

Thursday, 23 January 2025

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Homelessness and Planning

Social Housing Regulatory Programme - Council housing

Exempt Information

N/A

1.0. Purpose

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on the latest position regarding compliance with the [Regulator Social Housing \(RSH\) Consumer Standards](#), following the Council's self-referral on 1/8/24.
- 1.2 To set out the achievements reflecting the scale, pace and positive progress in relation to the Social Housing Regulatory Programme and the outcomes from [regulatory engagement](#).

2.0. Recommendations

2.1. Cabinet is recommended to: -

- 1) Recognise significant progress of the Social Housing Regulatory Programme team, working with the Regulator of Social Housing and avoiding a C3/4 rating. Noting continued support from the Regulator (28/2/25) and onward formal inspection timetabling remains unknown. (Details at Annex Two)
- 2) Approve the refreshed terms of reference for the Homelessness & Housing Advisory Board. (Details at Annex Three)
- 3) Recognise the role of the Homelessness & Housing Advisory Board in terms of the proposed work plan, delegating authority to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Homelessness and Planning to agree the annual work-plan including the ongoing review of the conceptual framework (the preferred document for the Regulators required pre-inspection).
- 4) Support continued development of the Housing Performance Dashboard, (Details at Annex One)
- 5) Confirm the arrangements for the Portfolio Holder Housing, Homelessness & Planning to act as the accountable member for Housing Health and Safety supporting the Deputy Leader as Corporate health & safety Member Lead as defined under the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- 6) Delegate to the S151 Officer, in conjunction with the Executive Director Communities the releasing of contingency funding to support associated staffing matters referred to Appointments & Staffing Committee, noting the need for additional staffing resources within assets.
- 7) Delegate arrangements for the procurement and undertaking of a mock inspection of the housing service to the Portfolio Holder Housing, Homelessness and Planning; in consultation with Executive Director Communities - scope and brief to be agreed by 31/3/25
- 8) Note that further reports are on the forward plan for the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan (8th March 2025) and the Tenant Inclusivity Plan including the Tenant & Leaseholder Voice and TSM improvement Plan (31st March 2025)

3.0. Executive Summary

- 3.1. Putting tenants and leaseholders at the heart of service improvement underpins the Regulator Social Housing new [consumer standards and framework](#). Details of the Councils compliance were reported to Cabinet on the [10/10/24](#) and agreed an accelerated approach to improvement planning following [self-referral on 12/8/24](#).

It is important to note that the Regulator welcomed the Council's decision to self-refer and the level of transparency paved the way for positive outcomes as areas for improvement were self-identified via the Councils robust programme management. There is no doubt that the scale and pace of improvement since as directly contributed to the **positive outcomes from the Regulator of Social Housing**. Choosing NOT to grade the Council¹ at successive formal meetings on 25/10/24 and 13/12/24, preferring continued monitoring because of the Councils response and action to-date, means the Council has provided a level of assurance in its improvement planning.

This is a significant achievement as other LAs have not had this response. This was also recognised in the Councils recent corporate peer challenge & will form part of the Councils ongoing action plan.

- 3.2. Since the last [Cabinet Update](#) the Programme Team have focused not only on internal improvement but also maintained an outward focus on learning and improvement including:-

- ✓ Engagement with external technical expertise to ensure the requisite step change across compliance including a root and branch review
- ✓ Monitoring and researching the Regulators published consumer judgements, including being part of a national benchmarking group
- ✓ Developing a supporting relationship with the Regulator through detailed provision of information and data to evidence improvement
- ✓ Contacted other providers at Melton, WHG and South Derbyshire who have all benefited from the first waves of inspection

