



Name of meeting: Cabinet

Date: 21st December 2022

Title of report: Final report of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel – Residential Housing Stock Health and Safety Compliance

Purpose of report:

To present the Final Report of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel – Residential Housing Stock Health and Safety Compliance.

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?	Not Applicable
Key Decision - Is it in the <u>Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports)</u>?	Key Decision – No Private Report/Private Appendix – No
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	No If no give the reason why not – Report of an Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel
Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance? Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?	Rachel Spencer-Henshall 7/12/22 Not applicable Julie Muscroft 28/11/22
Cabinet member portfolio	Councillor Cathy Scott – Deputy Leader and Housing and Democracy

Electoral wards affected: All

Ward councillors consulted: Not applicable

Public or private: Public

Has GDPR been considered? There are no GDPR implications arising from the report.

1. Summary

At its meeting held on 18th March 2021, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee agreed to establish an Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel to consider health and safety compliance for the Council's residential housing stock in light of the changing regulatory landscape and further to the housing management and maintenance functions transferring back to the Council on 1st April 2021.

2. Information required to take a decision

2.1 The terms of reference for the Panel are set out below:

The Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel will consider the Council's policies, procedures and arrangements for managing the health and safety of its tenants and its residential property portfolio, with a particular focus on high rise and multiple occupancy blocks.

The Panel will give consideration to:

- How the health and safety regime adopted by the Authority supports compliance with regulatory standards and puts appropriate risk mitigation strategies in place to ensure the health and safety of tenants.
- The six compliance areas: Fire; Gas; Electrical; Asbestos; Legionella; and LOLER (lifts) and the steps being taken to keep tenants safe.
- The impacts of the Social Housing White Paper, Draft Building Safety Bill and Fire Safety Bill 2019-21 for tenants.
- Progress in relation to the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel in respect of the Future Arrangements for the Council's Residential Housing Stock's recommendation that an Assurance Board be established focusing on housing compliance.
- Feedback from the Regulator and how that is being progressed.
- Governance and ensuring that a sustainable and adaptable system is in place to ensure that safety is embedded for the future.
- Engagement with, and provision of information for, tenants on health, safety and compliance issues.

2.2 Between July 2021 and July 2022, the Panel used a range of methods to gather the evidence used to inform this report, including undertaking a number of meetings with interested parties, a training session and a site visit to one of the high-rise blocks. The Panel then met on a number of occasions to develop the findings and recommendations arising from the evidence it received, resulting in its final report (appended to this report).

2.3 The report includes an Action Plan which summarises the seventeen recommendations and sets out the proposed response in each instance.

3. Implications for the Council

3.1 Working with People

The Panel met with tenants who were involved with the Tenants Advisory and Grants Panel, the Housing Advisory Board and the Fire Safety Champion initiative to ascertain their views.

Amongst other things, the Social Housing White Paper includes an expectation for enhanced two-way communication by landlords with tenants in respect to landlord health and safety obligations and how these will be met.

The Panel heard that consultation had been undertaken with tenants and residents in respect of the implementation of major fire safety works at Harold Wilson Court and the options for the longer-term future of the properties at Bishops Court, Holme Park Court and Buxton House, prior to a decision being made by Cabinet.

The Authority's Engagement Strategy is based on a friendly and restorative approach to communication to establish positive relationships and with a focus on face-to-face engagement where possible. It aims to give a stronger voice to tenants and regular communication and engagement takes place through the use of different formats.

There is a dedicated Fire Safety Engagement Team who have a visible presence. This team has responsibility for providing regular updates to the tenants living in high-risk residential blocks, making sure that they are informed and empowered to challenge and support the work to mitigate risk for their homes.

The Panel considered that the Tenant Advisory and Grant Panel (TAGP) was working effectively and the channels of communication between officers and the TAGP and the tenant members of the Housing Advisory Board were well established and working well.

3.2 Working with Partners

Not applicable

3.3 Place Based Working

The approach to engagement with tenants and residents is place-based.

3.4 Climate Change and Air Quality

Not applicable

3.5 Improving outcomes for children

The provision of safe, good quality, decent homes and neighbourhoods will help to contribute to improving outcomes for children.

3.6 Financial Implications for the people living or working in Kirklees

Not applicable

3.7 Other (eg Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)/Legal/Financial or Human Resources) Consultees and their opinions

The Authority has responsibilities to meet a range of regulatory and legislative requirements, as set out in the report, and is subject to scrutiny by the Social Housing Regulator, Housing Ombudsman and the Building Safety Regulator.

4 Next steps and timelines

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee will receive a progress report in twelve months' time to monitor the implementation of the actions.

5 Officer recommendations and reasons

That Cabinet:

- (i) Note the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel – Residential Housing Stock Health and Safety Compliance.
- (ii) Approve the responses included in the Action Plan (Appendix 2 of the report).

6 Cabinet Portfolio Holder's recommendations

I accept the recommendations in the Ad Hoc Scrutiny report fully, however, I accept recommendation 12 in part.

I will ask officers to ensure these are progressed in a timely manner.

7 Contact officer

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8 Background Papers and History of Decisions

Not applicable

9 Service Director responsible

Julie Muscroft – Service Director, Legal, Governance and Commissioning