



<b>Service Delivery Committee</b>	<b>Tuesday, 26 November 2019</b>	<b>Matter for Information and Decision</b>
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**Report Title:** **Housing Service Improvement Plan (November 2019)**

**Report Author(s):** **Leah Montia (Housing Manager)**

<b>Purpose of Report:</b>	The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with the proposed Housing Services Improvement Plan to address the Council's duties as set out by the Regulator of Social Housing.
<b>Report Summary:</b>	<p>The report provides a summary of the current service provisions and sets out the improvements recommended for the Council over 2020/21, to ensure compliance with the four standards as set out by the Regulator of Social Housing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Home Standard</li> <li>2. Tenancy Standard</li> <li>3. Neighbourhood and Community Standard; and</li> <li>4. Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard</li> </ol>
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	<b>That the Committee considers the Housing Services Improvement Plan as set out in this report.</b>
<b>Senior Leadership, Head of Service, Manager, Officer and Other Contact(s):</b>	<p>Stephen Hinds (Deputy Chief Executive) (0116) 257 2681 <a href="mailto:stephen.hinds@oadby-wigston.gov.uk">stephen.hinds@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Adrian Thorpe (Head of the Built Environment) (0116) 257 2645 <a href="mailto:adrian.thorpe@oadby-wigston.gov.uk">adrian.thorpe@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Leah Montia (Housing Manager) (0116) 257 2781 <a href="mailto:leah.montia@oadby-wigston.gov.uk">leah.montia@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</a></p>
<b>Corporate Objectives:</b>	Building, Protecting and Empowering Communities (CO1) Providing Excellent Services (CO3)
<b>Vision and Values:</b>	Accountability (V1) Customer Focus (V5) Innovation (V4)
<b>Report Implications:-</b>	
Legal:	There are no implications directly arising from this report. The plan intends to ensure the Council meets its legal and regulatory obligations.
Financial:	Although there are no implications directly arising from this report. Any future spending plans drawn up from this will need to be costed and budgeted for at the appropriate time.
Corporate Risk Management:	Reputation Damage (CR4) Regulatory Governance (CR6)

Equalities and Equalities Assessment (EA):	There are no implications arising from this report. EA not applicable.
Human Rights:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Health and Safety:	There are no implications arising from this report.
<b>Statutory Officers' Comments:-</b>	
Head of Paid Service:	The report is satisfactory.
Chief Finance Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
Monitoring Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
<b>Consultees:</b>	None.
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None.
<b>Appendices:</b>	None.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the Housing Service Improvement Plan which highlights the areas in need of improvement for the Council to be compliant with the Regulatory Standard in respect of its functions as a social landlord. The improvements are compatible with the Council's corporate objectives:
- **Building, Protecting and Empowering Communities**  
*"Be proud of your borough as a place to live"*
  - **Providing Excellent Services**  
*"Delivering those services needed to the highest standard whilst providing value for money"*
- 1.2 Oadby and Wigston Borough Council has a housing stock of properties which comprises of flats, bungalows and houses. The Council's Housing Team manages the housing stock which is made up of predominantly tenanted, both general needs and specialist over 50s, and a lesser amount of leasehold properties.
- 1.3 As a provider of social housing the Council is required to adhere to the Consumer Standards as set by the Regulator of Social Housing. The role of the Regulator of Social Housing is to set the consumer standards and intervene where failure to meet the standards has caused, or could have caused, serious harm to tenants. The four standards are:
- **Home Standard** – Which relates primarily to the standard, repairs and quality of accommodation.
  - **Tenancy Standard** – How the property is allocated and managed.
  - **Neighbourhood and Community Standard** – This relates to the communal areas and "estates", which also covers ASB management.
  - **Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard** – Concerns providing tenants with choice and ensuring they are involved with an influence how and what services are provided.

- 1.4 The approach in this report is intended to ensure the Council meets its legal and regulatory obligations, whilst providing the best service for tenants and leaseholders. The approach aims to enable management to report on key areas to monitor performance and to allow for further transparency, accountability, and a stronger housing team whilst providing excellent services to tenants and leaseholders.