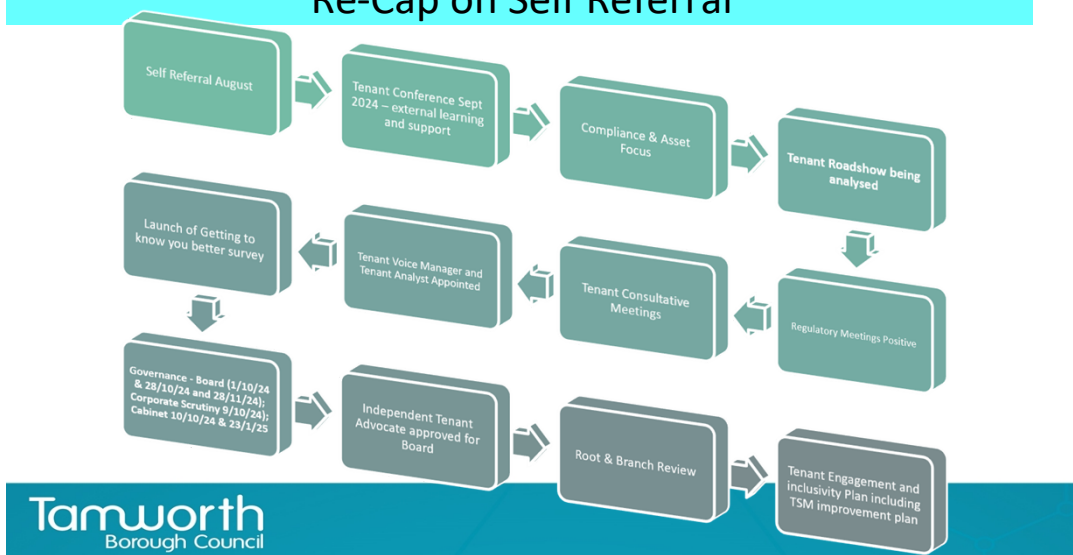
- 3.3. This report sets out the significant achievements, reflecting the scale and pace of change to remedy areas identified for self-referral. Originally there were 3 areas identified; two have been resolved which related to the submission of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code (Cabinet August 2024) and development of environmental service standards.

The areas under the safety and quality standard have seen comprehensive improvements as evidenced in the presentation to the Regulator on 13th December 2024. (Annex One). This was the culmination of significant work over August-December 2024 and enabled the team to show **organisational grip, sustained improvement and progress**.

- 3.4. The achievements reported to the Regulator are shown in detail in the attached presentation - highlights include: -

- ✓ Corporate Development of a Health & Safety Policy with the Deputy Leader as the Responsible person agreed at Cabinet in November 2024
- ✓ Weekly Oversight from the Councils Leadership Group comprising ELT, Leader, Deputy Leader and/or Executive members
- ✓ Dedicated Resourcing from the Programme Lead, Head of Repairs on Compliance and maximised use of external technical expertise
- ✓ Refreshed Terms of Reference for the Homelessness & Housing Advisory Board, championed by the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Homelessness and Planning

Re-Cap on Self Referral



- ✓ Tenant Conference in September launching a roadshow of engagement to develop the inclusivity plan around the tenant and leaseholder Voice
- ✓ Appointment of a Tenant Voice Manager and additional tenant analyst role
- ✓ Commissioned “getting to know you better” survey of our tenant and leaseholder base
- ✓ Role developed for the Independent Tenant Advocate – details being reported to Appointments & Staffing Committee 30/1/25
- ✓ Root & Branch Review, informed by the external technical compliance review on asset compliance as well as on contractual reset with Equans – all of which drives proposals to Cabinet around investment in resourcing
- ✓ Significant Step changes across all Asset Compliance key performance indicators, shown below. Including the mobilisation of c£1m Electrical work, re-procured expertise on fire safety and development of a complete asbestos register – the improvement plan at annex four shows the scale of the progress across all the requisite workstreams.

Performance Dash-Board at a glance!*

Ref	Compliance Area	% Compliance	No. Properties or communals Affected	Frequency	% compliance at self-referral	Trend	Commentary
	Fire Risk Assessments (communal) (12month rolling)	40% (2024/2025)	77	Annual	100% (2023/2024)	↔	2024/2025 underway – completion by Jan 2025. NFSS re-procured with external investment in training & strategy for onward management
	Fire Risk Remedials	100%	260	Variable	0%	↑	2023/2024 all completed. 2024/2025 underway
	Gas Safety (LGSR) Domestic	99.95%	3312	Annual	99.6%	↑	Consistent with no-access – 2 properties in court process
	Electrical (EICR) Domestic & Communal	75.5%	1038	5-yearly	1370 (67.6%)	↑	332 completed based on 320 per month target. 1370 down to 1038 overdue (4222 properties in total)
	Asbestos Re-inspections (communal)	100%	68	Variable	100%	↔	Asbestos Register now re-created – significant work
	Passenger Lifts Inspections (LOLER)	100%	11	Annual	100%	↔	
	Water Hygiene (L8) Risk Assessments	100%	28	Bi-Annual	69%	↑	2024/2025 completed but subject to external verification and tracking
	Water Hygiene Remedial actions	100%	28	Variable	0%	↑	Completed for 2023/2024

- 3.5. The recommendations in the report are covered in the relevant sections and are designed to ensure continued focus in the immediate and medium term. Longer term the Corporate Peer Challenge provides a basis to consider service improvement and transformation.

