



North Tyneside Council

Housing Sub Committee

Friday, 13 November 2020

Monday, 23 November 2020 This meeting will be conducted using video conferencing technology. A live stream of the meeting will be available via the link below.
commencing at 6.00 pm.

Agenda Item	Page
<p>1. Apologies for Absence</p> <p>To receive any apologies for absence.</p>	
<p>2. Appointment of Substitute Members</p> <p>To be notified of the appointment of any Substitute Members.</p>	
<p>3. Declarations of Interest</p> <p>You are invited to declare any registerable and/or non-registerable interests in matters appearing on the agenda, and the nature of that interest.</p> <p>You are also invited to disclose any dispensation in relation to any registerable and/or non-registerable interests that have been granted to you in respect of any matters appearing on the agenda.</p> <p>Please complete the Declarations of Interests card available at the meeting and return it to the Democratic Services Officer before leaving the meeting.</p>	
<p>4. Minutes</p> <p>To consider the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2020.</p>	5 - 6
<p>5. Budget Update - Impact of Covid</p> <p>To receive a presentation setting out the impact that Covid has had on the Housing budget.</p>	
<p>6. Homelessness</p>	

Members of the public are entitled to attend this meeting and receive information about it. North Tyneside Council wants to make it easier for you to get hold of the information you need. We are able to provide our documents in alternative formats including Braille, audiotape, large print and alternative languages.

To receive a presentation on the current position with homelessness in the Borough and measures in place to provide support during the Covid pandemic.

Circulation overleaf ...

Members of the Housing Sub Committee

Councillor Linda Darke
Councillor Andy Newman (Chair)
Councillor Matthew Thirlaway
Councillor Linda Bell
Councillor Erin Parker-Leonard
Councillor Matt Wilson

Councillor John Hunter
Councillor Alan Percy
Councillor Joan Walker
Councillor Pam McIntyre
Councillor Frances Weetman
vacancy

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Housing Sub Committee

Monday, 27 January 2020

Present: Councillor A Newman (Chair)
Councillors L Darke, John Hunter, A Percy, M Reynolds,
M Thirlaway, J Walker, L Bell, P McIntyre, E Parker-
Leonard and M Wilson

Apologies: Councillors F Weetman

HO15/19 Appointment of Substitute Members

There were no substitute members appointed.

HO16/19 Declarations of Interest

Councillor M Thirlaway declared a non-registerable personal interest in Item 5, Empty Homes 'Moving In' and 'Moving Out' Standards, as his father works for North Tyneside Council repairs and maintenance service.

HO17/19 Minutes

It was agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

HO18/19 Empty Homes 'Moving In' and 'Moving Out' Standards

The sub-committee received a presentation which set out the background to previous reviews of the empty homes 'moving in' and 'moving out' standards, proposals for carrying out a further review and how members could become involved in this.

It was noted that a full review of the moving in and moving out standards was carried out in 2015. This incorporated the challenges for local authority housing that emerged from the Welfare Reform Act 2013. A further review was undertaken in 2017 by Elected Members and tenants, which included pre and post inspections of properties to ensure that quality standards were being met and a refresh of the tenant satisfaction surveys.

Members were informed that in April 2017 there were around 450 properties empty which had an impact on rental income. At 31st March 2020 this had fallen to below 200 properties and to date there were 124 empty properties in North Tyneside. This equated to less than 1% of the overall housing stock and it was noted that a lot of work had been done to reduce the number of empty homes.

Following the transition of the repairs service back to the management of the local authority, it was timely to carry out a further review of the moving in and out standards. Members

were invited to get involved in this review and were informed of 2 dates in February 2020, one of which where property inspections would take place and a further date where data collected would be discussed. It was highlighted that the focus on discussions would be new tenant repairs, the gifting of improvements, self-help and satisfaction and complaints.

Members indicated their interest in being involved in property inspections going forward. It was suggested that the logistics of this could be discussed at one of the sessions in February and that with over 25 inspections taking place per week, it would not be feasible for members to attend every inspection, especially as quite often they would be carried out at short notice. It was clarified that, although members had not been invited to property inspections since 2017 as part of the Empty Homes review, these had still routinely been carried out by officers.

A member asked if the outcome of the review would be brought back to the sub-committee at a future date, as there would be some members that would not be able to attend the inspections and further discussions during the day. Officers confirmed that the issues identified as part of the review and the proposals for what the new standards will look like would be reported to the sub-committee. It was suggested that, as a number of members from the Housing sub-committee could not attend meetings during the day, the invitation to attend the sessions as part of the review of the empty homes standard be circulated to all members of the Council.

It was **agreed** to note the presentation and the opportunities for Members to contribute to the review of the empty homes standards.

