



Committee Report

PURPOSE: Final Decision Report

KEY OR NON-KEY DECISION: Non-key decision

COMMITTEE: Homes and Housing Delivery Committee

DATE: 14 February 2025

TITLE: Housing & Consumer Standards Programme and Compliance Update

Ward(s): Citywide

Officer presenting the report: Fiona Lester and Richard James

Job title: Director of Housing & Landlord Services and Housing & Consumer Standards Programme Lead

Committee Chair: Cllr Barry Parsons

Executive Director lead: John Smith: Executive Director for Growth & Regeneration

Proposal origin: BCC Staff

Purpose of Report:

1. To note and comment on the Housing & Consumer Standards Programme (H&CSP) improvement plan summary (Appendix Ai)
2. To note and comment on the H&CSP landlord compliance programme combined backlog and BAU performance report (Appendix Aii)
3. To note and comment on the 'strategic root cause' review report (Appendix Aiii)
4. To note the update on the Consumer Standards Improvement Strategy
5. To note and comment on the residents voice actions and feedback from the Housing Scrutiny Panel
6. To note and comment on the update from the latest regulatory review meeting with the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH)

Evidence Base / Options to consider:

1. H&CSP Improvement Plan Update Summary – Appendix Ai

1.1. The latest update summary included in appendix Ai outlines the position reported to the December Housing and Consumer Standards Programme (H&CSP). The December H&CSP Board was used to undertake a strategic root cause workshop (see item 3). The December programme update was distributed to the H&CSP Board via email.

1.2. The reporting format has been simplified into a new 'Highlight report' format to enable the

updates to be more easily understood. The highlight report still provides an update on progress with the current phase and overall programme actions. It also identifies key work areas at risk of delay and summarises high level progress on the programme workstreams.

1.3. The programme RAG rating is currently amber to reflect ongoing challenges with the delivery of some key compliance areas outlined in item 1.4 and the highlight report in appendix Ai.

1.4. The 'overview' and 'high risk areas' slides in appendix Ai outline the top activity areas that are at 'risk of delay'. These relate to;

- Damp and mould
- Fire safety
- Electrical safety (following the completion of the electrical data review)

Damp and mould and fire safety continue to be a focus due to challenges with the pace of improvement with backlog works. Difficulties remain with the collection and management of compliance data / processes, internal and external resources to deliver inspections / remedial works and accurately capturing and reporting on works completed.

Good progress is being made with electrical safety. The electrical data review has looked at electrical related data and safety certification concluded in December 2024. It has confirmed the number of outstanding inspections and highlighted a large number (c.1500) additional electrical remedial works. These works will be given the highest delivery priority. Due to the importance of these areas, the January Housing & Consumer Standards Programme Board will focus on better understanding the challenges with delivery and actions required to improve delivery.

1.5. There is an understanding of the need to strengthen senior delivery leadership to support the response to the delivery challenges. An interim Director of Transformation and Building Safety (Clare Gibb) will be employed for 12 months and started in January. One of the priorities will be to improve asset / compliance data and the delivery of key compliance activities.

1.6. At the December Homes and Housing Delivery Committee (H&HDC), there was detailed discussion about the need for the committee to better understand the current position regarding damp and mould in the council's social housing and what we are doing to respond. There was a request for more information to be brought to a future H&HDC. This is a key priority for the new interim Director of Transformation and Building Safety who will lead on the update. It is proposed that this update is brought to the April H&HDC to give time to fully understand the situation and confirm an improvement plan.

2. Combined Performance update on Landlord Compliance Backlog and BAU Activities – Appendix Aii

2.1. Appendix Aii outlines landlord compliance performance against the H&CSP backlog activities and the current Business as Usual (BAU) position. The bar charts and tables summarise non-compliance / backlog areas included in the Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) Regulatory Judgement. The section of the bars in blue identifies the current status of the backlog included in the Regulatory Judgement. The section of the bars in orange depicts the BAU position which shows performance that was not included in the confirmed areas of non-compliance in the Regulatory Judgement. The performance statistics are taken from the end of November 2024 position which was presented to the H&CSP Board in December.

