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All Wards
Item 8

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET HOUSING PANEL – 8 NOVEMBER 2021
REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

HOUSING COMPLIANCE UPDATE

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to members of the Cabinet Housing Panel on the Housing Compliance position and improvement plan.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Members of Cabinet Housing Panel are asked to note the content of this report.

3 Explanation

- 3.1 The council self-referred to the Regulator of Social Housing after discovering issues of non-compliance. The council produced an improvement action plan and informed all tenants/leaseholders of the issues and continues to have regular engagement meetings with the Regulator of Social Housing to ensure we are moving towards a position of full compliance. There is also a dedicated webpage set up informing the public about our housing compliance position.
- 3.2 The non-compliance affected, and subsequent regulatory notice was given in, four out of the six major compliance areas Fire, Water, Asbestos and Electric. Gas and Lifts were found to have no significant issues of compliance.
- 3.3 The improvement action plan that was produced stated the timeframe in which we expect to reach full compliance in all areas and this report is to give members an update of where we are now in all six big compliance areas.
- 3.4 Fire – Our blocks do have fire risk assessments that were completed for general needs blocks in 2018 and sheltered schemes and high-risk buildings in 2020 the majority of these were overdue for review and there were some outstanding actions mostly relating to fire doors. Unfortunately, it did take us time to find a suitable contractor that could complete the risk assessments required within the timeframe given, a contractor was subsequently appointed in August to complete all fire risk assessments and all properties are scheduled in to be completed by the end March 2022. We have had some significant issues in gaining access to properties in order to complete the type three fire risk assessments and after discussion with the Regulator, we will be reverting to a type one which satisfies the Fire Safety Order to ensure we have the most up to date information for each block. Not completing a type three FRA would not add addition risks to the residents of the block as the type one does cover all communal areas compartmentation and fire escapes. The fire actions are completed apart from fire doors. We are completing a programme of fire doors and this year have installed 580 fire door

sets as of 21st October 2021. We have met with Hertfordshire Fire Service and have proactively asked to set up regular meetings with them in order to keep them up to date going forward.

- 3.5 Water – This area has significantly improved, and all blocks have been visited and are compliant with a Legionella Risk Assessment with exception of 15 blocks where there have been access issues. These access issues are due to works required within the loft spaces of the blocks. These works are being organised and do not present a risk to any residents of the blocks.
- 3.6 Asbestos – This area is now 100% compliant as all surveys have been completed to all 470 blocks in scope.
- 3.7 Electricity – This area has two parts: domestic (dwellings); and communal (blocks). The communal area is now 100% compliant with all C1 and C2 actions completed. A C1 action means there is danger present and needs immediate remediation and a C2 action means potentially dangerous but no immediate threat. The domestic testing has had a significant amount of no access to properties at 282 in total. We have managed to now gain access into a number of these and are continuing with the process with the others. This process will be supporting tenants where needed however will include where necessary taking legal action to gain entry unfortunately this process can take some time to complete. We are still expecting to be fully compliant by March 2022 with a 5-year programme as opposed to a 10-year programme.
- 3.8 Gas – This area has two parts; domestic (dwellings); and, communal (blocks). The communal blocks are 100% compliant and the domestic is 99.99% compliant with one property outstanding due to access issues which we are following the process to complete.
- 3.9 Lift – This area continues to be 100% compliant.
- 3.10 We are continuing to follow our action plan to ensure compliance to our properties is reached and kept and we are now planning our rolling programmes to ensure all properties are completed in time and to ensure the programme for every year is manageable and sustainable.

4. Implications

4.1 Legal Implications

- 4.2 There is potential for further regulatory action if the council does not reach a compliant position.

5. Financial Implication(s)

- 5.1 This report is for information only and there are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations.

6. Risk Management Implications

- 6.1 There is potential for reputational damage if the council does not reach a compliant position within an appropriate timeframe.

7 Communication

- 7.1 We have regular communications and engagement meetings with the regulator of social housing to ensure the progress required is completed.
- 7.2 We have continued to update the website with information on the compliance position and are actively writing the residents when works are being completed within their home or communal block.
- 7.3 We have a dedicated email address for tenants to contact if they have any questions or concerns relating to any of the compliance areas.
- 7.4 We have communicated with the Hertfordshire Fire Service and are scheduling in regular meetings with them to discuss progress.

8. Security & Terrorism Implication(s)

- 8.1 There are no security and terrorism implications arising from this report.

9. Procurement Implication(s)

- 9.1 There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

10 Climate Change Implication(s)

- 10.1 There are no climate change implications arising from this report.

11. Human Resources Implication(s)

- 11.1 There are no HR implications arising from this report.

12. Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)

- 12.1 There are no health and wellbeing implications arising from this report.

13. Link to Corporate Priorities

- 13.1 The subject of this report is linked to the following Council's Corporate Priorities "Our Housing" specifically to Improving Housing Need in the Borough.

14. Equalities and Diversity

- 14.1 An EqIA was not completed because this report does not propose changes to existing service-related policies or the development of new service-related policies.

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