

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee
<b>DATE</b>	27 May 2025
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Housing Board Bi-Annual Report (December to May 2025)
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	F&C/25/119
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Eleanor Sheppard
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Stephen Booth and Jacqui McKenzie
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Stephen Booth, Jacqui McKenzie and Eleanor Sheppard
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	1.1.1

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 At Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee on 30 May 2024, the Executive Director Families and Communities was instructed to present Committee with bi-annual reports to enable Committee oversight of all housing improvement activity being coordinated by the Housing Board.
- 1.2 At the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee meeting on 21 November 2024, the Chief Officer - Housing was instructed to report the implications of resource planning assumptions made by Scottish Government when known.
- 1.3 This report aims to satisfy both instructions.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

- 2.1 Note the progress made by the Housing Board from December 2024 to May 2025;
- 2.2 Endorse the amended Plan available in Appendix A;
- 2.3 Instruct the Housing Board to present an amended and measurable Improvement Plan for approval as part of the Housing Board Bi-Annual Report in November 2025;
- 2.4 Note the key data summary available in Appendix B;
- 2.5 Note the Terms of Reference for the Cross Party Working Group available in Appendix C;

- 2.6 Welcome the findings of the Aberdeen Tenant Service Review Group available in Appendix D;
- 2.7 Instruct the Chief Officer - Housing to work with the Aberdeen Tenant Service Review Group to positively respond to the findings of their review and report progress against tenant recommendations through a subsequent Housing Board Bi-Annual Report;
- 2.8 Approve the arranged access procedure available in Appendix E in relation to Electrical Installation Condition Report inspections to ensure that all Council owned properties comply with necessary health and safety checks;
- 2.9 Instruct the Chief Officer - Housing to implement the Quality Improvement Framework available in Appendix F;
- 2.10 Instruct the Chief Officer Housing to evaluate the impact of the Quality Improvement Framework on an annual basis and present an updated Framework to Committee for approval within one calendar year as part of the May Housing Board Bi-Annual Report;
- 2.11 Note the homeless benchmarking summary report available in Appendix G; and
- 2.12 Note the resource planning assumptions issued by Scottish Government on 18 March 2025 for the affordable housing supply programme in 2025/26;

### **3. CURRENT SITUATION**

- 3.1 As outlined in [F&C/24/176](#), all housing improvement activity continues to be coordinated by the Housing Board.
- 3.2 The Housing Board has an iterative plan shared in the November 2024 Housing Board Bi-Annual Report ([F&C/24/335](#)) which continues to be updated as the root cause of issues being experienced by the Housing Service and tenants is better understood (Appendix A). In keeping with the approach used in November 2024, proposed new additions to the Plan are recorded in red, with completed actions recommended for removal greyed and in green. Members are asked to endorse the changes being proposed and note that the iterative approach being taken is helping to realise improvements across many core measures as outlined in Appendix B.
- 3.3 The appropriateness of the Plan continues to be reviewed on a monthly basis to ensure that work is informed and prioritised in light of progress, on-going evaluation and analysis of data. The Housing Board now has a far greater understanding of some of the problems being faced. As a Board we make most progress in addressing the problems identified when we have clarity around the problem to be solved and guard against too quickly jumping to implement one single and simple solution. In summary, a test and learn approach is proving most impactful and this learning has been used to help develop our Quality Improvement Framework discussed further at paragraph 3.44.
- 3.4 As a result of our increased knowledge of some of the problems and improved arrangements for self-evaluation, the Housing Board propose to develop a refreshed plan. As well as reflecting our learning to date, it is proposed that the

new plan be aligned with the anticipated Housing Asset Model, Local Housing Strategy and 30 Year Business Plan to ensure cohesion. It is proposed that the refreshed Plan now concentrates on the outcomes we seek to improve rather than a series of focus areas. Officers propose to incorporate high level SMART targets to enable effective scrutiny of progress, whilst keeping sufficient flexibility in approach to ensure that the iterative approach taken to date continues given the success of this approach to date. With Member approval, the Housing Board will develop a new high level Plan as the Housing Asset Model and Local Housing Strategy is agreed and present an updated Plan for approval in November 2025.