- 2.2. There continues to be good performance with: gas servicing, electrical inspections, fire risk assessments, water safety and asbestos inspections to communal areas.
- 2.3. The number of non-compliant smoke detection within homes continues to reduce. At the end of November this had reduced to 9,447 which is an improvement of 2,718 from the end of October 2024.
- 2.4. Steady progress continues to be made in reducing the number of backlog response repairs to 4,225 in November 24 from 6,401 in September 24. However, the number of new repairs is increasing. An increase in response repairs is expected during the winter and will be impacted by the increase in damp and mould and repairs resulting from stock condition surveys. The H&CSP board has requested that an Issue Flag report is provided for the February board meeting to outline the reasons for the increase, delivery challenges, plans to improve performance and any decisions required to facilitate the required improvements.
- 2.5. The number of outstanding electrical inspections continues to reduce. The completion of the electrical data review has increased the number of outstanding electrical remedial works by c.1500 and has been given the highest delivery priority. An Issue Flag report will be taken to the January H&CSP board to agree a delivery programme that reflects the outcome of the electrical data review.
- 2.6. Challenges remain regarding the delivery of fire remedial works and damp and mould inspections and remedial works. Both areas are a significant focus for the H&CSP board and as outlined in section one and Appendix Ai.

3. Root Cause Reviews Being Undertaken

- 3.1. The council has commissioned a consultant (Newtrality) to undertake a review of the Repairs and Maintenance service. This includes a review of the target operating model and customer journey and will help us to better understand the root causes that have contributed to areas of non-compliance. The review will be concluded at the end of January / early February. An update on the findings of the review and improvement plans will be presented to the April H&HDC.
- 3.2. The Programme Board held a strategic root cause review session on 18 December to further investigate the underlying issues that resulted in the regulatory judgement in more detail. The session was facilitated by Savills governance and regulation teams and also attended by Cllr Richard Eddy (Vice Chair of the H&HDC).
- 3.3. The root cause and lessons learned report in appendix Aiii is based on the facilitated strategic root cause review session. Four key themes were identified:
 - Corporate approach
 - Culture and Performance
 - Data and Systems
 - Skills and capacity

Each theme outlines the various observations made, the impacts, actions and a benchmark for what good looks like. On the final page of the report in appendix Aiii, the council summarises what

has been done so far against the themes. This will be expanded as part of the Consumer Standards Improvement Strategy development.

- 3.4. The council undertook this review to ensure that any underlying causes in respect of our C3 grading are captured as well as the presenting issues we have identified in the Housing and Consumer Standards Improvement Plan (HCSIP). The report in appendix Aiii will be shared with the RSH once it has been through internal review. The report will be revisited at a later date to enable the Programme Board evaluation of whether the issues have been addressed and outcome benchmarks have been met, demonstrating sustained improvement.
- 3.5. Following approval of the root cause report, the actions identified will be cross referenced to the HCSIP. The Consumer Standards Improvement Strategy will also include the themes and actions identified in the Strategic Root Cause report. This will include alignment with the council's corporate values and behaviours. See section four for an update on the strategy's development.

4. Update on the Consumer Standards Improvement Strategy

4.1. The December H&HDC was presented with an initial draft of a consumer standards improvement strategy. This high-level document is being developed to summarise:

- the background to the council's self-referral and C3 judgement against compliance with the consumer standards
- a summary of the H&CSP, its objectives and the improvement plan
- how the council is prioritising improvement tasks
- a high level timeline of the delivery of the programme
- a summary of the governance arrangements for the programme
- how the council will gain verification and assurance on the delivery of the programme objectives.

4.2. Following feedback from the H&HDC, H&CSP, and RSH it was agreed that the final version will:

- ensure the strategy outlines the journey for the council to meet all the consumer standards while recognising the priority of the health & safety related actions identified in the RSH's Regulatory Judgement
- be clearer on the key timeline and high-risk activities
- better articulate the roadmap and key milestones
- be clearer about measurable outcomes.

