

CITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON
COUNCIL

Climate Change, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Panel

7 March 2024

Time 6.00 pm **Public Meeting?** YES **Type of meeting** Scrutiny
Venue Committee Room 3 - 3rd Floor - Civic Centre

Membership

Chair Cllr Anwen Muston (Lab)
Vice-chair Cllr Wendy Dalton (Con)

Labour

Cllr Mary Bateman
Cllr Greg Brackenridge
Cllr Sally Green
Cllr Jeszemma Howl
Cllr Linda Leach
Cllr Barbara McGarrity QN
Cllr Rohit Mistry
Cllr John Reynolds

Conservative

Cllr Stephanie Haynes
Cllr Andrew McNeil

Quorum for this meeting is three Councillors.

Information for the Public

If you have any queries about this meeting, please contact the Scrutiny Team:

Contact Earl Piggott-Smith
Tel/Email earl.piggott-smith@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Address Scrutiny Office, Civic Centre, 1st floor, St Peter's Square,
Wolverhampton WV1 1RL

Copies of other agendas and reports are available from:

Website <http://wolverhampton.moderngov.co.uk/>
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Tel 01902 555046

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Agenda

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 **Welcome and Introduction**
[The Chair to welcome everyone to the meeting]

MEETING BUSINESS ITEMS

- 2 **Apologies**
- 3 **Declarations of interest**
- 4 **Minutes of the previous meeting (22 February 2024) - to follow**
[To approve the minutes of the previous meeting as a correct record]

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- 5 **Wolverhampton Homes – Customer contact and access** (Pages 3 - 60)
[Shaun Aldis, Chief Executive, and Julie Haydon, Director Corporate Services, Wolverhampton Homes, to present report]
- 6 **Development of 2041 Net Zero Strategy** (Pages 61 - 80)
[David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer, and Perminder Belu, Head of Green Cities and Circular Economy, and Simon Oliver, Service Manager – Green Cities, to present report]

Briefing Note

Title: **Wolverhampton Homes**
 – Customer contact and access

Date: 07 March 2024

Prepared by: **Julie Haydon**

Job Title: **Director Corporate Services**

Scrutiny Panel: **Climate Change Panel**

Recommendation(s) for action or decision

The Scrutiny Board/Panel is recommended to note the:

- update in relation to Wolverhampton Homes Customer Contact and Access arrangements, supporting data and performance – following the September 2023 scrutiny briefing. See Appendix 1.
- improvements to customer communication, how we have promoted awareness, and how we continue to use different methods of engagement.
- the Wolverhampton Homes Communication strategy.
- existing arrangements for how Wolverhampton Homes Customer Contact and Access activity is reported to and scrutinised by its shareholder the City of Wolverhampton Council.

Questions for Scrutiny to consider

1. In relation to the identified areas of particular concern or challenge – is the improvement plan working and is it proportionate to the challenge?
2. What have been the improvements and results so far?
3. How do we ensure customers know how to contact us?

Purpose

To update members in relation to the Wolverhampton Homes Customer Contact and Access arrangements which includes Tenants, Leaseholders and those residents of the city / non-residents who access our services including:

- Contact and access arrangements including face to face, telephony and digital
- Contact centre call waiting times / abandonment rates
- Methods of contact
- Learning from complaints
- Customer engagement including the Customer Involvement Panel
- Housing advice to customers based on new regulation (Fire Safety / Damp, Mould, and Condensation)

Background

Wolverhampton Homes manages over 21,000 on behalf of the City of Wolverhampton Council, as an Arms Length Organisation, who undertake the additional delivery of a number of other services on behalf of the City of Wolverhampton Council including Homeless, Anti-Social Behaviour, Out of Hours contact, Home Improvement Agency, and Telecare.

The governance arrangements in place for Wolverhampton Homes reporting arrangements, forms part of the City of Wolverhampton Council governance framework. The framework arrangements are currently under review as part of the City Housing Improvement Programme.

Regulation and Legislation - from a housing perspective, both the council and Wolverhampton Homes are governed by the Housing Regulator with the continued requirement to comply with the Consumer Standards which sit alongside the Social Housing Regulation Act. A review of the standards is underway with the new requirements in place from April 2024.

The standards require landlords to:

- Be open with their tenants and residents
- Treat them with fairness and respect so that they can access services, raise complaints, when necessary
- To be able to influence decision-making and hold their landlords to account.

Progress, options, discussion etc.

Contact and access arrangements including face to face, telephony, and digital touchpoints - Wolverhampton Homes continue to offer a number of contact and access arrangements including face to face, telephony and digital touchpoints. With the launch of the customer App in November 2023, this has seen significant engagement and activity from customers.

With performance under continual review, increases to resources have made to meet demand and the company has shown significant improvements in reducing the call waiting times. Stringent monitoring is undertaken of call waiting times and abandonment rates.

Methods of contact – the company offers a range of contact arrangements including:

- Telephony is provided 24hrs a day / 365 days a year
- App – 24hr access with live chat throughout business hours
- Chatbot – via the website
- In person – both outreach in the community and via Civic Centre 10am to 3pm
- In writing or via contact form on the website

Learning from complaints - themes of contact including those gained from customer complaints are regularly reviewed to inform process and service improvements as these can often be indicators of areas of need / where there are issues arising. Regular review and activity takes place with service leads to ensure the improvement requirements are met.

See Appendix 1 – Customer contact activity and performance

Customer engagement – has seen the establishment of the Customer Involvement Panel, who have been inducted into the business over the last 6 months, with the first meeting taking place in January 2024. Additionally, there has been a redesign of the Community Development team to further bolster the community offer to provide additional opportunity for positive engagement

outcomes for our customers. The team will provide patch based services and are linking in with existing provision to ensure customers are aware

Housing advice – the customer communications plan includes regular updates to customers based on new regulation and factors in season trends (Fire Safety / Damp, Mould, and Condensation).

Next steps:

Future planning in relation to WH leading the change in staff culture and those measures being used to improve the effectiveness of the service:

- Relocation of the contact centre providing additional staff and subject matter expert capacity – completed February 2024
- Customer Experience project linked to wider business activity is underway
- Housing Advice offer - continued joint approach with CWC which may include the use of libraries and community centres to provide local venues.
- Omni-channel implementation – seamless contact and access platform for telephony, digital and online contact across all channels including face to face, mobile and online.
- Tenant and Resident Associations (TRAs) and Leaseholder forum – establishing new and supporting the existing TRAs to increase customer engagement and satisfaction.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Wolverhampton Homes Customer Contact activity and performance (include app activity).

Appendix 2 – Wolverhampton Homes Customer Complaints activity, performance and implementing learnings

Appendix 3 – Customer Engagement plans

Appendix 4 – Communications strategy

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Wolverhampton Homes – Customer contact and access

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Climate Change, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Panel
07 March 2024

Presenters:

Shaun Aldis
Chief Executive

Julie Haydon
Director Corporate Services

[wolverhampton.gov.uk](https://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk)

Recommendations for action

The Scrutiny Panel is recommended to note the:

- update in relation to Wolverhampton Homes Customer Contact and Access arrangements, supporting data and performance, following the September 2023 scrutiny briefing including:
 - Contact and access – face to face, telephony and digital
 - Contact centre – call waiting times / abandonment rates,
 - Methods of contact
 - Learning from complaints
 - Customer engagement including the Customer Involvement Panel
 - Housing advice based on new regulation
- improvements to customer communication, how we have promoted awareness and how we continue to use different methods of engagement.
- Wolverhampton Homes Communication Strategy
- existing arrangements for how Wolverhampton Homes Customer Contact and Access activity is report to and scrutinised by its shareholder.

Purpose and Background

- To update panel members in relation to the Customer Contact and Access arrangements for customers of Wolverhampton Homes which includes Tenants, Leaseholders and those residents of the city / non-residents who access our services.
- Wolverhampton Homes is one of four managing agents across the city responsible for managing the council housing stock on behalf of the city council. Details were presented to Climate Change Scrutiny panel in September 2023 with the request for a six-month update to be presented in March 2024.

Key Questions for Scrutiny to consider:

1. In relation to any areas of particular concern or challenge - is the improvement plan working and is it proportionate to the challenge?
2. What have been the improvements and results so far?
3. How do we ensure customers can contact us?

Key activity

1. Customer contact activity and performance (see Appendix 1)
2. Customer complaints activity, performance and implemented learnings (see Appendix 2)
3. Customer engagement – communications strategy (see Appendix 3)

Key information for Scrutiny

- **Regulation and Legislation** - from a housing perspective, both the council and Wolverhampton Homes are governed by the Housing Regulator with the continued requirement to comply with the Consumer Standards which sit alongside the Social Housing Regulation Act. A review of the standards is underway with the new requirements in place from April 2024.
- **The Consumer Standards** require landlords to:
 - be open with their tenants and residents
 - treat them with fairness and respect so that they can access services, raise complaints, when necessary
 - be able to influence decision-making and hold their landlords to account.

