

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Communities, Housing and Public Protection
DATE	17 January 2023
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Housing Improvement Group – Update Report January 2023
REPORT NUMBER	RES/23/045
DIRECTOR	Resources
CHIEF OFFICER	Corporate Landlord
REPORT AUTHOR	Stephen Booth
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide members with an update on the work of the Housing Improvement Group and seek instructions to bring reports on a variety of issues.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Note the work of the Housing Improvement Group in identifying improvements and efficiencies around the management and maintenance of the housing stock and instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to bring forward regular reports (bi-annual) on the work of the Group to this Committee, the first such report to go to the Committee meeting in July 2023.
- 2.2 Note that, as part of the transformation programme, there is an ongoing review of the structure of the organisation around housing repairs and maintenance and instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to report any changes to this Committee on 6 July 2023.
- 2.3 Instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to review, as part of the transformation programme, key planned maintenance activities required across the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) portfolio and report back to this committee in July 2023) on a programme approach to delivering these works.
- 2.4 Instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord, as part of the 2023/24 budget setting process, to consider the balance between pro-active preventative maintenance and replacement works with a view to reporting a more robust planned maintenance programme as part of the HRA Capital and Revenue budgets, reflecting all other budget pressures.

- 2.6 Instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to report to the next meeting of this Committee on the capital programme of works to properties, following consideration of the current approach to tenants refusing improvement works, with options to change this approach and the case for changing to an approach which ensures all tenanted properties are upgraded and maintained to the same standard.
- 2.7 Instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to ensure that a robust approach is taken in relation to common repairs within shared ownership properties and report to the next committee on the legal and logistical implications of this, with a recommendation of a course of action to ensure all tenanted properties are maintained to similar standard.
- 2.8 Instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to review the HRA’s non-traditional housing stock to identify properties that will be unable to meet future environmental or other standards, identify a budget to undertake these inspections within the 2023/24 budget and report back to this Committee on progress in November 2023.
- 2.9 Instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to consolidate and refresh all asset management strategies for the HRA estate and report back to this Committee on this matter by late 2024.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 In response to feedback from tenants during community ‘walkabouts’, members and operational staff, a Housing Improvement Group was established by officers during 2022. The initial intention of the group, encompassing officers from Operations and Protective Services, Early Intervention and Community Empowerment and Corporate Landlord, was to look at a range of improvement projects on a short-term basis to improve the housing stock and tenant and community experience. This report gives the opportunity for officers to make members aware of this work and the likelihood of future workstreams.
- 3.2 Officers are now of the view that there have been benefits in bringing the group together and this should continue on a longer-term basis. The agenda items for the group will include Routine maintenance programme, Void property, Greenspace management, Stock Condition and Suitability, Long term asset management strategy, Capital Investment programme, Property Management services redesign, Routine Housing inspections, Concierge service implementation, Implementation of Housing and Support Service monitoring and tenant participation.
- 3.3 Bringing officers together in this way has created the opportunity for a number of test and trial opportunities where issues exist, and improvements can be tested. The type of projects that are being delivered by the group include: -
 - Review and improvement to minimum letting standard

- Concierge review/ test and trial in multi-storey buildings
- Environmental hit squad
- Change to approach around cyclical inspections on tenancies
- Stair cleaning trial (externally provided).

3.4 The work of the group has also highlighted other areas of potential improvement with further work required to look into the detail and consider any unintended consequences. These issues are noted below with recommendations to report back more fully within section 2 of this Report.

3.5 **Pro-active maintenance** – in recent years where properties have met SHQS and EESSH standards the level of pro-active maintenance has dropped below historic levels. The recommendations seek approval that the resource balance between re-active and pro-active maintenance required should be reset. Officers propose re-setting this profile and implementing a more robust programme of planned maintenance works to increase the overall quality of the estate.

3.6 **Capital Spend** – Historically there have been consistent issues in delivering capital projects within the HRA planned levels of expenditure. In recent years these issues have been compounded by the Covid pandemic which has impacted on contractor availability and access to carry out planned works. Over the next 2 years it is proposed to review the overlap between planned maintenance and capital replacement works to be more proactive with preventative work. This will be reported as part of the budget process, with this committee being asked to agree the principle of this.