- 3.5 The Void Property Member / Officer Working Group continues to meet, and a formal Terms of Reference has been agreed (Appendix C). The February meeting of the Working Group reviewed progress against the Housing Board Plan, explored in more detail the work being undertaken to develop the Housing Asset Plan/Model and explored the Housing Board Data Dashboard. A further meeting is scheduled for May 2025. These meetings continue to provide a helpful opportunity for officers to benefit from support and challenge from Elected Members.
- 3.6 Members will be aware that the Housing Board has structured its current plan around key areas of focus. Paragraphs 3.5 - 3.74 of this report provide a high level overview of action taken against these key areas since progress was last reported in November 2024.
- 3.7 **Area of Focus: Improved data management through the establishment of a Housing Data Dashboard.**

The now well established Housing Board Data Dashboard is updated on a weekly basis to inform the work of operational teams. The Dashboard is reviewed formally on a monthly basis by the Housing Board and this review helps officers track the impact of any changes made. As outlined in Appendix B, taking an iterative and data led approach is helping to realise improvements across a number of areas:

- There are now 418 fewer housing voids in March 2025 than in July 2024.
- There are 28.60% fewer buy backs sitting void in March 2025 than in July 2024.
- There has been a 19.5% increase in relets over 2024/25.
- Refusal rates are declining.
- Abandonments reduced by 21% over 2024/25.
- Tenancy Sustainment has improved slightly.
- There has been a reduction in gross rent arrears.
- Homeless applications have reduced by 1.9% in 2024/25.
- The number of statutory decisions taken has increased by 145 (12.1%) with 1,278 decisions reached in 2023/24 compared to 1,432 in 2024/25.
- Homeless journey times have reduced by 28 days, sitting at an average of 134 days in 2024/25 compared to 162 in 2023/24.
- The use of hotel accommodation for those presenting as homeless has reduced by 81% from 118 as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 to 23 at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.
- There has been a 15% increase in the number of properties returned from Building Services to Housing for letting.

Slight changes continue to be made to the dashboard to ensure that it contains all of the information required to support our improvement agenda, and the adoption of the new NEC system will greatly support our oversight of repairs and maintenance data.

3.8 Formal review of the Data Dashboard by the Housing Board has triggered further analysis in a number of areas. Since November, the Board has undertaken more detailed exploration of homelessness benchmarking data, worked to understand the death void path, extended understanding around abandonments, data around tenants who serve custodial sentences and those who require a period of hospitalisation, as well as working to understand levels of direct debit payment and demand for 4 bedroomed properties. Work to understand the circumstances that lead to properties being void for long periods has almost concluded.

3.9 As each area is explored in greater detail, a number of actions are agreed. For example, our management information system is currently configured to record those who vacate their properties due to a hospital stay and imprisonment together. Members will appreciate the very different needs both groups. As a result of the analysis undertaken, we have agreed to split the recording of those who vacate their properties due to a hospital stay or imprisonment so that we have a clearer picture of demand and are better able to evaluate the impact of our system on both groups. Another example stems from our exploration of the data around abandonments. Understanding the needs of those who abandon their properties is helping to inform other policy areas, such as the eligibility criteria for the Rent Assistance Fund.

### 3.10 **Evaluation of the Housing Board**

The Housing Board has now been operational for a full year. The one year anniversary triggered an evaluation of the success of the Housing Board approach to help determine next steps.

3.11 Positives noted included:

- Bringing officers from different clusters together around a common purpose is helping to join things up.
- Monthly board meetings enable effective sharing of progress through Housing Bi-Annual Reports and to inform the narrative to support Regulatory returns.
- The very high level of curiosity, candour and compromise from officers who routinely attend, and levels of preparation for the Board meetings by officers of the Board.
- Further analysis from the data team is helping us know where to look and take timely action.

3.12 Next steps identified include the need to:

- Have improved oversight of the capital programme now that a decision has been taken for oversight of this work to be through the Housing Board.
- Establish short term working groups to look at increasing the uptake of capital works and develop further understanding around Damp and Mould issues within our properties.
- Think about the frequency of reporting some areas to the Housing Board so that our agendas don't become unmanageable.

- Pace our asks of the data team so we don't have a large number of recommendations that can't all be implemented. A first step to managing this would be to set up a tracker of all of the recommendations so we can review and prioritise them when our capacity increases.
- Refresh membership to take account of new structures.

3.13 All of the next steps have now been or are in the process of being actioned. The Housing Board will undertake a further evaluation in March 2026.