Julie Haydon

Director Corporate Services – Wolverhampton Homes

Julie.Haydon@wolverhamptonhomes.org.uk

07870 363036

wolverhampton.gov.uk

Customer Contact & Access Customer Services

January 2024



Activity - Face to face services delivered at the Civic Centre

| | September | | October | | November | | December | | January | | Total |
|----------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|-------------|
| | Served | Average Waiting Time (mins) | Served | Average Waiting Time (mins) | Served | Average Waiting Time (mins) | Served | Average Waiting Time (mins) | Served | Average Waiting Time (mins) | |
| ASB | 1 | 00:31:24 | 1 | 00:10:50 | 1 | 00:28:12 | 2 | 00:29:19 | 5 | 00:20:12 | 10 |
| Document Submission | 12 | 00:54:17 | 9 | 00:12:19 | 27 | 00:09:00 | 6 | 00:47:33 | 11 | 00:14:36 | 65 |
| Homeless | 176 | 00:42:42 | 289 | 00:23:53 | 332 | 00:15:23 | 220 | 00:27:32 | 398 | 00:14:17 | 1415 |
| Lettings | 144 | 00:41:46 | 163 | 00:19:30 | 166 | 00:14:39 | 210 | 00:26:38 | 291 | 00:13:42 | 974 |
| Neighbourhoods/ Estates | 9 | 00:49:06 | 4 | 00:08:03 | 7 | 00:19:06 | - | - | | | 20 |
| Other | 33 | 00:54:02 | 53 | 00:16:38 | 48 | 00:16:23 | 42 | 00:23:17 | 64 | 00:11:03 | 240 |
| Rent & Arrears | 26 | 00:34:45 | 55 | 00:22:33 | 47 | 00:11:56 | 43 | 00:26:12 | 90 | 00:11:57 | 261 |
| Repairs | 30 | 00:46:53 | 45 | 00:27:10 | 53 | 00:13:17 | 33 | 00:26:16 | 65 | 00:12:26 | 226 |
| Right to buy | 16 | 00:46:36 | 16 | 00:15:17 | 24 | 00:16:00 | 13 | 00:44:37 | 28 | 00:13:46 | 97 |
| Tenancy | 17 | 00:33:50 | 34 | 00:23:10 | 19 | 00:20:43 | 28 | 00:35:26 | 46 | 00:11:29 | 144 |
| | 464 | 00:43:32 | 669 | 00:17:57 | 724 | 00:16:28 | 597 | 00:31:52 | 998 | 00:13:43 | 3452 |

Customer contact

- **Face to face (Civic):**
 - Staffing levels increased to 3 (10am – 3pm)
 - 998 customers with an average wait time of 13 mins 43 secs (wait times improved)
 - Trends - Homeless and Lettings highest volume
 - Continue to support cross service working
- **Telephony**
 - Service redesign
 - Customer journey mapping
- **Digital System development:**
 - Omni-channel (joint implementation with CWC)
 - System development
 - Customer App launched

Customer Contact Centre Redesign

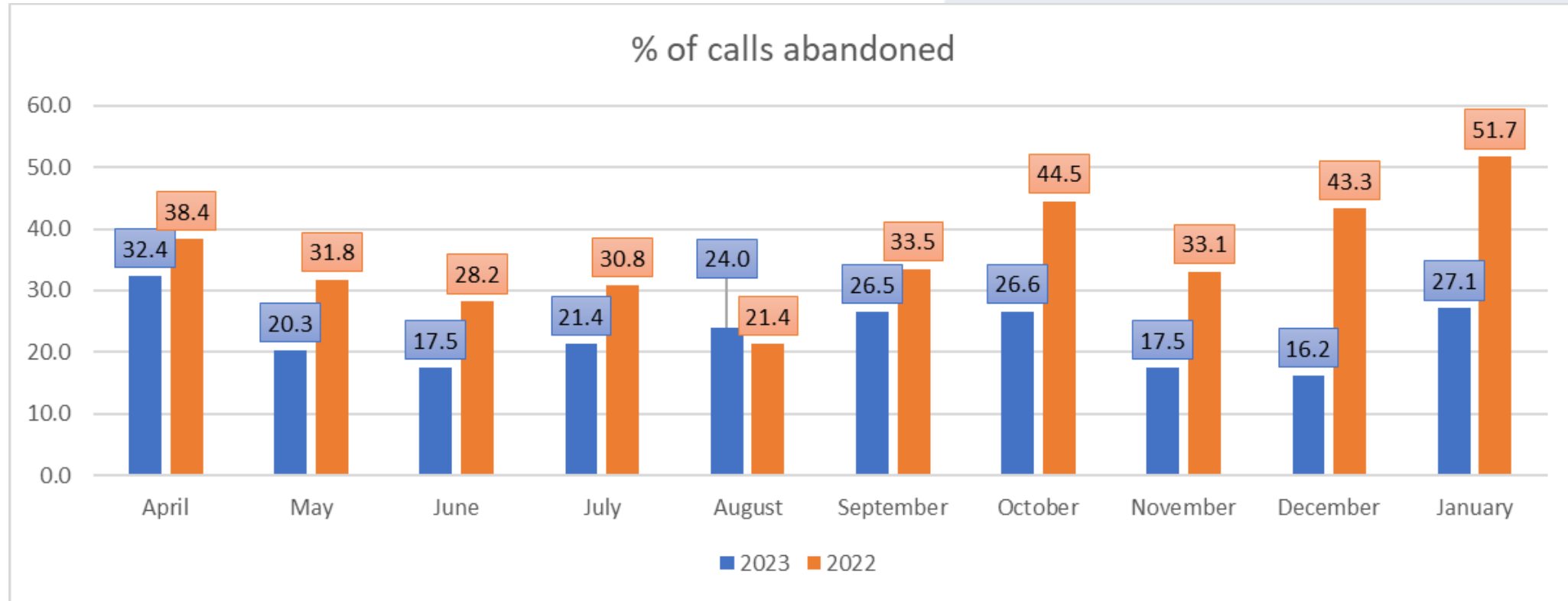
- Recruitment
 - Continued recruitment
 - Resources - 30 FTE
- Redesign
 - Introduction of specialist advisor tier
- Relocation
 - Additional capacity
 - Ergonomics designed for family 'call' groups e.g. Repairs, Homeless, Lettings etc.

Customer contact – telephony (business hours)

- Calls received – January 2024 - received 17,328 calls, this is the highest number of calls received for this financial year
- % of call answered in 80 sec's (target 55%) – 33.4% for January 2024 an improvement of 15.3% compared to the same period the previous year.
- % of calls answered (target 85%) – 72.9% was achieved in January 2024 an improvement of 24.6% compared to the same period the previous year
- % of calls abandoned (target 15%) – 27.1% was achieved in January 2024 an improvement of 24.6% compared to the same period the previous year.
- Average wait for a call to be answered – 9 mins 41 secs was the average for January 2024 an improvement of 10 mins 35 secs compared to the same period the previous year.

Year to date performance

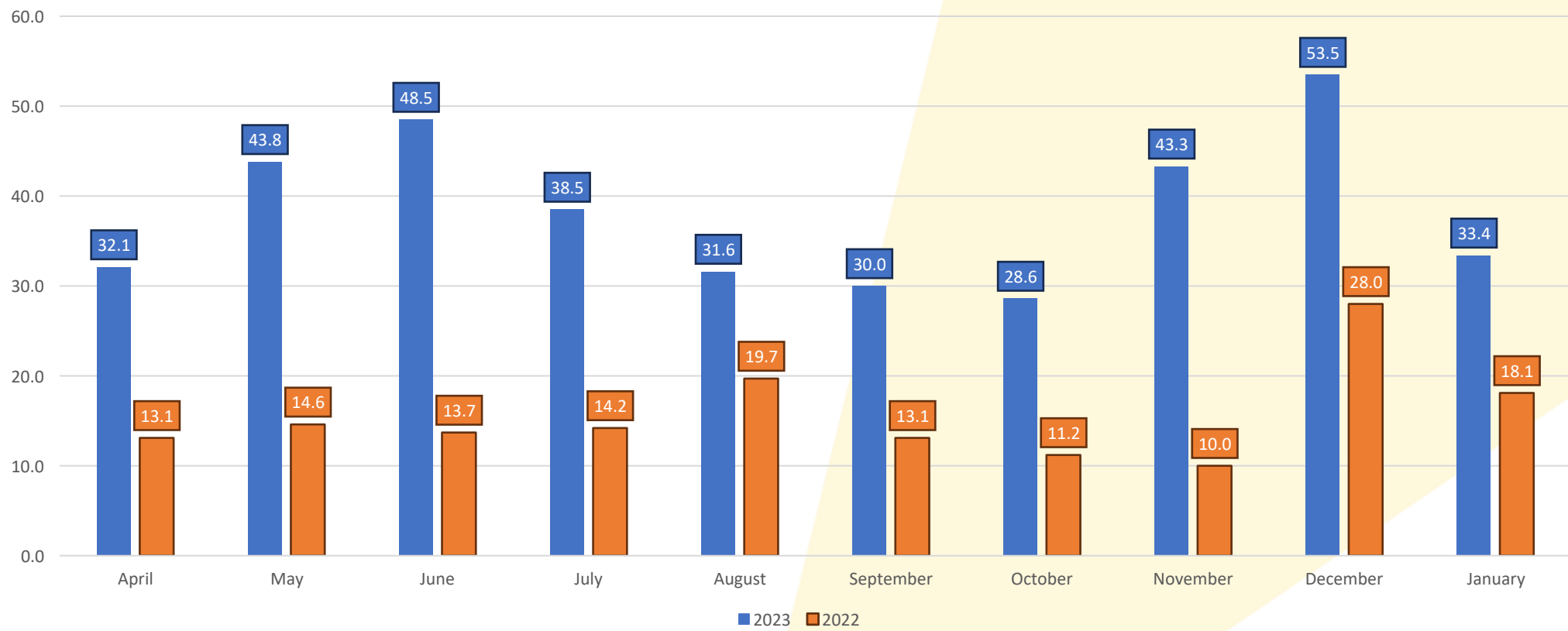
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Year to date performance