3.6 **Tenant Refusals for Capital Improvement Works (Voids impacts)** - Historically, there has been a relatively high rate of tenants refusing capital works, normally where a lengthy period of access is required or where the planned works may cause some inconvenience or disruption to the tenant. Where this occurs, officers contact the tenant in an attempt to have the works done, although this is often very time consuming and often ultimately unsuccessful. The impact of works not being undertaken is that the stock starts to vary in quality and additional time and cost is added to void periods for 'catch up' works. This also becomes more costly as some economies of scale are lost.

3.7 The terms of the Council's current Scottish secure tenancy agreements provide the Council with the right to enter a tenant's home to carry out improvement work required to ensure our housing meets the Scottish Housing Quality Standard, as well as for the replacement or upgrade of safety related appliances and security systems. However, several tenancies still exist where tenancy agreements at the time provided only for access to be taken for repairs or inspection. Officers recommend that a standardised approach to dealing with tenants refusing to allow capital work to be carried out in their home is required, that work is undertaken to make all tenancy agreements consistent and the reasons where a tenant can refuse works is restricted to a limited number of areas e.g., health related issues. It is proposed that the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord enters into discussions across services to identify options

and risks around these issues and a report is brought back to a future meeting of this committee.

- 3.8 **Works to Common Areas/ Repairs and Improvements** – To take forward common repairs or improvements for blocks within shared ownership, the Council must consult with other owners to reach a majority or scheme decision for any works to go ahead. The consultation process, save for emergencies, can take an extensive time to carry out which inevitably leads to unnecessary delays. This situation is exacerbated in some instances where desirable work from the Council's perspective is not being advanced quick enough leading to greater risk, for example a leaking roof. Improvements in the process are being advanced as part of the transformational workstream, however officers wish to investigate the full breadth of options available to the Council to enable the carrying out of such works which will protect and preserve the asset but are also in the best interests of both private and council tenants. Officers are seeking an instruction to take forward this work and report recommendations to a future meeting of this Committee (summer 2023).
- 3.9 **Properties of non-traditional Construction** - 10% of the Council's existing housing stock are of non-traditional construction. This includes properties that have solid wall, concrete frame, steel frame construction etc. These properties were generally built-in times of high demand with a limited life expectancy. Stock and energy condition surveys for these properties have highlighted poor energy and general building performance including in some cases the need for long term structural improvement works. Officers are intending to undertake further and more extensive surveys of these properties and intend to report back on the findings in late 2023 on options for these property types.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 No financial implications have been identified at this time although this will require to be addressed in follow up reports. Proposed studies will be met by current resource.
- 4.2 Any specialised or additional resource requirement will be identified within the HRA budget setting process.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report. The legal implications of any future recommendations will be addressed in future reports.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Quality of housing may reduce without effective maintenance, repairs, and capital improvements	Implementation of recommendations in this report.	Low	Yes
Compliance	Provision of quality housing ensures compliance with Scottish Housing Regulator requirements	Implementation of recommendations in this report.	Low	Yes
Operational	Provision of housing is a priority for residents of Aberdeen City. Failure to ensure there is an adequate supply of good quality housing may result in people seeking to be housed elsewhere.	Implementation of recommendations in this report.	Low	Yes
Financial	None at this time			Yes
Reputational	Failure to improve the quality of Council homes may harm the Council's reputation if the properties need repairs.	Implementation of recommendations in this report.	Low	Yes
Environment / Climate	Improvements to homes have a positive impact on carbon reduction. Failure to effectively implement the proposals may	Implementation of recommendations in this report.	Low	Yes

	result in increased carbon emissions.			
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8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2022-2023</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement <u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u>	The proposals within this report have no impact on the Council Delivery Plan.
<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26</u>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the City Centre Masterplan, by setting out steps which are expected to support a number of employment sectors.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support improved healthy life expectancy by setting out steps towards achieving reductions in fuel poverty and housing that is affordable.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions and improving the standard of housing by setting out steps towards achieving more energy efficient and better quality housing.
<i>Regional and City Strategies</i>	<p>The proposals within this report support the Aberdeen City Local Housing Strategy through the delivery and provision of quality affordable housing.</p> <p>The proposals within this report also support the following Legislative and Policy Programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scottish Housing Quality Standard - Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing 2.

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	Not required at this time.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required at this time.
Other	None

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None.

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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