

Committee: Scrutiny

Date: 22 June 2023

Title: Council Housing Management

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Summary

1. At the final meeting of the Scrutiny Committee before the election, a scoping document for a review of Council Housing Management was presented.
2. The committee requested it be brought back to the first meeting of the new committee for consideration. Since that time, the situation has progressed and work being done elsewhere in the authority will likely address the issues raised in the scoping document.

Recommendations

3. Scrutiny Committee requests an up-coming Cabinet report on future options for the Housing service be presented to it prior to decision at Cabinet.

Financial Implications

4. None

Background Papers

5. None

Impact

- 6.

Communication/Consultation	None
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	Health and safety issues have been a key feature in the issues faced by the Housing service and continue to be of primary importance
Human Rights/Legal Implications	There are potential legal implications as explained in the scoping document

Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

7. The Scrutiny Committee requested a scoping report on Council Housing Management for its March 2023 meeting due to concerns around the delivery of some elements of the service, particularly with regards to property repair and maintenance.
8. There have been well-publicised issues and challenges over the last 18 months which the council has moved to address. These challenges have included managing repairs, maintenance and capital improvements, the setting of rents, and quality assurance of build standards in a new built sheltered housing unit.
9. In August 2022 the council referred itself to the Regulator of Social Housing over concerns it may have breached the Home Standard with regards to some aspects of health and safety. Considerable work had been undertaken to address the issues and subsequent to the March Scrutiny Committee meeting, the Regulator wrote to the council to confirm that having reviewed the council's action plan and compliance data, it was satisfied the council was not in breach.
10. The scoping document appended to this report is unaltered from the version that went to Scrutiny in March 2023 and sets out a detailed approach to reviewing matters since April 2020. However, some of the content has been superseded by events and officers do not recommend the committee now proceeds in the way set out in the scoping document.
11. As expressed in the scoping document, and at the March meeting, there is also concern that time spent by relevant officers working with members on this review will inevitably detract from ongoing work to rectify areas where issues have been identified, and detract from work generally to improve the service offered to our tenants.
12. Members should also take note of the legal and contractual constraints as set out in the "Other issues" section of the scoping document.
13. Discussions continue about how best to meet the continuing needs of tenants and a detailed and substantive report on issues and solutions, covering many of the issues raised in the scoping document, will be going to Cabinet for decision, most likely in September 2023.
14. Therefore it is recommended that this report to Cabinet is brought to the Scrutiny Committee beforehand. As per established practice, the Chair of Scrutiny can then feed the committee's views into the Cabinet discussion.

15. Once matters are settled, there may be value in the Scrutiny Committee doing a piece of work on lessons learned, but this cannot happen in the short term for reasons set out in the scoping document (see paragraph 12 above).

Risk Analysis

16.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Outstanding issues relating the council housing management are not effectively addressed	1	3	Comprehensive reporting to Scrutiny and Cabinet

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.