Tolerance: 50%
Target: 55%

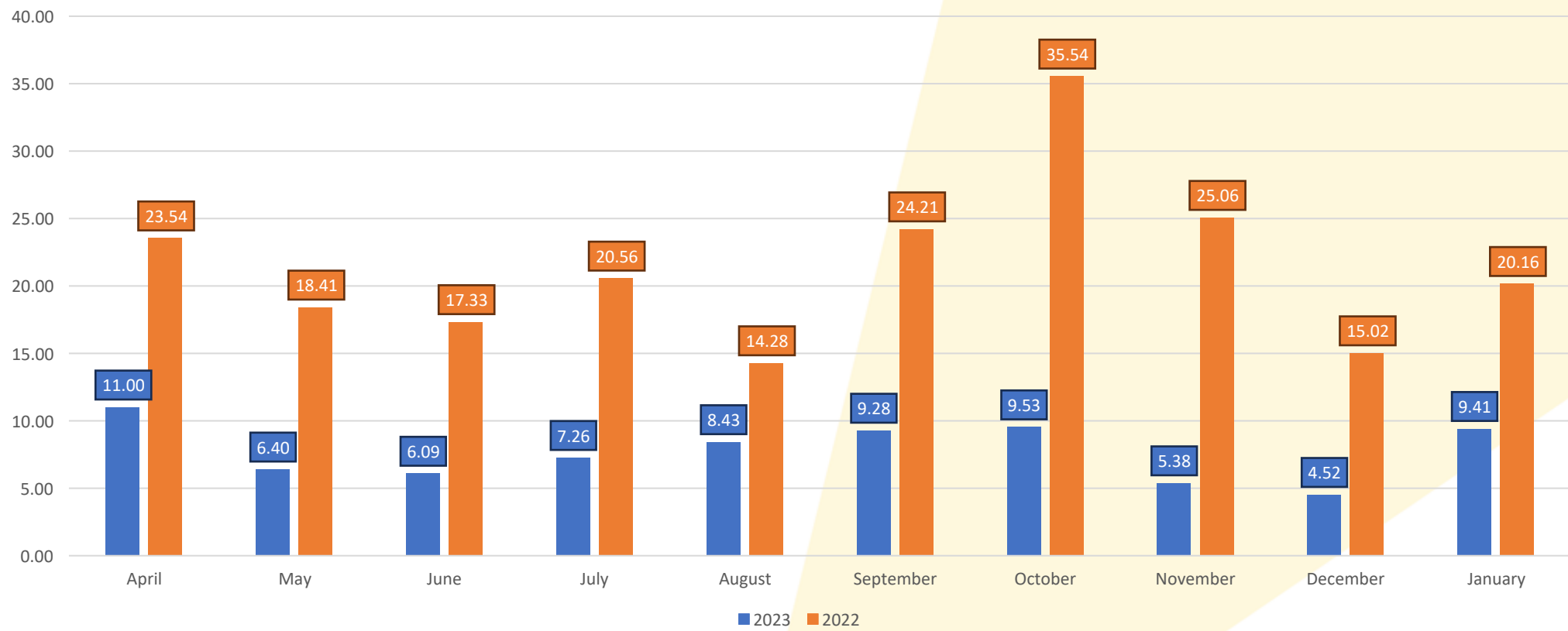
% of calls answered within 80 sec's



Year to date performance

Average wait to be answered (shown in minutes)

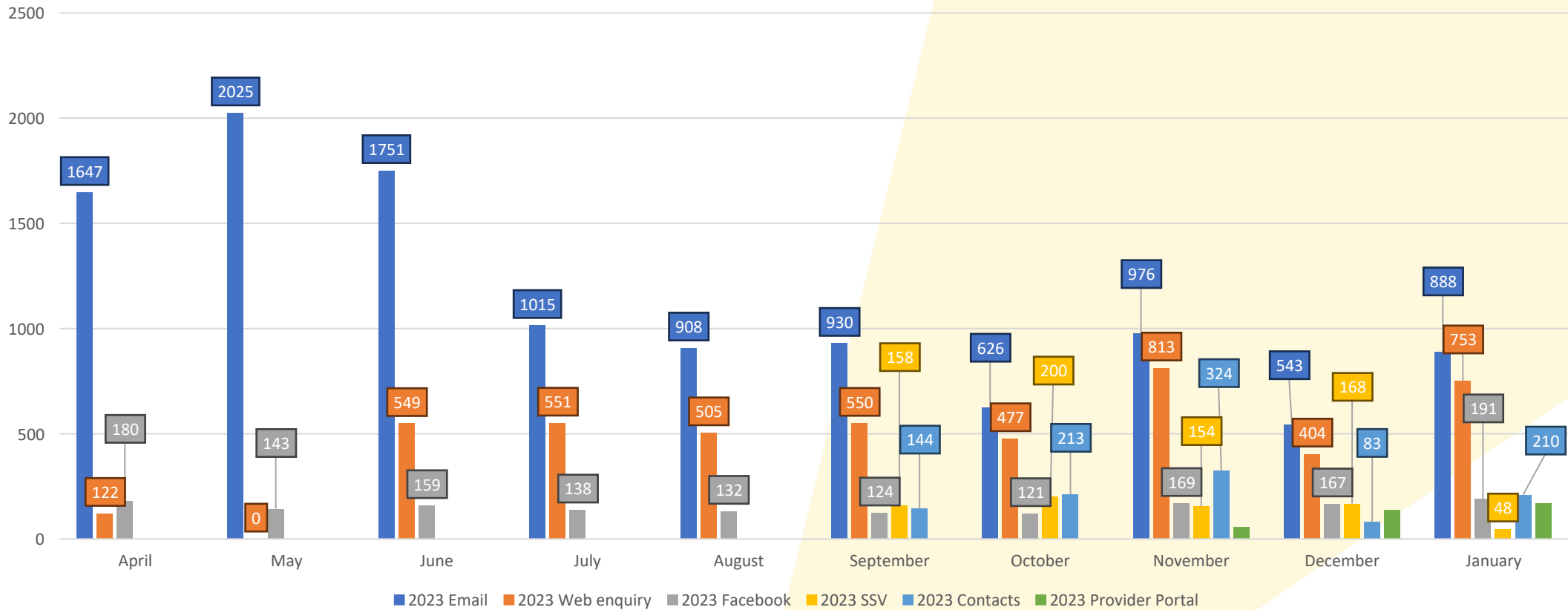
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Digital Correspondence

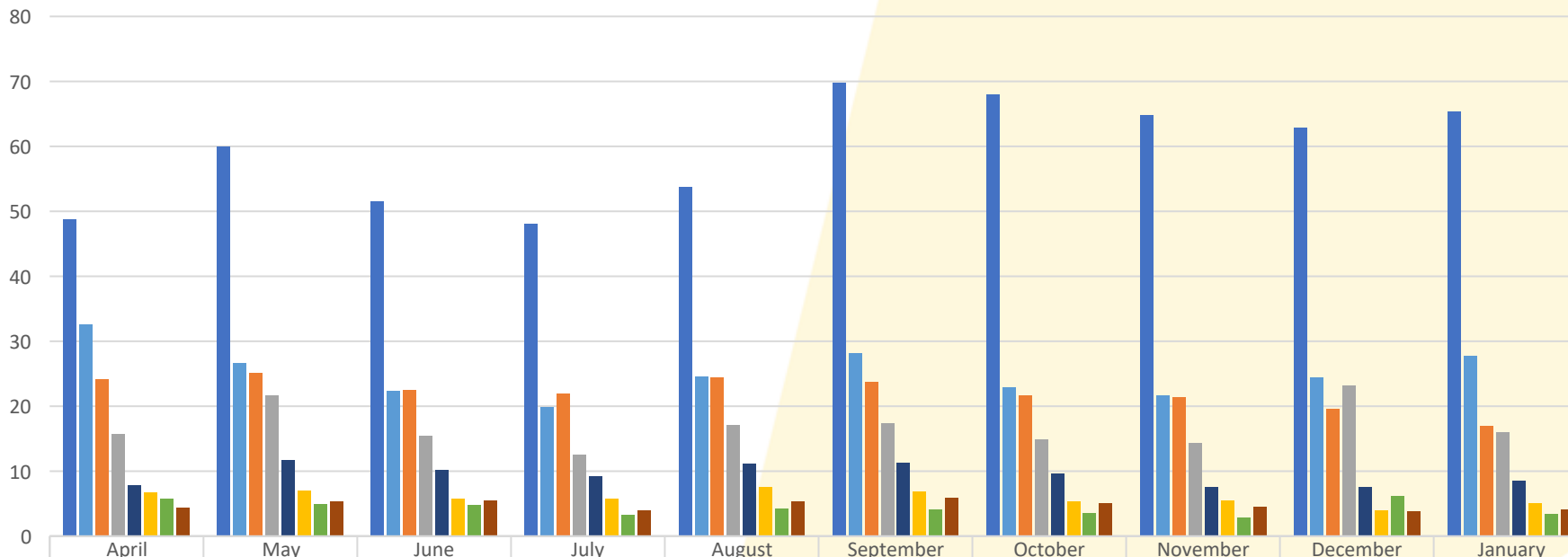
Digital Correspondence

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Call Themes

% of calls per menu option in relation to overall number of calls received



Customer Resolution update

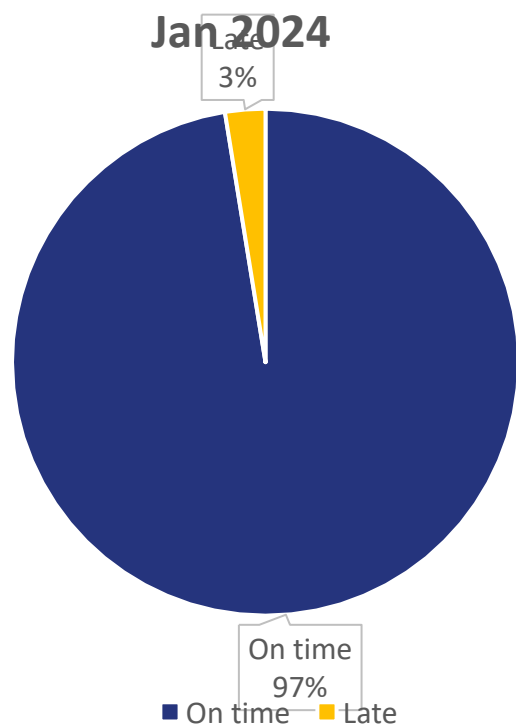
January 2024



Percentage of complaints responded to on time

| Month | Received | Due | On time | Late | Percentage | Target |
|----------|----------|-----|---------|------|------------|--------|
| Jan 2024 | 44 | 39 | 38 | 1 | 97% | 90% |

