

Housing and City Development Scrutiny Committee

15 April 2024

Consumer Standards for Social Housing

Report of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To scrutinise the Council's response to meeting the new Consumer Standards that must be complied with by Registered Providers of social housing.

2 Action required

- 2.1 The Committee is asked:

- 1) to make any comments or recommendations in response to the report from the Portfolio Holder for Housing on the approach being developed to ensure that the Council's Housing Service is compliant with the new Consumer Standards; and
- 2) to consider whether any further scrutiny of the issue is required (and, if so, to identify the focus and timescales).

3 Background information

- 3.1 The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) has revised and published its new Consumer Standards for all social housing providers, which will come into effect from April 2024. These four Standards, along with Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), will form the backbone of the new regulatory regime brought about by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, which lays the foundations for changes to how social housing is managed. The Act brings forward a stronger and more proactive regulatory regime to improve standards in the sector and hold landlords to account for the service that they provide to their tenants.
- 3.2 The RSH is an independent body responsible for setting standards that all registered providers of social housing must meet, and it holds landlords to account for compliance with these standards. Its remit covers both Local Authorities and other Registered Providers. The RSH's assessment approach will be both resident and outcome focused, and the regulator has enhanced powers to issue unlimited fines and order performance improvement plans. The regulator will be taking a fully proactive approach and will be able to intervene in more resident complaint cases than previously.
- 3.3 The RSH will inspect all large social landlords, including Local Authorities, every four years. These inspections will assess compliance with the new Standards and will result in a 'C' rating reflecting the level of adherence: C1 being the

highest and C4 being the lowest. Tenants and other stakeholders can refer cases to the RSH if they believe a landlord is not meeting the Standards. The RSH will engage in responsive regulation, considering these referrals and taking action when necessary. Landlords are expected to provide documentary evidence of compliance, which the RSH will scrutinise. The RSH has indicated that it expects only a small number of housing services to achieve C1 standard, initially. If a service is graded at C3 or C4, the RSH will continue to work with the provider to bring about improvement.

- 3.4 The RSH has a full year of inspections planned, typically giving around six weeks' notice of an inspection. Inspectors will engage with the Housing Ombudsman, look at the TSM data and use other available information prior to an inspection. The RSH will engage with the Council to agree the terms of the inspection and ask for the necessary details. During the inspection, inspectors will attend a tenant engagement meeting and meet with officers, councillors and senior managers.
- 3.5 Using the Housing Quality Network Toolkit, an internal review of the Standards within the Council's Housing Services has been undertaken. The review indicates that there is a medium to high confidence rating over half of the measures in terms of policies, procedures or evidence being in place. However, this still leaves considerable work to be undertaken. The review has been used to develop an Action Plan, which is then being embedded in each relevant Service Plan.
- 3.6 Progress towards implementation is monitored by the Housing Department Leadership Team. Many of the outstanding actions will be relatively straightforward to resolve, but there are some more significant tasks to be addressed, including a 100% stock condition survey, establishment of the Housing Action Board to better engage with tenants and an independent review of the Council's compliance systems to confirm that it is keeping homes safe.

4 List of attached information

- 4.1 Report: Consumer Standards for Social Housing

5 Background papers, other than published works or those disclosing exempt or confidential information

- 5.1 None

6 Published documents referred to in compiling this report

- 6.1 [Regulator of Social Housing – Regulatory Standards](#)

7 Wards affected

- 7.1 All

8 Contact information

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