

REPORT TITLE: SOCIAL HOUSING REGULATION CONSUMER STANDARD
IMPROVEMENT PLAN

23 JULY 2025

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Mark Reach Cabinet Member – Good Homes

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WARD(S): ALL

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide a detailed update on the progress in delivering the housing improvement action plan to address the regulatory judgement of the Social Housing Regulator. Cabinet Committee: Housing received a high-level action plan at its meeting in February 2025 (CAB 3479H). This report provides detail on the action plan progress and is the first of regular reports to Cabinet Committee: Housing on the journey to addressing the requirements of the regulatory judgement.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Cabinet Committee: Housing is asked to.

1. Note the progress made in delivering the housing improvement plan.
2. Agree to receive regular updates on plan implementation at future meetings.

IMPLICATIONS:1 COUNCIL PLAN OUTCOME

1.1 Greener Faster

The Housing revenue account business plan has programmed the retrofit programme to achieve regulatory requirements for all the housing stock to attain EPC C by 2030.

1.2 Thriving Places

The impact of the regulatory work will not only ensure customers' homes are safe and of a good quality it will enable significant investment in the local economy thus facilitating thriving places.

1.3 Healthy Communities

The work to achieve the Regulator of Social Housing consumer standards will ensure that customers' homes are of a safe and good standard and helping to deliver healthy communities.

1.4 Good Homes for All

The housing improvement plan delivery will ensure that good homes are delivered for council's tenants.

1.5 Efficient and Effective

The housing improvement plan will ensure that the council delivers the Regulator of Social Housing consumer standards in the most efficient and effective means.

1.6 Listening and Learning

The council is sharing experience with other local authorities that have received regulatory judgements. The council has regular meetings with the Regulator of Social Housing so as to learn the best ways to achieve regulatory standards. The TACT board will help drive the housing improvement plan delivery. The housing service will use all the methods contained in the resident engagement strategy to help inform and engage with customers to ensure that the housing improvement plan is informed by customer input.

2 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 All social housing landlords will be inspected as part of the regulatory regime within the next three years and will be expected to cover the full cost of regulation, including its expanded consumer standards remit and inspection regime. £45,000 has been budgeted to take account of our obligations within this regime in the 2025/26 HRA budget.
- 2.2 A Housing Quality Network self-assessment of the Safety and Quality consumer standard was carried out and identified gaps in what is expected in some areas of the new consumer standards
- 2.3 Associated ongoing costs within the compliance improvement plan have been reviewed and built into the HRA business plan and proposed budget for 2025/26, as considered and agreed at Cabinet in February 2025. This includes £400,000 per annum in the HRA revenue budget; £150,000 per annum in the HRA capital programme for additional major works identified within annual survey work; and £6m in the capital programme between 2025/26 and 2027/28 for potential fire compartmentation remedial works.
- 2.4 A cost identified from our internal self-assessment work is the requirement to carry out full stock condition surveys across all the HRA housing stock. Best practice sector advice is that cloning data or only carrying out external inspections are not an acceptable or a reliable approach. To meet these standards, the HRA will require additional resource and funding for both the immediate and longer-term needs. A stock condition survey has been commissioned to catch up on the required condition data for all HRA homes and £275,000 has been included as a one-off budget in 2025/26 to fund this. Going forward, a rolling-programme of surveys will be undertaken, and this on-going cost will be funded from existing resources. Going forward, a rolling-programme of surveys will be undertaken, and this ongoing cost will be funded from existing HRA resources.

3 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 largely came into effect on 1 April 2024 through amendments to the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008. The purpose of the 2023 Act is described as to “reform the regulatory regime to drive significant change in landlord behaviour”.
- 3.2 The changes brought in by the 2023 Act include a new power that enables the Regulator of Social Housing to require landlords to produce performance improvement plans where there has been a failure to meet the safety and

quality consumer standards, and as an alternative to the imposition of fines and other penalties.

- 3.3 The Regulator's published statutory guidance under s215 of the 2008 Act makes it clear that all registered providers are expected to identify problems and take appropriate corrective action to resolve them. The guidance forms part of the updated statutory framework.
- 3.4 The self-reporting process and the action plan and governance arrangements are intended to deliver changes and improvements to achieve the regulatory consumer standard without the need for enforcement action by the Regulator.
- 3.5 All procurement activity associated with delivering the improvement plan will be carried out with the support of the Procurement Team and in accordance with Contract Procedure Rules and relevant legislation.