## 2. The Home Standard

**Table 1 – Home Standard**

Standard	Required Outcome	Action required
<b>1.1</b>	<b>Quality of Accommodation</b>	
1.1.1	Ensure that tenants' homes meet the standard set out in section five of the Government's Decent Homes Guidance and continue to maintain their homes to at least this standard.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete a comprehensive stock condition survey of council housing and implement an effective Asset Management Database and Performance System (Orchard) in 2020;</li> <li>• Develop and implement a new Housing Asset Management Strategy for 2020 – 25 aligned to the Housing Strategy and HRA Business Plan (including review of HRA land and garage sites);</li> <li>• Revise the HRA Business Plan to support the new Asset Management Strategy;</li> <li>• Implement a new five year HRA planned investment programme.</li> </ul>
1.1.2	Meet the standards of design and quality that applied when the home was built, and were required as a condition of publicly funded financial assistance if these standards are higher than the Decent Homes Standard.	
1.1.3	In agreeing a local offer, ensure that it is set at a level not less than these standards and have regard to section six of the Government's Decent Homes Guidance.	
1.1.4	Agree with the regulator a period of non-compliance with the Decent Homes Standard, where this is reasonable. Providers shall ensure their tenants are aware of the reasons for any period of non-compliance, their plan to achieve compliance and then report on progress delivering this plan.	

Standard	Required Outcome	Action required
<b>1.2</b>	<b>Repairs and Maintenance</b>	
2.1	Provide a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service to homes and communal areas that responds to the needs of, and offers choices to, tenants, and has the objective of completing repairs and improvements right first time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete programme of re-procurement of repairs and voids services and all supporting elements during 2019-20.</li> </ul>

2.2	Meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of the occupants in their homes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete review of statutory position and appropriate risk assessments during 2019-20;</li> <li>• Implement a new five year HRA planned investment programme;</li> </ul>
2.3	Ensure a prudent, planned approach to repairs and maintenance of homes and communal areas. This should demonstrate an appropriate balance of planned and responsive repairs, and value for money. The approach should include: responsive and cyclical repairs, planned and capital work, work on empty properties, and adaptations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement a new Housing Asset Management Strategy for 2020 – 25 aligned to the Housing Strategy and HRA Business Plan (including review of HRA land and garage sites);</li> <li>• Implement a new five year HRA planned investment programme;</li> </ul>
2.4	Co-operate with relevant organisations to provide an adaptations service that meets tenants' needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-procurement of adaptations services completed in 2019-20;</li> <li>• Continue to develop partnership working with Lightbulb.</li> </ul>

### 3. The Tenancy Standard

- 3.1 The Tenancy Standard is concerned with the allocation and management of the Council's housing stock.
- 3.2 Officers have identified the following key areas in need of improvements, and in parts 6 to 10 of this report provides further details of proposed improvements.

**Table 2 – Tenancy Standard**

Standard	Required Outcome	Action required
<b>2.1.2</b>	Registered providers shall develop and deliver services to address under-occupation and overcrowding in their homes, within the resources available to them. These services should be focused on the needs of their tenants and will offer choices to them	Tenancy audits to be carried out by the Community Housing Officers(CHOs) to understand the scale of under occupation within Council housing stock. From this Management can review the Council's current offer to determine whether this is adequate and if necessary put forward plan to address both issues. The procedure for tenancy audits is detailed below at paragraph 6.
<b>2.1.5</b>	Registered providers shall minimise the time that properties are empty between each letting. When doing this they shall take in to account the circumstances of the tenants who have been offered the properties	Management to review the end to end process of voids and lettings to create further office focus and accountability at all levels. It is envisaged that there will be capacity in existing roles to assist with management of temporary housing.

