

## CABINET MEETING – 8 JUNE 2023

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

**Title of Report:**

Housing Service Annual Review

**Author(s):**

Executive Director of Health, Housing and Communities

**Purpose of Report:**

The purpose of the report is to provide Cabinet with the annual Council Housing Service update for 2022/23

**Description of Decision:**

**Cabinet is recommended to: -**

1. Acknowledge the updates provided
2. Note the emerging changes in the sector

**Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework?** Yes

**If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework**

**Suggested reason(s) for Decision:**

In February 2020, Cabinet approved to receive an annual report regarding the Housing Service. Also, doing so is required as part of the Council's wider Governance role as a provider of Social Housing

**Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:**

**That Cabinet does not receive an annual report on the Housing Service**

This option has been considered and rejected as there is an approval by Cabinet to receive an annual report. Also, delivery of a report to Cabinet is required as part of the Council's wider Governance role as a provider of Social Housing.

**Impacts analysed;**

**Equality**

n/a

**Privacy**

N/A

**Sustainability**

N/A

**Crime and Disorder**

N/A

**Is the Decision consistent with the Council's co-operative values?** Yes/~~No~~

**Is this a "Key Decision" as defined in the Constitution?** Yes/~~No~~

**Is it included in the 28-day Notice of Decisions?** Yes/~~No~~



## HOUSING SERVICE ANNUAL REVIEW

### REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF HEALTH, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

#### 1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Cabinet with the annual Council Housing Service update for 2022/23.

#### 2. Description of Decision (Recommendations)

- 2.1 Cabinet is recommended to: -
1. Acknowledge the updates provided
  2. Note the emerging changes in the sector

#### 3.0 Background

- 3.1 The Housing Service has seen growth in the last three years in terms of number of Council homes. This growth is supporting the Council to deliver on its strategic aspirations for improving housing conditions and providing greater housing choice for all.
- 3.2 The Housing Service was underpinned by two key activities. Securing Registered Provider of Social Housing (RP) status on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2019 and approval by Cabinet on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2020 for funding for the delivery of the Housing Delivery and Investment Plan (HDIP). The HDIP is a £59m gross capital investment plan to deliver new affordable homes across 3 streams of activity:
- Bringing Empty Homes Back into use;
  - Delivery of new bungalows; and
  - Provision of supported accommodation.
- 3.3 The Council as at 9th May is now a landlord with 117 tenancies. Being a Social Housing landlord also means we must meet all legislative, regulatory and wider compliance requirements as set out by Government and the Regulator of Social Housing. The primary aim is that we should provide quality affordable homes and provide excellent services to our tenants and ensure that tenants are at the heart of the Council service.
- 3.4 This Cabinet Report provides an update on the Housing Service through 2022/2023 and includes areas of Governance, Regulation, Operations, Development and investment through the HDIP. The Annual Report (attached as Appendix 3) relates to 2021/22.

## 4.0 Stock Details, Acquisitions and Growth

4.1 Council housing tenancies have increased from 68 homes in April 2022 to 117 on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023. Additional homes have been delivered through the acquisition of existing empty properties, through new build developments and the return of properties to the Council following the end of long leases with Bernicia.

4.2 The HDIP output update shown in Table 1 below provides a summary of progress against the key outputs in the HDIP as of 5th May 2023

4.3 Table 1:

Delivery Category	Area	Approved HDIP target	HDIP Progress against Target			
			In Council ownership	Secured	In Negotiation	Total progress
Empty Homes	East	61	16	1	0	17
	West	42	14	0	0	14
	North	38	13	0	0	13
	Coalfield	37	15	0	0	15
	Washington	32	7	0	0	7
<b>Total</b>		<b>210</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>66</b>
Bungalows	East	60	17	0	6	23
	West	38	0	73	2	75
	North	40	25	14	0	39
	Coalfields	36	5	0	0	5
	Washington	19	4	0	0	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>193</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>146</b>
Supported Accommodation	East	38	2	12	0	14
	West	35	2	2	37	41
	North	34	8	10	0	18
	Coalfields	34	1	0	20	21
	Washington	30	3	15	0	18
<b>Total</b>		<b>171</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>112</b>
<b>Total HDIP Units</b>		<b>574</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>324</b>
		<b>% Delivery</b>	<b>23.00</b>	<b>22.13</b>	<b>11.32</b>	<b>56.45</b>

