

Report to Stronger Communities Select Committee

Date of meeting: 12 July 2022



Portfolio: Housing and Property (Cllr Holly Whitbread)

Subject: The changing landscape of Housing and Property Services 1

Officer contact for further information: Deborah Fenton (07988860412)

Democratic Services Officer: R Perrin (01992 564243)

Recommendations/Decisions Required

- (1) That members note the changing landscape for housing and property services**
- (2) That members note this, as the first paper on regulation and note that further papers will be presented in the future.**

Executive Summary:

2021 proved to be another big year for social housing. There have been several significant changes, and some of these changes apply specifically to Local Government. The landscape will look significantly different in the future. This is against the backdrop of changing demographics and the changing aspirations of our residents. As a housing service, we are acutely aware that just producing bricks and mortar is not enough to create great places and instil a sense of community for our residents.

Members can expect a significant increase in reports and papers being presented following the changes. This paper gives members an overview of the Consumer Standards in which registered providers are obliged to adhere to.

This, and the other changes need to be planned for and resourced accordingly. Part of this includes informing members of the changes and their responsibilities under the new landscape. This report seeks to inform members of the glide path around the following:

National context

Regulation

Local context

Estate Regeneration & Creating great places where people want to live

Sheltered housing

Asset management strategy

Policy and Strategy

Report

National context

Social Housing Regulation - Consumer Regulations

Although social housing regulation is not new for registered providers such as housing associations, it is new for local government. This report sets out to cover one of the most

significant changes. That is that all local authorities are now to be regulated by the regulator of social housing. The regulator produces a regulatory framework that housing associations and now councils must adhere to. There are consequences for not adhering to regulation, this can include deregistering a housing provider.

The key point for members is their role in the co approach, the below was taken from:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/regulatory-standards#our-approach>

Our approach

We take a co-regulatory approach. This means boards and councillors who govern providers' service delivery are responsible for ensuring their organisation is meeting our standards, and for being open and accountable in how their organisation meets its objectives. Co-regulation also requires providers to support tenants in the shaping and scrutinising of service delivery and in holding boards and councillors to account.

We are risk-based in our regulatory approach. We use our sector risk analysis and assessments of registered providers with 1,000 or more social housing units to identify those we judge to be more complex and who consequently have an increased level of risk exposures. Providers with fewer than 1,000 social housing units are subject to a lower level of regulatory engagement. Our Sector risk profile is published annually and it can help registered providers to manage risks effectively.

As part of the co-regulatory approach, the Regulator will carry out an in-depth inspection every 3-4 years. We are aware that these have started within stock holding authorities.

There are standards within the regulations first of which is the consumer standards, these are significant as the regulator emphasizes tenant involvement and empowerment as well as health and safety. The requirements for this standard are as follows:

Tenant involvement and empowerment standard

This requires RPs to:

- consult with tenants
- provide good customer service and service choices to tenants (including information about any additional costs relevant to specific choices)
- have in place a clear and accessible complaints procedure
- respond to the diverse needs of tenants
- Where an RP wishes to dispose of property to another landlord, it must:
- consult in a fair, timely, appropriate, and effective manner
- set out its proposals clearly, giving sufficient detail
- set out actual or potential advantages and disadvantages in both the immediate and longer-term
- be able to demonstrate that they have considered the outcome of the consultation when reaching a decision

Home standard

This requires registered providers to achieve equality of accommodation, this is set out in the decent home guidance. Members should be aware that this is currently being reviewed.

Required outcomes

Registered providers shall:

- (a) ensure that tenants' homes meet the standard set out in section five of the Government's Decent Homes Guidance^[footnote] and continue to maintain their homes to at least this standard

- (b) meet the standards of design and quality that applied when the home was built, and were required as a condition of publicly funded financial assistance^[footnote] if these standards are higher than the Decent Homes Standard
- (c) in agreeing a local offer, ensure that it is set at a level not less than these standards and have regard to section six of the Government's Decent Homes Guidance.

Repairs and maintenance

Registered providers shall:

- (a) provide a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service to homes and communal areas that responds to the needs of, and offers choices to, tenants, and has the objective of completing repairs and improvements right first time
- (b) meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of the occupants in their homes.

Neighbourhood and community standard

This requires RPs to:

- consult with tenants in developing a policy for maintaining and improving their neighbourhoods
- co-operate with relevant partners to help promote social, environmental, and economic well-being in their areas
- work in partnership with other public agencies to tackle anti-social behaviour

Timeline

Regulation is now in place; it is normal practice for organisations to undertake a mock IDA to help understand the gaps and assist in developing an action plan. Officers will be looking to commission this shortly and present a report to the relevant committee later in the year, members may be asked to participate in the mock IDA.

Report Local context

Regeneration

Members received the business plan report on February 22, which listed the sites which were in line for regeneration, this follows a review of capital works and the ambition to carry out the works in a short time frame to save costs for both EFDC and Leaseholders. Also, to create a bigger impact, therefore, creating great places where people want to live. This follows the path of the new proposed Decent Homes Standard

Sheltered Housing

Following the review of Sheltered Housing which was undertaken in 2019 officers have now extended this to include a strategic review of the future of the schemes, considering changing aspirations and demographics. The review also considers that a high percentage of let's go-to people on the supplementary list, these are people who do not meet the local connection requirements.

In the last 5 years, 229 allocations have been made to sheltered housing, of these 140 have been off the supplementary list and 89 on the main waiting list

Timetable

Cllr H Whitbread and members have attended a presentation to view the recommendations, following this, a strategy, will be co-produced with stakeholders.

Policy and strategy

The changes not only impact the way we work but require the internal framework to be put in place. Officers are currently working through the resource implication for this and the timetable for presentation to the relevant Committee.

Other significant areas of work

Member should note that this is not an exhaustive list of work projects for housing, several additional areas of work will also be presented to future committees in the next 12 months these include:

Housing Management System update
Asset management strategy
Net-zero
Council House Building
Return on Investment (it's more than bricks and mortar)
Tenant involvement strategy (White Paper requirement)
Penningtons – a review of compliance

Reason for decision:

Given the increase in reports coming to committees over the coming year, it was felt to be appropriate to give members an overview.

Options considered and rejected:

The option was considered not to offer support, however, that, it was rejected.

Consultation undertaken:

The housing and property team have input into this paper

Resource implications:

Officers are currently reviewing the resources and if necessary, will present a report to SLT.

Legal and Governance Implications:

This proposal meets all requirements

Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications:

Background Papers:

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management:

The risks are a mix of legislation, reputation and financial the housing operational risk map will be updated according