4 WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

Availability of suitably qualified staff to deliver the housing improvement work plan is a challenge. The service has restructured to establish dedicated teams to deliver compliance activity and where recruitment proves difficult agency staff will be secured on an interim basis.

5 PROPERTY AND ASSET IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The main element of the housing improvement plan is aimed at achieving the compliance requirements of the safety and quality consumer standard. The plan includes a stock condition survey to ensure up to date information is available on the condition of the council's housing stock.

6 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 6.1. Delivery and development of the improvement plan will be subject to regular consultation and communication. The housing improvement workshops that are organised in various locations across the district allow customers direct input into the plan.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1. The housing improvement plan and compliance activity will address environmental considerations. For example, better knowledge of the council's housing stock will enable commissioning of works that will reduce impact on the natural environment as well as work to reduce the carbon footprint of the housing stock.

8 PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

- 8.1 As this is a high-level improvement plan there are no direct public sector equality duty considerations stemming from this report.

DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9 None.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
Financial Exposure The costs of the proposed action plan and contingency to address regulatory requirements will be additional cost to the Housing Revenue Account	Underspend in the 2024/5 HRA are being used to fund immediate compliance work Costs have been built into HRA 2025/6 budget and HRA business plan.	
Legal -primarily exposure to enforcement action by the Regulator. Following inspection by the social housing regulator there are a range of measures available to them depending on the outcome of their assessment	The action plan provides the council with a clear course of action to address regulatory requirements. These plans will need to be considered by the Social Housing Regulator and robust governance to ensure they are implemented. There will now be monthly progress reports with the regulator to demonstrate progress.	Planned early engagement with the RSH work in a co-regulatory manner to ensure compliance is achieved
Innovation Innovation could be stifled in the light of achieving regulatory requirements	Several local authority registered providers have already been inspected by the regulator or made self-	Learning from other registered social housing providers as part of the improvement process

	referrals and therefore the council can learn from peers who have already taken this action	
Reputation	Early engagement with Regulator of Social housing	Engagement with all key stakeholders to focus on
Achievement of outcome	Investment in training & skills needs across HRA sourcing where required external competent persons	
Lack of adequate resources	Adequate resources built into the HRA budget 2025/6 and onwards	
Loss of resource	Ensuring workload is appropriate for existing staff with support as needed alongside training & success planning.	Succession planning – looking at opportunities for bringing in trainees/apprenticeships

11 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

11.1. Cabinet Committee: Housing received a report (CAB3479H) at its meeting on the 3 February 2025, setting out the self-assessment against the Regulator of Social Housing consumer standards. It included the findings of the self-assessment work that been undertaken and a proposed action plan to address the shortcomings in relation to the Safety and Quality consumer standard.

11.2. On the 30 April 25 the Regulator of Social Housing published their judgement:

“there are serious failings in how Winchester City Council is delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and significant improvement is needed, specifically in relation to outcomes in our Safety and Quality Standard and the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard. Based on this assessment, we have concluded a C3 grade for Winchester City Council.”

- 11.3. Although the Regulator identified the failings it was also recognised that the Council had:

“engaged constructively with us since its self-referral and is taking steps to address the failures identified. This includes work to complete improvements to systems and processes for the delivery and oversight of legal health and safety requirements. It also has plans to complete a full stock condition survey of its home”

- 11.4. The council will be holding regular monthly meetings with the Regulator of Social Housing to enable them to assess performance against the improvement plan to achieve the consumer standards.
- 11.5. This report provides an update on progress against the housing improvement plan since last reported to Cabinet Committee Housing in February 2025. Of the 80 actions 20 have been completed. There are 31 actions where there has been minor slippage and revised milestone dates set. All actions are in progress. Appendix A contains the housing improvement plan as of end of June.
- 11.6. Of particular importance is the progress made in relation to compliance. The work is a tier one project and as such is reported to Overview and Scrutiny committee and on to Cabinet Committee quarterly. This report provides the opportunity to investigate the work on compliance in more detail. Appendix B provides the achievements as at end of June against the six main compliance areas.

12 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 12.1. Following the regulatory judgement there is no alternative to progressing an improvement plan.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Committee Reports:-

CAB3479(H) Social Housing Regulation 3.2.25

Other Background Documents: -

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Housing improvement plan.

Appendix B – Compliance performance