

## UPDATE TO IMPROVEMENT AND RECOVERY PLAN

### Executive Summary

The Improvement and Recovery Plan was adopted by Council in August 2023 and outlines the activity required to address the Government Directions as set out in the intervention in June 2023. The Plan includes four themes – Financial Recovery; Commercial; Governance and Assurance; and Organisation and Service Redesign. This report outlines the proposal to include a fifth theme which will incorporate the Housing Improvement Programme, recognising the need for increased strategic oversight of this work.

### Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

#### RESOLVE That

the Housing Improvement Programme be incorporated into the Improvement and Recovery Plan as the fifth theme.

### Reasons for Decision

Reason: The strategic importance of the programme requires this additional focus. There are interdependencies with the existing themes that require management across the programme in its entirety.

The Executive has the authority to determine the recommendation(s) set out above.

**Background Papers:** None.

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### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 There are a number of improvement initiatives underway within the Housing service that is part of the Communities Directorate. A significant programme is being developed to ensure the Council's housing stock meets required standards.
- 1.2 Due to the need for significant improvements to the housing stock to meet the required standards, officers self-referred to the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) in July 2023. Plans were immediately initiated to work on the required improvements. RSH is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities [Regulator of Social Housing - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk).
- 1.3 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Recovery Plan that was reported to the 13 July 2023 meeting of the Executive referenced that it will be necessary for the Council to self-refer to the Regulator for Social Housing as it will not be able to maintain its properties to the Decent Homes standard.
- 1.4 A more programmatic approach is now required to ensure the various streams of activity are prioritised accordingly, properly resourced and that there is sufficient strategic oversight. A programme manager has been recruited to drive and co-ordinate this work.
- 1.5 To ensure that housing improvement is given the strategic focus and visibility that it needs, it is proposed that the Housing Improvement Programme is included in the IRP going forward. This programme of work will address all aspects of housing management and incorporate the work needed to create a 30-year HRA business plan.

### 2.0 Housing Improvement Programme

- 2.1 The scope of the activity to be brought into the IRP is set out below. This is the initial scope and the exact format and shape of the workstreams will be developed over the coming weeks.
- 2.2 **Building safety** to deliver a programme of fire safety remedial works and associated projects, including compliance with carbon monoxide (CO) and smoke detection across the stock and a performance dashboard for all compliance areas.
- 2.3 **Service Improvement** which includes procuring and mobilising a new repairs contract; the Sheerwater refurbishment programme; the development of a detailed asset management strategy, including the decent homes programme; a review of compliance against the Rent Standard and other Regulatory Standards; a strategic and delivery approach to tackling damp and mould; and oversight, performance, and project management around voids, decants, returns to use, decommissioning and disposals.
- 2.4 **Resident engagement and consultation** which includes the implementation of Tenant Satisfaction Measures by 31 March 2024; a coordinated approach to resident engagement, delivering core activity required to meet the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard alongside bespoke engagement to support the effective delivery of the fire safety remedial works and decent homes programme; and a detailed programme of service improvements.
- 2.5 **Tools and ways of working** which will deliver the housing system upgrade, to monitor activity and compliance for fire safety, and medium to long term tools to support and deliver high quality asset management. This will also include a programme of policy and process review to ensure the regulatory standards are met and service delivery has a customer focus, and channel shift for frequent housing requests (repairs, online application for housing) and improvements to online information for residents, including fire safety.

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- 2.6 **Culture change** which will deliver a new culture and ways of working for the housing service, with staff aligned and focussed on strong customer service values and high quality delivery of core functions.
- 2.7 **Insights and data** will include management data and insight to support delivery of service improvements detailed above, with a focus on asset management; data to inform the development of a 30-year Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, including an updated stock condition survey and associated programme of works.
- 2.8 The work to deliver a balanced Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and a 30-year HRA business plan is already underway and included within the IRP within the Financial Recovery theme.

### 3.0 Change control

- 3.1 The Improvement and Recovery Plan was approved by Council in August 2023. As part of the decision to adopt the IRP, it was also agreed that the Executive will be required to approve any fundamental changes and updates to the IRP.
- 3.2 The proposal to include Housing Improvement Programme as a new theme represents a significant addition. The Executive is therefore asked to approve the addition of the programme as set out in section two above.

### 4.0 Next steps

- 4.1 The programme structure will be developed and projects will be prioritised. Senior leaders will be brought together to share and shape the transformation programme and identify where resource gaps exist.

### 5.0 Corporate Strategy

- 5.1 The deliverables set out in the Housing Improvement Programme and the IRP will achieve long-term sustainable improvements in how the Council operates, ensuring it is able to take effective decisions focused on improving outcomes for residents. This impacts on the Council's ability to deliver its Corporate Plan, which will have its objectives and actions revised.

### 6.0 Implications

#### Finance and Risk

- 6.1 If the Council fails to take appropriate action to meet the requirements set out in the Government Direction, or if the Commissioners appointed by the Secretary of State do not have sufficient confidence that appropriate actions are being taken to implement and sustain the required improvements, then the Council risks not having appropriate arrangements in place to comply with its best value duty under Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999. This could lead to further Government intervention, increased costs and damage to reputation.
- 6.2 An IRP Risk Register will be maintained which will underpin the Council's Strategic Risk Register. This will be reported monthly to CLT and to the Informal Executive.

#### Equalities and Human Resources

- 6.3 The transformation of the Housing Service may lead to staffing changes and could lead to changes in service provision. In this scenario, Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) will be developed where appropriate to describe the implications of the proposed changes along with mitigations.

Legal

- 6.4 This report has been reviewed by Legal Services who have raised no issues other than those addressed elsewhere in this report.

**7.0 Engagement and Consultation**

- 7.1 This programme will include a workstream for Resident engagement and consultation as described in section two.

REPORT ENDS