### **Scottish Housing Regulator changes**

3.14 The Board has reviewed the changed data sets regarding damp and mould due to be reported to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) from April 2025. Some of the reporting will be challenging without the new NEC module scheduled for implementation later in the year and a short term solution has been developed to ensure compliance with Regulator expectations. The Board has defined responsibilities for data collection and as noted is establishing a short life working group to consider a range of connected issues including training requirements, best practise, information leaflets, ventilation issues, technological advances, remote monitoring and capital improvements. This is likely to result in a number of test of change projects in the coming 24 months.

### **Repairs and maintenance NEC system**

3.15 As Members are aware, the new NEC system will support the logging and scheduling of works and provide proactive and real-time communication to tenants. Moving to this system will help strengthen central oversight and decision making and help officers prioritise work on voids properties based on demand. A Programme manager for the NEC roll out has been recruited. An Implementation Plan has been put in place with a series of workshops undertaken to support effective implementation, whilst looking to introduce process and transformational change in delivery at the same time. Workshops have been held to explore how the system will better manage Asset data and storage of building data by component, response repairs and Capital programming with further workshops planned in the next quarter on voids processes, asbestos information and planned and statutory maintenance works. The system is on track to start being tested from Summer 2025, with module roll-out later this year.

### **Ukrainian Longer Term Resettlement Fund**

3.16 In September 2022, the Scottish Government launched the Ukraine Longer-Term Resettlement Fund (ULTRF) to bring Local Authority (LA) and Registered Social Landlord (RSL) empty properties back into use. ACC successfully applied for £6.15m to refurbish 500 void Council properties for Ukrainian households arriving into the UK or residing temporarily in Welcome Accommodation (WA). Grant conditions stipulate that the properties are available for the duration of the visas issued to the families and households, up to three years.

3.17 Currently, 450 of the 500 properties are tenanted. The vacant properties, whilst held vacant, constitute a cost to the Local Authority in terms of Council tax payments and lack of rental income and contribute to our housing voids.

3.18 The policy landscape has significantly changed. The UK Government has confirmed that a new Ukraine Permission Extension (UPE) scheme (opened on 4 February 2025) will enable successful applicants to be granted a further

period of leave to remain for up to 18 months during which time they will have the same rights and entitlements to access work, benefits, healthcare and education as they currently have. Thank You Payments to Hosts who accommodate Ukrainians in their own homes will reduce and ultimately cease and all Welcome Accommodation closed on 31 March 2025. There are over 600 Ukrainians still living in hotels across Scotland, the vast majority of whom are single persons living in Edinburgh. Scottish Government has advised that properties should be made available to those in Welcome Accommodation, both within the relevant local authority and nationally. For clarity, there are no Ukrainians living in Welcome Accommodation (hotels) in Aberdeen.

- 3.19 It is highly likely that the vast majority of Ukrainians currently in ACC tenancies will apply and be granted leave to remain for a further 18 months. This means that the expected return of the 450 tenanted properties will now be delayed. The stopping of thank-you payments may trigger hosts to ask their Ukrainian guests to find alternative accommodation, and this may see an increase in requests for Council properties. Those still living in hotels out with Aberdeen will require settled accommodation, although only 10 of our held properties are for single persons and there are suggestions that those currently living in Edinburgh have made connections locally and wish to remain there.
- 3.20 Having reviewed the dynamic situation, the Housing Board has actively engaged with the Scottish Government to determine if there are Ukrainians living in welcome hotels across Scotland who would like to access a home in Aberdeen. A communication has also been issued to those in Host accommodation to advise of the limited availability of properties and the opportunities for mainstream accommodation in the future. Having exhausted all opportunities to make use of the 50 properties as intended, a request has been formally submitted to Scottish Government to allow those 50 properties to be brought back into general use given the demands on our housing system.

