

Housing Estates; Strategy, Policy and Standards

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| Overview and Scrutiny Panel | 24 November 2022 |
| Report Author | Sally O'Sullivan, TLS Manager |
| Portfolio Holder | Cllr Jill Bayford, Cabinet Member for Housing |
| Status | For Information |
| Classification: | Unrestricted |
| Key Decision | No |
| Ward: | All |

Executive Summary:

This report invites members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel to review 3 documents relating to the management of the Councils' housing estates, ahead of seeking approval at Cabinet.

The draft documents are as follows:

- Estate Strategy
- Estate Policy
- Estate Standard

Recommendation(s):

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel are asked to:

1. Note and scrutinise the following documents and the accompanying Equality Impact Assessment (EIA):
 - Estate Strategy - Annex 1
 - Estate Policy - Annex 2
 - Estate Standard - Annex 3
 - EIA - Annex 4

Corporate Implications

Financial and Value for Money

The adoption of the following:

- Estate Strategy
- Estate Policy
- Estate Standard

Will have a financial implication, these are:

Revenue spend where services are required, for example:

- Improved grounds maintenance or one off landscaping project to improve the estates appearance.
- Increased communal cleaning provision
- Tree management where required or where this has been neglected previously.
- Installation of signage
- Internal/external decoration

Capital spend to enhance estates, for example:

- Redeveloping refuse collection sites or storage sheds
- Replacement front entry doors or communal doors
- Replacement balconies
- Replacement windows

These elements are accounted for in the HRA capital and revenue budgets.

Legal

As a social housing landlord, the council has a regulatory responsibility under the Housing Act 1985 to ensure the following:

- there are appropriate policies in place that let our tenants and leaseholders know how we operate in certain situations.
- Our estates are clean, tidy and safe
- Tenants have the opportunity to tell us how they want their estates managed

There is legislation to help councils manage its estates and tackle waste offences such as fly-tipping. The Council also has legal authority to undertake enforcement actions against individuals (subject to sufficient evidence being available) which can include tenancy enforcement action against Council tenants.

Corporate

The council's agreed Corporate Statement includes a priority to improve the standards and safety in homes across all tenures.

Risk Management

The Regulator for Social Housings' Consumer Standards tell us we must have an Estates Policy in Place to promote good neighbourhood management. The Estate Strategy and Standard support the policy to achieve this.

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 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:

- *To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.*

The council's tenants and leaseholders include residents that have protected characteristics as set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Estates Strategy, Policy and Standard has been subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA), attached to this report.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- *Communities*

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1. The council's Tenant and Leaseholder Services (TLS) team provides tenancy management and maintenance services to tenants and leaseholders of Thanet District Council.
- 1.2. We wanted to develop and publish these documents, to show commitment and give direction, about how we will maintain and improve the neighbourhoods associated with our homes.
- 1.3. We pledged to create an Estate Strategy as part of our Service Improvement Plan in March 2021.
- 1.4. The publishing of these documents will ensure we are compliant with regulatory standards.

2. Regulatory Standards

- 2.1. The social housing sector is regulated by the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH). The RSH is an executive non departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
- 2.2. The RSH sets out its expectations of all Registered Housing Providers (RP) in a Regulatory Framework. The framework is the structure which establishes a viable, efficient and well governed sector
- 2.3. The RSH sets economic and consumer standards for RP's and can take action if these are breached. The standards make sure RP's are well managed, financially

stable, provide quality accommodation, give tenants choice and the opportunity to hold their landlords to account

- 2.4. The RSH expects RP's to identify problems and take action to resolve them. However, in some circumstances, the RSH will consider the use of regulatory enforcement.
- 2.5. The Neighbourhood and Community Standard is one of four Consumer Standards that RP's must comply with. This is the standard that gives us the direction by which to manage our estates.
- 2.6. The standard specifies three areas to be addressed:
 - Neighbourhood management
 - Local co operation
 - Antisocial behaviour
- 2.7. Our Estate Strategy, policy and standard addresses points made by the standard and thus facilitates compliance with the regulations.

3. Resident involvement

- 3.1. In January 2021 we consulted residents on what improvements were most important to them.
- 3.2. During our community partnership days, held through the summers of 2021 and 2022 we also asked residents what mattered to them about their estates, using a survey and face to face discussions.
- 3.3. Residents who took part in these engagement opportunities, gave their opinions on what they would like to see happening on their estates, this included:
 - Carrying out estate reviews to identify areas for improvement
 - Improve communal repairs
 - Improve grounds maintenance
 - Improve communal cleaning
 - Reduce the presence of litter and rubbish
- 3.4. The Estate Strategy, Policy and Standards were developed with the help of a resident focus group who met in May and June 2022. The group was supported by the Housing Services Manager and Tenant and Leaseholder Services Manager and used information from the two consultations carried out in 2021 with wider residents.
- 3.5. The resident focus group made eleven recommendations of which nine have been included. Residents agreed we needed a flexible estate by estate approach and

approved of the proposed resident responsibilities, added as a key role in delivering the Strategy.

- 3.6. The Thanet Tenants and Leaseholders Group (TTLG) were consulted on the draft Strategy, Policy and Standard at their meeting on 29 June 2022. The group welcomed the policy, strategy and standard and made no recommendations on further revisions.
- 3.7. Officers within the TLS team have had the opportunity to review and feed into this strategy, and the final draft is attached at annex 1.
- 3.8. This strategy was also presented to the council's Housing Cabinet Advisory Group on 14 October 2022

4. Next Steps

- 4.1. Following scrutiny by OSP, we will take these documents to Cabinet to ask that they are approved for adoption.

Contact Officer: Sally O'Sullivan, (Tenant and Leaseholder Services Manager)
Reporting to: Bob Porter (Acting Corporate Director of Place)

Annex List

1. Estate Strategy
2. Estate Policy
3. Estate Standard
4. Equalities Impact Assessment

Background Papers

None

Corporate Consultation

Finance: Chris Blundell (Director of Finance)

Legal: Sameera Khan (Interim Head of Legal & Monitoring Officer)

Equality: Catherine Curtis (Information Governance and Equality Manager)