**Key:**

In Council Ownership - legally complete

Secured - terms agreed / legal involvement approved

In negotiation - under discussion / terms

## 5.0 Grant Funding Update

### 5.1 Next Steps / Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme (NSAP / RSAP)

- 5.2 The Council secured £255,000 capital grant funding from DHLUCs Next Steps Accommodation Programme and a further £234,000 capital grant from their Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme. This supported the delivery of 12no one bedroomed homes for occupation by clients who have experienced rough sleeping. All properties were successfully acquired and are now in use.

### 5.3 Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes (SOAHP) 2016-21

- 5.4 The Council secured a capital grant allocation of £2.157m from Homes England as part of this funding programme. This grant allocation supported the delivery of 61 new homes. All projects have now been successfully completed and all the grant funding allocation has been claimed.

### 5.5 Affordable Home Programme (AHP) 2021-26

- 5.6 To date a capital grant allocation of £3,759,000 from this funding programme has been secured. The allocation will support the delivery of 98 new homes, across six development schemes.
- 5.7 To date £3,073,750 of the grant funding allocation has been successfully claimed to support the delivery of these development projects, leaving £685,250 remaining to be claimed once the projects have progressed to the point where the claim can be made.
- 5.8 A summary of the running totals of capital grant across all funding programmes secured via Homes England is shown in Table 2 below. This includes the £489,000 capital grant secured for NSAP/RSAP properties.

### 5.9 Table 2:

Capital Grant - running totals	
Total secured grant allocation to date	<b>£6,405,000</b>
Total grant allocation claimed to date	<b>£5,719,750</b>
Balance of grant remaining to be claimed	<b>£685,250</b>
Total number of units supported	<b>171</b>

## 6.0 Housing Services Monitoring Group

- 6.1 The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) expects that the Social Housing provided by Local Authorities is well governed and managed. The RSH requires Cabinet to ensure that effective arrangements are in place to provide assurance on risk management, governance and internal controls. The Housing Services Monitoring Group (HSMG) was established as the agreed

Strategic Steering Group which supports Cabinet in the monitoring and scrutiny of investment and performance of the Housing Service.

- 6.2 The HSMG has continued to meet quarterly through 2022/23. It plays an important function in the strategic review, monitoring and challenge of the housing service in terms of considering current service issues, performance matters and future strategic service discussions.
- 6.3 The HSMG is Chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Dynamic Smart City and supported by the Deputy Portfolio Holder for Dynamic Smart City with wider group attendance including the Executive Director of Health, Housing and Communities, Assistant Director of Housing and Communities and the Director of Finance. There is also regular wider representation on the HSMG from Housing, Property Services, Finance and the Communications team
- 6.4 On 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2022 Cabinet approved the widening of the HSMG membership to include up to two tenants. This is part of our drive to involve tenants in how the service is managed. The Housing Operations Team have made extensive efforts to secure membership from tenants, however, to date it has not been possible to identify interest from any current tenants. Work will continue to recruit a suitable tenant/s onto this group as this is a key governance arrangement and ensures tenants are part of our service review process.
- 6.5 The HSMG will continue to meet quarterly throughout 2023/24.

## **7.0 Service Progress**

### **7.1 Tenants communication**

- 7.2 The service has seen several 'firsts' over 2022/23. August 2022 saw the publication of our first Newsletter, "Housing News", which provides useful updates and information to all our tenants. The second newsletter followed in December 2022. These were issued to all tenants and published on our website. Copies are provided at Appendix 1 and 2.

- 7.3 Our first Annual Report was published in early 2023. This is a formal document which provides details of spend and performance across 2021/22. This is attached as Appendix 3.

