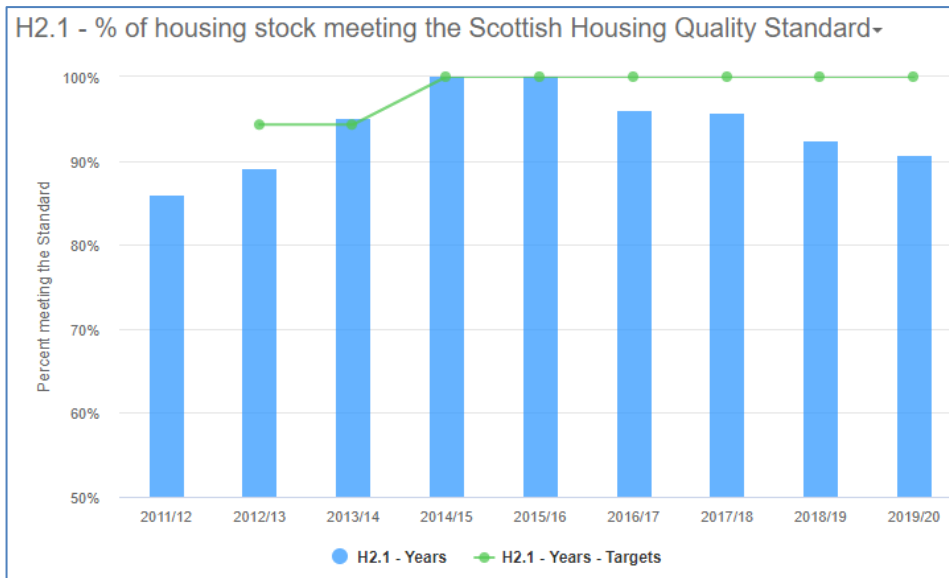
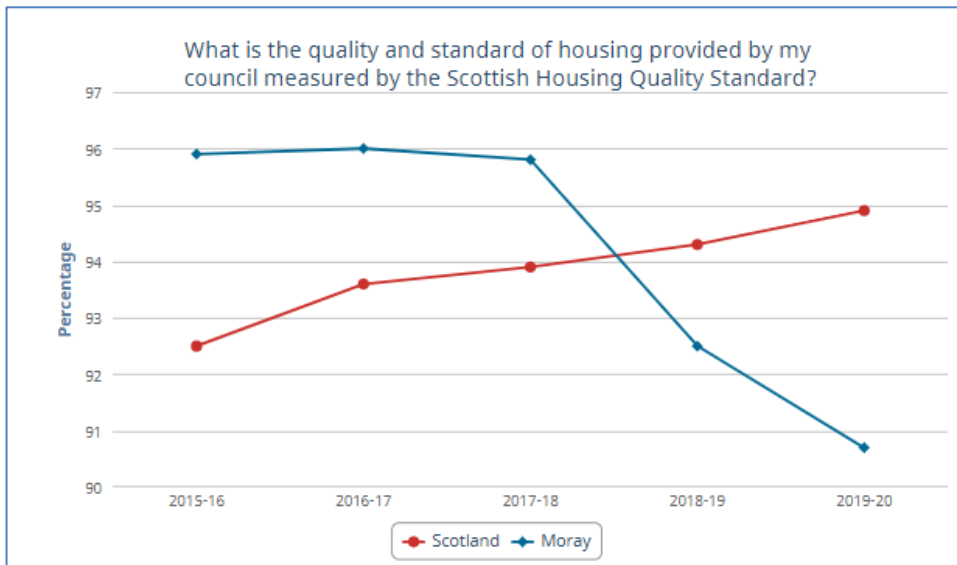


