

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| DECISION-MAKER: | OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE |
| SUBJECT: | SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL'S HOUSING IMPROVEMENT PLAN |
| DATE OF DECISION: | 12 DECEMBER 2024 |
| REPORT OF: | COUNCILLOR FRAMPTON CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING |

| <u>CONTACT DETAILS</u> | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------|---|---------------------------|
| Executive Director | Title | Executive Director - Resident Services | |
| | Name: | Debbie Ward | Tel: 023 8083 3351 |
| | E-mail | Debbie.Ward@southampton.gov.uk | |
| Author: | Title | Executive Director - Resident Services | |
| | Name: | Debbie Ward | Tel: 023 8083 3351 |
| | E-mail | Debbie.ward@Southampton.gov.uk | |

| |
|-------------------------------------|
| STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY |
| |

| |
|----------------------|
| BRIEF SUMMARY |
|----------------------|

This report sets out the improvement plan for Southampton City Council Landlord Services to ensure management action is focused on those areas where service standards have fallen below the ambition in the current Housing Strategy 2016/25, to drive up quality and outcomes for tenants and leaseholders.

The improvement plan identifies the areas that require significant action to respond to the findings of the new national Housing Regulator which completed an inspection of Southampton City Council's landlord services in August 2024 with the inspection report, attached as Appendix 1, published on 27th November 2024.

The improvement plan, attached as Appendix 2, is acknowledged in the inspection report as a key element to driving service performance from bottom quartile to top quartile performance in the coming 3 years for services performance and 5 years for decent homes standard.

The improvement plan is focused on the Housing Landlord function, puts tenants and leaseholders at the heart of its future development, and requires all parts of Southampton City Council that have a substantial role to deliver a quality landlord function to take an active, visible and collaborative part in delivery of the improvements.

| |
|-------------------------|
| RECOMMENDATIONS: |
|-------------------------|

| | | |
|--|------|--|
| | (i) | That the Committee consider the Landlord Services Improvement plan with full reference to the Report of the Housing Regulator published on 27 November 2024. |
| | (ii) | That the Committee consider the option to request a progress report on the progress and impact of the Improvement Plan on a 12-month cycle until top quartile performance is achieved. |

| REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS | |
|--|--|
| 1. | <p>To ensure the housing landlord service puts tenants and leaseholders at the heart of its future development and that performance is known and understood by Southampton City Council.</p> <p>That the performance in delivery of service to tenants and leaseholders is acknowledged as requiring significant change in the reporting of standards, clarity of performance outcomes and the investment decisions from the Housing Strategy, through the Housing Asset Investment Strategy, Housing Revenue Account management and delivery of services in Finance, Asset Management, Housing Management and Housing Operations.</p> |
| 2. | <p>To ensure the City Council through the Housing Landlord Service is making the improvements required by the Housing Regulator and achieving the performance improvements set out in the Plan.</p> |
| ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED | |
| 3. | None |
| DETAIL (Including consultation carried out) | |
| 4. | <p>Southampton City Council is the housing authority for the city and is responsible for fulfilling a range of duties to ensure that residents have access to safe, affordable and suitable housing options within its communities.</p> |
| 5. | <p>The Corporate Plan states the commitment to deliver “Safe and Stable Home Environments” and to “focus on helping individuals to remain in a safe home, by providing quality housing across the city and access to support when needed.”</p> |
| 6. | <p>SCC also has a Housing strategy (2016-2025) which sets out the aspirations for how it meets the housing responsibilities across the City and has prioritised housing in its corporate plan recognising that housing is a foundation for “individuals and families to achieve a high quality of life”.</p> |
| 7. | <p>The Housing Asset Management Strategy 2022-2026 sets out the approach to managing, maintaining, and improving homes to a good standard, including energy efficiency and net zero targets.</p> |
| 8. | <p>The delivery of services has not met the aspiration set out, performance levels have fallen below reasonable standards and do not consistently meet the requirements of the recently established Regulator of Social Housing, or the expectations of tenants and leaseholders. The deterioration of the service has taken place over a number of years. The current position shows that the landlord service is not operating to a reasonable level.</p> |
| 9. | <p>The investment in the housing stock decent homes standards has been poor with priority given to fire safety investment on the capital programme. Over the last 5 years the number of non-decent homes has increased from 6.7% of the stock to 47.7%.</p> |
| 10. | <p>The percentage of homes that meets the decent homes standard is one of the Key Performance Indicators set out in the Corporate Plan. The failure to meet the standards and the steep decline was recognised by the inclusion on the Corporate Risk Register in April 2024.</p> |

