

Meeting date: 13 March 2023

Report to: Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board

Subject/report title: Solihull Community Housing: Delivery Plan 2023/24

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Wards affected:

- All Wards | Bickenhill | Blythe | Castle Bromwich | Chelmsley Wood | Dorridge/Hockley Heath | Elmdon | Kingshurst/Fordbridge | Knowle | Lyndon | Meriden | Olton | Shirley East | Shirley South | Shirley West | Silhill | Smith's Wood | St Alphege
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Public/private report: Public

Exempt by virtue of paragraph: n/a

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present the draft delivery plan for 2023/24 to the Scrutiny Board for consideration and review.

2. Decision(s) recommended

- 2.1 To make any recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet member when she reviews the Delivery Plan.

3. Matters for Consideration

- 3.1 Solihull Community Housing (SCH) is the arms-length management organisation responsible for the management of Solihull Council's housing stock, as well as commissioned ancillary services. Its 2020-25 [Strategic Vision](#), which was reviewed by the Board in March 2020, sets out five strategic aims for the organisation:

- Creating homes
- More than bricks and mortar

- Strengthening communities
- Excellent customer service
- Passion in people

3.2 The annual delivery plan for SCH sets out the plans and objectives, as well as performance targets, for the coming year that will enable SCH to work towards delivery of those strategic aims. The draft delivery plan for 2023/24 is attached as appendix A.

3.3 The Cabinet member will review the delivery plan at her decision session on 28 March and the Scrutiny Board is invited to submit any comments on the draft for consideration at that meeting.

4. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?

4.1 Providing homes and housing-related services, such as tenancy and asset management, remains SCH's core purpose. SCH is also the main provider of homelessness and housing options services on behalf of the Council. The vision document explains how the organisation intends to improve and develop these core services in addition to an investment in other ways of supporting customers and communities, enhancing life chances and outcomes for its tenants, listening to and involving its customers, and being 'embedded' in the Borough's wider strategic partnerships. In addition, the fifth aim, 'Passion in People', commits SCH to developing its workforce and is underpinned by an organisation wide People Strategy.

4.2 Over the last year, SCH has made important progress in a number of areas:

- Embedding customer engagement into all aspects of the SCH operation. This has been recognised through landlord accreditation by Tpas, the leading tenant engagement experts.
- Responding to a significant increase in demand for accommodation as a result of refugees arriving in the borough.
- Installation of sprinkler systems in almost all properties in Solihull's 37 high rise blocks.
- Improving void management to make properties available more quickly and reduce rent loss.
- Collaborating with the Council to develop a ten year asset management strategy.
- Continued work on the Kingshurst regeneration programme, including commencement of demolition works.
- Working towards Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation.
- Implementing a rapid response mechanism for dealing with damp and mould issues.

4.3 The attached Delivery Plan is the fourth against the 2020-25 strategic document and is likely to be the last annual document, with the Council and SCH collaborating on a future three year plan to run from 2024. The 2023-24 plan is framed around a series of key themes (which are set out on page six), rather than the organisational structures:

- **Investing in existing and new homes** – recognising the importance of increasing the housing stock and improving the quality of existing properties.
- **Keeping customers safe in their homes** – ensuring the Council's properties meet building safety requirements, which is the subject of increased regulatory focus, and tackling instances of damp and mould.
- **Supporting those in need** – a holistic, partnership approach in the context of current economic challenges affecting many residents.
- **Improving neighbourhoods** – investing in local communities and also aligning to the Council's priorities on tackling domestic abuse, anti-social behaviour and safeguarding.
- **Green homes and sustainability** – reducing the environmental impact of the housing stock as well as SCH's operational activities.

4.4 The five themes are underpinned by three enablers, which look inward to how SCH operates as an organisation:

- **Engagement** – listening and responding to customers.
- **How we work** – improving systems and processes, particularly through increased use of technology.
- **Who we are** – investment in SCH's people and the environment in which they work.

4.5 A key driver for 2023/24 will be responding to the emerging regulatory framework. In addition to the focus on building safety, the Housing Ombudsman has set out a clear expectation of improved complaints handling by housing organisations, and the Regulator for Social Housing will be developing a new regulatory framework aligned to six consumer standards. This includes a set of new Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) that will have to be collected from April 2023, against which housing organisations will be benchmarked.

