

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director (Communities)	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Thursday, 7 July 2022

Updates on the previous Scrutiny - Quality of Social Housing

Is this report confidential?	No
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Is this decision key?	Not applicable
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Savings or expenditure amounting to greater than £100,000	Significant impact on 2 or more council wards
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Purpose of the Report

1. To update the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in regard to the Quality of Social Housing in Chorley following the recommendations made by Scrutiny Task Group in 2019.

Recommendations to Scrutiny Committee

2. No recommendations but for this report to be noted.

Corporate priorities

3. The report relates to the following corporate priorities: (please bold all those applicable):

Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all	A strong local economy
Clean, safe and healthy communities	An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area

Background to the report

4. The quality of social housing was identified in 2018 as a focus of Scrutiny in Chorley, with the council wishing to understand the issues faced by tenants in relation to Customer Service, Communication and Engagement, Property Maintenance and Standards, and Neighbourhood issues.
5. This report focuses on the recommendation from the final report of the task group and updates in relation to these.

The previous scrutiny recommendations and updates

6.

Previous recommendations from O&S	
To run a Members Learning Session on housing issues at the beginning of each Municipal Year	Members learning sessions have taken place (last one November 2021 which was also recorded for distribution) and the next is scheduled for 12 th September 2022. This covers the Housing Solutions service broadly. Now Select Move Co-Ordinator is in post we also propose a detailed session solely on social housing allocations, though this will be of benefit once Select Move Scrutiny and the allocations policy review has been concluded (Autumn of 2022).
To promote the take up of Disabled Facilities Grants with RP's	The private sector team work co-operatively with the main RPs operating within the borough of Chorley and there has been a recently renewed Service Level Agreement in place with the largest RP in the borough – Jigsaw Homes. We also have cost share arrangements in place with Accent, Progress, Onward Homes, Your Housing Group and Anchor Hanover. In the last 3 or 4 years significantly more RP referrals for DFG and most years now it is almost 50% of cases that are for RP tenants
To lobby the Government for greater regulation of RP's	There is legislative reform on the horizon regarding the regulation of Registered Provider landlords. The Green paper referenced in the final report from Scrutiny has subsequently led to a White paper (The Charter for Social Housing Tenants 2020) and on 8 June 2022, the Social Housing Regulation Bill was introduced to

Parliament. The Bill aims to deliver the proposals set out in the Social Housing White Paper by introducing a number of measures to give tenants greater powers, improve access to swift and fair redress, and enhance the powers of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH).

The bill set out 7 key expectations for all social housing residents:

- to be safe in your home
- to know how your landlord is performing
- to have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly
- to be treated with respect
- to have your voice heard by your landlord
- to have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in
- to be supported to take your first step to ownership, should your circumstances allow

Following the white paper the government has taken steps to improve the quality in social housing including;

- Publicising details on social media channels of those landlords who have breached the Regulator's consumer standards or where the Housing Ombudsman has made its most serious finding - severe maladministration - against them
- Launching a Resident Panel which will bring together social housing residents from across the country so they can directly share their views on our planned reforms and the measures – including the Decent Homes Standard, complaints awareness campaign and Access to Information Scheme - we are delivering to improve the quality of social housing.
- Publishing draft legislation to implement the Social Housing White

	<p>Paper commitments to reform the regulation of social housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publishing a factsheet explaining the role of the Regulator of Social Housing and Housing Ombudsman Service We will continue to publish updates on our progress in implementing the measures in the Social Housing White Paper and the further measures we are introducing to improve the quality of social housing and deliver on our Housing Mission target to reduce the number of non-decent rented homes by 50% by 2030.
<p>Introduction of a Chorley Good Homes Charter - a charter that RPs are encouraged to sign up to. The charter could include Customer Service, Property Maintenance and Standards Engagement and Communication, and Neighbourhood</p> <p>Suggestions for the charter to include;</p> <p>Customer Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer representation should be involved in the complaints process. • To provide a VIP mail service or a point of contact at a senior level to enable Councillors to represent their constituents on housing issues. • Dealing with complaints Residents must be able to obtain high quality, timely and local responses to complaints that they raise. • To acknowledge letters within 5 working days and respond fully within 7 working days. If this is not possible to write to tell residents why and to let them know how long it is expected to take to respond fully. • To answer the phone within 20 seconds. • To respond within 1 working day to emails (this may be an automated acknowledgement). • There should be a clear, concise 	<p>An individual Charter for Chorley has not been designed or implemented having been delayed by the challenge of responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. While the anticipated implantation of the legislation is welcomed, Chorley Council will look to take this action forward via the Select Move Steering Group withing the partnership of RPs in the locality and across central Lancashire.</p> <p>The council (Communities Director and Council Leader, Portfolio holder of Homes and Housing) meets with Jigsaw Homes quarterly as they are the largest provider (being the LSVT previously Chorley Community Homes) and when asked about their approach at the meeting June 2022 they responded by saying ;</p> <p><i>We welcome the proposals and have already begun to prepare for their introduction.</i></p> <p><i>To date we have:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reviewed and simplified our Complaints Policy.</i> • <i>Reviewed our Resident Engagement Strategy.</i> • <i>Introduced a new reporting dashboard so that board can easily monitor complaints, customer feedback and disrepair cases.</i> • <i>Reflected on whether the board was</i>

and user-friendly complaints procedure which is advertised on the website and available to all tenants.