Housing Neighbourhood Services

The effects of Covid-19 on the
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

Background – Government

- Wednesday 18th March 2020 the Government announced a complete ban on evictions and new possession cases during the coronavirus emergency.
- The Government took early steps to introduce legislation to require landlords to give three months' notice of their intention to seek possession of a property as opposed to the standard 4 week notice (social council tenants)
- This meant that it would be three months before a landlord could apply to the court to proceed with any possession action. The legislation was that all notices issued between the dates of 26 March 2020 and 30 September 2020 inclusive (although this period can be extended if needed).
- 29th August 2020 brought further changes into the regulations requiring landlords to give tenants six months' notice of their intention to seek possession, except in the most serious cases (those that had the previous three months notice was still valid)



Background – North Tyneside

- Stopped new cases going to Court and any that had dates set for court hearings we asked the courts to adjourn/suspend.
- Cancelled all arrears letters that mention any reference to taking court action or eviction (suspend rent escalation process)
- Created a new suit of letters
- We created new codes in the management system to capture all cases where our tenants have informed us of financial difficulties due to covid-19. This help us understand the impacts covid-19 has had on arrears.



Support for our tenants

- Discretionary Housing Payment (benefit applicable)
- Poverty Intervention Fund to help Children, Working age adults with Children and Older people
- Hardship fund applicable to all Council tenants
- Water Rates Discount Scheme - Northumbrian Water Scheme that allows a discount of up to 50% of your water rates, depending on your finances
- Employment and Skills Team Referral - For support with employment opportunities and access to increase skills
- Referrals – Citizen Advice Bureau, Council Tax Subsidy, Armed Forces Charity Support