4.0. Resource Implications

- 4.1. The financial implications of investing in the Housing Asset team driving compliance requires a commitment to physical (additional staff); External Support (retained whilst internal staff trained and upskilled) and technological (module development within Orchard) resources. The estimated costs of adding further resources in these areas is estimated at £100k to the end 2024/25. It is therefore recommended to release this from contingency, whereupon the final financial details of the staffing resources can be confirmed within the Appointments & Staffing Report at the end of January 2025, subject to approval of the related policy change submitted as part of the 2025/26 MTFs and budget process. There is currently £130k available within the HRA contingency budget, this will leave £30k remaining to year end.

5.0. Legal/Risk Implications Background

- 5.1. There is a detailed risk assessment aligned to the Social Housing Regulatory Programme. This also informs the overarching risk included on the Councils Corporate risk register. Details of the Programme risks now form part of the emerging Housing performance dashboard shown at Annex Two.
- 5.2. **Currently the Programme is based on temporary resources co-ordinating housing compliance across the Council. There are plans to review this and the risk of not having a sustained focus on housing improvement is accepted, noting the Regulator have downgraded organisations from C3 to C4 where they have failed to deliver known improvements.**

6.0. Equalities Implications

- 6.1. The Council is committed to understanding its tenants' and leaseholders in order to evidence how it tailors its services. Work has been commissioned and is underway with MEL research on the **"getting to know you better"** survey. Outcomes from this will be presented to Cabinet as part of the Tenant Inclusivity Plan – on the Councils forward plan for 25/2/25.

There is a community equality impact assessment completed and attached to this report – showing the initial screening with current profiling shared with the Regulator. The Council are committed to understanding all the protected characteristics (and others identified in the Councils latest Diversity & Equality strategy 2025-2028) and a tailored report showing how this will drive access to services is underway for publication as part of the Tenant Voice work.

7.0. Environment and Sustainability Implications (including climate change)

- 7.1. The Safety & quality Standard within the Consumer framework focuses on safety, decency and property sustainability. Progress with the Councils stock condition survey forms part of the performance reporting and fundamental to the improvement plan. Elsewhere on the Councils forward plan is the update to the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan (2025) which sets out these challenges and opportunities.

8.0. Matters for Consideration

- 8.1. Governance & the role Homelessness & Housing Advisory Board.
Details at Annex Three

At successive Board meetings it has been agreed that there would be cross party support, giving tenants and leaseholders a voice. This has been prioritised by the Portfolio Holder and the terms of reference including membership with tenant and leaseholder engagement, strengthened. The Board considered the new Terms of Reference on 28/11/24 and these are recommended to Cabinet with their support. Full details including membership is shown for transparency. The main changes are

- ✓ Tenants and Leaseholders having voting rights on the Board

- ✓ External partners invited where relevant
- ✓ Voting rights will be reserved to those members with an appropriate interest
- ✓ Cross Party membership reviewed and shown in the attached Annex
- ✓ Opportunity to be held on teams as appropriate
- ✓ Work plans to be agreed at the start of each municipal year and kept under review

8.2. Homelessness & Housing Advisory Board proposed work plan

At the meeting on the 28/11/24 it was agreed that a extra-ordinary meeting would be held on the 6/1/25 to review the performance dashboard in detail and that this would inform the municipal work plan for the Board. The current programme is shown below – but is subject to change and amendment by the Board. This is delegated to the Portfolio Holder in conjunction with the Board.

13 th February 2025	8 th April 2025	July 2025	November 2025
Performance Dashboard Pack (TMM)	Performance Dashboard Pack (TMM)	Performance Dashboard Pack (TMM)	Performance Dashboard Pack (TMM)
Complaint & Compliments & Comments Policy and Data (ZW/NH)	Equans Visit – Contract Reset (PW)	Policy Schedule Update for all of housing	Social Housing Conceptual Framework – Inspection ready document outline (TMM)
Terms of Mock Inspection (TMM)	Introduction to new Tenant Independent Advocate (LB)	Tenant Voice and TSM improvement Plan (LB)	
HRA Business Plan (TMM/ Glen Smith)	Homelessness Strategy Scope (SF)	Social Housing Conceptual Framework – Inspection ready document outline (TMM)	
Tenant Perception Survey and Getting to Know you Progress (LB)	Social Housing Conceptual Framework – Inspection ready document outline (TMM)		
Social Housing Conceptual Framework – Inspection ready document outline (TMM)	Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment & Submission Arrangement (ZW/NH)		

