

## Housing and City Development Scrutiny Committee: [30 September 2024](#) (item 5/20)

### Response to Recommendations: Homes Fit for the Future - Consultation and Findings

#### Portfolio: Housing and Planning

Recommendation	Response
<p>1) To recommend that the Council works to maximise its engagement with all Registered Providers in the social housing sector active in the city, both to ensure the effective delivery of locally affordable housing and to support tenants in resolving any issues with Housing Association landlords.</p>	<p>The Council acknowledges the vital role of Registered Providers (RPs) and the important contribution that they will make in achieving the new Housing Strategy's overall vision. Housing Services has and continues to maintain strong working relationships with all RPs that operate in the city, which have been developed through the activities below to seek to ensure the social housing sector delivers services that residents need in a coordinated and collaborative way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• one-to-one engagement with individual RPs;</li><li>• chairing the refreshed Nottingham Social Housing Forum;</li><li>• chairing the Nottingham HomeLink partnership; and</li><li>• engaging RPs in local Neighbourhood Action Team meetings to support our neighbourhoods.</li></ul> <p>The Council anticipates a steady pipeline of affordable rented homes to come forward from RPs, as most Government funding programmes are orientated towards this tenure. The Council can support RPs to develop more social homes in a number of ways, and the Local Plan ensures that private developers contribute to affordable housing through the Planning system.</p> <p>Under the Local Plan, developers are required to allocate a portion of new developments to affordable housing. If on-site delivery is not feasible, developers must pay a commuted sum to the Council, which can be used to fund affordable housing elsewhere in the city. However, these contributions are subject to a viability test, meaning that developers can sometimes be exempt if the scheme is not financially viable (this is a requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework). Given the level</p>

	<p>of housing need locally, the Council keeps these proportions under review to ensure that they are in line with the market conditions and the approach of other Local Authorities. The Council is currently revising the Local Plan and aiming to increase the focus towards delivering affordable units for rent, as opposed to low-cost home ownership. In addition, the Council is exploring opportunities to support RPs to maintain a supply of new affordable homes through the passporting of housing delivery funds and by taking account of social value considerations in the disposal of Council land and building assets.</p> <p>The Council is generally made aware of complaints or issues with RP landlords via the Councillor casework system or 'Have Your Say'. Housing Services has worked with the Councillor Casework team to enhance their understanding of the regulations and requirements that RPs have to meet and how to make efficient enquiries on tenants' behalf. When responding to citizen enquiries about RPs, the Casework team liaises with the RP's Customer Contact Centre and, where necessary, triggers the respective complaints process. If these official routes have been utilised and a satisfactory solution has not been agreed, then the Casework team refers the case to Housing Services, which then escalates the concerns to an appropriate senior RP contact. This is an additional tool to engage with the provider and does not supersede the powers or right to escalate matters to the Housing Ombudsman. Additionally, Housing Services meets with the Councillor Casework Team Leader on a quarterly basis to review local complaints and to identify trends or themes.</p>
<p>2) To recommend that all possible action is carried out to bring void Council-owned social housing back into use as quickly as possible, as part of the Council leading by example on returning empty housing in the city back into occupation.</p>	<p>Empty properties can create a negative impression of city neighbourhoods and cause frustration, especially when the demand for social housing is so high. Housing Services is working to improve how the Council works on its properties between tenancies to reduce the amount of time that homes are empty.</p>

Before a property is re-let, Housing Services must ensure that it meets the lettable standard that has been agreed in consultation with tenants. This ensures that the quality of the property given to a new tenant is of a good standard and creates a sustainable home and neighbourhood they will want to live in. In the Council's stock of around 24,500 homes, each year there are approximately 1,100 that become available for re-letting and, in addition, there are around 200 temporary accommodation properties.

The average cost of works per void property in 2024 is £6,800. Some empty homes require substantial repair and investment to bring them up to the lettable standard and meet the Decent Homes Standards (re-wiring, new kitchens and bathrooms, etc.). The Council will ensure that this work is undertaken at void time to minimise the disruptions to the new household. Most void works are undertaken by the Council's in-house Repairs and Cleansing team. The Council uses external contractors to deliver specialist works such as asbestos removal, re-wiring and damp proofing. The Council has also commissioned an external contractor to help reduce the current number of void properties.