### **Scottish Housing Regulator Return and Annual Assurance Statement**

- 3.21 Officers are currently working across Clusters to submit the Scottish Housing Regulator Return and have commenced work to complete the Annual Assurance Statement. The statement is on track to be presented to Committee in August 2025 and will draw from the Scottish Housing Regulator Return.
- 3.22 The Scottish Housing Regulator has published their [Engagement Plan](#) for the Council. As anticipated, the Regulator will engage with Aberdeen City about its services for people who are homeless, its site(s) for Gypsy/Travellers, service quality, stock quality and tenant and resident safety. Members should note that the planned engagement around homelessness services and Gypsy/Traveller sites is common to all Engagement Plans.
- 3.23 The established service performance review by the Regulator has guided a particular focus on tenant satisfaction, void management, rent arrears and tenancy sustainment.
- 3.24 **Area of Focus: Alignment and interconnectivity of Housing Strategies and Plans to ensure decision making is consistent and helps secure improvement in the longer term.**

It is proposed that relevant recommendations from the formal reports from the public inquiry into the tragic events at the Grenfell Tower, be added to our

workplan. An internal Officer Group has been established to consider the recommendations which apply to the Council. A readiness check is currently underway to support longer term planning.

- 3.25 A draft Local Housing Strategy (LHS), firmly based on the needs of those living in the city has been produced and is currently being consulted upon. Members will note that detail of the LHS engagement plan was provided in [F&C/25/043](#) in March 2025. The engagement is going extremely well with over 1,300 responses received to date. Following instruction from the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee in March, officers have also consulted the University College London's Institute of Health Equity, led by Professor Sir Michael Marmot, and Public Health Scotland, who are in partnership with the Council, through the "Collaboration for Health Equity in Scotland" to help inform the final Local Housing Strategy due to be presented to Committee for final approval in August 2025.
- 3.26 The Institute of Health Equity has shared that they believe that the draft Local Housing Strategy has a strong and welcome health and equity focus and situates housing as an important route to reduce health inequalities. They believe that the draft strategy identifies priority areas for housing which will improve the health of residents and reduce inequalities in health including healthy life expectancy and life expectancy.
- 3.27 The Institute of Health Equity made a number of proposals to further strengthen the focus on health and equity, highlight potential contributions from sectors either not already included or where their involvement is under developed, and some specific additions that are worthy of consideration. Officers will take account of the feedback as the final version of the Strategy is developed for approval by Committee in August 2025.
- 3.28 Members will be aware that the needs of those we welcome through various asylum and dispersal programmes was presented to Committee in March 2025. Progress against the Asylum Delivery Plan will be routinely monitored by the Housing Board, and this has been added to our Action Plan.
- 3.29 Work on the Asset Management Model is on-going, and the Void Property Member/Officer Working Group having had an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the anticipated output of the Asset Model. Work is currently underway to identify dates for similar briefings for all members in advance of the Asset Model being presented to Members for approval. Officers anticipate the first return of Asset Modelling data in late May and will then consider the implications of the data on our long term planning to enable a clear set of proposals to be presented to Members for approval alongside the HRA 30 year Plan.
- 3.30 Members will be aware that officers have an instruction to implement a hybrid model of care at Provost Hogg. Over the last year there has been a considerable change in the needs of tenants who reside there and in other supported facilities. Given that the draft Local Housing Strategy identifies further challenges in terms of supporting an aging population, officers are of the view that a better understanding of both the current and anticipated future population of our sheltered and very sheltered homes is required to ensure that decisions taken best support our tenants now and in the longer term. As a result, it is proposed that further analysis of current and future need be

undertaken before progressing the hybrid model of care. The need to undertake this detailed analysis will be factored into our Local Housing Strategy and feature in the next version of our Housing Board Plan.

- 3.31 The alignment of all key documents is thought important to help ensure full cohesion across strategies and plans. As a result, the HRA 30 year Business Plan will be updated and reported to Council on an annual basis and will take account of the Asset Management Plan and updated Local Housing Strategy (or progress made in delivering the Strategy once agreed by Committee) and the IJB Market Position Statement. An HRA budget protocol was agreed recently at Council.

**Area of Focus: Improved tenancy management and tenant participation**

- 3.32 The Aberdeen Housing Service Review Group (AHSRG) has been supported to undertake a review of Tenant & Resident Participation. This wide ranging tenant and resident led audit (available in Appendix D) has identified a number of areas for improvement which have been transferred into a shared Action Plan. The Action Plan will be monitored and updated on a bi-annual basis with progress reported through the established Bi Annual Reports.
- 3.33 Officers are exceptionally grateful for the time and energy the AHSRG have committed to undertaking the review and look forward to taking the actions identified forward with the group.

