

<b>Report title</b>	Wolverhampton Homes Business Plan 2024-2025	
<b>Decision designation</b>	RED	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Steve Evans Deputy Leader: City 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 Tel Email	Client Relationship Manager 01902 555706 Lynda.eyton@wolverhampton.gov.uk
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	Directorate Leadership Team Strategic Executive Board Cabinet Member Briefing	16 January 2024 16 January 2024 26 January 2024

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### Recommendations for decision:

That Cabinet recommends that Council:

1. Approve the Wolverhampton Homes Business Plan 2024-2025.
2. Approve the Wolverhampton Homes Delivery Plan 2024-2025.
3. Approve the arrangements for monitoring the delivery of the Wolverhampton Homes Business plan and Delivery Plan.

### Recommendation for noting:

That Cabinet is asked to:

1. Note that the governance and monitoring arrangements of Wolverhampton Homes are to be reviewed following the recommendations of Cabinet 18 October 2023 (Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 – Landlord Services Review).

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet acceptance of the Wolverhampton Homes Annual Business Plan 2024-2025, the associated Delivery Plan 2024-2025 and its monitoring arrangements, and to recommend approval of the same 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.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 WH have this year developed an Annual Business Plan with an associated Annual Delivery Plan.
- 2.4 The WH Business Plan 2024-2025 sets out the strategic plan for how they will support CWC's priorities, Our City: Our Plan, regulatory requirements and WH's priorities to:
- Enhance our community and customer focus
  - Provide safe and secure homes
  - Support tenants to sustain their tenancies and homes
- 2.5 The Annual Delivery Plan demonstrates how the strategic priorities of the Business Plan will be operationalised over the coming year.

## **3.0 Monitoring**

- 3.1 The Council currently maintains the WH Delivery Plan Quarterly Monitoring Group, chaired by the Deputy Leader: City Housing, 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.
- 3.2 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 3. The key performance indicators have been developed jointly by WH Senior Management Team and CWC City Housing 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.
- 3.3 The Council has further oversight of the performance of WH through several means, including but not limited to:
- Asset Management Group

- Financial Issues Group
- Reporting to Fire Safety Compliance Scrutiny
- Councillor members of WH Board
- A quarterly Managing Agents Forum
- Client Relationship Manager attendance at board meetings, AGMs etc.
- Internal audits from the Council’s Audit team and governance audits from the City Housing team.

3.4 The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) has set out the specific expectations and outcomes that all registered housing providers are expected to achieve through the Consumer Standards. The consumer standards are monitored through the performance monitoring regime. The RSH recently consulted on a new suite of consumer standards which are outlined in the table below:

<b><u>Current Consumer Standard</u></b>	<b><u>Proposed Consumer Standard</u></b>
<b>Home Standard</b> – sets requirements on the quality of accommodation and repairs and maintenance	<b>The Safety and Quality Standard</b> – requires landlords to provide safe and good quality homes and landlord services to tenants.
<b>Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard</b> – sets requirements on customer service and complaints, tenant rights and involvement.	<b>The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard</b> – requires landlords to be open with tenants and treat them with fairness and respect so that tenants can access services, raise complaints when necessary, influence decision making and hold their landlord to account.
<b>Neighbourhood and Community Standard</b> – addresses issues around neighbourhood and communal areas and anti-social behaviour	<b>The Neighbourhood and Community Standard</b> – requires landlords to engage with other relevant parties so that tenants can live in safe and well-maintained neighbourhoods and feel safe in their homes.
<b>Tenancy Standard</b> - sets requirements for how properties are allocated/exchanged and terms around tenure.	<b>The Tenancy Standard</b> – sets requirements for the fair allocation and letting of homes and for how those tenancies are managed and ended by landlords.
<b>Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)</b>	No changes proposed

3.5 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) will be required to be reported to the RSH from April 2024 and comprise of 10 management measures monitored through key performance indicators whilst the 12 perception measures are gathered via surveys conducted by an external company contracted to carry out surveys of our tenants on our behalf. The

results of these surveys, and any recommendations resulting from them, are reported to the quarterly monitoring group meeting.

#### **4.0 Review of governance and monitoring arrangements**

4.1 In response to the changing regulatory landscape of social housing, which has included a new Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (the Act), CWC City Housing carried out a review of its housing management services including a review of the governance, monitoring and the management agreement between CWC and WH.

