

# Housing & Leisure Overview & Scrutiny Committee

25 November 2024

## Proposals For Scrutiny Review Task Group Work

### 1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To consider and agree a way forward for the proposed HRA Policy Framework scrutiny review topics and nominate individual committee members to participate in those Task Group Reviews.

### 2.0 Background

- 2.1 At the Committee's last meeting held on 2 September 2024 the Committee considered a report on the Policy Framework for Landlord Services and Housing Standards, a key component in our Housing Improvement Programme to meet the requirements of the Social Housing (Regulations) Act 2023 and demonstrate compliance with the Consumer Standards set by the Regulator for Social Housing.
- 2.2 The report listed the Policies, Procedures and Standards which will be required in order to deliver a harmonised landlord service to our tenants, together with the proposed consultation principles, adoption timetable and decision level for each, in order to ensure that the Framework is compiled as effectively and transparently as possible.
- 2.3 The Committee was asked to consider the list and the proposed timetable and agree which policy reviews they would like to participate in either as a full Committee or through a number of Task Groups (TG).
- 2.4 The Committee agreed that where possible they would like to be involved both at the policy formation stage and at post public consultation/pre-decision stage. They recognised this would not be possible in all cases given the tight timeframe for developing some of the key standards and policies and that in those instances, it would be better to be involved at post public consultation/pre-decision stage.
- 2.5 The Committee recognised that in order to sign up to participate in a particular TG, Members would need an understanding of the commitment it would require i.e. the optimum number of task group meetings each review would require and the possible meeting dates when they would need to be available.
- 2.6 Given the scale of the task, officers were asked to identify four or five key standards / policies where member contribution via a task group review could add the most value, and to consider what the work of each TG might include. Outside of that, members agreed other draft Policies, Procedures and Standards should come to the committee prior to their consideration by the Executive Member for Culture, Arts & Housing so that the views of scrutiny members could inform the decision-making process.

### 3.0 Proposed Policy Review Scrutiny Topics

- 3.1 The following four Standards / Policies have been identified as suitable for scrutiny review, where the committee could directly influence and add value to the process of harmonising current/legacy policies as part of a planned policy review or where there is currently policy conflict:

- **Lettable Standard (Void Standard)** - Scheduled for Executive Member approval on 9 April 2025
- **Grounds Maintenance Policy** - Scheduled for Executive Member approval on 9 April 2025
- **Housing Fees and Charges Policy** - Scheduled for Executive Member approval on 9 July 2025.
- **Compensation Policy** – Scheduled for Executive Member approval on 9 July 2025.

### 3.2 **Lettable Standard (Void Standard)**

To develop a Lettable Standard for NYC social housing stock. This standard details the condition which a property will be brought up to once a tenancy ends in preparation for an incoming tenant / mutual exchange. Void standards across the stock holding localities currently differ and could be improved.

Status: Some work has commenced on an operational level, using Harrogate's previous standard.

Lead Officers: Lorraine Larini, Paul Cole, Sara Smith

It is proposed the Task Group would meet three times – (Sessions 1 & 2 on same day with a lunch break between):

#### Friday 10 January 2025 – Information Gathering Day

- Informal TG Session 1 (AM) – To start in a meeting room for a briefing on current compliance with the RSH Consumer Standards and industry standard best practice.
- Followed by site visits to inspect voids (session likely to be held in Selby as that is where there is the highest turnover of voids -tbc)
- Informal TG Session 2 (PM) – Meeting to consider void numbers, complaints, tenant feedback and financial implications.

#### Tuesday 28 January - Options Consideration

- Informal TG Session 3 (AM or PM)– To assist in the development of a draft Policy through consideration of an options paper including consideration of financial implications to Council and implications for tenants.

Full Committee to consider TG review feedback and recommendations, and draft Policy (informed by the TG review). The final Task Group review report would come to the full Committee at its meeting on 10th March 2025, prior to its consideration by the Executive Member on 9 April 2025.

### 3.3 **Grounds Maintenance Policy**

To harmonise the Grounds Maintenance Policy for NYC Tenants. Currently tenants receive a different service depending on locality.

Status: Officers have yet to start work on this

Lead Officers: Lorraine Larini and Carl Doolan

It is proposed the Task Group would meet two times:

#### Monday 3 February 2025 (AM)

- Informal TG Session 1: TG to start in meeting room, to consider current compliance with the RSH Consumer Standards and review industry standard best practice.
- Followed by site visit to carry out estate walk (location to tbc)

#### Friday 20 February

- Informal TG Session 2: To consider tenant feedback and assist in the development of a draft Policy through consideration of an options paper including consideration of financial implications to Council and implications for tenants.

Full Committee to consider TG review feedback and recommendations, and draft Policy (informed by the TG review) at its meeting on 10th March 2025, prior to its consideration by the Executive Member on 9 April 2025.

### 3.4 **Housing Fees and Charges Policy - Service Charges**

To help shape the Policy. Currently 3 separate approaches to Service Charges and what services are offered to NYC tenants across the stock holding localities. This is a large piece of work which will require thorough consultation with tenants.

Status: Not yet started

Lead officer(s): To be confirmed.

Task Group to meet two times in April/May 2025 – exact dates to be agreed with input from Lead Officers. Review would need to be completed by 23 May 2025.

Informal TG Session 1 to:

- Consider current compliance with RSH Consumer Standards and review industry standard best practice.
- Review tenant satisfaction feedback.

Informal TG Session 2 to:

- Assist in the development of a draft Policy through consideration of an options paper including consideration of financial implications to Council and implications for tenants.

Full Committee to consider TG review feedback and recommendations, and draft Policy (informed by TG review) at its meeting on 11th June 2025, prior to its consideration by the Executive Member on 9 July 2025.

### 3.5 **Compensation Policy/Procedure**

To review / harmonise the tenant/ leaseholder compensation policy, taking into account legacy policies, best practice, consumer standards and housing ombudsman code.

Status: Not yet started

Lead officer(s): To be confirmed.

Task Group to meet two times in April/May 2025 – exact dates to be agreed with input from Lead Officers. Review would need to be completed by 23 May 2025.

Informal TG Session 1 - To:

- Consider current compliance with RSH Consumer Standards and review industry standard best practice.
- Review compensation claims, complaints trends and tenant experience/feedback.

Informal TG Session 2 – To:

- Assist in the development of a draft Policy/Procedure through consideration of an options paper including consideration of financial implications to Council and implications for tenants.

Full Committee to consider TG review feedback and recommendations, and draft Policy/Procedure (informed by TG review) at its meeting on 11th June 2025, prior to its consideration by the Executive Member on 9 July 2025.

#### **4.0 CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

- 4.1 The adoption of appropriate Policies, Procedures and Standards as part of an agreed HRA Policy framework aligns with the council priority: 'To ensure that our council housing stock remains decent and continues to improve, with an ambition to become an exemplar social landlord'.

#### **5.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The financial, legal, equality and climate change implications associated with the four Policies / Standards will be identified as part of each Task Group scrutiny review and detailed within each Task Group's draft final report for the full Committee's consideration.

#### **6.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 In order to ensure that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has effective oversight of and the opportunity to contribute to the development of policies, to promote transparency, to expedite decision making, and to support the work to harmonise the Council's HRA Policy Framework as soon as possible.

#### **6.0 Recommendation**

6.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i) Consider and agree the four proposed Policies / Standards for Task Group scrutiny review.
- ii) Note the proposed Task Group meeting dates and proposed remit for each Task Group review.
- iii) Seek nominations for each of the four Task Groups.

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13 November 2024

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**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:** None

**APPENDICES:** None

Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.