Figure 3



4.13 While the majority of Moray Council's housing stock (54.6%) meets the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH), performance remains below target as illustrated in Figure 4. Comparison shows the result is significantly below the national average (84.1%) ranking as the lowest amongst 26 other local authorities. Targets to improve the energy efficiency of the Council's housing stock have slipped due to suspension during pandemic restrictions. Future work programme outputs will be dependent on stock condition survey report and ongoing restrictions (**INDICATOR H2.2b**). Moray has historically had below the Scottish average proportion of housing stock meeting this standard. Although the proportion in Moray has been rising it has been behind the rate of change across Scotland (Figure 5) so that the gap between Moray and the Scottish average has been growing. This trend was exacerbated in 2019/20 when the proportion of stock in Moray meeting the standard reduced and in 2019/20 Moray had the lowest proportion of the 26 local authorities that provided data for this indicator. A significant investment programme had been planned for 2020/21 on upgrades to improve the energy efficiency of our houses. However, this was impacted by

the COVID restrictions. A continued substantial investment beyond the carried forward 2020/21 programme is required in future years. A review of the HRA Business Plan will begin in June 2021 to develop a sustainable investment plan to bring the current stock up to meet the EESSH standard and continue with a new build programme. The revised Business Plan will be reported to this committee.

Figure 4

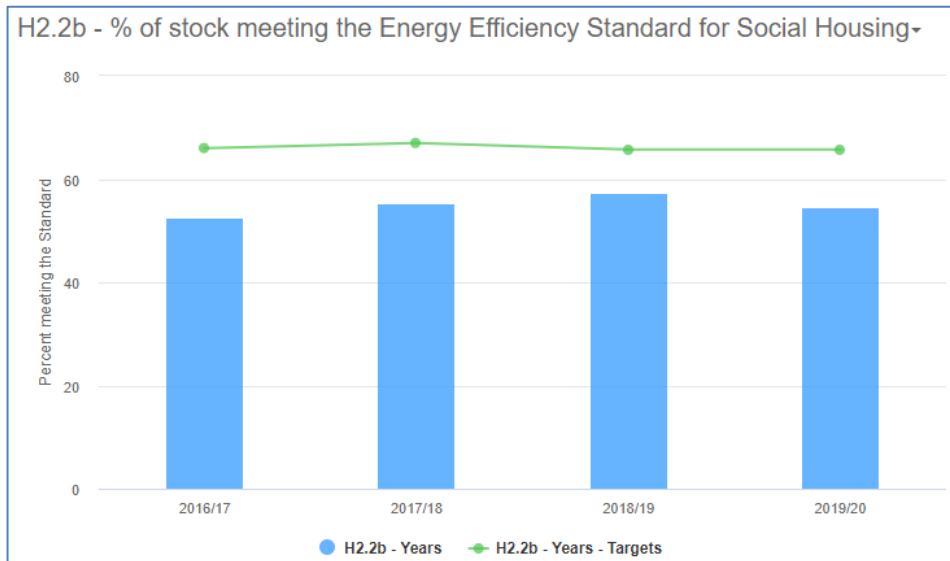
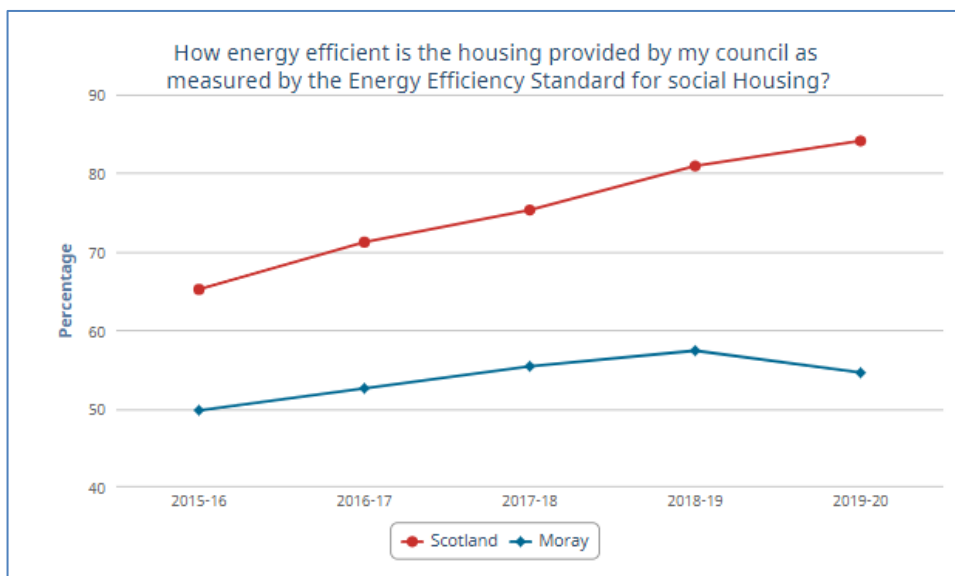


