

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET – 30 NOVEMBER 2021
REPORT OF SHAREHOLDER GROUP

NOW HOUSING LIMITED – PROGRESS REPORT

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on Now Housing Limited, including the updated Business Plan attached at Appendix A.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet notes the update on the performance of Now Housing Limited and the updated Business Plan.

3 Explanation

- 3.1 In January 2019, Cabinet approved the creation of Now Housing Limited (Now Housing), 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 an officer 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 initial business plan for Now Housing Limited was approved in October 2019. The Business Plan is reviewed annually, and a summary of the Business Plan and proposed changes based on the proposed pipeline of properties to be delivered, is attached at Appendix A.
- 3.4 Currently Now Housing owns and manages one block of 12 flats in Chequersfield, Welwyn Garden City.
- 3.5 Performance on rent collection is currently 100% and there has been no rent lost due to voids. However, one property is currently due to become void at the end of October 2021 and the process of allocating this property is underway.

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 legal advice provided to both Now Housing and the shareholder group.
- 4.2 Progress by Now Housing against the business plan targets are to be reported quarterly to the Shareholder Representative Group and Cabinet, through Cabinet Housing Panel.

5. Financial Implication(s)

- 5.1 A loan agreement has been agreed between the council and Now Housing to cover the period from April 2021.
- 5.2 The loan facility will be reviewed, and a new agreement made in 2022, based on the projected borrowing requirements of the company in 2022/23

6. Risk Management Implications

- 6.1 Now Housing has developed a comprehensive risk map, covering both strategic and operational risks.
- 6.2 The risk register for Now Housing is reviewed every quarter by the Now Housing Board.

7. Communication

- 7.1 A communications plan has been developed to ensure that the council promotes the achievements of the Housing Company.

8. 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 Good quality housing is key to achieving positive health and wellbeing. The Housing Company provides an opportunity to deliver more affordable, quality homes locally.

13. Link to Strategic Aims

- 13.1 The subject of this report is linked to the council's Strategic Aims:
 - a) **Quality homes through managed growth** and specifically our approach to 'secure land, funding and partnerships to deliver homes that people can afford'.

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 Business Plan Summary.