<b>2.2.1</b>	Registered providers shall publish clear and accessible policies which outline their approach to tenancy management, including interventions to sustain tenancies and prevent unnecessary evictions, and tackling tenancy fraud..."	A review of policies relating to tenancy management.
<b>2.2.6</b>	Registered providers shall make sure that their home continues to be occupied by the tenant they let the home to in accordance with the requirements of the relevant tenant agreement, for the duration of the tenancy...	Tenancy audits to be carried out by CHOs to understand who is residing in Council's properties, and to take any necessary action in relation to tenancy fraud.  It is envisaged that this information can also be used to gain further insight in to Council tenants and leaseholders, which can be use to inform future policy and services.
<b>2.2.7</b>	Registered providers shall develop and provide services that will support tenants to maintain their tenancy and prevent unnecessary evictions.	A review of policies relating to tenancy management. Tenancy audits will also provide necessary information to officers about what support is needed and services can be reviewed accordingly.

#### **4. The Neighbourhood and Community Standard**

- 4.1 The Neighbourhood and Community Standard is concerned with how the Council manages its neighbourhoods and estates, which includes the management of antisocial behaviour (ASB).
- 4.2 Officers have identified the following keys areas in need of improvement, and in parts 6 to 10 of this report provides further details of proposed improvements.

**Table 3 – Neighbourhood and Community Standard**

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Required Outcome</b>	<b>Action required</b>
<b>2.1</b>	Registered providers shall consult with tenants in developing a published policy for maintain and improving the neighbourhoods associated with their homes...The policy shall include any communal area associated with the registered provider's homes.	Review of estate inspection policy and process. Officers to consult with tenants and leaseholders on the policy.
<b>2.3.2</b>	In their work to prevent and address ASB, registered providers shall demonstrate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tenants are made aware of their responsibilities and rights in relation to ASB</li> </ul>	Management to review ASB procedure for officers and to put in place robust case management protocol.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• leadership, commitment and accountability on preventing and tackling ASB that reflects a shared understanding of responsibilities with other local agencies</li> <li>• strong focus exists on preventative measures tailored towards the needs of tenants and their families</li> <li>• appropriate and decisive action is taken to deal with ASB before it escalates, which focuses on resolving the problem having regard to the full range of tools and legal powers available</li> <li>• tenants and residents can easily report ASB, are kept informed about the status of their case where responsibility rests with the organisation and are appropriately signposted where it does not</li> <li>• provision of support to victims and witnesses</li> </ul>	
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## 5. Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard

- 5.1 The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standards is concerned with how the Council communicates and engages with its tenants, and involves them to ensure that residents have opportunities to influence and delivery of services.
- 5.2 Officers have identified the following keys areas in need of improvement, and in parts 6 to 10 of this report provides further details of service improvements.

**Table 4 – Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard**

Standard	Required Outcome	Action required
1.2.1	<p>Registered providers shall ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• formulation of their landlord’s housing-related policies and strategic priorities</li> <li>• the making of decisions about how housing-related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards</li> <li>• the scrutiny of their landlord’s performance and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved</li> </ul>	<p>Develop Tenants Involvement Strategy, and link in with existing modes of engagement for Borough residents i.e. Citizens Panel</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the management of their homes (where applicable)</li> <li>• management of repair and maintenance services, such as commissioning and undertaking a range of repair tasks, as agreed with landlords, and the sharing in savings made, and</li> <li>• agreeing local offers for service delivery.</li> </ul>	
<b>1.3.1 (b)</b>	Registered providers shall demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their tenants, including in relation to the equality strands and tenants with additional support needs.	Tenancy Audits will enable officers to gain further insight into residents. As will the use of forums such as Citizens Panel where residents can specify in they are a tenant or leaseholder along with any needs they may have.
<b>2.1.2</b>	Providers shall offer a range of ways for tenants to express a complaint and set out clear service standards for responding to complaints, and details of what to do if they are unhappy with the outcome of a complaint. Providers shall inform tenants how they use complaints to improve their services. Registered providers shall publish information about complaints each year, including their number and nature, and the outcome of the complaints	It is recognised that there is a clear complaints process in place. However, Officers have identified that what is lacking is a way for the Council to share information on how complaints are used to improve services.
<b>2.2.2</b>	Registered providers shall consult with tenants on the scope of local offers for service delivery. This shall include how performance will be monitored, reported to and scrutinised by tenants and arrangements for reviewing these on a periodic basis.	Develop Tenants Involvement Strategy, and link in with existing modes of engagement for Borough residents i.e. Citizens Panel
<b>2.2.4</b>	Registered providers shall consult with tenants at least once every three years on the best way of involving tenants in the governance and scrutiny of the organisation's housing management service.	Develop Tenants Involvement Strategy, and link in with existing modes of engagement for Borough residents i.e. Citizens Panel. It is also proposed that an annual survey could be used to gain feedback on customer satisfaction, and could be amended as needed to gain feedback on different areas of services.
<b>2.3.1</b>	Registered providers shall demonstrate how they respond to tenants' needs in the way they provide services and communicate	Develop Tenants Involvement Strategy, and link in with existing modes of engagement for Borough

