

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S REPORT TO

Economy Environment and Place Scrutiny Committee

07 December 2023

Report Title: Social Housing within the Borough Newcastle under Lyme Housing Task and Finish Group

Submitted by: Service Director – Regulatory Services

Portfolios: Community Safety and Wellbeing

Ward(s) affected: All Wards

<u>Purpose of the Report</u>	<u>Key Decision</u>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
To provide an update to the Committee about the activities of the Housing Task and Finish Group, which was formed to assess Social Housing within the Borough.			
<u>Recommendation</u>			
That Committee:			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Takes note of the report that has been prepared (Appendix A), which sets out the activities of the Housing Task and Finish Group to date. 2. Considers the three recommendations made by the Group and to provide guidance, as to when and by which date the recommendations should be enacted. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As significant enhancement works are being proposed by the RP's, in terms of energy efficiency and mitigating risks such as damp and mould, it makes sense to assess the condition of the housing stock once these improvements have been made. 2. Aspire Housing has agreed, at the request of the Working Group, they would be willing to give a presentation, via TEAMS (available for all Councillors), to enable Councillors to hear what progress was being made to improve their housing stock and their response times, along with information on the reporting mechanisms and the complaints escalation process. 3. The Committee resolves that in the near future, (within 12 months) to take stock of how the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and the new, proactive consumer regulation regime is being embedded within the working of Registered Providers. 			
<u>Reasons</u>			
The Housing Task and Finish Group was formed at the request of the Economy, Environment & Place Scrutiny Committee. Therefore, it is appropriate for the Committee to note the report and the recommendations contained within it.			

1. **Background**

- 1.1 An Inception meeting for the Housing Task & Finish Group was held on the 8th March 2023.
- 1.2 The working group was formed with the aim of focussing on social housing provisions in the borough. It was composed of members who all have different experiences and backgrounds who would contribute to the objective.
- 1.3 The rationale for the focus on social housing, was the acknowledgement it represents an important function; as low income and vulnerable households within our communities require such housing. There was a recent national focus on conditions ('damp and mould') in England's social housing, (following a tragic death in Rochdale in November 2022)
- 1.4 The approach of the Group was to initially request by way of background, a number of reports from officers which would set out:
 - a) information about the social housing within the Borough and
 - b) the regulatory framework for social housing.
- 1.5 This was to be followed by a 'call for evidence' to all Registered Providers, asking them to provide a focussed insight into key issues of social housing, by way of open questions. The questions related to complaints made to the Housing Ombudsman, challenges of retrofitting and remediating their housing stock, their relationship with the Social Housing Regulator and any future challenges.
- 1.6 A presentation and a hearing before the Task and Finish Group by Aspire Housing, by virtue of it being the largest provider within the Borough was also made.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 A detailed report has been prepared and is included as an appendix, which sets out in detail the activities of the Housing Task and Finish Group and the issues related to Social Housing within the Borough which it has considered.
- 2.2 To avoid repetition, the details contained within the report have not been included here within and the Committee is asked to refer to the appended report.

3. **Recommendations**

3.1 That Committee:

1. Takes note of the report that has been prepared, which sets out the activities of the Housing Task and Finish Group to date.
2. Considers the three recommendations made by the Group and to provide guidance, as to when and by which date the recommendations should be enacted.
 1. As significant enhancement works are being proposed by the RP's, in terms of energy efficiency and mitigating risks such as damp and mould, it makes sense to assess the condition of the housing stock once these improvements have been made.

2. Aspire Housing has agreed, at the request of the Working Group, they would be willing to give a presentation, via TEAMS (available for all Councillors), to enable Councillors to hear what progress was being made to improve their housing stock and their response times, along with information on the reporting mechanisms and the complaints escalation process.
3. The Committee resolves that in the near future, (within 12 months) to take stock of how the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and the new, proactive consumer regulation regime is being embedded within the working of Registered Providers.

4. Reasons

- 4.1 The above recommendations are considered logical next steps, with respect to the activities undertaken by the Housing Task and Finish Group. Aspire Housing, by virtue of it being the largest provider of social housing within the Borough fulfils an important role and the Committee should be kept aware of its performance. The Committee should also be attuned to the impact of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.

5. Legal and Statutory Implications

- 5.1 The local authority has to “periodically review the housing needs of its area in relation to housing conditions and the needs of the district” (Housing Act 1985).
- 5.2 The Housing Act 1996 places a number of statutory duties on a local authority; broadly, the duties relate can be categorised into:
 - i) allocating social housing;
 - ii) providing housing information and advice and
 - iii) preventing and resolving homelessness.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 No differential impact arises from the proposals contained in this report.

7. Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 There are no financial implications. Officers and Members resources will need to be directed to implementing the recommendations if agreed by the Committee.

8. Major Risks & Mitigation

- 8.1 If the recommendations were not implemented, there may be reputational damage.

9. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)

- 9.1 The proposal contributes to the following UN Sustainable Goals:



10. Key Decision Information

10.1 None

11. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

11.1 None

12. List of Appendices

12.1 Appendix A - Housing Task and Finish Group Social Housing within Newcastle under Lyme
Appendix 1: Housing Duties Report.
Appendix 2: Regulation of Social Housing.
Appendix 3: Housing Task and Finish Working Group - regulation of social housing.
Appendix 4: Private Sector Housing Activities Report

13. Background Papers

13.1 None