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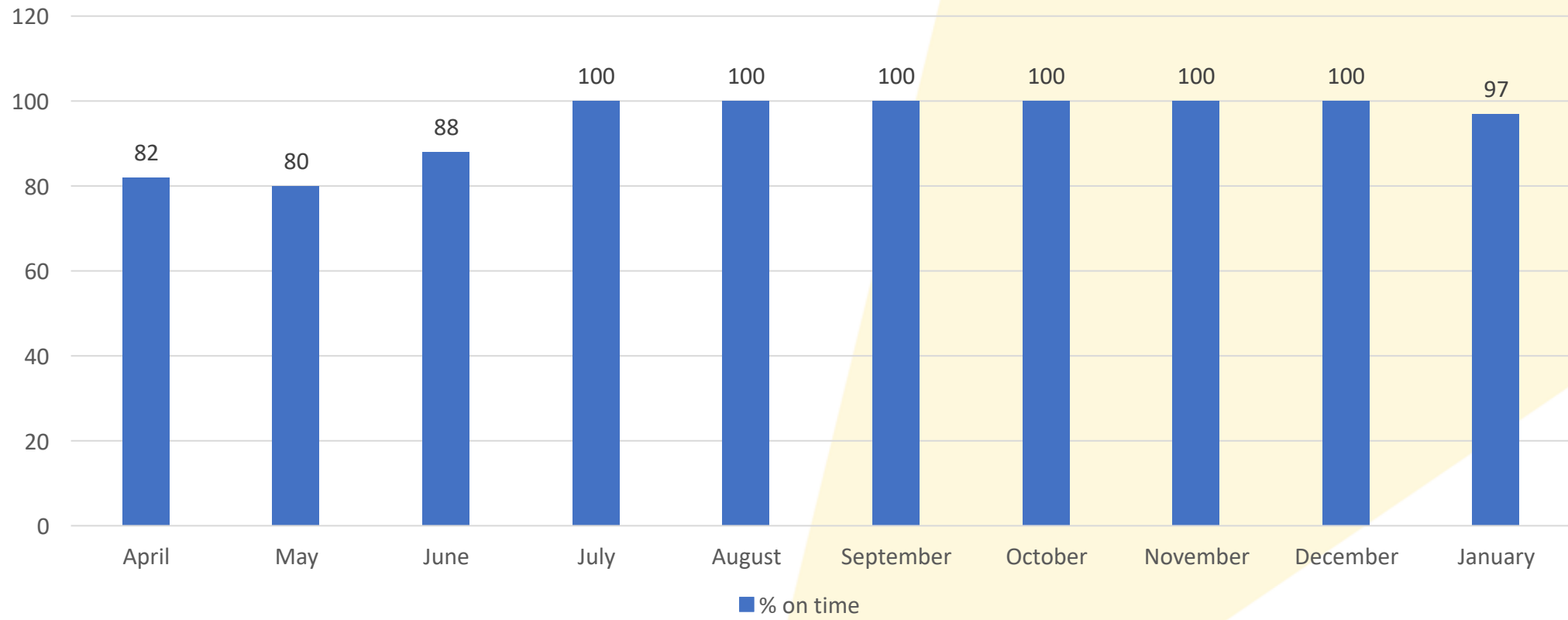


- January 2024 – 97% response rate – 1 response late by 1 day agreed with customer via discussion (100% in December 2023)
- Complaints recorded – 44 (17 in December 2023)
- Regular meetings with managers, chasing and escalation process in place
- Duty arrangement in place for monitoring incoming complaints

Year to date performance

Tolerance: 85%
Target: 90%

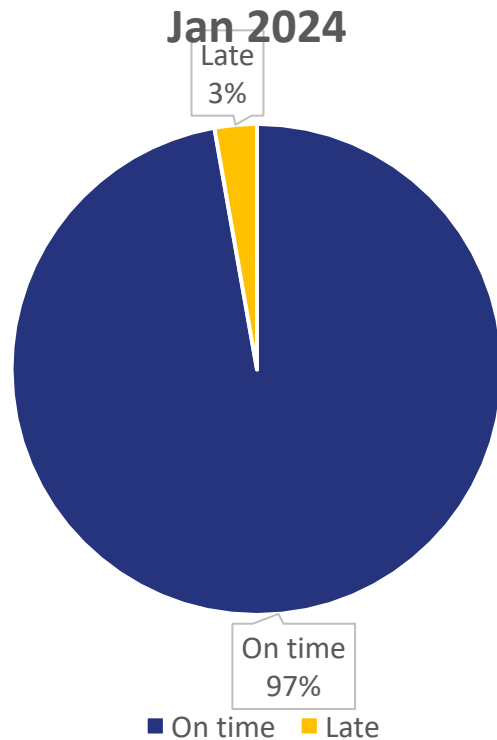
Percentage of complaints responded to on time



Stage 1 complaints performance

| Month | Received | Due | On time | Late | Percentage | Target |
|--------|----------|-----|---------|------|------------|--------|
| Jan 24 | 38 | 36 | 35 | 1 | 97% | 90% |

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Complaints responded to on time

- January 2024 – 97%
- December 2023 – 100%

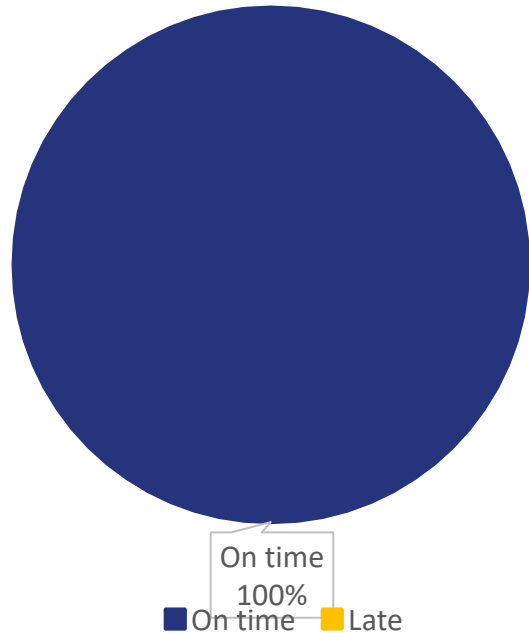
Themes

- Communication
- Housing Circumstances
- Maintenance

Stage 2 complaints performance

| Month | Received | Due | On time | Late | Percentage | Target |
|--------|----------|-----|---------|------|------------|--------|
| Jan 24 | 6 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 100% | 90% |

Jan 2024



- Complaints responded to on time
 - January 2024 - 100%
 - December 2023 - 100%

Member enquiry performance

| Month | Received | Due | On time | Late | Percentage | Target |
|----------|----------|-----|---------|------|------------|--------|
| Jan 2024 | 175 | 152 | 148 | 4 | 97% | 90% |

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| Service area enquiries | Number |
|------------------------|------------|
| Lettings | 52 |
| Repairs | 30 |
| ASB | 22 |
| Tenancies | 20 |
| Neighbourhoods | 17 |
| ASB | 14 |
| Homeless | 12 |
| Total | 167 |

Improvements implemented

CMC – focus on customer service

- Control Room Operators and Team Leaders prioritised for customer service training
- Weekly call quality monitoring for all Operators for both Telecare and general / out of hours enquiries
- Review of opening and closing greetings to customers

A few of the compliments...

- **Repairs** – out of hours service – a customer contacted us to say the work was completed efficiently and very professionally
- **Repairs** – a customer complimented an operative after completion of plumbing repairs, referring to them being very professional and friendly and that work was completed to a high standard
- **ASB** – a customer thanked the ASB Officer who has handled their complaint, saying they always kept in contact and took statements, with the case taken to court and a decision made against their neighbours.
- **Housing Solutions** – received a compliment from a customer saying, “having a safe and warm place to sleep has made a world of difference, and I am truly grateful for your compassion”.
- **Building Solutions** - a customer complimented the Aids and Adaptations team for the work to their bathroom, saying it has "given them more life" following their ongoing health struggles and they now have so much more independence.

Other highlights

- Focus on keeping Complaints and Members enquiries inbox performance within policy.
- Revised Complaint webform and webpage now live.
- Complaints policy and process presentation delivered to City Housing Oversight Panel on what is a complaint, what is a service request, expected responses and lessons learnt.
- Complaints lessons learnt in Quarter 3 currently being analysed and implemented as part of regular process.

Regulatory compliance – national context

The Housing Ombudsman Service (HO) looks at complaints about registered providers of social housing. Recently there has been heightened regulatory compliance placed upon us through the Housing Ombudsman and the Regulator for Social Housing.

The most recent Annual Complaints Review for 2022 – 2023 revealed a huge 323% rise in severe maladministration findings.

Customers are being encouraged through advertised campaigns to report to the HO – public notices of high levels of compensation being awarded.

Customer Engagement planning

February 2024



Customer engagement - in context

The regulatory framework, specifically the Consumer Standards details the Tenant Involvement and Empower standard which sets out a number of requirements for landlords. This includes the requirement to develop, implement and support, and to provide opportunities for customer involvement and empowerment.

Consideration of the renewed emphasis on the social purpose of housing providers – wider neighbourhoods and communities.

Co-creation of social value – scoping community initiatives and partnering with customers to co-create, monitor and evaluate.

