



**Name of meeting: Economy and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel**

**Date: 19<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

**Title of report: Homes and Neighbourhoods Transfer**

**Purpose of report:** To provide an update on the transfer of the housing management and maintenance services (formally provided by KNH) back to the Council.

<b>Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>  If yes give the reason why
<b>Key Decision - Is it in the <u>Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports)?</u></b>	<b>No</b>  <b>No</b>
<b>The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>  If no give the reason why not
<b>Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> &amp; name</b>  <b>Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?</b>  <b>Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?</b>	<b>David Shephard - Strategic Director Growth and Regeneration - 8<sup>th</sup> October 2021.</b>
<b>Cabinet member <a href="#">portfolio</a></b>	<b>Cllr Cathy Scott – Portfolio Holder for Housing and Democracy</b>

**Electoral wards affected:** The service manages properties across all the electoral wards in the Borough

**Ward councillors consulted:** Councillors were consulted prior to the transfer decision in October 2020

**Public or private:** Public

**Has GDPR been considered?** Yes – as part of the transfer back to Kirklees Council all data held by Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing has been transferred to the Council.

## **1. Summary**

Following the decision taken by Cabinet in October 2020 that the housing management and maintenance services previously provided by KNH should be delivered directly by the Council a significant amount of work has been undertaken to bring this to fruition. This report provides an update on the transfer of these services and the outline plans for its further development.

Bringing these services back in house and ensuring they are meeting tenants needs now and in the future has been the driver by this approach. The move back is being delivered in three phases of activity these being transfer, transition, and transform. These phases are set out in more detail below.

The transfer phase that started following the cabinet decision with a target date of 1<sup>st</sup> April 21 was successfully delivered thanks to the efforts of a dedicated project team. This year is focused on the further embedding of the Homes and Neighbourhood Service (H+N) into the Council (Transition). A key focus for this year is concentrating on core business and the delivery of our compliance programme following our self-referral to the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH).

Finally, we are looking ahead to the future development of our services for the benefit of our tenants. This is part of our transformation phase that will pick up pace from 2022 onwards and will become our three-year rolling service plan.

These three phases are not linear and are iterative in their approach, therefore timescales and plans will be flexed to achieve the best possible results.

## **2. Information required to take a decision**

No decision is required

## **3. Implications for the Council**

### **3.1 Working with People**

Through our housing management and maintenance services we are in regular contact with our tenants and their families who live in our 22k properties

### **3.2 Working with Partners**

Partnership working is well embedded within the service. As part of our Service Excellence initiative, we are working with our partners to identify further opportunities for cooperation and collaboration on a range of initiatives.

### **3.3 Place Based Working**

The service has always operated using a patch or neighbourhood approach. As part of the services reintegration into the Authority further alignment is underway with the place based approach adopted by the Council.

### **3.4 Climate Change and Air Quality**

The service has a number of programmes and initiatives to meet our climate change obligations ranging from the increased insulation of our properties to the rolling out of fully electric vehicles.

### **3.5 Improving outcomes for children**

There are no specific outcomes for children identified within the transfer plans

### **3.6 Other (eg Legal/Financial or Human Resources) Consultees and their opinions**

The Housing Revenue Account remains a ringfenced funding for the Councils Social Housing Stock.

## **4. Next steps and timelines**

This section provides an overview of the activities that have been undertaken during the transfer phase of the project to bring the housing management and maintenance services previously undertaken by KNH back in house. It further provides an overview of the plans for the further integration of these services into the Council and the medium-term plans that are being developed for their future improvement.

### **Transfer**

To achieve the smooth transfer of services from KNH to the Council on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 a project team was established to direct a number of workstreams including:

#### **Human Resources**

To oversee the communication with staff, manage the TUPE transfer of over 800 staff, together with the induction, and onboarding of the 75 staff who moved from KNH to council corporate services departments.

#### **Financial**

The closing down of the KNH accounts and company codes in SAP and moving these over to the councils coding structure.

#### **ICT**

Overseeing the system changes required to move from one legal entity to another, transferring internet and intranet content to bring it in line with the councils offer and managing the move of all the KNH email and user accounts onto those of the council.