**Eliciting tenant views**

- 3.34 Following the very disappointing survey return rate on the Tenant Satisfaction Survey in 2023, an alternative approach to eliciting the voices of our tenants has been developed. Whilst the Scottish Housing Regulator states that social landlords of our size should, as a minimum, undertake 400 surveys, commissioning an independent external partner to undertake 1,300 interviews would provide a dataset we could have a high level of confidence in, and be able to drill down at housing management levels. The benefits of taking this approach would include:
- Longer interview times, which allows for more detailed responses.
  - Ability to ask numerous questions e.g. (35/45).
  - Ability to investigate complex issues.
  - Allow interviewees time to expand on their answers.
  - Answers are often more truthful and specific.
  - Allows interviewers time to establish a connection with respondents.
- 3.35 It is anticipated that the fieldwork for the survey will take place in August and September and be widely promoted, including through the various summer events and galas planned. The external partner will ensure that the data is thoroughly checked and cleansed to ensure its accuracy, consistency, and reliability. They will also check for bias to identify and mitigate any unfair or skewed patterns that could affect the analysis or outcomes. We will also seek to be able to extract information on the experiences of our tenants who have been affected by RAAC.
- 3.36 Given that we have undertaken three previous surveys in this manner, it will provide an opportunity to look at satisfaction levels over a 10-year period and



provide an opportunity to make direct comparisons. Officers have engaged with the Scottish Housing Regulator to agree a timescale for the refreshed Tenant Satisfaction Survey to be undertaken, in light of the 2025 consultation calendar.

### **Tenants involved in recruitment processes**

- 3.37 Tenants were involved in the recruitment process for the Fairer Futures Partnership Lead. The tenants involved appreciated the opportunity to influence the identification of the successful candidate and will soon have the opportunity to work closely with him as we develop our model of Family Support. We will continue to seek opportunities for tenant involvement in recruitment.

### **Health and safety checks and programmes**

- 3.38 Sadly, gaining entry to properties to complete necessary health and safety checks and programmes continues to be challenging. Officers have been giving particular attention to compliance with Electrical Installation Condition Report inspections were compliance currently sits at around 92% (a number of non-compliant properties form part of and elongate the void process). Whilst compliance has been rising, the Council's contractor reports increasing levels of No entries and refused entries (approx. 50% in February) giving increased concern going forward.
- 3.39 Considerable consideration has been given to how best to take this cross service work forward. A staffing business case is being brought forward to establish a specialist team to deliver this internally, with external contractor support (contract is currently managed through the repairs team) similar to how gas safety is successfully managed. Members should be aware that undertaking an EICR through an arranged access process will present some difficulties compared to gas works as the gas checks can be completed in the matter of minutes compared to EICR's which require access to the various electrical sockets and switches throughout a property and takes circa 3 hours to undertake, plus additional time to undertake any necessary repairs found.
- 3.40 The proposed arranged access procedure is attached as Appendix E. With Committee approval this approach will be implemented and kept under review with Committee notified of any necessary changes through future Bi-Annual Housing Board reports.

### **Rent Assistance Fund Evaluation**

- 3.41 The scope of an evaluation of the Rent Assistance Fund has been approved by the Housing Board and the evaluation is now underway. Officers anticipate that the evaluation will be presented to Committee in August 2025.

### **Choice Based Letting (CBL)**

- 3.42 The previously reported evaluation of CBL concluded that increasing applicant placed bids would have a positive impact on other areas such as levels of refusals and overall tenancy sustainment figures. Work continues to increase the number of those making use of Choice Based Lettings. Data is indicating a 20% increase in applicant placed bids since June 2023.
- 3.43 Data shows a decline in overall refusal rates compared with 2023/24 (56.10% in 2023/24 to 52.2% in 2024/25) and an overall increase in tenancy sustainment

from 89.33% to 90.26%. Officers have focussed on improving and increasing communication with applicants who have registered for housing online but not placed bids. Continued targeted supportive sessions with applicants on our urgent list, prior to the auto bid process, continues to be a priority. In addition, a training session has taken place with the Cyrenians, with further sessions planned for other partners support the most vulnerable applicants.