### **7.4 Milestone of our 100<sup>th</sup> tenant**

- 7.5 A significant development of sixteen properties at Arnay Court (Old Mill Road, Southwick) saw the letting of our 100<sup>th</sup> home. This was a key milestone, and the occasion was marked by the presentation of flowers to our 100<sup>th</sup> tenant who said:

*'We are absolutely tickled pink with the house. Our old apartment was becoming really difficult for us to access, which meant we were increasingly*

*isolated. The move to a home that meets our needs has lifted our mood and we are starting to live again, which is lovely'.*

#### 7.6 National Award Success

In February 2023 the Council won two awards at the National Housing Digital Awards for the 'Most Innovative Support or Care Service Award' and the 'Most Innovative Housing Provider Award'.

7.5 The Council was nominated due to its trailblazing work embedding digital technology into our homes through collaboration between Housing and Adult Social Care which supported people to live as independently as possible.

7.6 Judges assessing the award submissions highlighted the great example of incorporating technology into homes and services which were supporting residents now and in the future. There was specific recognition of the 'fantastic integration of new technology in building design' in the new homes created by the Council through our Housing Delivery and Investment Plan.

7.7 This was an excellent national achievement and recognition of the joint and collaborative working that has been employed to maximise the quality of homes and care for some of our most vulnerable residents.

#### 7.8 Service Compliance

7.9 We have continued to deliver on our Compliance Action Plan to ensure that the service met kept pace with regulatory, service and changing policy requirements.

7.10 The Compliance Action Plan activity was formally reviewed through the Council's Audit Team who assessed the Level of Assurance in the delivery and activity of the plan. It is pleasing to report that the outcome of 'Substantial' confidence was found in relation to the implementation of the Action Plan. This demonstrates that work continues to ensure that we ensure with compliance and regulatory requirements across the housing service.

### 8.0 **Performance**

#### 8.1 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

8.2 The RSH has introduced Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) which must be reported on annually by all Registered Providers who own more than 1,000 properties.

8.3 Registered Providers must:

- Collect and process information specified by the RSH relating to their performance against the TSMs
- Annually publish their performance against the TSMs

- Annually submit to the RSH information specified by the RSH relating to their performance against those measures. The information must be submitted within a timeframe and in a form determined by the RSH
- 8.4 Although TSMs are only required from providers with over 1,000 dwellings, it is seen as sector good practice for all providers to collate this information to enable performance to be benchmarked against peers.
- 8.5 We have now developed appropriate monitoring arrangements for TSMs so that we can align our performance with sector activity and comparisons for the future assessment of our service.
- 8.6 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2022/23
- 8.7 Agreed Key Performance Indicators are now operational within the service. These KPIs align well to local needs and sector and industry best practice. These KPIs will provide clear indications of performance across all areas of the service and identify quickly where we are doing well and where we need to improve. It will also provide data for our tenants on how we are doing in the delivery of the service to them.
- 8.8 The KPIs are reviewed and monitored by the HSMG on a quarterly basis. A copy of the KPIs for 2022/23 is within Appendix 4.
- 8.9 The Service will reflect on performance from 2022/23 to set new targets for 2023/24. These will be monitored quarterly at HSMG.
- 9.0 Emerging Issues in the Social Housing Sector**
- 9.1 Housing qualifications
- 9.2 The RSH has stepped up its work to strengthen regulation in the section, which will in turn improve the offer of social housing to customers.
- 9.3 The latest government action to drive up standards and improve the lives of social housing residents suggests:
- Professional qualifications are to be made mandatory for social housing managers, ensuring residents receive a high-quality service and rapidly professionalise the sector
  - Part of the Social Housing (Regulations) Bill (which is currently undergoing final amendments) will give the Regulator new powers to hold landlords to account
- 9.4 The details of the qualification requirements are still awaited, once these are known the appropriate staff will be placed on the required courses to meet the new mandatory requirements.