| | |
|-----|--|
| 11. | The Landlord services was subject to inspection by the Regulator of Social Housing in August 2024. The Regulator inspection regime was established from 1 April 2024. This inspection looked at the range of services, tenant relations, engagement, and the current performance levels. Assessment is made against a defined framework including value for money, material risks to the future financial viability of the stock. The service receives a rating of C1, 2, 3 or 4, with C1 being the most positive. The Regulator has a range of powers including intervention and fines. |
| 12. | Following the inspection the final report was received on the 27 November 2024 and the overall rating was of C3. Our earlier self-assessment had determined that this rating was likely, and the work to improve standards and develop a comprehensive improvement plan was already in development and contained in the Transformation Programme as the Good Landlord project. The self-awareness and the development of the plan was recognised by the inspectors and the full report is attached at Appendix 1. |
| 13. | The delivery of Southampton City Council housing responsibility is across the departmental structure of the Council and decisions made through the formal decision-making Governance which has led to the proper consideration of housing landlord matters and the HRA in silos, lacking the single focus on outcomes for tenants and leaseholders. |
| 14. | The separation of responsibilities and accountabilities has developed the tendency to work in silos despite reasonable co-operation between officers and decision makers. This is most evident between the landlord management function and the asset management functions. The professional priorities of the services are not consistent, and the main functions and plans and projects need a better joint focus between the demands of homes for people and the asset management of the Council. |
| 15. | The Good Landlord Transformation project has directly addressed the siloed approach, and the improvement plan runs from the development of a new Housing Strategy, asset management and planning and the specific landlord activities with the focus on outcomes for tenants. The Improvement plan outline and detail are attached at Appendix 2. |

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Capital/Revenue

| | |
|-----|--|
| 16. | None in this report. There are a range of significant decisions that will require capital and investment decisions, they will be the subject of specific reports at the point of decision. |
|-----|--|

Property/Other

| | |
|-----|--|
| 17. | None in this report. There are a range of significant decisions that will require capital and investment decisions, they will be the subject of specific reports at the point of decision. |
|-----|--|

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:

| | |
|-----|---|
| 18. | The duty to undertake overview and scrutiny is set out in Part 1A Section 9 of the Local Government Act 2000. |
|-----|---|

Other Legal Implications:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 19. | N/A |
| RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS | |
| 20. | The low level of Decent Homes Standards currently being met in the property in the Housing Revenue Account is registered on the Corporate Risk register and oversight will be managed there, with the improvement plan having a programme delivery framework that will have a risk log constantly reviewed. |
| POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS | |
| 21. | Link to Council policy objectives outlined in paragraphs 5-7. |

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| KEY DECISION? | Yes |
| WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED: | All |
| <u>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION</u> | |
| Appendices | |
| 1. | Report of the Regulator of Social Housing |
| 2. | Housing Improvement Plan - Highlights |

Documents In Members' Rooms

| | |
|----|------|
| 1. | None |
|----|------|

Equality Impact Assessment

| | |
|--|----|
| Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) to be carried out? | No |
|--|----|

Data Protection Impact Assessment

| | |
|---|----|
| Do the implications/subject of the report require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to be carried out? | No |
|---|----|

Other Background Documents

Other Background documents available for inspection at:

| Title of Background Paper(s) | Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable) |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1. None | |