4.2 A City Housing Improvement Programme (CHIP) has been established to deliver on the Cabinet endorsed mandate to achieve compliance with the Act, by reviewing the relationship with the ALMO, Wolverhampton Homes to include:

- The creation of an overarching Shareholder Board as a focus for housing governance.
- Amend the Management Agreement and Partnership Pledge to reflect the Regulatory landscape and strengthen City of Wolverhampton Council's (CWC's) ability to lead on improvements where necessary.
- Strengthen the clienting arrangements with defined roles and responsibilities, accountabilities for demonstrating assurance and re-assurance, and clear reporting structures.
- Develop a shared evidence base to demonstrate Regulatory compliance, to support re-assurance testing, a clear line of sight and single view of the truth. CWC will lead on creating a Data Process Strategy that ensures data is being recorded consistently across all teams with associated automated data quality and reporting.
- Align Wolverhampton Homes business planning cycles with those of CWC, including the objectives of the refreshed housing strategy.
- Review all Service Level Agreements and functions delivered to ensure services are fit for purpose, that adequate monitoring and oversight is in place across CWC which provides assurance to the Council and value for money for residents.

And, following the implementation of the recommended governance changes, City Housing will review the effectiveness of the new Management Agreement in strengthening CWC expectations, providing sufficient oversight and whether this has provided the direct line of sight required for Regulatory compliance.

4.3 As the expectations of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act and the Regulator of Social Housing become clearer, CWC need to continue to consider whether the ALMO remains the best operational model for our housing services to gain full assurance against Consumer Standards and the regulatory regime and to deliver the best services to the tenants of City of Wolverhampton Council.

4.4 A report on progress of the City Housing Improvement Programme (CHIP) will be presented to Scrutiny and Cabinet in October 2024.

## **5.0 Evaluation of alternative options**

5.1 CWC could choose not to adopt the WH Business Plan and associated 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.

## **6.0 Reasons for decision**

6.1 It is recommended that the WH Business Plan at appendix 1 and the Delivery Plan at appendix 2 is adopted along with the additional appendices. The suite of key performance indicators (KPIs) are at Appendix 3. The KPIs, business plan and delivery plan have been developed in collaboration with the Council and assists the council to meet its priorities and regulatory requirements.

6.2 Appendix 4 sets out WH's procurement plan for 2024-2025 as required by the management agreement, appendix 5 are those contracts let in 2023-2024 and appendix 6 sets out the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme projects where management is delegated to WH.

## **7.0 Financial implications**

7.1 There are no direct financial implications from this business plan. Wolverhampton Homes receive an annual management fee from the Housing Revenue Account as approved by Cabinet in the 'Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2024-2025 including Rents and Service Charges', to deliver services as contracted in the Management Agreement and receive additional income from trading activities. A balanced budget to deliver the annual delivery plan is approved by the Wolverhampton Homes Board on an annual basis.

7.2 WH performance on rent collection and void management impacts on the income receivable in the HRA and is monitored throughout the year.

7.3 WH manages the majority of the HRA capital programme, including major refurbishment projects which are delivered by the Strategic Construction Partnership. This programme invests around 58% of HRA resources so it is important that it is managed efficiently and effectively.

[JM/10012024/M]

## **8.0 Legal implications**

8.1 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 Business and Delivery Plans should be robust and ensure that there are good governance arrangements in place.

[CS/08012024/1]

## **9.0 Equalities implications**

9.1 WH annual business 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.

## **10.0 All other implications**

10.1 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.

10.2 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 signpost tenants to.

10.3 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.

## **11.0 Schedule of background papers**

11.1 [18 October 2023, Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 – Landlord Services Review, Cabinet](#)

11.2 [12 September 2018, Wolverhampton Homes Management Agreement Update](#), Cabinet (exempt report)

11.3 [17 January 2024, Housing Revenue Business Account Business Plan 2024-2025](#), Cabinet

## **12.0 Appendices**

12.1 Appendix 1: Wolverhampton Homes Business Plan 2024-2025

12.2 Appendix 2: Wolverhampton Homes Delivery Plan 2024-2025

12.3 Appendix 3: Wolverhampton Homes Key Performance Indicators Suite 2024-2025

- 12.4 Appendix 4: Wolverhampton Homes Procurement Plan 2024-2025
- 12.5 Appendix 5: Wolverhampton Homes Contracts Let 2023-2024
- 12.6 Appendix 6: Wolverhampton Homes Capital Programme 2024-2025