Customer engagement strategy

- Customers interacting with WH via a range of engagement activities
- Develop a system for defining and measuring levels of customer engagement, and embed a process for continual review
- Consult with customers to gauge satisfaction levels and to listen to and understand their needs and aspirations
- Ensure that customers are empowered by involving them in designing and scrutinising our services, policies and future planning
- Improving value for money, services, and driving innovation and change
- Understand what is important to our customers and communities

Current activity - Community Development

- Redesign of the Community Development service
 - Community Engagement and Customer Involvement partner appointed
 - Community Development officers recruited
- Introduction of the Customer Involvement Panel
- City wide allocation - divided areas of work into wards with the intention to actively encourage customer interactions
- Councillor involvement – linking in with Ward members to confirm the offer

Current activity - Customer engagement

- Customer meetings
 - reinstating regular community meetings with themed sessions, promoting debate, customer involvement, customer development, staff involvement and a platform for community engagement
 - utilisation of social media / Teams to deliver live events
- Tenant and Resident Association & Leaseholder meetings – support current activity and start consultation and conversation with tenants to consider wider requirements and improvements
- Produce an annual plan to incorporate community events

Current activity - Community Chest

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The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy was launched in November 2022 and has provided community groups across the city with access to funds for local activity

Identification of additional ways to support community applications through staff volunteering

Links to other community activities including signposting customers





Telling our story

2024 to 2025
Communications strategy



Welcome

The landscape for social housing is changing. With a new regulatory framework, commitment to listening and acting on customer voice and increasing demand for services, good communication and engagement has never been more important. By engaging with our customers, colleagues, stakeholders and partners, we can tell our story and help them to understand the work we do, our main challenges and successes, and ultimately develop stronger relationships, built on trust.

Our communications strategy supports our mission, vision and values. It describes who we are and what's important to us, and gives direction and structure to how we communicate. Effective communication will help us to achieve the objectives set out in our business plan and in other key strategies, protect and enhance our reputation and support the City of Wolverhampton Council and other partners in delivering on their plans for the city and its residents.

Our company values



Working
together



Open to
new ideas



Respecting
differences



Delivering
our promises



Our mission:

To help
people get
on in life



Our vision:

Unlocking
people's
potential through
housing, skills & technology

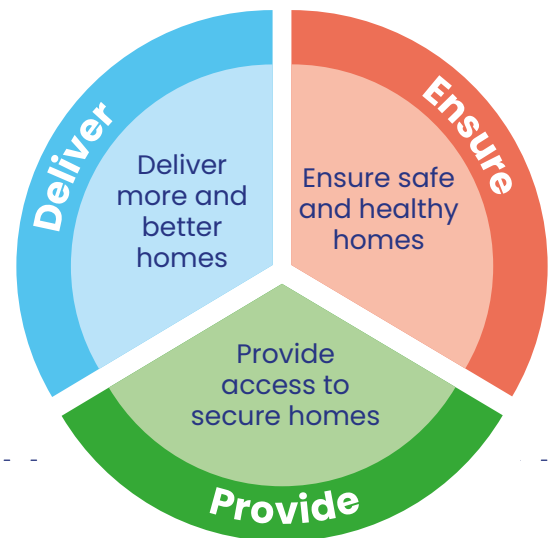


Our strategies

Business Plan 2024 – 2027



Our Business Plan supports the City of Wolverhampton Council in delivering their objectives and is based on three strategic priorities:



The seven pillars of the Charter for Social Housing Residents sets out what our customers can expect from Wolverhampton Homes:

To be safe in your home.

The government will work with industry and landlords to ensure every home is safe and secure.

To know how your landlord is performing

including on repairs, complaints and safety, and how it spends its money, so you can hold it to account.

To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly, with access to a strong Ombudsman.

To be treated with respect, backed by a strong consumer regulator and improved consumer standards for tenants.

To have your voice heard by your landlord, for example through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being on its Board.

To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in, with your landlord keeping your home in good repair.

To be supported to take your first step to ownership, so it is a ladder to other opportunities, should your circumstances allow.



Our approach

Purpose:

We want customers, colleagues and other stakeholders to understand our business and the landscape we are operating in, recognise the biggest challenges and opportunities, and take the necessary actions to support us to deliver on our promises.

Objectives

The objectives of this strategy are to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of our customers through effective targeting of information relevant to them.
- Establish Wolverhampton Homes as a leading brand for housing, skills and technology, that listens and acts on customer voice.
- Create communications which tell our story and create opportunities for two-way dialogue to help us to learn from our audiences.
- Be open and honest about how we are delivering against our mission, vision and values so customers, colleagues and stakeholders understand what we are doing and how it affects them.
- Develop existing and new channels to provide customers with easy access to information and self-service options.
- Support effective partnership working with the City of Wolverhampton Council and local and national partners through clear messaging.
- Ensure we're able to effectively communicate in the event of a crisis, keeping affected audiences updated and informed if something goes wrong.

For you

We know and understand our customers and accommodate their needs and preferences wherever possible. Our communication is inclusive and reinforces our vision and values, which are at the heart of everything that we do.

Trusted

Our communication is open, honest and factual, with a clear purpose. We will continue to develop and maintain a professional corporate identity – our brand – for consistent use across the business.

Open

Communication is accessible, plain English and free of jargon and the information we provide is easy to read and understand. Our communication will be driven by customer needs and our business plan.

Telling our story

Our communication will focus on these key themes to support the Charter for Social Housing Residents and our Delivery Plan.

- Providing good quality, safe homes in thriving communities.
- Develop consistent and transparent methods of communicating our performance against regulatory measures that help keep customers safe and informed.
- Supporting our customers.
- Creating two-way dialogue with opportunities for customers to be consulted and have their say.
- Promoting our colleague offer and career opportunities with Wolverhampton Homes to retain local talent in the city and become an employer of choice.
- Provide excellent communications on a cost-effective basis, providing high-quality online services that encourage customers to move to digital by choice.

Our audiences

As a community business, we aim to be as inclusive and accessible as possible. Our audiences include tenants, leaseholders and Wolverhampton Homes colleagues, along with other people who access our services including homeless people, homeowners and community groups. We have developed a communications strategy that will engage with these different audiences through targeted communications. This will allow us to tailor our message so that it resonates with the relevant group and provides them with the information that is important to them.





- **Develop** consistent and transparent methods of communicating our performance against regulatory measures that help keep customers safe and informed.

Reaching you

We have a range of different channels available to reach different audiences and for different purposes. Our aim is to reach people with information that is relevant to them and using their preferred method.

The main areas of communication we will develop are:

Website and self-serve

Our website was redeveloped in 2021 and all of the information on Wolverhampton Homes and our services can be found here. We'll continue to develop our website and we'd like customers to visit the website first if they have a question or need more details about one of our services. Our popular automated chatbot can assist users to find the information they need.

Our My Account service gives customers and potential tenants a quick and secure way of reporting repairs, checking on housing bids and paying rent. As part of our drive for continual improvement, we will be launching a My Account customer app in 2023 which will be available for smartphones and tablets as well as on desktop computers. The app offers additional functionality, including checking current and previous repairs and changing appointments; applying, searching and bidding for homes; and completing those everyday transactions that make managing your home easier.

Targeted email and text messages

Wolverhampton Homes customers already receive a monthly e-newsletter 'HomesTalk' by email, which covers important news and service updates as well as details of city and community events. Through audience insight projects, we plan to expand our email targeting capabilities to ensure we are sending the most relevant information to customers about the services they use or may be interested in. We know that many people

prefer to receive time-sensitive news by text message so we are also aiming to offer this as an option for customers. Electronic methods of communication will help us to achieve our environmental targets and are much more cost-effective than sending out letters and other printed communication.

Social media

With 84% of the UK population a member of at least one social network (Statista 2022), social media is a cost-effective way for us to broadcast information that is relevant to the majority of our audience. Using platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Linked In can help us to reach people with relevant content and also allow us to share important messages from partners including West Midlands Fire Service and the police. Our social media channels are all open for comments and messages, with our customer service teams managing these. They are a popular contact method for many customers, creating two-way dialogue and opportunities for the customer voice to be heard.

Face-to-face meetings

Supporting community groups and voluntary organisations is a key pillar of our Corporate Social Responsibility and Community Investment strategy. Local groups create safe and welcoming spaces for people to meet their neighbours and develop connections, reducing loneliness and social isolation, and they play an important role in building relationships with customers and partners. We support a number of active Tenant and Resident Associations which hold meetings in person across the city, with representatives from WH often available to discuss services and local projects and initiatives. Customers are always welcome to attend and get involved. We have a range of different channels available to reach different audiences and for different purposes. Our aim is to reach people with information that is relevant to them and using their preferred method. The main areas of communication we will develop are:

Digital screens

We are installing digital screens in every one of our tower blocks across the city. This will allow residents and visitors to stay updated with news and information relevant to their home and their neighbourhood.

Printed materials

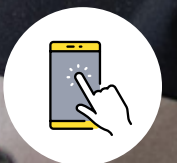
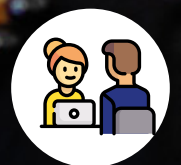
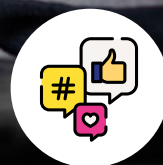
Despite the increasing shift to digital there is still a place for printed communication including posters, leaflets and mail-outs. We will continue to use these methods when it will help us to achieve our objectives, keeping in mind the environmental impact and our aim for customers to move to digital by choice.

Internal communications

Wolverhampton Homes colleagues have access to our SharePoint intranet site, Microsoft Teams and Viva Engage where all key internal messages are posted. A monthly e-newsletter #WHLife signposts colleagues to recent and upcoming news stories, events, training and job opportunities. Each office also has at least one digital screen where information and upcoming events are advertised. We promote in-person and online briefings by senior managers to keep colleagues informed and we will continue to send all-staff emails for time-sensitive and important information as necessary, but these will be kept to a minimum.

