

Meeting date: 30 March 2021
Report to: Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health



Subject/report title: Solihull Community Housing Delivery Plan
Report from: Head of Stronger Communities (Housing & Communities)
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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

Public/private report: Public

Exempt by virtue of paragraph:

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To present the draft Solihull Community Housing Delivery Plan 2021/22.

2. Decision(s) recommended

2.1 To approve the Delivery Plan 2021/22.

2.2 To approve the use of the Welfare Reform Reserve to fund the procurement and development of an analytics and software tool to support SCH to reduce rent arrears and provide targeted financial support to tenants.

3. Matters for Consideration

3.1 Solihull Community Housing (SCH) is the Arms – Length Management Organisation (ALMO) which manages the Council's housing stock and provides defined services on behalf of the Council.

3.2 SCH is required to prepare an annual Delivery Plan which sets out its objectives for the coming year, together with proposed performance targets. The draft Plan for 2021/22 is at **Appendix A**.

3.3 SCH also have in place a five year Vision covering 2020 – 2025. This was presented

at the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health's decision session on 31st March 2020. The vision is included for information at **Appendix B**.

- 3.4 **Appendix C** provides further information relating to decision 2.2 on SCHs procurement and implementation plans for a targeted analytical and software tool. Please note Appendix C contains confidential information which is exempt under paragraph 3 and is therefore private.
4. **What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?**
- 4.1 The Vision Document (2020-25) sets out five strategic aims for SCH which are accompanied by a set of aspirations and measures for success, setting out what SCH would like to have achieved in each area by 2025. The strategic aims are:
- Creating Homes;
 - More than Bricks and Mortar;
 - Strengthening Communities;
 - Excellent Customer Service;
 - Passion in People.
- 4.2 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 of 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 their workforce and is underpinned by an organisation wide People Strategy which sets out a strong programme of staff engagement.
- 4.3 SCH are now one year into the work programmes required to deliver the stated strategic aims and ambitions set out in the Vision Document. Delivery during 2020/21 has been significantly impacted by responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, with SCH having to rapidly adjust to the need to implement new models of service delivery and to work with the Council and partners as part of the Borough-wide response to supporting residents, preventing the spread of infection and ensuring the continued delivery of business critical services. In particular the SCH response to Covid-19 has focused on supporting vulnerable customers, communication and engagement regarding key public health messages, delivering the emergency response and ensuring core services continued to operate and providing support for households in temporary accommodation
- 4.4 Despite the impact of Covid-19 SCH have made progress towards many of the ambitions set out in the strategic vision over the past 12 months. Notably during 2020/21 this has included:
- Revised Asset Management Strategy agreed
 - Development of new homes
 - Suite of new service standards produced
 - Apprenticeship programme and employment support embedded

- Developed a People Strategy
- SCHape customer panel launched

- 4.5 The draft Delivery Plan for 2021/22 sets out what SCH will deliver in the coming year and the key milestones and performance indicators that will be used to measure progress and demonstrate the contribution made to meeting the strategic aims set out in the Vision Document. 2021/22 represents Year 2 of work towards the SCH Strategic Vision.
- 4.6 The plan begins by referencing the strategic vision and details how the measures set out in the Delivery Plan will support and contribute to the 5 building blocks and 9 things to do set out in the current Council Plan. It then details the planned work by each of three service areas within SCH, each of which has a number of strategic objectives, a 'work package' underpinned by milestones for delivery and a set of key performance indicators and targets that will be used to measure progress.
- 4.7 The three service areas and their strategic objectives are:
- 4.7.1 Asset Management and Development:
- Data driven approach to manage our stock portfolio in a proactive, green and environmentally sustainable way
 - Ensure our homes are safe
 - Optimise the value and impact of the property maintenance service
 - Growth in social housing in partnership with Solihull Council
- 4.7.2 Housing and Communities
- Delivering excellent core housing management services that are integrated and highly visible
 - Enhanced service offers to support our wider customer base to achieve positive outcomes
 - Reducing homelessness and risk of homelessness across the Borough,
 - Working collaboratively with partners and stakeholders to create resilient and thriving communities
- 4.7.3 Customer Service and Business Support
- Implement a Community Engagement roadmap to empower customers and involve them in the heart of decision making and further support thriving communities
 - Delivering services for customers in the way they want and reduce customer effort
 - Continuously improving services and processes through customer insight
 - Embedding a clear approach to supporting vulnerable customers across all SCH services
 - Supporting and developing our staff
- 4.8 The majority of strategic objectives have remained consistent with those presented in the 2020/21 Delivery Plan with some slight revisions to wording and focus to capture developing priorities and themes. During 2021/22 key work packages will include implementation of the asset management strategy, work with the Council to progress the Kingshurst Village Centre Regeneration and new housing development, embedding

the customer engagement framework and enhancing the approach to supporting vulnerable customers, a focus organisationally on staff support and development and business process mapping and a review of key service areas including Anti-Social Behaviour and Wellbeing services, incorporating the Disabled Facilities Grant delivery.