### **Rent Arrears**

- 3.44 A Rent Arrears Improvement Charter is in place and reported to the Performance Board. Initiatives undertaken between December and May have concentrated on the Rent Assistance Fund and Small Balance Arrears.
- 3.45 In the first half of 24/25, the Rent Assistance Fund made 50 awards totalling £77,721. Work was undertaken to improve the number of awards by reviewing Static Balances, cases in court, eviction cases, new tenancies on Universal Credit and data from the LIFT database (Low Income Family Tracker) where there are households with a child, in relative poverty, in fuel poverty and covering their rent for at least 3 months. This was with the aim of making more awards to sustain tenancies. The 24/25 figure rose to 499 approved awards with a value of £450,830.50. Work will continue to review the Rent Assistant Fund into 25/26.
- 3.46 In year collection of rent is currently sitting at 97%, this compares favourably with other local authorities. The 24/25 benchmarking process with other local authorities was undertaken to identify differences in the former tenancy arrears process. The main difference identified was the lack of debt being written off by Aberdeen City Council (below 10% in ACC compared to a 30% average in our Family Group) and steps have been taken to better mirror the process utilised in other local authorities with revised working practices put in place alongside the Council's debt collection provider. All debt written off has been agreed with the Finance Team.
- 3.47 Former tenancy arrears collection has also been analysed. For 2023/24 the average Scottish local authority collection amount was £205,090 (24/25 data is not yet available). Aberdeen City achieved a collection amount of £552,796 for 24/25. Implementation of revised processes has realised a reduction in the debt outstanding from £6.4m in 23/24 to £5.2m in 24/25 and the number of Former Tenancy Arrears accounts has reduced from 3,659 to 2,243. There is confidence that the collection of monies due is improving due to the revised process implemented by utilising the Council Debt Collection agents
- 3.48 A number of process changes have already been implemented for current tenancies. Consideration is now focusing on small scale tests of change. One example of proposed activity is to target tenants with an arrears balance of less than £400. Although this only equates to debt of approx. £800,000 there are 5,677 tenants within this range in debt to the council. A test of change has been completed and has reduced the percentage of small balances from 53.54% in 23/24 to 45.86% in 24/25. It is proposed that this process becomes a regular action whilst refining the process from the lessons learnt in the test for change.

- 3.49 Overall the final position for 24/25 shows the overall Gross Arrears for all years as a percentage of Rent Due has reduced from 17.68% to 14.31% after write offs.

### **Quality Improvement Framework**

- 3.50 Considerable work has been undertaken to develop a Quality Improvement Framework for housing. The Framework, available in Appendix F, will help the Housing Service align working practices with the totality of the regulatory requirements. An instruction to implement the Framework will see officers refresh staff handbooks and learning and development programmes around the Quality Improvement Framework and also use this key document to help identify areas for the next version of the Housing Board Plan.
- 3.51 It is proposed that the service evaluate the impact of the framework on a yearly basis to ensure that learning triggers a refresh of the framework. This would see a refreshed Quality Improvement Framework being shared with Committee on a yearly basis.

### **Housing and Support Model**

- 3.52 Further to the Housing and Support Officer Focus Groups reported in November, staff were surveyed to help prioritise actions around the model. It is clear that teams have good ideas on how to improve the service delivered to tenants. Teams will soon be asked to make some of their suggestions a reality by testing different ways of working across patch teams.

- 3.53 **Area of focus: Improvement in stock management to ensure an effective end to end process**

The level of housing voids continues to fluctuate, in part due to when new homes are made available, however a steadily reducing trend is now evident. A more proactive new build allocation flow chart has been developed with the aim of allocating as many properties as possible prior to them being formally handed over to the Housing Service in order to prevent new homes sitting as void as bids for the properties are made through our Choice Based Letting system.

- 3.54 Corporate Landlord and Housing continue to meet and progress improvements across the void process. One key change undertaken has been the development of a ready reckoner to help to proactively plan the work required in void properties. The structure of the voids team within building services is being reviewed and a number of new processes implemented around the initial inspection processes, digitisation of work planning, organising of trades and materials and identifying the range of different performance metrics to measure progress. Taking a 'test and learn' approach is helping to identify the changed actions that can positively contribute to a voids reduction, whilst also keeping a keen eye on any unintended consequences that can be counterproductive in a complex system.
- 3.55 The new Minimum Letting Standard outlined in November has been implemented with paint packs available to new tenants from 6th February. There has been no requests for paint packs or requests for decoration to be carried out on the tenant's behalf since February 6<sup>th</sup> although Members should note the relatively short sample to date. There is clear evidence that void properties are being returned for allocation to new tenants more quickly.

