

Housing, Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel – Action Tracker 2025-26

2025-26 - 23 June 2025

No.	ITEM	STATUS	ACTION	RESPONSE
1	Housing Resident Impact Assessment	COMPLETED	The Panel requested that the guidance on the new arrangements for supporting the tenants associations be circulated via email	The Residents Association information pack was circulated to the Panel via email on 16 th September
2	Cabinet Member Questions	COMPLETED	The Panel requested a summary of survey feedback that was collected from tenants who had moved into new build properties.	<i>On 22 April 2025, Cabinet received a paper updating it on the progress of the Council Housing Programme (agenda item 22, p589) – link here: Agenda Document for Cabinet, 22/04/2025 18:30</i> <i>This report included a section summarising the resident satisfaction surveys that are carried out by the Engagement and Aftercare Team 12 months after the residents have moved into their new homes: “Post completion project quality review and final accounting (Gateway 5)” (at s7.15-s7.21, on p595-p597).</i> <i>Four schemes were reported on in this report (Rosa Luxemburg Apartments (103 council homes), Mountview Court (4 council homes), Scales Road (4 council homes), and Romney Close (3 council homes).</i> <i>The Gateway 5 (GW5) reports were appended to this report, from p607-p637.</i> <i>With the completion of new council homes a rolling programme, the Engagement and Aftercare Team carries out the 12-month resident satisfaction (GW5) surveys on a rolling basis throughout the year.</i>

3	Cabinet Member Questions	Ongoing	The Panel enquired about the Affordable Energy Strategy and whether there were any plans to renew this when it expired	Officers have advised that this is due to be renewed and that some initial work has been undertaken around reviewing the existing strategy as well as outreach work with community, RSL's, Public Health etc. As part of a restructure, the Fuel Poverty function has been transferred from Carbon Management into Customer Services. Further Information on indicative timescales for the renewal of the strategy is outstanding.
4	Cabinet Member Questions	COMPLETED	The Chair commented that people being able to sublet a room in their home may act as a disincentive towards them downsizing and requested a written response on the number of residents who sublet a room.	Officers have advised that this is not something that they are able to provide accurate data on. Tenancy audits would pick up whether a bedroom was being used. Single occupancy is recorded and officers would check whether if permission had been granted as part of the audit. Requests for subletting are not as common as they used to be.

23rd September 2025

No.	ITEM	STATUS	ACTION	RESPONSE
5	KPI Update	COMPLETED	The Chair requested that future standing KPI updates included information on the number of legal disrepair cases.	Legal Disrepair Claims are managed via an internal process between our Repairs Service and Legal Services. Due to the unpredictable nature of claim volumes, we do not have KPI's attached to legal disrepair claims. Where a disrepair claim is made, surveyors are appointed to agree a schedule of works for the works to be undertaken. Where an agreement cannot be made, this is referred to our legal team and resolved through litigation. Legal Service and Housing Services meet once a month to review overall case progress, however we are unable to share case progress due to the sensitivity and legal privilege of these cases. The HRA business plan outlines the provision made each year to deal with legal disrepair claims.
6	Q1 Finance Update	COMPLETED	The Panel asked for a written response on what the financial limit was in terms of assets that a person could have and still be eligible for a council home. The Panel also sought assurances that the organisation carries out checks on whether people own a property overseas and that these checks were routinely carried out.	Under 3.5 of the Council's Housing Allocation Policy, households that have total savings over £50,000 or £100,000 if an applicant is of pensionable age, will not be included on the Council's Housing Register and will not be offered accommodation, subject to exceptions set out in the Policy. Under 5.8.1 owner occupiers applicants who own other residential property All offers of accommodation made through the Housing Register are subject to verification checks either having already been completed or being completed prior to a formal offer. These checks include verifying an applicant's address history for 6 years and their income and savings.

