

<b>Report title</b>	Wolverhampton Homes Delivery Plan 2023-2024	
<b>Decision designation</b>	RED	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Bhupinder Gakhal City Assents and Housing	
<b>Key decision</b>	Yes	
<b>In forward plan</b>	Yes	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All Wards	
<b>Accountable Director</b>	John Roseblade, Director of Resident Services	
<b>Originating service</b>	City Housing	
<b>Accountable employee</b>	Lynda Eyton	Client Relationship Manager
	Tel	01902 555706
	Email	Lynda.eyton@wolverhampton.gov.uk
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	City Housing and Environment Leadership Team	24 January 2023
	Strategic Executive Board	31 January 2023
	Cabinet Member Briefing	8 February 2023

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**Recommendations for decision:**

The Cabinet recommends that Council:

1. Approve the Wolverhampton Homes Delivery Plan 2023-2024.
2. Approve the arrangements for monitoring the delivery of the Wolverhampton Homes Delivery Plan.

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet acceptance of the Wolverhampton Homes Annual Delivery Plan 2023-2024 and its monitoring arrangements and to recommend approval of the plan by Full Council.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Under the terms of the management agreement between the City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) and its arms length management organisation (ALMO), Wolverhampton Homes (WH), the Council is required to adopt an annual Delivery Plan. The schedules to the management agreement were revised and adopted by Cabinet on 12 September 2018, with 'Schedule 3 - Annual Delivery Planning Process Timetable' amended in support of WH developing an overarching business plan allowing for longer term service and financial planning.
- 2.2 Full Council adopted WH's four-year Business Plan in April 2019, which ends April 2023, aligned to the next break clause in the management agreement. However, this current Business Plan will be held in abeyance pending the development of the new Housing Strategy which will be in place from 2024. The new WH Business Plan will be written in conjunction with the new Housing Strategy to ensure the WH Business Plan priorities and objectives are fully aligned with those of the Council.
- 2.3 To set out how this longer-term vision will be achieved, working with CWC, WH are required to provide an annual update by way of an annual Delivery Plan, which demonstrates how these strategic priorities will be operationalised over the coming year.

## **3.0 Update Wolverhampton Homes Service Delivery 2022-2023**

- 3.1 Whilst remaining aligned to the overarching four-year Business Plan, the annual delivery plan 2022–2023 was developed in the context of the Charter for Social Housing Residents – Social Housing White Paper, published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 17 November 2020.
- 3.2 The new regulatory changes, increased expectations from the Regulator of Social Housing and the importance of the customer voice have been embraced by WH and are reflected in their key core priorities.
- 3.3 Several factors, increased service demand, inflation, increased staffing costs, raising energy and fuel costs have increased the budgetary pressures on WH. WH have focussed scrutiny on the company's finances and have continued to explore new ways of working across the business. This has included a review of office accommodation.
- 3.4 Inflationary increases have not only increased budgetary pressures on WH but on their tenants also. WH commits to support CWC's Financial Wellbeing Strategy and have responded to the increased costs of living by supporting their tenants through several channels:

- WH's Money Smart Team provide tenants with advice around budgeting and income maximisation, supporting them to access financial support available including the Council's Household Support Fund.
  - The Money Smart Team have supported customers to have their gas reconnected, some customers who have chosen not to have gas in their home, for a range of personal reasons, WH are continuing to engage with to ensure the option for reconnection to the gas supply remains an option for them.
  - WH provide Home Energy visits, offering energy efficiency advice and Winter Wellbeing Roadshows through the winter months
- 3.5 WH's Home Improvement Agency have installed over 1,100 disabled adaptations and Disabled Facilities Grants works into homes across the city, showing continuous improvement in the use of grants (specifically Disabled Facilities Grants) to allow more children and adults to live better for longer in their homes.
- 3.6 WH has developed a mechanism primarily for their trade operatives but is also utilised by all front line staff. The See It, Report It programme enables staff and contractors to raise concerns about any customer in the homes WH manage, identifying safeguarding and support needs at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.7 The WH's Anti-social Behaviour team have worked closely with CWC and other local authorities across the region to obtain an injunction through the courts banning car cruising in the Black Country. The team have also recently attended a stakeholder event at the Mayor's Parlour with partner agencies to look at how to tackle the root cause of youth crime and violence following the city being awarded £1 million in funding from the Violence Reduction Partnership. They are continuing to work with partner agencies across the City on this important area of work.
- 3.8 WH have recently achieved DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) accreditation. The accreditation assessment recognises the work Wolverhampton Homes has undertaken in embedding good standards of practice when supporting tenants impacted by domestic abuse.
- 3.9 WH have supported the Council's priority to address youth unemployment in the city with their Early Careers Strategy. The development of the strategy has seen a number of young people across the city supported into employment through school work experience, apprenticeships, management trainee positions and direct employment. Further work, in collaboration with DWP, The Youth Hub and Wolverhampton College will see the development of a work placement programme for young people to develop their skills around work shadowing, CV writing and interview practice.