- 4.9 The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are reviewed annually along with the Delivery Plan. All current KPIs will remain in place for 2021/22 with amendments made to some of the targets to reflect performance and learning during the previous 12 months. As set out at point 4.3 covid-19 impacted significantly on some areas of performance during 2020/21, particularly as SCH had to stop delivering some non-essential services during the first lockdown, and the on-going response to and recovery from Covid-19 will continue to feature heavily in service delivery during the forthcoming year.
- 4.10 A further strategic focus during 2021/22 will be to improve rent collection to ensure that SCH achieve the target of 98% collection of rent due included in the delivery plan. Work has been ongoing to improve this performance through a number of targeted initiatives and SCH would like to enhance this approach through investment in a cloud based solution that would provide more business analysis on rent collection and aid targeting interventions in a more productive way. Indicative benefits identified through the evaluation of other areas using similar technology show a significant reduction in arrears and the potential to release/reduce capacity in the service. Further information is available on this in the private Appendix (**Appendix C**). The investment will help to achieve a number of the strategic objectives set out in the delivery plan, particularly, “Reducing homelessness and risk of homelessness across the Borough” and “Continuously improving services and processes through customer insight”.
- 4.11 The draft Delivery Plan also sets out how SCH will manage finance, governance and risk in partnership with the Council.
- 4.12 The Council will be working closely with SCH during 2021/22 to develop and agree a revised client function and governance structure for the oversight of the functions delegated to SCH to deliver on the Council’s behalf. This will include a review of processes for oversight and monitoring, methods for tracking progress against the delivery plan and a greater focus on those areas set out in the Management Agreement as shared functions and responsibilities. This will also include reflecting on any changes in the priorities or work programmes of the Council Plan which is currently being reviewed.
- 4.13 In developing revisions to the current oversight, monitoring and partnership arrangements the Council will also be able to work with SCH to ensure that both organisations will be able to meet the new expectations being set out in the “The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper”, which was published in November 2020. The strategic ambitions and operational milestones set out in the Vision and Delivery Plan are also setting strong foundations in being able to respond to the White Paper.
- 4.14 The main theme of the white paper is around strengthening the regulation of social housing and ensuring that the ‘voice’ of social housing tenants is listened to. It sets out a charter for what every social housing resident should expect and includes proposals for a comprehensive set of measures designed to strengthen the formal standards against which landlords are regulated and give tenants and the regulator

clear methods of redress in cases of complaints or poor performance.

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 milestones and KPIs set out in the Delivery 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.
- 5.3 The work to review and develop the SCH client function, along with the accompanying oversight and governance arrangements between the Council and SCH, will enable a more robust process for formalising any recommended changes to the Management Agreement and / or Delivery Plan. This will feed into the annual review process and be reflected in any updates to the Plan for future years. It will also support delivery of the recommendations set out in the Social Housing White Paper (2020).

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. Revitalising our towns and local centres. 2. UK Central (UKC) and maximising the opportunities of HS2. 3. Increase the supply of housing, especially affordable and social housing. | <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, with targets to deliver 23 new net zero homes across 4 sites in the programme for 2021/22</p> <p>SCH will be a lead partner in the delivery of the Kingshurst Village Centre regeneration</p> |
| <p>Environment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Enhance Solihull's natural environment. 5. Improve Solihull's air quality. 6. Reduce Solihull's 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"> 7. Take action to improve life chances in our most disadvantaged communities. 8. Enable communities to thrive. | <p>Support for customers across all services</p> <p>Specific actions around safeguarding, including activity to prevent and respond to exploitation</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>9. Sustainable, quality, affordable provision for adults & children with complex needs.</p> | <p>Contribution to implementation of the Domestic Abuse Bill</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> <p>Focus on staff development</p> |
|--|--|

6.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

6.2.1 The Chief Executive of SCH has discussed the draft Delivery Plan at various stages of development at the Quarterly Monitoring Board, and at the Council's Corporate Leadership Team and Strategic Housing Framework Board. Comments and feedback from these forums have been incorporated into the final draft presented at **Appendix A**.

6.2.2 The SCH Board considered an initial draft of the Delivery Plan in November and approved the final draft for 2021/22 at their meeting on 25 January 2021.

6.2.3 The Chair and Chief Executive of SCH attended the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board meeting on 18 March 2021, presented the delivery plan, outlined progress made against the targets and ambitions set out in the Vision Document and answered questions from Scrutiny Board Members. The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health was also in attendance at the Scrutiny Board meeting for the discussion on the SCH delivery plan.

6.2.4 The Economic Development & Managed Growth Scrutiny Board at this meeting agreed the following recommendations to go forward to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health:

- The Board noted the number of new home completions, the anticipated losses via 'Right to Buy' and the impact of any shortfall on meeting housing need in the Borough and asked that the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health looks at ways to address this housing shortfall by utilising the headroom only in the Housing Revenue Account to facilitate new building, with particular emphasis on homes for social rent.
- The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health will provide the Board members with data for 2020/21 on the number of properties purchased through the "Right to Buy" and the number of new affordable housing completions, broken down to show the number of social rented units delivered

6.3 Financial implications:

6.3.1 The work packages contained in the draft Plan are funded through the Housing Capital Programme, the SCH Management Fee and several supplementary sources.

6.3.2 Annual financial savings to support the Council's MTFs are agreed through the Budget Strategy Working Group.

6.4 Legal implications:

6.4.1 The requirements of the Delivery Plan are set out in the Management Agreement between the Council and SCH.

6.5 Risk implications:

6.5.1 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.

6.5.2 The Strategic Housing Framework 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.

6.6 Equality implications:

6.6.1 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.

6.6.2 SCH have an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, and 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.

6.6.3 There are also specific areas of work and delivery milestones included in the draft Plan under the strategic objective “Embedding a clear approach to supporting vulnerable customers across all SCH services”. This focus will improve the service offer for vulnerable customers, including consideration of equalities and diversity and the specific actions required to respond to the identified needs of those with protected characteristics.

7. List of appendices referred to

7.1 Appendix A – Draft Delivery Plan 2021/2

7.2 Appendix B – Vision Document 2020/5

7.3 Appendix C – Private, exempt under paragraph 3

8. Background papers used to compile this report

8.1 Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government, The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper, November 2020 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-charter-for-social-housing-residents-social-housing-white-paper>

9. List of other relevant documents

9.1 None.