4.6 Performance indicators are reviewed annually, having been monitored with the Council through the Quarterly Monitoring Board (QMB) chaired by the Deputy Leader. The key performance indicators for 2023/24 are set out towards the end of the Delivery Plan. In addition to a number of key operational indicators, the SCH Board proposes to focus its monitoring on the new TSMs, given the national attention this will receive. The SCH management agreement, which operates on a rolling five-year basis, is reviewed annually by the Council. In light of feedback from QMB, the Cabinet agreed earlier this year to rollover the agreement for a further 12 months.

5. **Reasons for recommending preferred option**

5.1 The draft Delivery Plan details work for the coming year which will involve all parts of SCH and will affect all aspects of service provision. The priorities and performance indicators set out in the plan also contribute to the ambitions set out in the strategic vision.

5.2 The draft Delivery Plan demonstrates how SCH activity will support the objectives of the Council and Solihull's wider strategic partnerships.

6. Implications and Considerations

6.1 State how the proposals in this report contribute to the priorities in the [Council Plan](#):

Priority:	Contribution:
<p>Economy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and promote the Borough's economy, with a focus on revitalising our towns and local centres. 2. Maximising the opportunities of UK Central and HS2. 3. Increase the supply of affordable and social housing that is environmentally sustainable. 	<p>Maintenance and improvement of the Council's housing stock</p> <p>SCH office accommodation strategy</p> <p>SCH will continue to work with the Council to bring forward new homes</p> <p>SCH is a lead partner in the delivery of the Kingshurst Village Centre regeneration</p>
<p>Environment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Enhance our natural environment, improve air quality and reduce net carbon emissions. 	<p>New homes to be 'future proofed', warm and healthy, in line with the Council's net zero carbon ambition.</p> <p>Continued investment in energy efficiency of the Council's housing stock</p> <p>Joint work with the Council to ensure legislative requirements relating to building safety are achieved and compliance maintained</p>
<p>People and Communities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Take action to improve life chances and health outcomes in our most disadvantaged communities. 6. Enable communities to thrive. 7. Improving outcomes for children and young people in Solihull. 8. Good quality, responsive and dignified care and support for adults in Solihull when they need it. 	<p>Support for customers across all services</p> <p>Specific actions around safeguarding, including activity to prevent and respond to exploitation</p> <p>DAHA accreditation</p> <p>Accessible, responsive services and a focus on improving customer satisfaction</p> <p>Core focus on supporting residents to secure and sustain a stable home</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Promote employee wellbeing 	<p>Focus on staff development and wellbeing</p>

6.1 Consultation and Scrutiny:

6.1.1 Tenant involvement has been key to the development of this year's Delivery Plan and was a particular focus of the tenant conference in September, the feedback from which informed the SCH Board's initial discussions on developing the 2023/24 plan.

6.1.2 The Chief Executive of SCH has discussed the draft Delivery Plan at various stages of development at the Quarterly Monitoring Board and the Council's Corporate Leadership Team. It was also considered by the leadership teams in the Economy and Infrastructure and Adult Social Care directorates. Comments and feedback from these forums have been incorporated into the final draft presented at Appendix A.

6.1.3 The SCH Board considered an initial draft of the delivery plan in November and approved the final draft for 2023/24 at its meeting on 20 February.

6.1.4 The Scrutiny Board has the opportunity to provide comments to inform the Cabinet member's consideration of the plan.

6.2 Financial implications:

6.1.1 The plan sets out how SCH manages its finances in conjunction with the Council. The work associated with the priorities set out in the plan are funded by the housing capital programme, the SCH management fee, and other supplementary sources.

6.2 Legal implications:

6.2.1 The SCH management agreement sets out the governance arrangements under which SCH operates on behalf of the Council.

6.3 Risk implications:

6.3.1 SCH monitors risk on a quarterly basis within a well – defined framework using a shared risk management system with the Council; there are no red risks associated with the plan.

6.3.2 The Strategic Housing Board oversees a Council and SCH shared register of strategic risks and underneath this there are a number of cross-cutting operational risks which are overseen by lead officers.

6.4 Equality implications:

6.4.1 SCH has the same obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty as the Council – to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between those who share a 'protected' characteristic and those who do not.

6.4.2 SCH has an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, and associated action plan. The priorities set out in the action plan are integral to the activities set out under each of the strategic objectives in the delivery plan, influencing the work carried out and service improvements planned across the organisation.

7. List of appendices referred to

7.1 Appendix A: Draft Solihull Community Housing Delivery Plan 2022/23

8. Background papers used to compile this report

Solihull Community Housing Strategic Vision 2020-25

9. List of other relevant documents

9.1 Not applicable