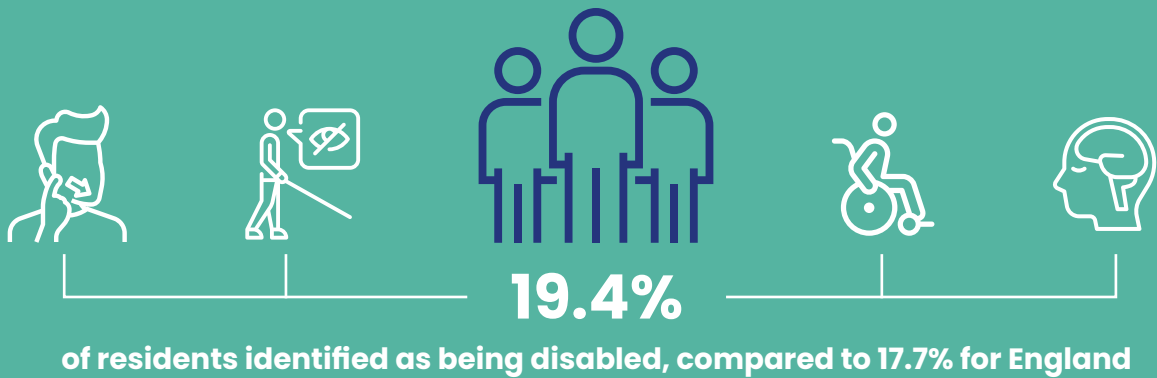
To promote specific initiatives and campaigns, we also access a range of other channels including local radio and TV, Out-of-Home or outdoor advertising, local newspapers and their websites.

- **Our aim**
is to reach people with information that is relevant to them and using their preferred method.



Our diverse audience

We want customers to come with us on this journey, and we need to be aware of any challenges or considerations that could impact this.



15%

of residents

do not speak English as their main language, compared to 9.2% for England

Currently **less than two-thirds of customers** have registered their email address to receive news and essential service updates.





- **This strategy** gives direction and structure to how we communicate, helping to achieve our objectives.

Supporting our strategic priorities through communication

Universal Credit housing costs

Following the annual rent review in March 2023, we needed to remind customers in receipt of Universal Credit (UC) to check their updated housing costs using My Account and update their UC account with the new information. This action would ensure their UC payment would reflect the new rent amount and they would not fall behind on their payments.

We emailed all registered My Account users with a reminder alongside running a small campaign across our social media channels. In the two weeks of the campaign there was an increase of +227% My Account logins as customers checked their rent details. Calls to Homes Direct reduced by 25% as customers were able to get the information quickly and easily through the online system. This in turn reduced call waiting times for other customers.



- **+227%** increase in 'My Account' logins as customers checked their rent details, as a result of our campaign.



- **4000** website visits and over 350 applications to the apprenticeship programme.

Apprentice Recruitment

Our apprenticeship programme is very popular as it provides on-the-job training alongside college-based learning which will set our apprentices up for a great career which allows them to specialise in their chosen area, for example, bricklaying, plumbing or business administration. It's important that we reach local talent in the city and attract the best candidates for these challenging and rewarding roles.

The campaign was planned over three weeks on social media, on a range of job sites, in local newspapers and customer emails. In fact, we had to stop the social media campaign after just eight days as it was so successful! More than 4,000 people visited our website to find out more about the opportunities and over 350 people applied for the apprenticeship programme. The applications were of an extremely high quality, meaning we were successful in recruiting an excellent cohort of apprentices to support us to deliver services for our customers in the future.

Our brand

Our brand is more than just the Wolverhampton Homes logo. It captures who we are and helps shape our reputation. It's one of our most valuable assets and how our customers, stakeholders and residents of our city see and recognise us through our vans, our uniforms and the photos, colours and language used in the information we send out. Our brand reflects our beliefs and values, as well as our personality. It is a visual representation of how we wish to be seen: collaborative, open, approachable and honest. It's a brand to be proud of, and to ensure the brand remains strong and trusted, we need our communications to be written and designed in a consistent way.

Everyone in Wolverhampton Homes is responsible for our brand. We will improve it through:

- Delivering a good customer experience.
- Addressing reputational issues quickly.
- Use of the appropriate logo and branded templates.
- Following corporate guidelines for language, sentence structure and tone of voice.

We will update and promote our brand guidelines and toolkits to ensure all colleagues can use the branding appropriately. Managers must ensure that all staff apply the brand guidelines and house style in their work with the help of the communications team.



- **It's who we are**

Our brand reflects our beliefs and values, as well as our personality. It is a visual representation of how we wish to be seen.



Celebrating success

We want to provide information and service updates in a way that makes it easy for customers. Wherever possible we will evaluate communications performance to understand if we have achieved what we set out to, and how we can improve next time.

The monitoring will vary, but is likely to include analysis of 'the three O's', that is the Outputs, Outtakes and Outcomes of our work.

Measurement

Outputs

are the most basic form of measurement and look at what was produced, for example, videos, news articles or customer emails.

Outtakes

looks at who we reached through our communication. For example, how many people read the article, watched the video, or attended our event.

Outcomes

consider how behaviour has changed as a result. For example, did more customers log onto their account and update their personal details, or apply for the apprenticeship programme?



Our goals: year one

Deliver outcome-focused campaigns to address strategic customer-facing priorities.

Detailed reporting will demonstrate return on investment against the campaign objectives.

Completion of a social media audit and channel strategy development.

Internal comms channel and content audit with channel strategy development.

Employee engagement project.

Developing our employer brand to help us become an employer of choice.

Creating a new framework for recruitment marketing.

Deliver a project to embed our company values, striving for customer service excellence for all colleagues.

Deliver an annual programme of leadership communication to embed our business plan and support the achievement of our strategic objectives.

Support colleagues in HR, Organisational Development, Systems Development and EDI with outcome focused campaigns to achieve their internal objectives.





Wolverhampton Homes

Alfred Squire Road • Wednesfield • Wolverhampton • WV11 1XU

www.wolverhamptonhomes.org.uk



@wolveshomes

Title: Development of 2041 Net Zero Strategy

Agenda Item No: 6
Date: 27 February 2024

Prepared by: Perminder Balu

Job Title: Head of Green Cities and Circular Economy

Scrutiny Panel: Climate Change and Communities

Recommendation(s) for action

The Scrutiny Panel is recommended to:

1. Note status update requested by the Panel Chair.
2. Endorse ongoing actions and way forward together with providing any additional recommendations as appropriate.

Questions for Scrutiny Panel to consider

1. With the local knowledge and city-wide community awareness held, are there any specific groups, organisations, and/or individuals, it is suggested be approached for inclusion in forthcoming wider stakeholder consultation process?

Purpose

Following the progress update of The Council Net Zero 2028 Action plan, the Chair of the Climate Change and Communities Scrutiny panel requested a progress update of the Net Zero 2041 Strategy for the City.

Background

City of Wolverhampton Council (The Council) declared a Climate Emergency in 2019. In September 2020 following a successful Citizens Assembly and public consultation, the Council approved the Future Generations: Our Commitment Strategy which formalised the climate emergency declaration into policy and committed The Council to two Net Zero targets.

- 1) Achieving Net Zero across Corporate Activities by 2028: requiring The Council to reduce its direct carbon emissions as much as possible and offsetting any residual emissions.
- 2) Working with Partners across the city to achieve a Net Zero City by 2041 in line with the Regional target.

It is widely recognised and accepted collective city-wide action and support is paramount to deliver Net Zero 2041 for Wolverhampton. This approach underpins the ongoing Strategy development and commitment to residents, businesses, and visitors in maintaining the 'climate lens perspective' which remains core to moving forward.

As requested by the Chair, this report focuses on the progress against the city-wide Strategy for Net Zero by 2041.

Context of Net Zero - Challenge

In 2015 governments around the world, including the UK, signed the Paris Climate Agreement to keep their own national emissions within their agreed Carbon Budgets to limit global warming to 1.5°C and minimise the impacts of climate change.

A carbon budget is the maximum amount of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) emissions allowed over a period to limit global warming to a certain level.

How does the City of Wolverhampton make a reasonable contribution to agreed decarbonisation targets agreed by the UK government in line with the Paris Climate Agreement?

Reframing the Motivation for Net Zero

Net Zero is not just about carbon.

Reducing carbon emissions is fundamental for all of us to avoid the worst effects of climate change over the longer term and the significant impacts this will have on Wulfrunians and the City's economy. Impacts that are already having devastating effects across the globe and within many UK Cities.

However, the recent energy crisis alone justifies a shift to a low carbon energy economy, as reliance on international fossil fuel supplies has proven costly for many vulnerable people across the country and in the city.

Therefore, it is critical to refocus attention on the short-term co-benefits that the Net Zero transition can bring including but not limited to:

- Fuel Poverty reduction & energy security
- Public health benefits from cleaner air
- Skilled Green Sector Jobs
- Warm and low-cost-energy homes
- Business resilience
- A Greener City and climate adaptation
- Circular Economy opportunities
- Technological and digital innovation

The significant economic growth all of this will bring will enable communities to thrive in line with our City: Our Plan and the Good Growth Strategy, to ensure that Wulfrunians will live longer, healthier lives, in a cleaner greener and more equitable city.

Developing a Net Zero Strategy for the City

The Council commissioned City Science Corporation to support development of an evidenced based Strategy and Action Plan. This connects climate action to the core outcomes of Our City:

Our Plan, and to inform council decision making over policy and investment towards achieving Net Zero. The following key principles underpin the strategy:

| | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1) Fair & Equal | 2) Resilience | 3) Collaboration | 4) Engagement & Awareness | 5) Distributed Leadership |
| • Supporting our most vulnerable | • Planning for the future | • Working in partnership | • Supporting behaviour change | • Empowerment through accountability |

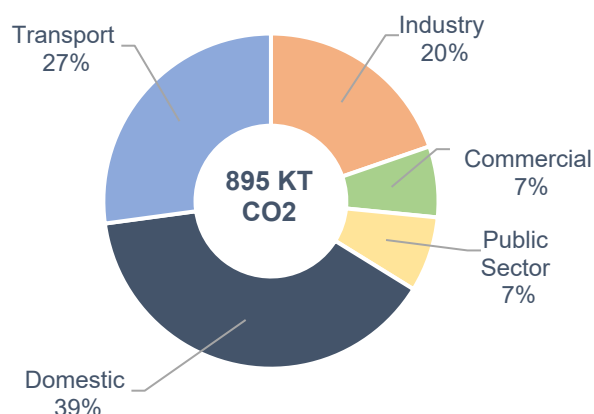
- 1) We have a duty to support those who can least afford the impacts of climate change. Those in lower socio-economic levels who are least financially able often have the smallest carbon footprints.
- 2) Climate Change is happening, and we must prepare for it with emerging digital and other technologies in order to safeguard assets and livelihoods.
- 3) Bringing people along on the journey is critical to ensuring it is a success.
- 4) With better awareness comes better-informed and conscientious decisions.
- 5) The Council cannot do this alone; everyone inside and outside of the council will have a responsibility for driving decarbonisation.

