Housing Portfolio
Councillor V C Smith

Report to Council – 15 October 2025

We are currently being visited by the Regulator of Social Housing as part of a two-day on-site inspection. Over the last few months we have submitted information about our housing service and they have met with tenants and employees to find out more about the service we deliver. Following this inspection we will be given a grading, ranging from C1 to C4. Once our grading is known this will be shared with our tenants and members.

We have been keen to share with the regulator the progress we are making, with the support of our Housing Influence Panel and Housing Improvement Board to improve our Repairs service. We are particularly proud of the improved customer service our Repairs Customer Services Team provides. In August 2025 the team dealt with 1113 calls, with only 8% of calls being abandoned. The average waiting time was less than 2 mins. The team managed to deal with the call at first point of contact on 82% of occasions. In addition to this the team dealt with almost 2000 requests via email and online reporting.

At the end of Quarter 1, rent arrears were 1.7%, which is lower than our target of 2%. The Financial Inclusion Officers have received 54 referrals for tenants that required support from 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025, in addition to the cases they continue to support from the previous financial year. They also continue to refer cases to the Household Support Fund, phase 7 which opened on 29 April 2025. Between 29 April 2025 and 30 June 2025, they made 16 white goods referrals and 78 households that have been supported with either a food voucher or payment.

There have been two particularly good outcomes recently. Firstly, a couple that were referred by the Income Team due to their rent arrears, required assistance with their benefit claims which were complex. Through various applications their income was increased by £5,740.80 per year. The couple were not aware that they were entitled to this additional financial support and are now not worried that they may lose their home. In a second case, one of our Independent Living Co-ordinators referred an 80-year-old tenant when she found out that the tenant was not claiming any benefits and was paying their full rent and council tax from their state pension. After support from a Financial Inclusion Officer to make claims, she was awarded assistance with both her rent and council tax and a backdated payment from Housing Benefit of £1,395.

This year we have amended our targets within the Housing Business Plan to monitor the total number of nights that bed and breakfast accommodation is used for. We avoid using this type of accommodation wherever possible. However, sometimes it is not possible, especially if someone contacts us out of hours. Based on last years figures, our target for Quarter 1 was 350 nights in total. We achieved this, using bed and breakfast accommodation for only 170 nights, less than half of the target set. Our aim is always to prevent homelessness, rather than needing to offer temporary accommodation or take a full homelessness application. We know that this is not always possible, but in Quarter 1 70% of homelessness cases were prevented.

At the end of August, we sent out our 2nd housing magazine. This contained a lot of useful information for tenants in an easy-to-read format. We have received many compliments on the latest edition and are now working on our Winter issue.

Private Sector Housing
An Emergency Prohibition Notice was served to stop the occupation of a flat above a commercial restaurant.

A notice to deal with a filthy and/or verminous premiss under the Public Health Act has been served and work is currently being undertaken by the householder to clear the premises.

Good progress is being made with Disabled Facilities Grants processing new referrals and monitoring the works at those in progress.

The Asset Management & Development Team continue to progress key initiatives aimed at improving the quality, sustainability and efficiency of the councils HRA portfolio. Our focus remains on strategic investment, compliance and unlocking development opportunities, to meet the housing needs to our borough.

Key Updates:

- Stock Condition – The council aims to have 70% of it's HRA portfolio surveyed by the end of March 2026, with the remaining 30% delivered within the 2026-27 financial year. This will conclude a full stock refresh of the portfolio, which was last done in 2019, and put the authority in a far stronger position in terms of future investment planning, procurement and compliance with current (and revised) Decent Homes and Building Safety Standards. It will also provide a sound platform from which the authority can run a rolling 20%, 5 year stock condition survey programme from, which will ensure a 100% 'Root & Branch' stock survey will not be required in the future.

- Capital Programme Delivery – The 2025-26 capital programme is on track, with significant progress made on the procurement of the contractor to delivery our Wave 3 Social Housing Decarbonisation 3 year programme, for which the council was awarded £1.3m in funding, earlier this year. In addition, the revision, and reprocurement of our gas combination boiler specification is forecast around £700 per installation, which will provide some clear savings to benefit the capital programme across the board, and allow us to start considering how we fund a heating programme beyond gas moving forward.

- Development Pipeline – Feasibility work is underway on several sites identified around the borough for potential housing development. These include a mix of infill opportunities and larger regeneration schemes, with a continued focus on affordable and sustainable housing delivery. Remedial work to both Relaw Court and Cross Street will commence early October, which will allow these schemes to be handed over to Housing Management to be let.

- The launch of our new Civica Property Management software is due in December 2025, which will attend to the majority of the issues identified by Internal Audit, both in their 2023 and most recent audit earlier this year, centring around more effective property portfolio management. In addition, the Estates Team is working to reduce £200k arrears accounts for a number of retailers in Beeston Square, as well as completing the letting of the final retail unit in this location, which will result in the Square being back to full let status.

- Social Housing Regulator – The council continues to make positive progress in preparing for the and engaging with the Social Housing Regulator, as part of the new inspection regime that was introduced in April 2024. As part of this process, a targeted improvement plan, based on the mock HQN audit that was completed earlier in the year, has been developed, to underpin our response to the inspection, focusing on tenant engagement, compliance, repairs and community safety. In addition, we have strengthened our data collection processes, to ensure robust evidence is available to support our self assessment.

  A mobilisation plan is in place to respond promptly to inspectors requests, and is led by our Change Delivery Manager, who ensures that all stakeholders are briefed and involved throughout the process.