

Councillor Arthur Coote – Portfolio Holder for Housing

Report to Council: 11 March 2024

General Summary

Repairs and Maintenance

It was agreed at an extraordinary Cabinet meeting on the 9th January 2024 that UDC would not extend the joint venture arrangements with Norse Group and that we would exit from UNSL from the 31st March 2025.

UDC have appointed an Interim Director of Property, Brian Burton, to oversee the exit and demobilisation of the UNSL arrangements and to shape and procure the repair and maintenance service of the future. Brian will be ensuring that we are able to achieve and maintain expected service levels to UDC tenants as well as ensuring that we have the best solution in place for April 2025 and beyond.

A capital works programme will be published before the end of March 2024. This will identify the investment needed to ensure our homes meet the Decent Homes standard and includes replacement kitchens, bathrooms, windows, roofs, heating upgrades etc.

We have made an application for £3.2M of government funding to improve energy efficiency and save residents money on their bills as the government announces the allocation of nearly £2 billion in funding energy-saving measures ranging from loft insulation to new windows.

The match funding will go towards improvements to properties and off-gas grid homes with an EPC rating of D or below and could save tenants between £220 and £400 a year on energy bills.

We have worked extremely hard to increase our position across all areas of compliance to 99.89% on our gas servicing, our 5-year electrical programme is at 95.02% and our 10-year electrical testing programme is at 99.89%. Asbestos, Legionella and LOLER all remain at 100%. We are creating a new dashboard to include Damp and Mould statistics within our health and safety compliance work streams and will report this at next Council.

Housing Management

The Housing Management team are asking Cabinet to review the use of Introductory tenancies. This will ensure that we can implement a rolling programme of tenancy audits and can use data to triangulate the properties that we need to prioritise. This will also enable us to update tenant and household details, so we have a more up to date picture of who is living in our properties and what their needs are.

Housing Board is running well, with a clear forward plan that includes overseeing KPI's and performance data as well as ensuring that UDC are meeting regulatory requirements and consumer standards.

The Housing Management team have been working closely with the Income Team to address rent arrears and provide support for tenants who may be affected by the cost-of-living crisis.

Housing Options

A Housing Options Duty Officer will be available on site in Saffron Walden, daily during working hours. This re-instates our pre-covid levels of service and underlines our commitment to assist those in need or help and support.