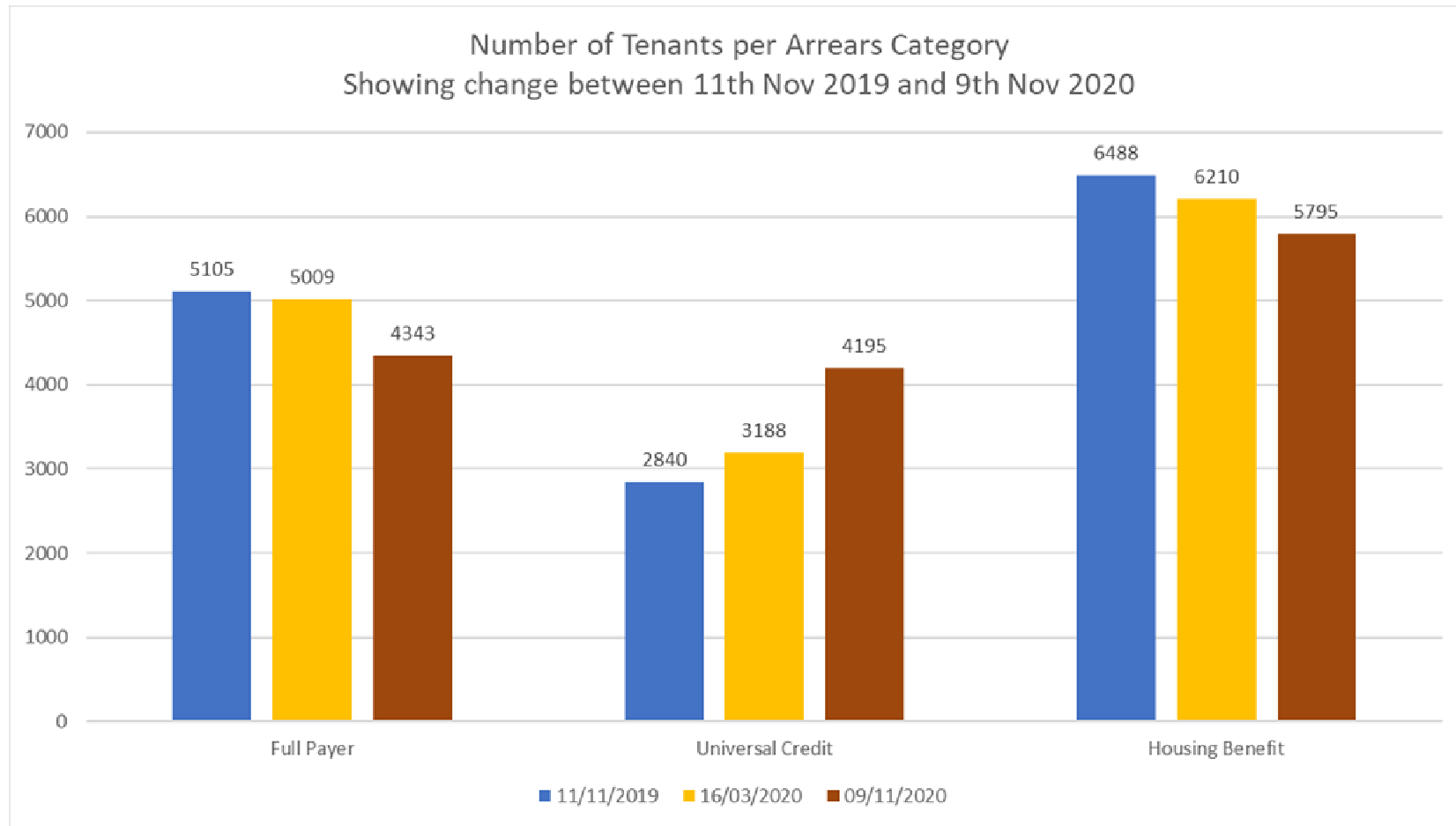


Impacts of Covid-19 on Rents

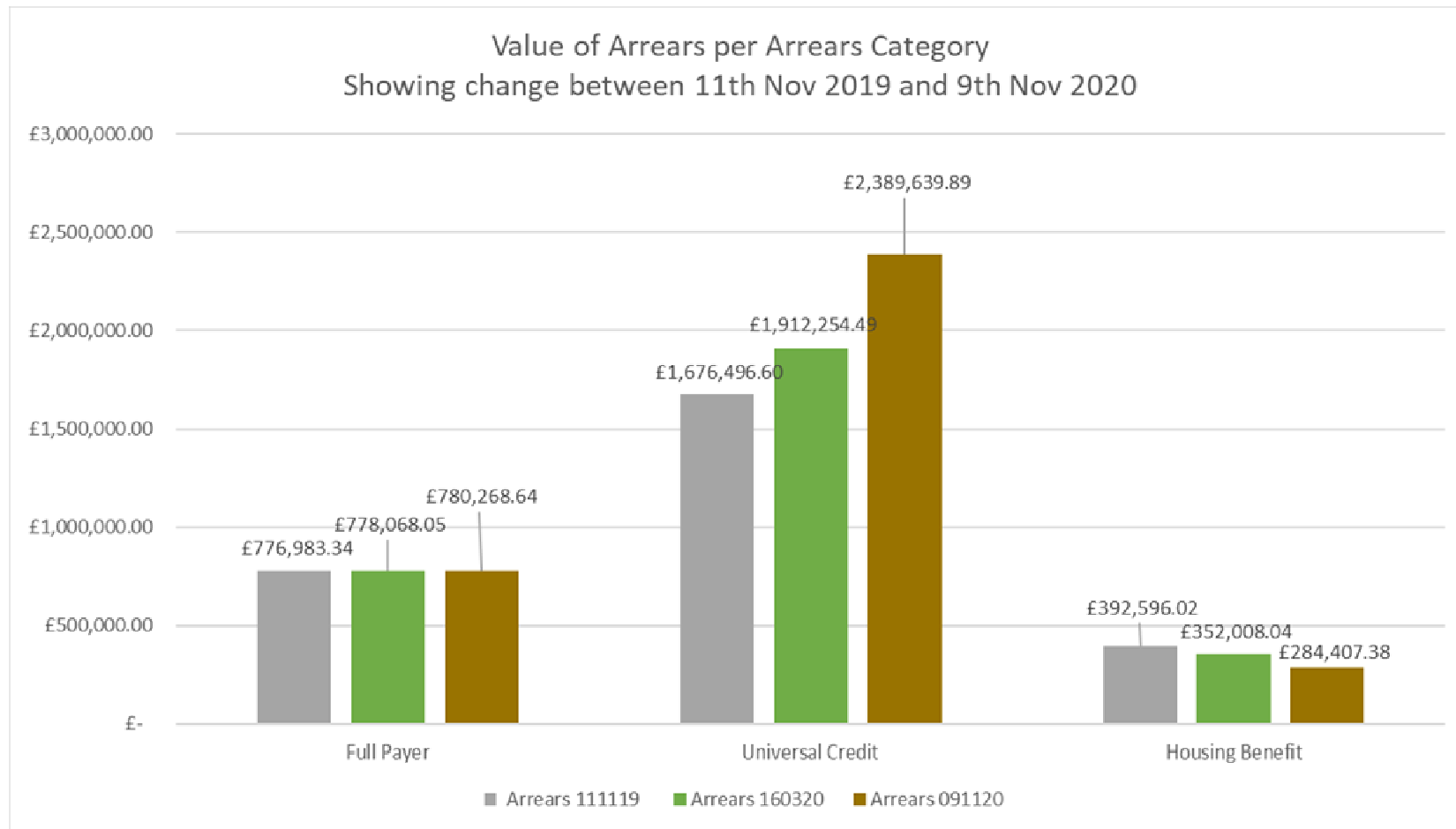
- Arrears have gone up
- Influx of UC case at beginning of lockdown
- Initial impact of rental loss following not being able to let properties
- Enforcement / Legal action