## 9.5 Damp and Mould housing conditions

9.6 Following the tragic death of Awaab Ishak in Rochdale last year the Government and the Regulator of Social Housing initiated changes to the law and regulatory framework to ensure social landlords rectify all issues of damp and mould in their stock.

9.7 The Housing Ombudsman who works closely with the RSH in the delivery of the Regulatory Framework and services to tenants developed 26 new recommendations for social housing landlords to deliver services with regards to the management, tenants service response and the delivery of repairs in relation to damp and mould.

9.6 In response to the evolving situation from the tragic incident on Rochdale we developed a Mould and Damp Action Plan. This Action Plan has subsequently been reviewed in line with the Housing Ombudsman recommendations through a self-assessment process. This found some gaps within the Action Plan which have now been reviewed and further actions agreed.

9.7 The Mould and Damp Action Plan is managed and monitored by Housing and Property Services through a weekly service meeting and review any repairs or works that are connected or relate to damp or mould issues.

## 9.8 Better Social Housing Review

9.9 The Government has recently published recommendations to improve social housing within a 'Better Social Housing Review'. These recommendations focus on the following areas:

1. Providers focus on their Core Business
2. Performance
3. Repairs and repairs processes
4. Staffing / training
5. Tenant consultation / voice
6. Involving communities
7. Reacting to this review

9.12 This is another clear indication of the direction of travel for the sector and governments continued commitment to regulating and improving the housing sector and housing conditions and services for tenants.

9.13 We are reviewing the issues raised within these recommendations and where necessary build into our Compliance Action Plan new required service improvement actions and activities.

## **10.0 Reasons for the Decision**

10.1 In February 2020, Cabinet approved to receive an annual report regarding the Housing Service. Also, doing so is required as part of the Council's wider Governance role as a provider of Social Housing.

## **11.0 Alternative Options**

- 11.1 That Cabinet does not receive an annual report on the Housing Service
- 11.2 This option has been considered and rejected as there is a requirement to provide Cabinet with an update regards the service. Also, delivery of a report to Cabinet is required as part of the Council's wider Governance role as a provider of Social Housing.

## **12.0 Impact Analysis**

- (a) **Equalities** - An Equality Impact Assessment is not required
- (b) **Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA)** – there are no foreseen risks to the privacy of the public.
- (c) **Sustainability** – future projects will take account of the need to maximise energy efficiency measures and all sustainability options explored and considered as part of each development
- (d) **Reduction of Crime and Disorder – Community Cohesion / Social Inclusion** – future projects will be designed to delivered to ensure they design out crime and supports community cohesion

## **13.0 Financial Implications**

- 13.1 There are no direct costs associated with approving the recommendations set out in this report. The capital costs associated with the delivery of the HDIP are met from the allocation within the approved Capital Programme.

## **14.0 Other Relevant Considerations / Consultations**

### **Co-operative Values** – Wider project delivery

- (i) **Risk Analysis** – All projects will be financially assessed in terms of its viability with both the development and HRA financial parameters before they proceed, and all service regulatory and compliance requirements are closely monitored and managed within service Action Plans
- (ii) **Legal Implications** – All projects within the HDIP will be structured in line with all required legal requirements and all Housing Service activity will be undertaken within all regulatory and legislative requirements
- (iii) **Procurement Implications** – All HDIP projects will meet the Council's Corporate Procurement Policies and requirements
- (iv) **Policy Implications** – the delivery of more quality affordable homes and greater housing choice is a strategic priority of the council

- (v) **Implications for Other Services** – Housing Service activity is supported by a range of other service areas including Property Services, Legal, Finance and Environmental Services
- (vi) **The Public / External Bodies** – The Regulator of Social Housing is the regulator of the Council Housing Service. Homes England would be the lead on all development grant funding arrangements
- (vii) **Compatibility with European Convention on Human Rights** – There are no issues in relation to compatibility with the European Convention on Human Rights at the present time.

## **15.0 Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – August 2022 Tenants Newsletter
- Appendix 2 – December 2022 Tenants Newsletter
- Appendix 3 – Housing Annual Report
- Appendix 4 – KPIs 2022/23