4.3. It is also important that the strategy responds to issues identified in the strategic root cause report (see item 3).

5. Residents Voice Actions and Feedback

5.1. The new Resident Engagement Strategy continues to be developed and will be presented to the H&HDC in late financial year 2024/25. The strategy will take into consideration the resident feedback given to the H&HDC by residents and resident groups. It will also outline how the 'resident's voice' will be heard and responded to.

5.2. Proposals to expand resident engagement and oversight of the H&CSP were agreed at the

December PCCB. Ongoing development will continue with input from Councillor Parsons and the interim proposal will be presented to the committee in May.

5.3. A task and finish group on resident engagement is being set up with H&HD Committee to look at the overall resident engagement approach.

5.4. The Housing Scrutiny Panel has discussed progress with the H&CSP and given feedback on the 13 December 2024 H&HDC meeting. A summary of the themes discussed at the meeting are outlined in table 01.

Table 01 – Feedback from January resident engagement meetings		
Summary of issue identified	Consumer Standards	What the plans are to respond to the issue / concerns
Why do we need to make savings to the Housing Revenue Account?	Safety & Quality Standard	<p>The Council’s main priority is ensuring that our homes are safe and in good condition, and that we meet the standards required of us as a social landlord. We need to spend more on our existing homes to ensure they meet the landlord statutory obligations, Consumer Standards and the decent homes standard. In 2025/26 we plan to invest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £21.6m investment in high rise blocks • £19.0m in day to day repairs; • £4.3m in fire remediation works; • £2.8m in increased electrical testing; • £2.5m investment in fire sprinklers, smoke alarms and cladding replacement; • £2.4m to combat damp and mould; • £2.3m for gas servicing; • £1.5m to ensure our fire doors are working; • £0.7m in increased fire alarm testing; • £0.7m to better understand the condition of homes <p>In addition to the delivery of new homes detailed above within the HRA, the General Fund will acquire 75 properties at a cost of £33m in 2025/26 to be used as Temporary Accommodation.</p>
Why are we not planning to buy all of the houses and flats that Goram Homes are building?	Safety & Quality Standard	<p>Despite the financial pressures and need to re-prioritise capital investment, we are still delivering 728 new homes at a cost of £207.3m over the medium term, with 136 delivered in 2024/25 and 263 in 2025/26. There are some sites where we are confident that there are other social housing providers who could own and manage the homes Goram Homes build. This would mean the homes are still available to house people in Bristol at social rents.</p>

<p>Why are you considering selling some homes?</p>	<p>Safety & Quality Standard</p>	<p>The council is committed to ensure existing homes are safety, warm and comfortable. The 2025/26 budget and business plan prioritises investment in existing homes. Any decision to dispose of a small number of homes would be underpinned by robust new policy which would go through the governance pathway to be approved by members of the Strategy and Resources committee. We have homes that have been identified as being in poor condition and requiring significant investment to meet existing and upcoming standards. However, there are not plans to dispose of a large number of homes. Officers are exploring options to potentially disposal of 14 homes in 25/26 and up to 28 annually thereafter. Over 5 years we may look to dispose of 159 homes (including 33 long term voids).</p>
<p>Could the pace of the cladding replacement programme be faster?</p>	<p>Safety & Quality Standard</p>	<p>The pace of our cladding replacement programme is slower than we would like. There is a national shortage of experienced workers and broader supply chain issues which have caused challenges. We are working with the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and have fed into their response to the government’s Local Resilience Adaptation Plan. We are working closely with Homes England (the Government's housing delivery organisation) to develop options to accelerate the cladding replacement programme.</p>
<p>Could the pace of major works schemes in Barton Hill be faster?</p>	<p>Safety & Quality Standard</p>	<p>The major refurbishment of multiple blocks in Barton Hill is a multi-year project. Planning restrictions linked to the building safety act have resulted in delays to starting some of the works. We are reviewing our delivery plans to include the impact of any delays. We update residents regularly on progress and will be in touch once we have finalised the revised delivery timeline.</p>

6. Update on Engagement with the RSH

- 6.1. The latest monthly regulatory review meeting took place on 9 January 2025. The meeting was productive and covered the progress on the:
- delivery of the improvement plan actions and latest performance reporting
 - what tenant focused risk mitigation measures are in place
 - the ‘root cause’ activities and Consumer Standards Improvement Strategy
 - understanding what residents are telling the Council and how we are proactively communicating with residents in an accessible way that meets their communication needs.