Number of tenants per arrears category



Value of arrears by category



Current Position

- Government Furlough scheme to cover 80 per cent to continue
- Restart the notice seeking possession process to encourage tenants to engage with the Council to make arrangements for repayment of rent arrears.
- Evictions will not be enforced whilst national restrictions are in place
- Evictions will not be enforced by bailiffs until 11 January 2021 at the earliest, except for the most egregious cases such as anti-social behaviour
- Six month notice periods still in place until at least the end of March 2021, except for most serious cases
- To continue to support or tenants to be able to sustain and maintain their tenancy.



Homeless Service

Homeless Numbers

	2020 (March – November)	2019 (March – November)
Homeless presentations	1165	1364
Homeless presentation due to domestic abuse	55	52
Placements to temporary accommodation	227 - 75 dispersed accommodation - 152 B&B	145 -70 dispersed accommodation - 75 B&B
Customers who represented	74	47
Rough sleepers	47	7
Rehoused	190	284

Funding

- 7 grant funded posts:
 - Single Persons Support Officer
 - Homeless Support officer (rough sleeping)
 - Private Sector Officer
 - Housing Options Officer
 - Domestic Abuse Officer
 - 2 x Changing Lives Officers (joint funding with Northumberland County Council)
- RSI (Rough Sleeper Initiative)
 - Mental Health role (CPN)
 - Personalisation Pot



Funding

- Homeless Prevention Grant

- Prevent homeless – eg pay rent arrears, mortgage arrears, rent deposits, transport to return to family

- Next Steps Accommodation Programme

- Awarded £32k revenue to support rough sleepers in emergency accommodation
- Application for capital funding – purchase additional properties & commission support service for entrenched rough sleepers

- Everyone In Initiative (covid related fund)

- Claim for temporary accommodation

- Cold weather fund

- Application to be submitted

Customer Access

- Frontline service at North Shields Customer First Centre (by appointment)
- Introduction of freephone (0800) number
- 24-hour 'out of hour' service
- Dedicated email address
- Referrals via partners



Accommodation

- Dispersed accommodation
 - units increased from 29 to 37
- B&B provision (North Tyneside)
- B&B provision (out of area/ SWEP arrangements)
- Next Steps Accommodation Programme application



Best Practice

- Team briefings
- Specialist posts
- Personal Housing Plan for all presentations
- Person centred plans
- Personalisation pot:
 - Mobile phones
 - Birth certificates, bank accounts, etc
 - Train tickets, rent deposits, boarding kennels, etc
 - 'Wellness pack' (masks, hand sanitiser, food)
- Communication – regular updates to website



Rough Sleepers

- Specialist Housing Advice Officer
 - support up to 6 months once in a tenancy
 - effective move-ons
 - Holistic package
- Partnership work – eg Changing Lives
- Increased placements
- Mobile phones
- ‘Wellness pack’
- Review of winter weather arrangements



Winter Planning

- No legal protections or statutory duty to provide shelter in severe weather
- No strict definition of 'severe weather'.
- Weather conditions considered include:
 - Cold, excessive rain, high winds, wind chill factor, snow, frost.
Chill factor
 - A weather warning within the North Tyneside area



Winter Planning

•Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEPP):

- Operational 1 November – 31 March + other periods of severe weather
- Activated when actual or 'feels like' temperature is forecast to drop to zero degrees or below for 3 consecutive nights or severe weather forecast
- Monitored by Housing Team & provision for out of hours
- Ensure people are not at risk of dying on streets, or no one dies on streets during severe weather
- All rough sleepers have opportunity to access shelter during severe weather
- Every effort to engage with individuals who have been or are rough sleeping
- Operational 1 November – 31 March + other periods of severe weather



Winter Planning

- 'Sit up' service:
 - Provided for last 5 years
 - Delivered by Whitley Bay Street Pastors & volunteers
 - Shelter at local resource hall (up to 6 individuals plus volunteers)
 - Food and refreshments provided
- Revised arrangements (response to covid-19):
 - Verified rough sleepers
 - Single room occupancy provision
 - Bed & Breakfast establishments contacted (within authority & out of area)
 - Mobile phones & wellness packs issued
 - Ongoing review of guidance

Useful contacts

- North Shields Customer First Centre (by appointment)
- Telephone: 0191 643 2520
- Freephone 0800 011 6511
- Email: housing.advice@northtyneside.gov.uk