8.3. Housing Performance Dashboard ***Details at Annex One***

The new Performance Dashboard has been migrated from data contained within the Social Housing Regulatory Programme Log, using the Councils performance management tool (Ideagen). This will be developed as part of the overall improvements to the Councils performance management framework. At the workshop on the 6/1/25 the Board were very supportive and this informed the work planning areas above.

The report is split into 4 sections

1. The Tenant Satisfaction measures
2. The Key performance indicators required by the Regulator
3. Risk Ratings for the Programme
4. Individual Project progress reports within the Regulatory Programme

From the update to the Regulator you will see that Corporate Scrutiny reviewed this in October 2024 and the Board will support that wider Scrutiny and executive function.

8.4. Health & Safety Requirements

It is a requirement of the Regulator to set out the Housing Health and Safety appropriate member lead – these arrangements will ensure health and safety matters are escalated from the Board to the Corporate Health and Safety Working Group to ensure that this remains fully compliant.

[Cabinet approved on 21/11/24](#) the revised Health and Safety policy. This included clarification on roles, including executive roles. Specifically, that the Portfolio Holder Housing, Homelessness & Planning is the accountable member for Housing Health and Safety and that the Deputy Leader has a Corporate Lead role for Health & Safety, including scrutinising the Housing Health & Safety arrangements as defined under the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023'

8.5. Resourcing & Investment across the Programme

It is recommended to delegate approval to the Councils s151 Officer, in conjunction with Executive Director Communities to release necessary contingency to fund both permanent changes (impacting resourcing) and referring matters to Appointments & Staffing Committee on 30/1/25 up to £100k; as well as continued temporary resourcing noting the need for sustained focus on the compliance improvement plan via external technical advice (Details including the Asset Compliance Improvement Plan have been shared with the Board previously; and are available if required.)

There are 3 elements to these costs

1. The need to continue with external technical expertise on the repairs and assets service to progress key works-streams within the compliance improvement plan. This work has already been procured separately and the table below summarises current work tasks. It is further recommended those areas proposed below are progressed to maintain momentum with the regulator in terms of progress. This is estimated at £25K until year end and is subject to the councils financial regulations. (2024/2025)

Current Work-Streams	Proposed
Options & Procurement of Compliance Contractor(s)	Stock reconciliation across all big 6 areas
Improvement Planning Oversight and Critical Challenge (Asset Compliance)	Legionella specification to improve and re-procure the water hygiene risk assessments
Contract Management of Gooms EICR work and programme	Critical Friend to implementation of Asbestos Register
	Policy updates for all big 6 areas for discussion at the Board

2. The need to develop the modules within orchard to integrate the asset MRI system so as to host the asbestos register. This is estimated at £25k until year end (2024/2025)
3. The need to invest in the current asset compliance structure to ensure that the work continues. It is recommended to present the full details to Appointments and Staffing Committee on the 30/1/25 and **is subject to the usual statutory consultation and job evaluation arrangements And funding being released.**

8.6 Inspection Preparedness' & Mock Inspection Arrangements

Delegate arrangements to the Portfolio Holder Housing, Homelessness and Planning, in consultation with the Executive Director Communities for the scope, procurement and undertaking of a mock inspection of the housing service, brief to be agreed by 31/3/25 and discussed with the Homelessness and Housing Advisory Board (HHAB).

The Programme Lead understands that the LGA; as well as other providers such as HQN and CIH, offer a bespoke housing mock inspection and this will test the level of preparedness' as we continue to improve services. There is already a conceptual framework document in draft – which is likely to form part of the Regulators data requirement pre-inspection. It is necessary to keep this updated and it is recommended that the HHAB consider this at the February meeting in order to bring it back to Cabinet for approval later in 2025.

Report Author

Tina Mustafa – Assistant Director Neighbourhoods

Appendices

Annex One – Performance Dashboard as at end of December 2024

Annex Two – Presentation shared with Regulator Social Housing 13th December 2024

Annex Three – Draft Terms of Reference for the Homelessness Housing Advisory Board
Equality Impact Assessment Screening attached

This page is intentionally left blank