				Property ownership Proof of address such as bank statements, utility bills etc will be required to confirm address history and any gaps or failure to provide evidence will be investigated further, as will links to properties identified through credit checks that have not been mentioned as part of the application. Only where there is some indication that a person has lived or owned property abroad would proactive checks be carried out into this. Whilst the UK Land Registry offers a reliable and easily accessible tool to check property ownership in the UK, every country will have their own systems for establishing property ownership. These are often, fragmented, difficult to access and of varying reliability. Therefore, unless there is information to suggest possible overseas property ownership, it isn't feasible to make generalised proactive checks. Financial checks The verification process will include credit checks and requesting statements for bank accounts linked to the applicant. Where this reveals savings greater than the threshold or substantial withdrawals that suggest the applicant may have disposed of savings above the threshold, a formal offer will not be made.
6	Q1 Finance Update	COMPLETED	The Panel queried the personal financial limit that would make someone ineligible for social housing. The Panel also raised concerns about checks on ownership of foreign homes not being adequately undertaken and queried what checks were done in relation to owning a home overseas.	The projected overspend is based on a series of assumptions, with projections reviewed and updated monthly. Providing projections is based on the most up to date information at the time. Services are required to identify risks and opportunities to the financial position and manage any risks throughout the year. <u>Budget Planning 2025/26</u> Work began on setting the 2025/26 budget early in the 2024/25 financial year. This process consisted of the Council's leadership team working together to collectively understand the budget

			position and what is driving the spend, share information across directorates and develop a number of cross - directorate and directorate specific savings proposals to address the financial challenge. The estimated pressures are based on a series of assumptions with the best-known information at the current time. Many of these assumptions will carry risk and uncertainty and therefore for demand led services, such as social care and housing, scenario planning is undertaken to identify a best case and worst-case scenario before a judgement is made and forms the basis for estimating future service pressures. All assumptions remained under review, with the 2024/25 Month 8 forecasts were used to inform the most up to date, realistic and reliable estimates of service pressures to set the budget for 2025/26. Given the increase in pressures the council faces, the council must significantly reduce expenditure. We are holding a corporate contingency of £10m to manage risks but our estimates of demand and price in some areas have outstripped the assumptions we made when the budget was set. All services reviewed non-essential spend to bring down the 2024/25 overspends and at the same time developed proposals for reducing spend and increasing income for 2025/26. However, the stricter controls that are now in place only came into effect from April. To set the budget for 2025/26, £37m EFS was required. There is a need to plan for uncertainty as the future is unknown when formulating the budget. As mentioned above this is achieved by focussing on scenario planning which allows the Council to think in advance and identify drivers, review scenarios and define the issues using the most recent data and insight. The Council's Section 151 Officer has a statutory responsibility to assess the robustness of the Council's budget and to ensure that the Council
--	--	--	--

				has sufficient contingency/reserves to provide against known risks in respect of both expenditure and income. The Council's Section 151 Officer has acknowledged that the Q1 position demonstrates that there is more to do when Budget Planning, however it should be noted that the 2025/26 budget was set based on the most up to date info at the time and service pressures increased by the end of 2024/25, which resulted in a year end 2024/25 service overspend of £37.8m.
7	Q1 Finance Update	COMPLETED	The Panel queried the relationship between the projected £34.1m overspend and the £37m EFS loan that was secured from the government. The Panel requested clarification about where the £37m loan was reflected in the overall budget position.	The report to Cabinet in February 2025 acknowledged the service pressures facing the council, with £56m additional budget allocated to services in 2025/26, primarily, adults and children's social care and temporary accommodation. This additional budget is included in the Q1 General Fund Revised Budget of £314,383 (see table 1 in the Q1 report) and is only possible by assuming a £37m use of Exceptional Financial Support (EFS). This is shown as a separate line in the revenue budget under "funding" and also within the capital programme. The projected Q1 overspend of £34.1m is on top of the assumed use of EFS. Any EFS not funded through capital receipts, the financing cost of the use of EFS will be charged to the Capital Financing Charges Budget (see table 1 in the Q1 report).