Figure 5



### Recovery and Renewal - successes

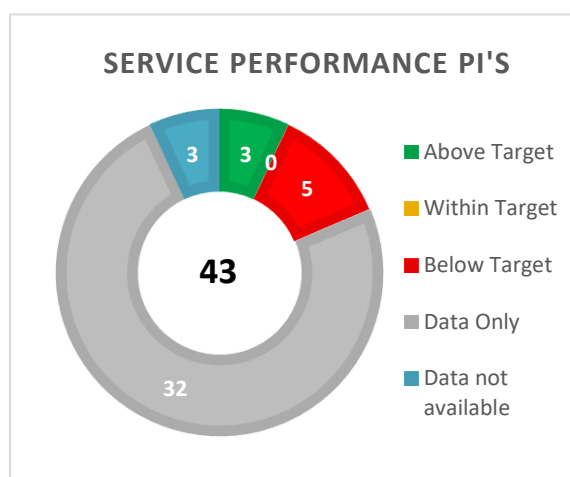
- 4.14 Work to progress the provision of employment land and industrial units in Forres is progressing with potential sites identified and landowners contacted to open negotiations. The timescale to prepare the business case by May 2021 is subject to slippage as the land was only identified in March. (HPS20-22.S6.01.1.1 & 1.2).

## Recovery and Renewal - challenges and actions to support

- 4.15 All other actions relating to increasing employment land in areas of need in Moray are subject to completion of earlier stages.

### 5. SERVICE PERFORMANCE

- 5.1 In line with the Performance Management Framework, operational performance is reviewed quarterly by departmental management. Areas performing well and/or areas subject to a decreasing trend or where benchmarking results show performance significantly below comparators will be reported to this committee for member scrutiny.
- 5.2 Initial publication of 2019/20 Local Government Benchmarking Framework Indicators in February 2021 will be refreshed in early May. The full suite can be viewed using the [My Local Council](#) tool.
- 5.3 Report is by exception, however links to backing tables for all [Service Performance Indicators](#) is provided (results are reported a quarter in arrears so latest data covers the period to December 2020).



### Operational Indicators - successes

- 5.4 There were 4 new unauthorised encampments in the reporting period, all of which were visited within target timescales following a slight dip in performance in the previous quarter (**INDICATOR H6.2**).

### Operational Indicators - challenges and actions to support

- 5.5 Housing applications admitted to the list within 10 days have been significantly below target throughout 2020/21 due to pandemic restrictions, this remains under review. (**INDICATOR H4.15**).
- 5.6 In recent years there has been a change in the groups being allocated homes from Moray Council's stock as illustrated by Figure 4. The proportion of applicants from the homeless list has been increasing gradually, particularly this year given the circumstance described at paragraph 4.9 above. The

percentage of applicants from the waiting list has gradually decreased over time and, despite the uncertainties in the past 12 months, this trend appears to be continuing. The trend over time with applicants from the transfer list is less clear, but the proportion has increased during 2020/21 (**INDICATORS H4.18a, b & c**).

Figure 6



5.7 Rent collection during 2020/21 fell slightly below target (97%) in quarters 2 and 3 (94% and 93.8% respectively). Given the financial implications of the lockdown guidelines, furlough schemes and loss of earning opportunities for many parts of the economy, the reduction in rent collected is perhaps expected. Similarly, gross rent arrears (3.9%) and current tenant arrears (4.5%) as a percentage of rent due were both one percentage point above target as at December 2020. Both indicators routinely achieved target in the quarters before the pandemic and in 2019/20 benchmarking results reported Moray’s performance for gross rent arrears was the lowest against all other authorities so it is anticipated that performance will remain within the top quartile (**INDICATORS H5.2, H5.3, H5.6**).