	with tenants	residents i.e. Citizens Panel
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## 6. Tenancy Audits

6.1 A tenancy audit is a process where by the Council Officers would attend a tenant's home to ascertain who is residing in the property. Firstly, the aim is to check that the person residing in the property is the named tenant, and the following information can also be gathered:

- Occupancy, including children, partners, etc;
- Photo ID or proof of address of tenant, and household members;
- Right to "rent status" of tenants; and
- Housing needs of the tenant and household members.

6.2 This information is necessary for the effective management of the Council's housing stock. The information in 6.1 can assist in fraud investigations, ASB cases, ensuring services and support offered to tenants is relevant, influencing local lettings policies, influencing any incentive programmes e.g. downsizing. The information gathered in a tenancy audit can also be referred to when Officers receive a right to buy applicant or a succession request following the death of the tenant.

6.3 Currently, the Council only has the information gathered at the time of sign up and relies on tenants to keep the Council informed in the changes in their household. Officers note that residents rarely keep the Council updated, unless there is a specific reason i.e. the change affects a housing benefit entitlement or they wish to move to a house more suitable to their needs.

6.4 The aim is for Officers to carry out tenancy audits on 20% of the Council's housing stock each year. This equates to around 10 visits per officer per month, based on a team of two community housing officers. The Officers would attempt a visit on more than one occasion as there would be many occasions where tenants are not in on the first visit.

6.5 These visits could be targeted, i.e. if there are reports of tenancy fraud, abandonment or on larger houses to identify what number of households are eligible to downsize to free up family homes.

6.6 Management would be able to report on the number of tenancy audits within a given period, and the outcomes of the audits. This information can be used to monitor team performance and influence services and policy.

## 7. Estate Inspection (EI) Policy and Procedure

7.1 The current practice is for CHOs to carry out a six monthly estate inspection on all our housing stock. These are attended by Members and occasionally police, residents and surveyors. The information gathered from these is collated differently depending on the officer, and is not in a format in which managers can review or monitor. The Council's current procedure for estate inspections is not reflective of the Council's current requirements and there is an opportunity to review the way the Council carries out estate inspections, manages the housing stock and reports on performance.

7.2 It is crucial that regular inspections are carried out on the communal areas of the Council's housing stock to:

- Ensure compliance with health and safety laws and regulations;
- Effectively maintain the buildings and communal areas, ensuring repairs are dealt with promptly;



- Ensure that communal areas are being cleaned inline with Service Level Agreement (SLA) and to have evidence to demonstrate good practice or challenge any performance issues;
- Ensure that grounds maintenance is being carried out inline with SLA and to have evidence good practice or challenge any performance issues;
- Engage with residents, to gain their insight in relation to the delivery of services or any issues on the estate e.g. ASB;
- Have a regular presence on the Council's estates; and
- Monitor performance of the team and the services provided.