- 6.2. The RSH suggested that it would be useful for the Council's new Chief Executive (Nick Hibberd) and Chair of the H&HDC (Cllr Barry Parsons) attend a future monthly liaison meeting to discuss their thoughts on the council's compliance position with the Consumer Standards.

Officer Recommendations:

That the committee for Homes & Housing Delivery:

1. note and comment on the Housing & Consumer Standards Programme (H&CSP) improvement plan summary (Appendix Ai)
2. note and comment on the H&CSP landlord compliance programme combined backlog and BAU performance report (Appendix Aii)
3. note and comment on the strategic root cause review report (Appendix Aiii)
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Corporate Strategy alignment:

1. Homes and Communities:
Management of council homes is pivotal in providing residents with safe warm, secure and affordable accommodation

City Benefits:

1. Fourteen percent of housing in Bristol is owned and managed by BCC, the quality of the homes and services provided by BCC impacts directly on a significant number of households, as well as contributing to delivery of objectives in the council's Corporate and Housing strategies.
2. The Housing & Consumer Standards Programme will ensure that the; safety, quality, comfort and sustainability of the fourteen percent of housing owned and managed by Bristol is improved. Also, that the residents voice is heard and services are provided to meet the diverse needs of residents.
3. Significant investment in BCC's homes was agreed in the 2024/25 budget. The investment is focused on improving the safety and quality of homes, making them more energy efficient and building more high-quality homes to meet the increasing demand for social housing within Bristol.

Consultation Details:

1. The external reviews included engagement with a range of colleagues from across BCC.
2. There has been proactive communication on the self-referral to the RSH, RSH's Regulatory Judgement and the H&CSP with BCC social housing tenants and leaseholders, BCC colleagues, Cllrs and other external stakeholders. Further engagement events with tenants are taking place in September.
3. A detailed Communications Strategy was approved by the H&CSP Board on 28 August 2024. The strategy includes the implementation of a dedicated communications resources who will work

closely with existing teams and lead on the coordination of external and internal communications.

Background Documents:

- RSH’s 9 July 2024 Regulatory Judgement (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bristol-city-council/bristol-city-council-00hb-regulatory-judgement-9-july-2024>)
- RSH guidance on New Regulatory Framework ([Reshaping Consumer Regulation – Our New Approach](#))
- Implication of new legislation on High Risk buildings ([Guidance on the criteria for being a higher-risk building - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#))
- Housing Ombudsman information on the new Complaint Handling Code ([The Complaint Handling Code | Housing Ombudsman Service \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#))

Revenue Cost	N/A	Source of Revenue Funding	Housing Investment Plan Approved
Capital Cost	N/A	Source of Capital Funding	N/A
One off cost <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing cost <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Saving Proposal <input type="checkbox"/> If yes - existing or new saving? OR Income generation proposal <input type="checkbox"/>	

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Further essential background / detail on the proposal	YES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appendix Ai - H&CSP Improvement Plan Highlight Report (December 2024) • Appendix Aii – Landlord Compliance Performance Report (November 2024) • Appendix Aiii – Strategic Root Cause report 	
Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)	NO
<i>Note – The H&CSP was included in the July 2024 update</i>	
Appendix C – Environmental Impact Assessment	NO
Appendix D – Decision Risk Assessment	NO
Appendix E – Exempt Information	NO
Appendix F – Details of consultation carried out - internal and external	NO
Appendix G – Options appraisal matrix	NO
Appendix H – Business case / financial analysis	NO