Appendix 1 provides a summary infographic of the Strategy.

Wolverhampton Carbon Footprint

As of 2021, energy only emissions from the City of Wolverhampton were circa 900,000 tonnes (900KT) of carbon dioxide (CO₂). This is broken down by:

1. Domestic (39%)
2. Transport (27%)
3. Industry (20%)
4. Public Sector (7%)
5. Commercial (7%)



Note: The Councils corporate carbon footprint of 11,600 tonnes of CO₂e is 1.2% of the City's emissions profile. Achieving our net zero target of 2028 will help to contribute to the city's Net Zero ambitions.

Carbon Emission Comparisons

The City's per person emissions remains the joint second smallest across the Region. But is 5th in terms of the per capita emissions reductions between 2005 and 2021.

However, since 2005 Wolverhampton has seen a 44% reduction in absolute emissions, compared to 36% across the region, and 39% across the UK.

| Per capita Emissions (tCO2 per Person) | Year | | |
|--|------------|------------|-------------|
| | 2005 | 2021 | difference |
| Local Authority Area | | | |
| Coventry | 7.3 | 3.5 | -3.8 |
| Sandwell | 7.6 | 3.8 | -3.8 |
| Birmingham | 6.7 | 3.4 | -3.3 |
| Walsall | 6.8 | 3.5 | -3.3 |
| Wolverhampton | 6.6 | 3.4 | -3.2 |
| Solihull | 8.2 | 5.3 | -2.9 |
| Dudley | 6.1 | 3.3 | -2.8 |

How to Achieve Net Zero by 2041

The strategy has outlined a pathway to Net Zero for the City which will require significant intervention, to achieve the required carbon reductions by the end of each 5-year carbon budget period.

| | 2021 | 2026 | 2031 | 2036 | 2041 |
|---------------------------------|-------------|------|------|------|------|
| Domestic | 348 (ktCO2) | 282 | 219 | 108 | 11 |
| Transport | 228 | 192 | 127 | 47 | 2 |
| Industrial | 172 | 99 | 79 | 19 | 16 |
| Commercial & Public) | 126 | 76 | 46 | 18 | 3 |
| Reduction vs 2021 | 0 | 26% | 46% | 78% | 96% |

The interdependencies with government policy means that the city can only reduce carbon as quickly as government policy allows e.g. national strategic energy planning, whereby national carbon budget targets are likely to fall short.

This requires more aggressive intervention at city level in order bridge the policy gap from central government.

Action Plan

To achieve the necessary carbon reductions 20 priority actions have been **drafted**/ developed in collaboration with internal and external stakeholders.

The actions cut across four core themes:

1. Transport
2. Domestic Energy
3. Industrial & Commercial
4. Energy Supply

And four cross cutting themes:

1. Circular Economy
2. Adaptation
3. Nature Recovery
4. Upskilling



Importantly, the Action Plan builds on some existing projects and programmes to ensure there is alignment across the different strategies but are still in **draft** phase whilst the details of the financial implementation are considered and evaluated.

Monitoring, Reporting and Governance

Once approved, ongoing monitoring and reporting through established and proposed governance channels will be required to track progress against agreed KPI's.

The Creation of a separate partner board had been proposed, however in light of the recent Good Growth Strategy and evolution of partnership and matrix groups across the City, taking advantage of existing governance channels such as the anchor network could present more efficient opportunity for broader stakeholder inclusion.

External governance is paramount for endorsement of the plan and ongoing partner accountability.

As part of ongoing internal alteration for greater transparency and accountability, a Climate Action Assessment Tool (CAAT) developed by the Green Cities and Circular Economy Service Area is being implemented. The CAAT provides an indicative outcome on the relative impact of Projects across key themes which enables early visibility where Climate Action measures and mitigations are or are not being incorporated.

Key Policy Outcomes

The Strategy sets the precedent for stipulating terms for planning and regeneration which will ensure that new capital projects are aligned to the objectives of the Net Zero Strategy, as well as the core strategic and economic ambitions.

1) The Local Plan

Once approved the strategy will inform elements of the local plan to ensure that there is a stronger focus on decarbonisation particularly regarding new build properties and the roll out of renewable energy and other strategic energy infrastructure in the City.

2) City Plan

Mapping the Net Zero strategy to Our City: Our Plan will ensure that we can deliver on the core outcomes and ambitions whilst ensuring that Net Zero is properly embedded into the decision-making process. This will be enhanced by the recent roll out of the Climate Action Assessment Tool into all decision-making processes.

3) Good Growth Strategy

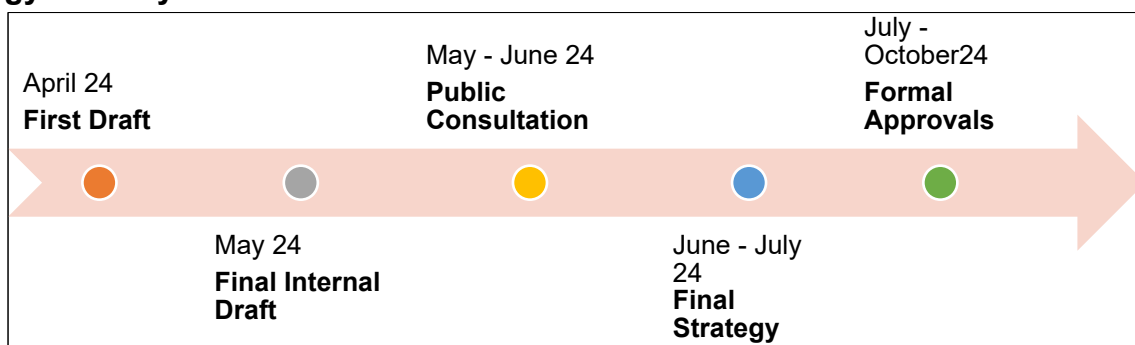
Key Elements of the good growth strategy reference a just and equitable economy that leverages green innovation and net zero to achieve good growth, and to strengthen the City's.

Forthcoming Major Regeneration and Developments

Maximising strategic opportunities from; Green Innovation Corridor, St Georges, Canalside and other regeneration schemes, in addition to social housing projects and developments with Anchor Partners, all form the catalyst to accelerate and demonstrate the City's commitment to Net Zero 2041. These opportunities and those yet to come, provide the ideal platform for the Council to grasp and demonstrate the 'Green Revolution', incorporating the following at every stage from concept to delivery:

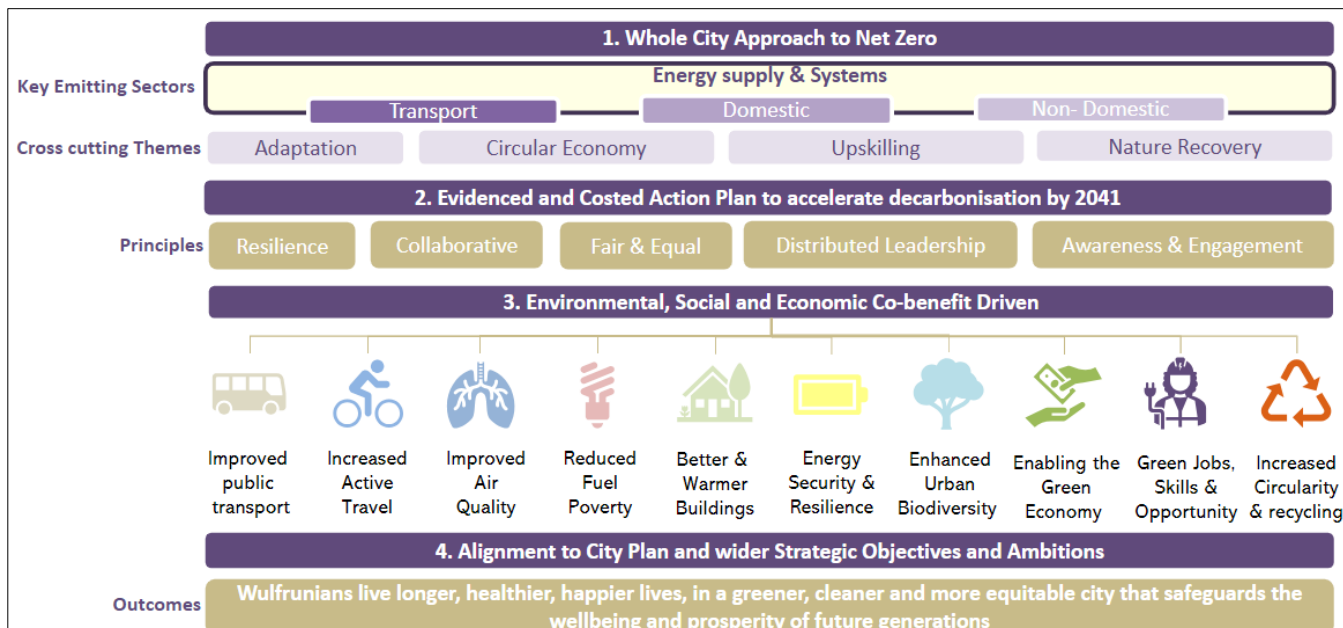
- Embracing sustainability
- Maximising renewable energy generation and storage
- Promoting circular economy principles (including surplus construction materials)
- Embedding resilience and adaptation

Strategy Delivery Timeline



Appendices

Appendix 1 – Summary infographic of the City Net Zero Strategy & Objectives



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Climate Change and Communities Scrutiny Panel

7 March 2024

Presenter:

Perminder Balu

Head of Green Cities and
Circular Economy

Oliver Thomas

Service Manager – Green Cities

[wolverhampton.gov.uk](https://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk)

Update: 2041 Net Zero Strategy Development

Progress update of the Net Zero 2041 Strategy for the City.