- 3.56 Following approval of the revised Acquisitions and Disposal Policy in November 2024, a tracker has been put in place and a number of properties identified for disposal, albeit identification of further properties is being delayed whilst options for RAAC homeowners are being considered.
- 3.57 Work towards meeting EESH2 requirements continues through capital planned works. We await further details on the proposed net zero standard for social housing.
- 3.58 **Area of focus: Delivery of Partnership Plan focused on preventing homelessness in Aberdeen.**  
National homelessness data for 2023/24, published in late September 2024, has been analysed to understand the Council's position relative to other local authorities, other cities and the overall national mean. The presenting figures for Aberdeen City paint a mixed picture, yet the overall mid-term trends broadly mirror what is happening nationally, particularly in terms of increases in new and existing demands. There were however, encouraging signs that applicant demands began to plateau in 2023/24, yet do still remain high. The Board have quality assured the report (available in Appendix G) and accepted the recommendations which have been aligned with current workplans.
- 3.59 There has been a 1.9% reduction in applications from people experiencing or threatened with homelessness (from 1,780 applications in 2023/24 to 1,747 in 2024/25). A primary area of focus has been on reducing our use of unsuitable hotel accommodation. As a result of this focus, hotel occupancy rates have reduced by 81% (from 118 down to 23 rooms occupied at year end). To do this we have increased our use of suitable furnished temporary accommodation as well as focusing on securing decisions and outcomes more quickly for people in our homeless system. The overall objective is to reach a position where hotels are not being used to supplement our temporary accommodation stock, however it is important to highlight that certain fluctuations of demand are driven by factors that are outwith the direct control of the local authority.
- 3.60 The time taken to make decisions when a household presents as homeless has reduced from an average of 39.4 days to 30.1 days. Overall lets to homeless applicants has increased from 34% to 38.5%, our use of 2 bedroomed stock to accommodate single applicants has supported some of this increase. A discipline around being driven by performance data has supported these changes, with the average homeless journey reducing by 28 days to 134 days when compared to 163 days in 2023/24.
- 3.61 The Homewards Coalition continues to have a strong focus on preventing homelessness for single adults experiencing relationship breakdown and young people in the city. Most recently Invisible Cities was launched in Aberdeen in conjunction with Homewards, this provides an opportunity for people who have experienced homelessness to receive training and skills to become a tour guide in the city. In addition, furnishings have been provided to households through the innovative housing programme to support tenancy sustainment in Partnership with Langstane Housing Association.
- 3.62 Given the high proportion of homeless presentations who cite domestic violence as a factor in their homelessness, partners have been convened to look more

fully at the challenges. This area will be prioritised as we develop our model of Family Support.

**Area of focus: RAAC**

- 3.63 2 key committee reports regarding RAAC have been prepared and presented to Council (F&C/25/030) and Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee (CR&E/25/057).
- 3.64 Both reports have provided clear direction to officers and work to implement Committee instructions is on-going.
- 3.65 Following a successful recruitment process, dedicated SAMH support is now in place in addition to the supports put in place several months ago. Action is being taking to ensure that all homeowners impacted by RAAC know how to access this bespoke support.
- 3.66 Almost all tenants have been rehomed, with the last remaining 9 tenants (as of 9 April 2025) currently considering an offer of housing. As a result, the dedicated Housing and Support Team will re-join Patch teams. We will seek to engage with tenants who have been rehomed to further understand their experiences and any additional support they may require. Consideration is currently being given to the skills and resources required to support owners in light of our on-going engagement with owners.
- 3.67 Considerable time has been afforded to the consideration of the options presented by owners for consideration by Council.

**Area of focus: Capital Programme - New Build Housing**

- 3.68 The capital delivery of new build housing projects has continued throughout the last period, whereby we have seen the Practical Completion achieved for 28 units at the 206 Union Street refurbishment.
- 3.69 Good progress also continues to be made at the Cloverhill project which is a phased delivery of 536 units. At time of writing 341 units have been delivered with a further 29 units expected over the course of May 2025. The remaining properties will be handed over thereafter on a monthly basis between now and projection completion.
- 3.70 Works are now underway at Craighill (87 units) and the appointed Contractor is mobilising to commence construction works at Kincorth (195 units).
- 3.71 Design development towards achieving RIBA 3 continues for the Greenferns and Greenferns Landward sites with the intention of returning to Committee for further instruction later this calendar year.
- 3.72 The new Complex Care facility located at the former Stoneywood Primary School site is progressing with an expectation of Practical Completion in Summer 2025.