#### 4.0 Annual Delivery Plan 2023-2024

- 4.1 Wolverhampton Homes Delivery Plan 2023–2024 at appendix 1 has been developed with the City of Wolverhampton’s Housing Strategy Team, WH Senior Management Team and WH Senior Leadership Team.
- 4.2 The Delivery Plan ensures Wolverhampton Homes deliver services on behalf of the Council to support the Council’s vision and priorities as set out in the Council Plan, Our City, Our Plan and ensuring Wulfrunians live longer, healthier lives. One of the six key priorities in Our City, Our Plan is to deliver **Good homes in well connected neighbourhoods**, with four key outcomes:
1. Work together to deliver more new homes
  2. Safe and healthy homes for all
  3. Access to a secure home
  4. Clean, green neighbourhoods and public space
- 4.3 In line with the key outcomes listed in 4.2, the services to be delivered by Wolverhampton Homes as shown in appendix 1, will contribute to these outcomes and include activities such as the continuation of the supply of new builds on infill sites, the development of new single/couples accommodation for former rough sleepers, providing safe and secure homes and environments, supporting residents to live independently in their own home and maintaining housing stock and asset standards.
- 4.4 The Delivery Plan also aligns with the seven pillars of the Charter for Social Housing White Paper and reflects the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing as set in the Consumer Standards and sets out what tenants can expect from their landlord. The seven pillars of the Charter for Social Housing White Paper are:
- To be safe in your home. The government will work with industry and landlords to ensure every home is safe and secure.
  - To know how your landlord is performing including on repairs, complaints and safety, and how it spends its money, so you can hold it to account
  - To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly, with access to a strong Ombudsman
  - To be treated with respect, backed by a strong consumer regulator and improved consumer standards for tenants
  - To have your voice heard by your landlord, for example through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being on its Board
  - To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in, with your landlord keeping your home in good repair

- To be supported to take your first step to ownership, so it is a ladder to other opportunities, should your circumstances allow
- 4.5 The Delivery Plan is themed by WH service areas: Corporate Services, Homes and Communities and Property Services. There is a focus on WH's core service offering and in line with the Our Future redesign ensures the company continues to:
- Enhance community and customer focus
  - Provide safe and secure homes
  - Support people to sustain their tenancies and homes
- 4.6 WH remain committed to responding proactively to the Charter for Social Housing Residents and to deliver the requirements of the Fire Safety Bill (2021) and the Building Safety Bill (2021) ensuring that residents are safe and feel safe, and remains resolute in achieving the highest standards of governance.
- 4.7 The Delivery Plan includes some detail on how the plan will be achieved through value for money in the use of resources and adequate staffing resources.
- 4.8 WH draft budget for 2023–2024 is being prepared for presentation to WH Board in March 2023 and will make some assumptions about achievable efficiencies to deliver against a balanced budget during 2023–2024. Value for Money initiatives are continually sought in line with the Value for Money strategy which was launched in 2021. This will aim to provide contributions to the efficiencies, in particular in reviewing ways of working, service delivery, IT and digital, all of which saw new opportunities during the pandemic that are being reviewed and built upon.

## **5.0 Monitoring**

- 5.1 The Council currently maintains the WH Delivery Plan Quarterly Monitoring Group, chaired by the Director of City Housing and Environment, it provides the opportunity to the Council (including officers from Housing and Finance) to have oversight and scrutiny of the progress WH are making in the achievement of the Delivery Plan.
- 5.2 In addition, CWC Landlord Services Officers, with WH Performance Team hold monthly Performance Officer Group meetings to provide ongoing oversight and monitoring of key performance indicators at appendix 2. The key performance indicators have been developed jointly by WH Senior Management Team and CWC Housing Strategy to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements and the terms of the Management Agreement and that there are consistently high standards of services provided to tenants.
- 5.3 In response to the requirements of The Charter for Social Housing Residents White Paper and the Bill anticipated later this year, CWC Housing Strategy have commissioned TPAS (tenant engagement experts) to work with them, WH and the other housing managing agents to deliver the tenant scrutiny function, giving tenants more opportunities

to have their voice heard and to give them more influence in shaping the housing management services provided to them. WH will work with TPAS to achieve this.

- 5.4 The Regulator for Social Housing is reviewing the Consumer Standards which apply to all registered housing providers including local authorities. The current consumer standards are:
- a. Home Standard.
  - b. Tenancy Standard.
  - c. Neighbourhood and Community Standard.
  - d. Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard.
- 5.5 These Standards will be measured through a set of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) being introduced from April 2023 and reported to the Regulator. WH have collected TSM data for 2022–2023 to create a baseline, the monitoring of this will transfer to CWC Landlord Services who will collate this information including that of the other managing agents from April 2023 and implement any required action plans across the managing agents as regulation, enacted through the Social Housing Bill expected this year, is implemented.
- 5.6 The performance against the key performance indicators at appendix 2, progress and outcomes emerging from Tenant Scrutiny and TSMs will be routinely reported to Cabinet.
- 5.7 The monitoring arrangements that have been in place for several years will continue to be reviewed and updated to ensure they remain fit for purpose, reflect best practice and are in line with recommendations from the Regulator.