## 6. OTHER PERFORMANCE RELATED DATA

### Complaints & MP/MSP Enquiries

6.1 In line with the Performance Management Framework, complaints are reviewed quarterly by departmental management in terms of time taken to respond, outcome and learning points. Links to backing tables for all [Service Complaints](#) is provided.

6.2 Fifty-two complaints were received in the quarter to March 2021, of which 33 (62%) were closed at frontline. Twenty-three complaints were upheld (44%) and 13 were partially upheld (25%). 96% of frontline investigations were completed within the target of 5 days; however, on average, frontline complaints took 5.7 days to complete. 87% of investigations were completed within the 20-day target and the average time to close investigations was 17.13 days. Compared to the same quarter last year, the service received slightly less complaints, a greater proportion were closed at frontline and complaint outcomes of upheld or partially upheld were similar.

Thirty-four MP/MSP enquiries were dealt with in the period; during the same period last year 37 such enquiries were dealt with.

### Other Performance (not included within Service Plan)

6.3 Building Services DLO annually submits performance data returns to The Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) that benchmarks its



performance against to other UK local authority Building maintenance providers. The 2019/20 performance figures submitted have been evaluated by APSE and, as a result of the good performance highlighted, Building Services have been nominated as a finalist for the Best Building Maintenance Provider UK award. The award ceremony takes place on 8 June 2021 and a copy of the benchmarking report is available in the Members library for viewing. This is an excellent achievement, which shows that our Building Services DLO continues to maintain good performance in a number of key activity areas and provides national recognition for the Council and service.

### **Case Studies**

- 6.4 The service recently dealt with two major gas outage incidents (2 & 3 February and 5 & 6 March 2021) that affected 461 tenants with gas central heating in the Keith and Newmill areas. The housing service response included calling and offering assistance to all tenants (over 1,000 temporary heaters were provided over both incidents) and assisting Scottish Gas Networks (SGN) to safely isolate and restore services to all properties affected, by way of 12 Gas Engineers redeployed to assist both incidents. Staff responded well and over 1,150 hours was spent dealing with both incidents in challenging weather conditions in the first outage and at very short notice over a weekend on the second incident.

### **Consultation and Engagement**

- 6.5 During December 2020 and January 2021, tenants were consulted on a range of options for the Council house rent increase for 2021/22. The consultation involved a letter to 5,983 tenants with a questionnaire and a survey link on the Council's website. The views of the Moray Tenants Forum were also canvassed as part of the consultation. As well as views on the rent increase proposals, the consultation gathered information on the impact of Covid-19 on tenant household finances. The consultation achieved a response rate of just over 10% of households, more than double the rate of the 2020/21 consultation. The Council took account of findings of the survey when setting the Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2021/22.thing to report.

## **7. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

### **(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))**

Performance measurement is used to ensure the efficient and sustainable delivery of services to meet the Council's priorities in both the Corporate Plan and the LOIP.

### **(b) Policy and Legal**

The Council has a statutory requirement to publish a range of information that will demonstrate that it is securing best value and assist in comparing performance both over time and between authorities where appropriate.

**(c) Financial implications**

None.

**(d) Risk Implications**

None.

**(e) Staffing Implications**

None.

**(f) Property**

None.

**(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact**

An Equality Impact Assessment is not required as this report is to inform the Committee on performance.

**(h) Consultations**

The Acting Head of Housing and Property Services, Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) and Service Managers have been consulted with any comments received incorporated into this report.

**8. CONCLUSION**

**8.1 As at the end of March 2021, 14 Service Plan outcomes were due to complete, 11 have been achieved and the overall plan is 42% complete.**

**8.2 It is clear however, that the restrictions introduced to control the spread of COVID-19 have impacted upon performance. This has been a challenging year for the service having to juggle demand with the ability to undertake work while remaining compliant with lockdown restrictions as well as adapting to new ways of working away from the office.**

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Background Papers: Held by Author

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