

Housing Services Transition and Performance Update Report

Overview & Scrutiny Panel 19 January 2021

Report Author	Sally O'Sullivan, Tenant and Leaseholder Services Manager
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Helen Whitehead, Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Services
Status	For Information
Classification:	Unrestricted
Key Decision	No
Ward:	All

Executive Summary:

This report provides an update for members of the Overview and Scrutiny Report on the transition of the tenant and leaseholder service from East Kent Housing (EKH) to the council. The new in-house service was successfully launched on 1 October 2020.

The report also provides information about the service performance as at 1 October 2020 and subsequently, including details of the current position in respect of tenant and leaseholder health and safety.

Recommendation(s):

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel are asked to:

1. Note the progress made in establishing the new Tenant and Leaseholder Service.
2. Consider the information provided on performance at transition and since.
3. Consider the progress made in respect of tenant and leaseholder Health and Safety.

Corporate Implications

Financial and Value for Money

The report is for information and does not have any direct financial implications.

Legal

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

The legal implications in respect of tenant and leaseholder health and safety have been considered within the adopted policies for gas, fire, electrical, water, lift and asbestos safety.

Corporate

Providing safe, secure and affordable homes, including homes owned and managed by the council is a key corporate priority. The transfer of housing management and maintenance service from East Kent Housing (EKH) back to the council was a specific commitment set out in the council's Corporate Statement.

Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.

This report relates to the following aim of the equality duty: -
(Delete as appropriate)

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- To foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Many of the council's tenants and leaseholders have protected characteristics under the Public Sector Equality Duty. Although there are no direct impacts from this report for tenants and leaseholders with protected characteristics arising from this report, a effective housing management and maintenance service will benefit all of the council's tenants and leaseholders.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

This report relates to the following corporate priorities: -

- *Communities*

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The council's Cabinet decided to bring Housing Management and Maintenance Services back in house at its meeting on 17 February 2020. It was originally thought that the transition would take until 1 April 2021 to complete, however this timetable was brought forward due to continuing performance issues at East Kent Housing (EKH). The services successfully transitioned to the council on 1 October 2020, with full responsibility for the tenant and leaseholder services being taken over by TDC at 3pm on 30 September 2020.
- 1.2 The officers transferring from EKH brought operational and systems knowledge with them ensuring the services could operate from the 1 October 2020. TDC ran a

reduced service for tenants and leaseholders for the first week after transition, allowing time for inductions and training.

- 1.3 The new team has worked hard to ensure that the transition was completed as smoothly as possible and to ensure that we would be in a position to agree and implement a service improvement plan over the coming 12 to 18 months.
- 1.4 A particular area of focus has been tenant and leaseholder health and safety. The council has been working closely with the Regulator for Social Housing and agreed a voluntary undertaking setting out how and when the council will complete the work to fully address the previously identified failures of tenant and leaseholder health and safety management at EKH.
- 1.5 This report therefore covers 3 specific areas:
1. A performance update, as at 30 November 2020, as set out in annexes 1 (KPI metrics) and 2 (performance cover report).
 2. An update on tenant and leaseholder health and safety, attached at annex 3.
 3. A position statement, setting out some of the issues that the council's new team have had to deal with following transition, attached at annex 4.

2.0 The Regulator for Social Housing

- 2.1 Following a self-referral by the council, as a result of identified failures in health and safety management at East Kent Housing, the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) served a regulatory notice on the council on 9 September 2019. Details of the notice are published on the RSH website.
- 2.2 The RSH has recognised that the council has put in place a programme to rectify the identified failures and has agreed a Voluntary Undertaking with the RSH setting out the commitment to move to a fully compliant position.
- 2.3 The Voluntary Undertaking sets out the commitment to complete work on the recovery programme by the end of the current financial year, March 2021. Once completed, the council will arrange for these services to be audited so that assurance about the compliance position can be confirmed. This assurance will enable the RSH to remove the regulatory notice. We expect this to be resolved so that the RSH can remove the notice by the late spring/early summer of 2021.

3.0 Improvement Planning

- 3.1 The attached annexes highlight a number of key areas of the service that need improvement, including:
- Contract Management, particularly in relation to responsive repairs
 - Capital Programme Delivery
 - Void and Rent Arrears Performance
 - Health and Safety Management
 - Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement
 - Systems and Processes
- 3.2 The service has committed to developing and implementing an agreed improvement plan to cover these and other issues. The position statement, attached at annex 4,

has been prepared following engagement from front line staff from across the service, including specific improvement planning workshops.

- 3.3 In addition, the Tenant and Leaseholder News, sent out in January 2020 included a survey asking tenants and leaseholders for information about their priorities for improving the service. The results of this survey will be used to formulate a detailed improvement plan for the coming 12-18 months, with clear outcomes and timescales. The newsletter also includes details of housing tenants and leaseholders can become more involved in the service. Progress in developing and implementing the Improvement Plan will form part of future performance updates to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.
- 3.4 The leader of the council has established a Housing Cabinet Advisory Group, with political membership from across the council. The purpose of the HCAG is to:
- To advise the Cabinet about housing strategy and policy reviews, improvement plans and new initiatives, such as options to increase the supply of affordable homes.
 - To hear from and consider the views of tenants, leaseholders and other customers about the housing service and their priorities for improvement;
 - To report back to Cabinet on the outcomes of the group's considerations.

Policy review and improvement planning will form part of the work programme for the new HCAG.

Contact Officer: *Sally O'Sullivan, Tenant and Leaseholder Services Manager*
Reporting to: *Bob Porter, Director of Housing and Planning*

Annex List

Annex 1: Tenant and Leaseholder Services Performance Report (Metrics)
Annex 2: Tenant and Leaseholder Services Performance Report
Annex 3: Tenant and Leaseholder Health and Safety Compliance Performance
Annex 4: Transfer Position Statement, as at 1 October 2020

Background Papers

Details of the RSH Regulatory Notice:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-judgement-thanet-district-council/regulatory-notice-thanet-district-council-11-september-2019>

January 2020 Tenant and Leaseholder Newsletter:
[\[Add Link to webpage\]](#)

Corporate Consultation

Finance: Chris Blundell, Director of Finance
Legal: *(Insert name and job title)*