Recent service improvements to improve void turnaround times include:

- designing and implementing a standard operating procedure for voids and regularly auditing the procedure to identify further improvements and to react to legislative changes efficiently;
- improving the oversight of performance;
- increasing service capacity within the Voids service area (the Council is using agency staff to backfill vacant posts as well as recruiting replacement staff, the Planned and Investment service area is taking on some void properties to support the Voids service and increase throughput, and a contractor has been procured to tackle the properties that require a significant amount of work);

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintaining a close working relationship between the Voids and Lettings team to deliver a seamless service, keeping customers informed and handovers smooth and efficient;</li> <li>• purchasing new equipment where it has been identified that this will improve productivity; and</li> <li>• focusing resources on properties with high demand, which means that works for low demand properties (for example, some Independent Living schemes) may be on hold until a suitable customer is matched and accepts an offer on a property.</li> </ul> <p>As part of the work to address the issue of properties in low demand, there is currently a review of the Independent Living stock in the city. The review aims to devise solutions to address this situation to help maximise the availability of social housing for Nottingham citizens.</p>
<p>3) To recommend that the Council considers how it could engage effectively with its partners and with the Government on the development of a standardisation of regulation across Registered Providers in the social housing sector, to help deliver a consistency of experience for social tenants.</p>	<p>In response to the 2020 White Paper (the Charter for Social Housing Residents), the role of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) has been strengthened and a number of changes to standardise regulation across the social housing sector have been implemented. These have been designed to help deliver a consistency of experience for social tenants. The RSH has revised the Consumer Standards and introduced Tenant Satisfaction measures. These changes are designed to improve the living conditions of tenants by making sure their homes are safe and well-maintained. Tenants will have more influence over their housing services and can expect greater transparency and accountability from their landlords. The revised Consumer Standards were effective from April 2024 and constitute:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Safety and Quality Standard, which makes sure that tenants' homes are safe and of good quality. This includes outcomes related to the safety and quality of tenants' homes;</li> </ul>

- the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard, which focuses on providing tenants with clear information, influence over services and mechanisms to hold landlords accountable
- the Neighbourhood and Community Standard, which aims to foster a sense of community and make sure that neighbourhoods are well-maintained and safe; and
- the Tenancy Standard, which addresses the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords, promoting fair treatment and respect for tenants.

The RSH has introduced Tenants Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), which are intended to be a tool to allow tenants to scrutinise their landlord's performance, give insights to landlords on where they might look to improve their services and provide a source of intelligence to the RSH on how far landlords are meeting the outcomes of the new Consumer Standards. Social housing landlords are required by law to collect TSM data and report it to the RSH. TSMs include information from tenant surveys and those generated from management information held by landlords on areas including repairs and maintenance, complaints and engagement, respectful and helpful engagement, and building safety. In addition, Awaab's Law mandates social housing landlords to address and repair reported serious health hazards within specified timeframes and to make this an implied term in tenancy agreements. Failure to do so will allow tenants to hold their landlords to account by taking legal action through the Courts for a breach of contract.

There have been various consultations in the lead up to these changes, which the Council has responded to. The Council will continue to respond to consultations and utilise its contacts with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government as the Government and the RSH assess how successful these changes have been. Housing Services will engage with Registered Providers both individually and through the Social

	Housing Forum as the Council responds to and embeds these new regulatory requirements.
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**Housing and City Development Scrutiny Committee: [18 November 2024](#) (item 5/27)**

**Response to Recommendations: Independent Living Review and Future Model**

**Portfolio: Housing and Planning**

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Response</b>
1) To recommend that the further development of the Independent Living offer is supported by a targeted advertising and communications process, so that it is straightforward for people who would benefit from the service most to find out about and apply for it.	A Housing Revenue Account growth bid has been submitted for additional Lettings Officer resource specifically to support Independent Living which, if approved, will support with the delivery of a targeted advertising and communications process. Should the Independent Living review proposals to rebrand and revise the eligibility criteria be accepted by the relevant decision-makers, a marketing campaign will be undertaken to support the relaunch.