## **6.0 Evaluation of alternative options**

- 6.1 The Council entered into a 15-year management agreement with WH in 2013 to continue to deliver housing management services on behalf of the Council.
- 6.2 It is a requirement of this management agreement that the Council and WH work to develop and adopt a delivery plan which sets out how WH will deliver the services delegated to them and help to deliver the Stock Maintenance and Improvement Programme (WH Capital Programme at appendix 5).
- 6.3 Option one would be to adopt the WH Delivery Plan that has been developed jointly with CWC Housing Strategy.
- 6.4 Option two would be not to adopt an annual delivery plan. Where a delivery plan cannot be agreed, the management agreement sets out that it will be determined in accordance with its dispute resolution process.

## **7.0 Reasons for decision**

- 7.1 It is recommended that the WH Delivery Plan at appendix 1 is adopted. It is accompanied by performance indicators at Appendix 2, both of which have been developed in conjunction with the Council. Appendix 3 sets out WH's procurement plan for 2023-2024 as required by the management agreement, appendix 4 those contracts let in 2022-2023 and appendix 5 sets out the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital programme specifying the areas of WH's responsibility for delivery.
- 7.2 Additionally, the Council continues to monitor and review WH to ensure that the organisation remains high-performing, well-governed and delivering a housing service in line with the council's strategic objectives.

## **8.0 Financial implications**

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications from this action plan. Wolverhampton Homes receive an annual management fee from the HRA to deliver services as contracted in the Management Agreement.
- 8.2 The 'Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2023-2024 including Rents and Service Charges', report as approved by Full Council 25 January 2023 delegated approval of the management fee for 2023-2024 to the Cabinet Members for City Assets and Housing, and Resources and Digital City in conjunction with the Director of City Housing and Environment and the Director of Finance after review of budget pressures.
- 8.3 Wolverhampton Homes receive additional income from Service level Agreements for general fund services such as Telecare, external trading activities and are reimbursed for costs incurred in delivering capital programme activities. A balanced budget to deliver on the annual delivery plan is approved by the Wolverhampton Homes Board on an annual basis.  
[JM/30012023/S]

## **9.0 Legal implications**

- 9.1 In accordance with the management agreement the Council's in-house Legal Services has provided legal support to Wolverhampton Homes with efficiencies for a considerable number of years. The arrangements for monitoring the delivery of the Wolverhampton Homes Delivery Plan should be robust and ensure that there are good governance arrangements in place.  
[CS/26012023/1]

## **10.0 Equalities implications**

- 10.1 WH annual delivery plan has equalities implications in terms of the workstreams that the plan describes. Where appropriate any equalities implications have been or will be the subject of equality analysis within WH. This is governed through a schedule of equality analysis which is presented to WH Equality Circle Forum to inform the equality agenda,

providing a platform to assess the impact of planned service delivery. As a result of these considerations and analyses Councillors can be assured that Wolverhampton Homes is fully committed to meeting the requirements of the General Equality Duty as created by Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

## **11.0 All other implications**

- 11.1 There are no direct climate change or environmental implications for this report, however, the delivery of estate and property based programmes will contribute to the improvement of living conditions and enhance the visual appearance of neighbourhoods. WH will develop plans throughout the year to develop a strategic asset investment proposal for Housing in relation to achieving improved energy efficiency and carbon neutrality, which will contribute towards reducing carbon emissions over the course of the Business Plan.
- 11.2 There are no direct health and wellbeing implications for the report, however WH account for and work to improve the health and wellbeing of the tenants whose homes they manage, as part of their day-to-day delivery of housing management services and their interactions with the Council and other statutory organisations with whom they may work in partnership, make referrals to and sign post tenants to.
- 11.3 There are no direct digital implications for the report however WH are proactively working towards increased accessibility to their services through digital channels as well as improved digital inclusion for the tenants that they work with in the day to day delivery of housing management services.

## **12.0 Schedule of background papers**

- 12.1 27 March 2019, [Wolverhampton Homes Business Plan 2019-2023](#), Cabinet
- 12.2 12 September 2018, [Wolverhampton Homes Management Agreement Update](#), Cabinet
- 12.3 18 January 2023 [Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2023-2024 including Rent and Service Charges](#), Cabinet

## **13.0 Appendices**

- 13.1 Appendix 1: Wolverhampton Homes Delivery Plan 2023-2024
- 13.2 Appendix 2 – Wolverhampton Homes Suite of Key Performance Indicators 2023-2024
- 13.3 Appendix 3 – Wolverhampton Homes Procurement Plan 2023-2024
- 13.4 Appendix 4 – Wolverhampton Homes Contracts Let 2022-2023
- 13.5 Appendix 5 – Wolverhampton Homes Capital Programme 2023-2024