**HRA Capital Programme**

- 3.73 The Council's capital investment programme in its existing housing continued in this period, (such as window, kitchen, bathroom, roofing and services replacements, and fabric repairs).

- 3.74 The Capital and Corporate Landlord Clusters continued to work closely together to further identify and improve service efficiencies and our stock management. The works to move to NEC have given an impetus to consider the end to end process to create efficiencies, share data better and develop better information for tenants going forward.

#### **Resource Planning Assumptions 2025/26**

- 3.75 Members may recall that the Aberdeen City Strategic Housing Investment Plan was approved by this Committee on 21 November 2024 ([F&C/24/320](#)). The Chief Officer Housing was instructed to report back to committee with the implications of the resource planning assumptions when available from Scottish Government.
- 3.76 On 18 March 2025, Scottish Government confirmed that Aberdeen's provisional resource assumptions for the affordable housing supply programme in 2025/26 is £15.981m, with an additional £353,000 for acquisitions which gives a total of £16.334m. Officers are currently working with Scottish Government on prioritising projects for funding in 2025/26. It should be noted that the programme again has far more capacity than funding which means that Aberdeen City Council is well placed to be able to utilise any underspends from other areas, should they become available throughout the year.

### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Where there are financial implications noted against a particular project these are noted within the commentary. No additional financial requests are identified as a consequence of this report.
- 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.

### **6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising out of this report.

### **7. RISK**

- 7.1 The assessment of risk contained within the table below is considered to be consistent with the Council's Risk Appetite Statement.

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)  *taking into account controls/c	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?

			ontrol actions	
<b>Strategic</b>	Risk that our approaches do not secure improvement.	Mitigated by being data led, taking time to understand the problems identified and then taking a test and learn approach to improvement.  Mitigated by aligning all strategies and Plans.	L	Yes
<b>Compliance</b>	Failure to provide quality housing services will breach requirements of legislation and the Scottish Housing Regulator.	Adoption of the Housing Quality Improvement Framework and adoption of the NEC module.	L	Yes
<b>Operational</b>	Failure to maximise our use to resources	The cross council Housing Board guides the work of a range of Clusters to help maximise our use of resources.	L	Yes
<b>Financial</b>	Failure to have efficient and effective systems compromises the Council's ability to demonstrate best value	Continued focus on reducing void times and levels and increasing rent collection.	M	Yes
<b>Reputational</b>	Failure to improve the quality of Council homes may harm the Council's reputation if the properties need repairs.	The development of the Asset Model and adoption of the NEC system.	L	Yes
<b>Environment / Climate</b>				

## 8. OUTCOMES

<b><u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u></b>	
	<b>Impact of Report</b>
<b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b>	<p>A number of areas within 'Homes for the Future' will be positively impacted by this report. Of particular impact on the policy statement are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development of an Asset Management Plan</li> <li>• The number of adaptations made to homes</li> <li>• Work to realise net zero targets</li> <li>• Increasing choice for tenants</li> </ul>
<b>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</b>	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support improved healthy life expectancy by setting out steps towards achieving improvements in the housing stock.

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 better quality housing.
Stretch Outcome 12	<i>Aims to 'Reduce homelessness by 10% and youth homelessness by 6% by 2026, ensuring it is rare, brief and non-recurring with a longer-term ambition to end homelessness in Aberdeen City'.</i>
<b>Regional and City Strategies</b>	The work of the Housing Board is helping inform the development of our Local Housing Strategy.

## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed for the Arranged Access Procedure EICR (detailed in Appendix E)
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not required
<b>Other</b>	None

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Scottish Government Affordable Housing Supply Programme](#)

## 11. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Housing Emergency Action Plan  
Appendix B – Housing Board Data Report  
Appendix C – Housing Working Group Terms of Reference  
Appendix D – Review of Tenant & Resident Participation  
Appendix E – Arranged Access Procedure EICR (draft)  
Appendix F – Housing Services Quality Improvement Framework  
Appendix G – Homelessness Benchmarking Summary Report

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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