## Governance

Establishment of new governance arrangement in the development of the Housing Advisory Board, transferring KNH contractual and legal arrangements into the name of the Council, and once final accounts are available the voluntary liquidation of KNH.

## Communications

Throughout the process communications have been key with staff and key stakeholders along with the rebranding of the service with its new Homes and Neighbourhoods identity.

These short explanations can only briefly describe the considerable volume of work that has been undertaken in a relatively short period of time from the decision to make the transfer happen by 1<sup>st</sup> April. Thanks to the commitment and dedication of staff from across KNH and the Council all the key legal and regulatory requirements were fulfilled by the target date. There are still activities underway to bring the transfer phase to a conclusion however this is now substantially complete, with the final actions to close the company remaining.

## Transition / Consolidation

This year 21-22 is the transition year with a key focus on aligning and embedding the Homes and Neighbourhood Service back into the Council. The effort to “get us over the line” by 1<sup>st</sup> April was significant and this combined with the additional demands of working through the pandemic are being recognised. Whilst further integration activities with the council will continue the service has set itself some core objectives for 21-22.

We are therefore trying to keep a focus for this year simple, based on these following five key priorities.

1. **Core Business** – we shall continue to deliver and provide the best possible services to our tenants.
2. **Compliance** – we have a focus on keeping our tenants safe and are addressing all areas of our compliance programme.
3. **Complaints Review** – is an important building block of the White Paper and so helps us meet our regulatory obligations.
4. **CX** – implementing a new core housing management IT system is a significant investment and will deliver enhanced services for our tenants.
5. **CVD19** – we are now focused on delivering our services effectively and efficiently in a post pandemic world and supporting staff with recuperation opportunities.

A key part of this year’s activities is focussed on our high-rise properties following our self-referral to the RSH. This work continues to focus on the key six compliance areas and our addressing the identified fire and other compliance risks. Waking watches and other risk mitigations remain in place to provide assurance for our tenants and contracts are being finalised to undertake the remediation works to bring the properties into compliance.

As part of this Transition year the Kirklees Leaders Forum event in June was hosted by H+N leadership team as a way of introducing the new service to the wider Kirklees leadership group. Further opportunities to extend this conversation for the further integration and alignment of H+N into the Council are being built into our “Service Excellence” stakeholder engagement plan.

This service excellence initiative is the start of our next phase of continuous improvement and will be the springboard of activities in our service transformation journey from April 22 onwards. As part of this approach, we are currently undertaking conversations with key internal and external stakeholders to support our transformation aspirations.

### **Transformation**

The medium and long term transformation of the service is being driven by a number of key factors in response to external changes such as tenant’s expectations and regulatory requirements and internal programmes to deliver continuous improvement. These drivers include but are not limited to:

- Post Grenfell Tower building safety regime
- Establishment of a building safety regulator and increased powers for the Social Housing Regulator and the Housing Ombudsman
- Housing White Paper – the tenant’s charter
- Increasing tenant expectations as evidenced by the transfer consultation
- Investment in our IT infrastructure
- Wider societal and technological advances that raise expectations of service delivery and quality

Whilst these are already identified drivers for change the current service excellence stakeholder engagement that is underway will help to further inform the key outputs that will be required that meet in response to our stakeholders’ expectations and support our response to the above.

As previously noted, this is not a linear transformation programme and activity is already underway to:

- Replace the Housing Management system
- Develop a new data structure across the housing management, asset management and maintenance systems
- Scope system requirements for new assets and maintenance systems
- Review our complaints handling process
- Develop our approach to place-based working
- Workforce development plan to encompass succession planning and future skills requirements that respond to the Housing White Paper and new regulatory environment

This plan is dynamic and will be updated following the outcomes from our stakeholder engagement exercise and as further actions are identified.

**5. Officer recommendations and reasons**

Members are asked to note the report

**6. Cabinet Portfolio Holder's recommendations**

N/A

**7. Contact officer**

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**8. Background Papers and History of Decisions**

Cabinet Decision October 2020 to bring the Housing Management and Maintenance Services back in house.

**9. Service Director responsible**

Naz Parkar – Director Homes and Neighbourhoods