- Residents should have a nominated person to deal with an official complaint.
- To undertake and publish annual satisfaction surveys from local residents and use this information to improve services.
- The Council to be proactive in supporting residents in dealing with RP's.

Communication and engagement

- To use all forms of communication, e.g. emails, website, apps, texts, newsletters, noticeboards and face to face.
- Following consultation with residents for large- and small-scale investment information should be provided about planned maintenance 14 days in advance.
- To create a resident's association for Chorley Borough and invite all Chorley RP's.
- To establish a social sector housing forum for Chorley Borough and invite all Chorley RP's and Chorley Borough Councillors.
- To provide a quarterly update to Members, including planned maintenance, updates and events etc.
- To undertake walks of RP managed areas with ward Councillors, annually as a minimum.
- To have available and promote to residents a Local Residents Engagement Strategy.

Property maintenance and standards

- Properties should meet the Decent Homes Standard (or equivalent), which requires social properties to be free

adequately sighted on the themes of "repairs, redress, respect and transparency".

- *Improved our transparency to tenants with respect to the trade offs the board considered in agreeing the 2022/23 rent increase.*
- *Revised our KPIs as part of this year's Corporate Plan to align our satisfaction measure with that proposed by the Regulator and to also introduce a new measure which highlights customers who are dissatisfied due to a lack of politeness from our employees.*
- *Consulted with residents on their priorities for transparency and discussed these at the board strategy event of 8 June.*

We already plan to:

- *Publish to the general public our performance dashboards for overall Corporate Plan KPIs, Complaints and Customer Feedback and Corporate Plan Projects.*
- *Undertake wide-ranging Customer Care training.*
- *Implement a Data Quality Strategy to ensure that data to help us identify the diverse needs of residents is more accurate.*
- *Test the collection of the perception Tenant Satisfaction Measures in 2022/23.*
- *Align our KPI reporting to board during 2022/23 with the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures.*

of hazards that pose a risk to residents, to be in a reasonable state of repair, to have reasonably modern facilities and services such as kitchens and bathrooms and efficient heating effective insulation and damp proofing. This should be monitored.

- To have 60% of properties energy efficient in two years.
- For non-emergency repairs a visit should be undertaken in 2 working days and completed within five working days and guaranteed for a year. This will be measured by a key performance indicator.
- There should be a standard for emergency repairs, from point of report to fully completed repair should be completed within 2 days and guaranteed for a year.
- To install smoke alarms on every storey, and carbon monoxide alarms in every room containing solid fuel burning and gas appliances.
- The exterior of the properties should be included when considering health and safety responsibilities of RP's.
- To decorate and undertake large scale maintenance when a property is void where possible, when a new kitchen, bathroom or boiler is required in the next year.
- To endeavour to use locally based and appropriately qualified tradespeople where possible.

Neighbourhood issues

- To demonstrate value for money and full transparency in relation to service charges, their administration and show how residents can be involved in what the service charge is spent on.
- To be proactive in organising community sessions (these could

<p>include litter picks and community events) and encourage residents to take ownership of their properties and their community environment locally.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase parking provision for tenants where there is the greatest need, following consultation with residents. • To engage in a proactive and preventative approach to resolve issues and work with residents, partners and neighbourhoods to show the safety of the community is paramount. • To assist and support tenants to fulfil the obligations of their tenancy agreements, and where appropriate enforce tenancy agreements as a last resort. <p>For Registered Providers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To adopt the Chorley Good Homes Charter, following its creation by Chorley Council, to ensure consistency of housing services across the Borough. • To support the Youth Zone with the aim of reducing anti-social behaviour. 	
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Climate change and air quality

7. The work noted in this report impacts positively on the climate change and sustainability targets of the Councils Green Agenda and all environmental considerations are in place.

Equality and diversity

8. Not applicable

Risk

9. Not applicable

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

10. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

11. Whilst there is no further comment to make at this time, when the Individual Charter for Chorley is being discussed and designed, then Legal Services will need to be involved in the discussion of its content and any procedures due to be implemented.

Background documents



Reports from the Task and Finish Gro



Social Housing

Regulation Bill 2022

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