- 7.3 The reviewed system of EI would require a change of policy and procedure. To improve our inspection regime officers would recommend that an average block of two to three stories high would be inspected every other month, a higher risk block (such as Chartwell House and the sheltered schemes) would be inspected once a month and low risk blocks would be inspected quarterly. The procedure would provide Officers with guidance on the criteria and how to apply it.
- 7.4 The Council has a number of properties which are not flats contained within a block, and for these a six monthly or quarterly inspection may be sufficient as the aim is to check on the general area and be visible.
- 7.5 Once the frequency of the inspection had been set, Officers would be obliged to publish the date of the inspection. This would enable residents, partner agencies and Members to attend. There would also be targets for resident involvement on estate inspections, which could be a resident attending the whole inspection or if that is not possible Officers actively seeking out tenants to make themselves known and gain any feedback on the estates. This is to try and increase tenant and leasehold involvement in the services provided, to gain valuable feedback, and to improve the relationships and confidence in Officers from tenants and leaseholders.
- 7.6 It is anticipated that this will be an increased burden on Officer time, but it is necessary to ensure compliance and adds value to the service provided. It is anticipated that by being out on the estates the CHOs will be able to pick up on issues then and there. To assist this there will be a review of the patches so that they are geographically allocated e.g. CHO 1 will manage Wigston (majority of Council stock) and CHO 2 will manage South Wigston and Oadby.

## **8. Review Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) Procedure and Systems**

- 8.1 The current ASB policy is dated 2016 and should be reviewed in consultation with tenants and leaseholders. In addition to this the procedure for Officers to manage cases will be reviewed alongside the policy review.
- 8.2 There is currently no internal case management system to enable housing officers to effectively manage all levels of ASB in line with the Council's procedure. The Housing Team use Orchard, which is a housing management database and case management system, however the Council does not have use of the Orchard case management system. The housing team have use of the Police Sentinel Log, however this is an external reporting system to improve partnership working with the Police and relevant agencies. This system is not a case management system, and is not linked to the Council's internal procedure or housing database.
- 8.3 The introduction of a module within the housing management database, which is internal and linked to the Council's ASB procedure would allow for effective case management, monitoring of case progression and performance by managers, and reporting to senior management and Members. The proposal is for this to be explored by Officers with

Orchard to assess the costs and implementation requirements.

- 8.4 The review of the ways of working on ASB cases of Council housing stock will enable the Council to focus of the views of tenants and leaseholders living in the Borough, and shape the service accordingly. Management will also ensure that the Council effectively manages cases to ensure compliance with regulatory standards and to improve confidence from and relationships with partner agencies.

## **9. Review Housing Team Structure**

- 9.1 The housing team was restructured in 2019 and resulted in the appointment of a new Housing Manager post. Since being in post for the last 3 months the Housing Manager has been able to review how the team is working, and to consider changes to ensure that there is sufficient resource to provide the necessary services.

## **10. Develop Tenants Involvement Strategy**

- 10.1 Tenant involvement encourages reflection on what the purpose of "social housing" is and what services are being delivered. Furthermore, this will help the Council to work towards more efficient and modern services with the service user as a collaborator. By working with tenants, the Council can continue to provide good quality affordable homes, particularly to those in need and ensure the economic growth and prosperity of the Borough. Furthermore, this will enable the Council to provide excellent housing services where Council tenants feel listened to, empowered to influence decisions and have the opportunity to challenge the Council.
- 10.2 The aim of the strategy will be to ensure compliance with the regulatory standards by providing tenants and leaseholders with meaningful opportunities to influence the delivery of services.
- 10.3 Officers intend to work with existing methods of engagement, for example utilising the Citizens Panel to target Council tenants, and to work with other Council departments and partner agencies to develop new and innovative ways to engage and involve tenants and leaseholders.

## **11. Reporting and Performance**

- 11.1 The proposed ways of working will create new opportunities for management to report to Members on performance, which will enable further scrutiny and discussion around delivery of housing services.
- 11.2 Whilst Housing Services are starting to implement the plan immediately the improvements contained within this report will be achieved by the end of the financial year 2020/21. Officers will develop an action plan for Officers to implement changes within this timeframe which management will monitor to ensure improvements are made within target. Updates on the progress of the service improvement plan will be provided quarterly at Service Delivery Committee.