Background

- 2019: Climate Emergency declared.
- 2020: Future Generations: Our Commitment Strategy, approved.
 - Two Net Zero targets:
 - 1) Net Zero across Corporate Activities: 2028
 - 2) Working with Partners to achieve Net Zero City: 2041

Update: 2041 Net Zero Strategy Development

Reframing the Motivation for Net Zero

Climate Action/ reducing carbon emissions is fundamental to avoid the worst effects of climate change impacts on Wulfrunians and City's economy.

Cultural and behavioural change are needed at pace and maintained.

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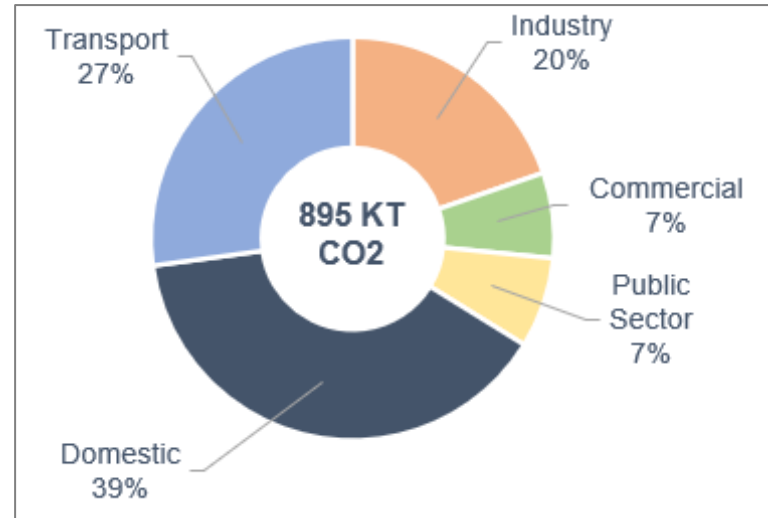
| Critical to refocus short-term co-benefits that Net Zero transition can bring (examples include) | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| Fuel Poverty reduction & energy security | Business resilience |
| Public health benefits from cleaner air | A Greener City and climate adaptation |
| Skilled Green Sector Jobs | Circular Economy opportunities |
| Warm and low-cost-energy homes | Technological and digital innovation |

Wolverhampton Carbon Footprint

2021: energy only emissions from City of Wolverhampton were circa 900,000 tonnes (900KT) of carbon dioxide (CO₂).

Council's corporate carbon footprint of 11,600 tonnes of CO₂e is 1.2% of the City's emissions.

Achieving our net zero target of 2028 will contribute to the city's Net Zero ambitions.



Comparisons and Interventions

Region

- Wolverhampton per person emissions remains joint second smallest across West Mids. (5th in terms of the per capita emissions reductions between 2005 and 2021).
- Since 2005 **Wolverhampton realised 44% reduction** in absolute emissions, compared to 36% across the Region, and 39% across the UK

Pathway

- 2041 strategy development outlines a pathway to Net Zero, requires significant intervention for carbon reductions by the end of each 5-year carbon budget period
- Aggressive interventions at city level required to bridge policy gap from central government

Action Plan

20 Actions in development (draft)

- Internal and external stakeholder collaboration.
- Elected Members and public engagement/ consultation to be undertaken.

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| Core themes | Cross cutting themes |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Transport | Circular Economy |
| Domestic Energy | Adaptation |
| Industrial & Commercial | Nature Recovery |
| Energy Supply | Upskilling |



Monitoring, Reporting and Governance

‘One Council’ approach

- Progress against agreed KPI’s
- Synergies with Good Growth Strategy, matrix groups and Anchor Network
- Greater efficiency, opportunities, transparency and broader stakeholder inclusion
- External governance paramount for Action Plan endorsement and oversight

Embedding Climate Action Assessment Tool (CAAT)

- Evaluation of Capital Projects throughout life cycle/ RIBA stages
- Visibility of maximising Climate Action measures and interventions

Strategic Developments and Land Use

Creativity, Innovation and 'Invest to Save'

- Projects explore commercial market options and grant funding applications
- Full analysis of Operating Expenditure options, not only Capital Costs
- Costs of maximising; renewable energy, climate adaptation, low carbon materials and circular economy, not a reason for design exclusion or value engineering

Green Innovation Corridor

- Springboard for City's 'Green Revolution' of showcase designs, construction and land use
- Embracing; green technology, renewables, climate resilience
- Partnering with Anchor Network and others to upskill, train, create employment
- Incorporate circular economy within construction design and material use

Regeneration, Housing, Education, Health Developments and Procurement

- For a 2041 Net Zero Wolverhampton, need to maximise all decarbonising opportunities

Key Policy Outcomes

Local Plan

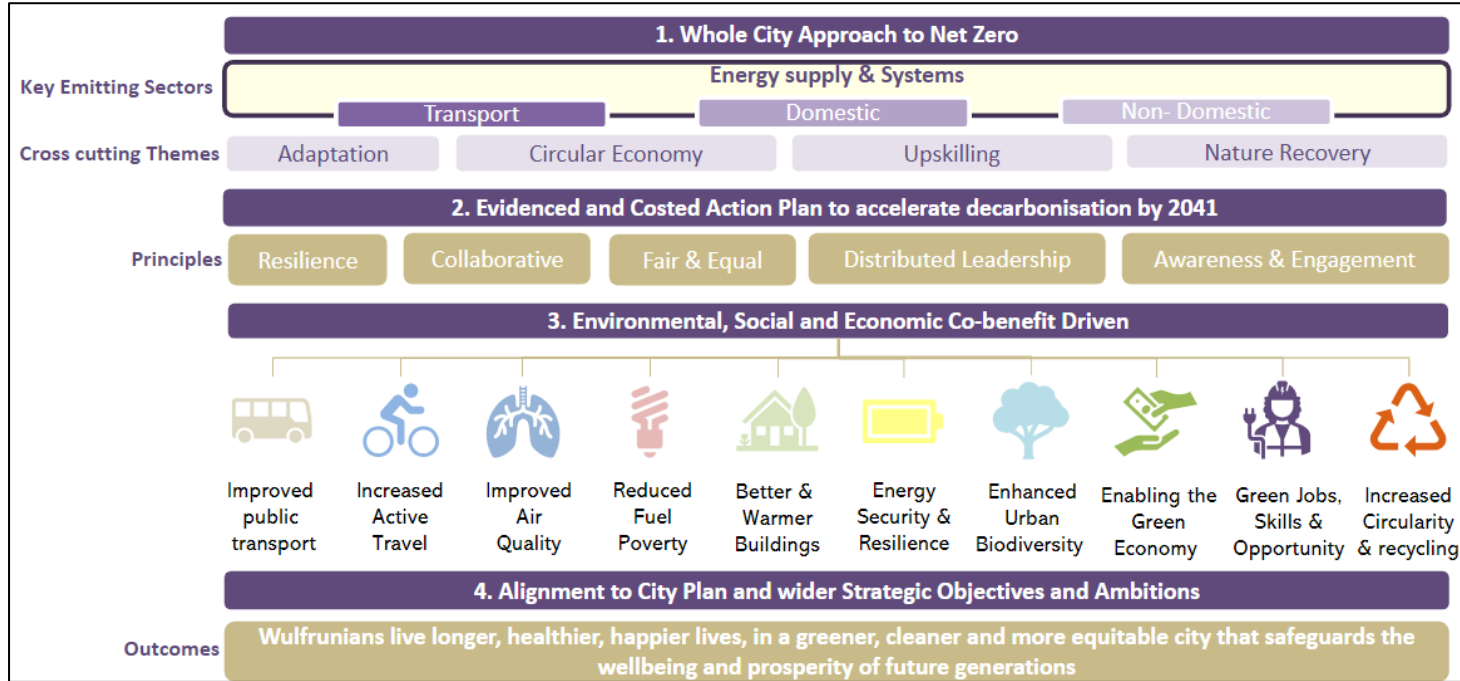
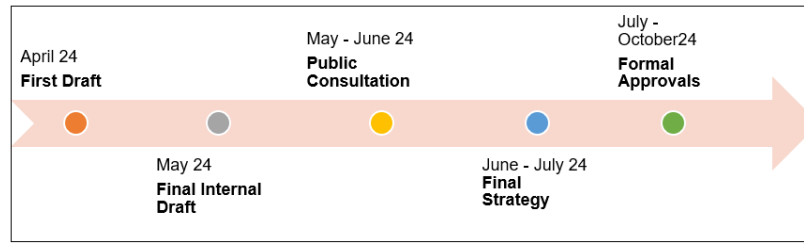
Will inform elements of the local plan to ensure that there is a stronger focus on decarbonisation particularly regarding new build properties and the roll out of renewable energy and other strategic energy infrastructure in the City.

City Plan

Mapping Net Zero Strategy to Our City: Our Plan - ensure can deliver on core outcomes and ambitions whilst ensuring Net Zero embedded in decision-making process.

Good Growth Strategy

A just and equitable economy that leverages green innovation and net zero to achieve good growth and strengthen the City.



Perminder Balu

Head of Green Cities and Circular
Economy
City of Wolverhampton Council

Perminder.balu@wolverhampton.gov.uk
01902 553462

wolverhampton.gov.uk