

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET HOUSING PANEL – 02 MARCH 2021
REPORT OF SHAREHOLDER GROUP

NOW HOUSING – PROGRESS REPORT

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on Now Housing Limited.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That Cabinet Housing Panel notes the report of the Chair of Now Housing Limited (shown in Appendix A), which presents an update on the company's progress to date.

3 Explanation

- 3.1 In January 2019 the Cabinet of Welwyn Hatfield Council approved the creation of Now Housing Limited, a new wholly council-owned housing company to provide housing for local people whose needs cannot be easily met through the private or social rented sectors.
- 3.2 Cabinet appointed a shareholder representative group to oversee the set-up of the Now Housing, on behalf of the council. Members of the shareholder group consist of the Council's Head of Paid Service, Section 151 Officer, Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) and Monitoring Officer.
- 3.3 The business plan for Now Housing Limited was approved in October 2019 and as part of the shareholder monitoring arrangements, regular updates on Now Housing's performance against the business plan are required to be presented to Cabinet Housing Panel.
- 3.4 The loan agreement between Now Housing Limited and the council has been finalised. This forms the basis for the funding provision for the development and acquisition of homes through Now Housing.
- 3.5 The purchase of the flat block at Chequersfield by Now Housing completed on 10 December 2020. The twelve flats were let immediately to local households in housing need and the feedback from the new tenants has been really positive. A breakdown of the feedback from residents is appended to the main Now Housing report at Appendix 1.
- 3.6 Performance on rent collection is currently 100% and there has been no rent lost due to voids.
- 3.7 As required by the council, the business plan for Now Housing Limited is subject to annual review. The first review has been concluded and the business plan update is attached as Appendix 2.

- 3.8 A meeting between the Chair and Vice-Chair of Now Housing Limited and the Shareholder Group took place on 10 December 2020. An update on the progress of Now Housing was discussed with the shareholder group. This update is contained within the attached report.

Implications

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 Now Housing Limited is a legally constituted company and robust governance arrangements are in place, as agreed with the shareholder group and based on expert legal advice provided to both Now Housing and the shareholder group.

5. Financial Implication(s)

- 5.1 A loan agreement has been agreed between the council and Now Housing, with a loan facility established to enable Now Housing to acquire and develop affordable homes.

6. Risk Management Implications

- 6.1 Now Housing has developed a comprehensive risk map, covering both strategic and operational risks.

7.1 Communication

- 7.1 A communications plan was developed to deliver effective p, to ensure that the council promotes its achievement in creating the Housing Company. The communications plan will be launched when the first properties have been let.

8.1 Security & Terrorism Implication(s)

- 8.1 There are no security or 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 human resource implications arising from this report.

12. Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)

- 12.1 There are 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 Housing Need and Affordable Homes.

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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Attached documents: Appendix A - Now Housing Performance Update, report of the Chair, Now Housing Limited.