

Meeting date: 5 March 2019
Report to: Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board
Subject/report title: Solihull Community Housing Delivery Plan 2019-20
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To present the draft Solihull Community Housing Delivery Plan for consideration.

2. Decision(s) recommended

2.1 To make any recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Housing.

3. What is the issue?

3.1 Each year Solihull Community Housing (SCH) prepares a Delivery Plan which refers to progress made by SCH over the current year and sets out its objectives for the coming year, together with proposed performance targets.

3.2 The draft Plan is at Appendix A. It is presented in SCH's new corporate branding style which is intended to refresh the organisation's image and better reflect the breadth of its business

3.3 The SCH Board received a final draft of the Plan on 26 February which was a day after publication of this report. Should there be any changes these will be brought to your attention at your meeting.

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

- 4.1 SCH has a five-year Future Strategic Vision (2017 – 2022) which sets the high-level framework for service delivery and collaborative work with partners.
- 4.2 The three aims of this are to Provide Homes; Improve Wellbeing and to Strengthen Communities
- 4.3 Within the Future Strategic Vision are four delivery themes, each looking forward to 2022: Team, Service, Value and Growth. The planned outcomes of each are set out (page 14).
- 4.4 The Future Strategic Vision will be refreshed during 2019/20 and a new strategic vision for 2020-25 will be produced as a result.
- 4.5 This review is being undertaken in part to reflect the changing policy context within which SCH operate. For example, national policy changes such as the removal of the Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap and of the proposals regarding 'high value' properties which come available for reletting (i.e. 'voids'), together with the recent Housing Green Paper, herald an operating environment which is more conducive to extending provision of social housing.
- 4.6 SCH is committed to their role as a strategic partner of the Council and actively support the priorities of the Council Plan. The draft Plan notes (at page 13) issues which SCH is particularly well placed to contribute in support: 'increasing the social housing stock, developing and delivering wellbeing services, provision of specialist housing for vulnerable customers and the creation of conditions for communities to thrive'.
- 4.7 To support the development of this role, the draft Plan introduces 6 strategic priorities for 2019/20 on customer satisfaction, stock growth, safer homes, locality working, staff development and digital engagement. For each, the draft Plan sets out how SCH will respond and what delivery milestones it has set itself.
- 4.8 The draft Plan then sets out operational priorities for each of the main areas of business: Customer and business support, Housing and Communities, Asset Management and Development.
- 4.9 Annual or quarterly milestones for each strategic and operational priority are set out over pages 26 to 30 of the draft Plan.
- 4.10 The appendix to the draft Plan details SCH's current performance against key indicators and proposes a target for each in 2019/20. This shows that SCH is currently performing well against most indicators though the draft Plan notes four areas where performance has dipped and which will be a focus for improvement in the coming year: Rent collection, Responsive repairs, Gas servicing and Tenant satisfaction.
- 4.11 SCH is proposing higher targets for most indicators in 2019/2. However, they have sensibly held or reduced a small number to ensure that targets are achievable with service improvement. There will also be a number of new stretch targets with

quarterly step-changes for customer satisfaction in three selected functions.

5. Reasons for recommending preferred option

- 5.1 The draft Plan sets out a well considered body of work for the coming year which will improve services, support and develop people and communities, contribute significantly to Council objectives and develop SCH as an effective organisation.
- 5.2 It adequately meets the requirement of a delivery plan according to the Management Agreement.

6. Implications and Considerations

6.1 Delivery of key themes in the Council Plan:

How will the options/proposals in this report contribute to the delivery of the key themes in the Council Plan?

- (a) Improve Health and Wellbeing – SCH will deliver a programme of work which will assist older, disabled and other vulnerable people in their homes, including the Disabled Facilities Grant, minor works programme and handyperson scheme.
- (b) Managed Growth – SCH propose a modest programme of new build and acquisitions in 2019/20 which will add to the stock of homes for rent and have signalled their desire to continue to undertake new development in future years
- (c) Build Stronger Communities – as the largest housing manager in Solihull, SCH is particularly well placed to lead and deliver aspects of the emerging approach on localities.
- (d) Deliver Value - SCH is committed to assisting the Council to achieve its Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). Their proposals for making the required savings were scrutinised through the Council's Budget Strategy process and have been approved by Cabinet along with the Housing Revenue Account and Management Fee for 2019/20.

6.2 Implications for children and young people, vulnerable groups and particular communities:

- 6.2.1 The draft Plan lists the partnership boards on which SCH is represented and issues of interest are referred to in the draft Plan where relevant.
- 6.2.2 At page 24 the draft Plan notes SCH's approach to safeguarding and the planned introduction of a competency framework for multi-agency safeguarding training for selected staff.

6.3 Consultation and Scrutiny:

- 6.3.1 The Chief Executive of SCH will present the draft Plan at your meeting.

6.4 Financial implications:

- 6.4.1 SCH receive an annual Management Fee from the Council for the delivery of devolved services. There are additional sums via Service Level Agreements for specific functions.
- 6.4.2 SCH is working within a Government policy of annual rent reductions to 2021 so the opportunity of revenue growth through rent increases is not available to them at present.
- 6.4.3 Annual financial savings to support the Council's MTFS are agreed through the Budget Strategy Working Group.
- 6.4.4 The major part of the Housing Capital Programme is spent by SCH including a share of the Disabled Facilities Grant.
- 6.4.5 SCH has received additional funds through allocations of Flexible Homelessness Support Grant during 2018/19 and this has expanded staff capacity which will be available throughout 2019/20.

6.5 Legal implications:

- 6.5.1 The Management Agreement between the Council and SCH and the Memorandum and Articles of SCH set out the legal basis for its operation.

6.6 Risk implications:

- 6.6.1 SCH monitors risk on a quarterly basis within a well – defined framework and have formed a new Audit and Risk Committee which in 2019/20 will have a particular focus on 'safer homes' so that learning arising from the Grenfell Tower inquiry and other events will be applied to relevant areas of business.
- 6.6.2 There are no red risks associated with the Plan.

6.7 Statutory Equality Duty:

- 6.7.1 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.
- 6.7.2 The protected characteristics include age, disability, sex or gender, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.
- 6.7.3 The draft Plan commits SCH to activity to promote equality and diversity including Fair Treatment Assessments of services.
- 6.7.4 This can lead to reasonable steps being taken to meeting the needs of protected groups, removing or reducing disadvantage, and activity aimed at promoting participation and understanding.

7. List of appendices referred to

7.1 Appendix A – Draft Delivery Plan

8. Background papers used to compile this report

8.1 N/A

9. List of other relevant documents

9.1 SCH Management Agreement

9.2 SCH Asset Management Plan

9.3 Council Plan