

**7<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

**REPORT NO. EPSH2211**

**REVIEW OF REGISTERED PROVIDERS 2021/22**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report is to inform Members of the Overview and Scrutiny committee on the outcome of the 2021/22 Registered Providers (RPs) Review. The purpose of the review meetings is to continue to build good working relationships with our RP partners, to monitor the performance and activities of the RPs and work together to resolve any problems. It also provides an opportunity to explore how RPs can support the council in the delivery of its corporate themes set out in the business plan. The report gives an overview of the scrutiny process and for each of the RP's reviewed and identifies; what is working well, causes for concern and any issues to follow up which may need to be raised with the Portfolio Holders for Planning and Economy or Operational Services.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny RP Review sub-group for 2020/21

<b>Members</b>	<b>Officers</b>
Councillor Diane Bedford Councillor Mike Smith Councillor Nem Thapa Councillor Rod Cooper Councillor Keith Dibble Councillor Terry Bridgeman	Zoë Paine Sue Thornett

- 2.2 Registered Providers: Meetings held

<b>Registered Provider</b>	<b>Meeting date</b>
Stonewater	18 <sup>th</sup> October 2021
Metropolitan Thames Valley	15 <sup>th</sup> November 2021
Vivid	17 <sup>th</sup> January 2022

### **3 The Scrutiny Process:**

- 3.1 Each RP provides financial and performance information, it's policies and strategies in advance of the meeting giving the group the opportunity to consider the information in advance.
- 3.2 Accompanied site visits prior to the meeting; these were unable to take place in this programme due to Covid-19 restrictions.

#### **Key Discussions in the review process**

- 4.
- Housing management for all tenures
  - Maintenance of property and neighbourhoods
  - Customer service and compliance with the Housing Regulators Customer Standards
  - Risk management: fire, gas, and electrical safety
  - Financial and performance information
  - Assisting residents with welfare issues
  - Development opportunities
  - Working together on Climate Change
  - Tackling deprivation and equality opportunity
  - Ward Members experience of working with RPs
  - Impacts of Covid-19

### **5. Summary of Review Group findings**

- 5.1 **Vivid** – Total properties in Rushmoor: 5,678. General needs 4,375, leasehold 648, shared ownership 305, housing for older persons 290, supported 7 and 53 other tenure. Vivid are Hampshire's largest provider of social housing and Rushmoor's stock transfer organisation.
- Members were pleased that the repairs service is recovering from the impact of the pandemic with routine repairs service back to normal. Vivid has employed over 30 additional trades to assist and address repairs.
  - Some examples were cited of residents waiting time to report repairs; Vivid recognised that it had not been as good as needed. Vivid emphasised that response to enquiries was very important to them, their current focus is to improve the speed of access via their contact centre and to improve communication flow.
  - Feedback received from local ward councillors was positive with compliments on the work Vivid are doing in tenancy support and supporting vulnerable tenants. Staff were swift in responding to enquiries, polite and helpful.
  - Residents are encouraged to get involved in developing and monitoring services, there is a resident panel which includes shared owners and leaseholders known as 'VIVID Impact'
  - Members were impressed with the amount of community development work Vivid are involved with in Rushmoor their partnership working to support local project for schools, employment skills and the elderly. They

have digital mentors going into their older person schemes to deliver one-to-one IT skills learning, and operate a IT recycle scheme for schools.

- Vivid offer a high-level tenancy support to tenants with welfare needs, including a specialist money advice, employment and training teams, all referrals are triaged to see what level and type of support is required. Low level generic support is provided by their homeless prevention officers. Last year they brought in an additional £5.9m of additional income and backdated benefits to their residents.
- Vivid have a specialist Tenancy Enforcement Team which deals with all their serious cases of anti-social behaviour and works closely to jointly tackle ASB with the community safety team, and the Police.
- Vivid has an ambitious development programme and are committed to building social rent properties. Rushmoor remains a priority development area.
- Members were impressed with Vivid's plans on reducing the carbon emissions in their housing stock and their commitment to partnership working to achieve this. They have developed a carbon neutral strategy and have made a provision within their business plan to invest in their stock to meet government targets. Their target for SAP rating is B for all homes by 2030 they are also introducing provision of electric charging points for cars and looking to replace gas central heating boilers with more efficient boilers for example replacing with air source heat pump.

**5.2 Stonewater:** Total properties in Rushmoor: 103. 100 general needs rent, 3 shared ownership, Stonewater properties in Rushmoor consist of 77x1, 2 and 3-bed flats, 22x2 and 3 bed houses and four maisonettes.

- Members were pleased with Stonewater's approach with their 'Customer Promise', Improving Customer Service and prioritising what matters to their customers and customer engagement in shaping services.
- Members were impressed with Stonewater's approach to social isolation, wellbeing, and the community. They have specialist officers to work with families as well as with older/retired customers utilising technology and getting devices to customers. Wellbeing calls with the retirement living team made contact daily during the pandemic where customers were shielding or nervous to go out.
- Stonewater have an Environmental Sustainability Team within their Homes Team and aim to achieve EPC rating C on all their properties by 2030. They have a schedule of works planned from 2022 – 2030 and are no longer installing gas central heating boilers on new build properties; they are mostly installing ground source heating.
- Where they are able, they are working with other RPs across an area to reduce service charge implications.
- Councillors were pleased that Stonewater are also installing electric charging points for vehicles with all new schemes having electrical charge points.
- Tenants Satisfaction with repairs has been slightly lower because of pandemic but is now improving. There are still customers reluctant to allow people into their homes. Stonewater can arrange to meet a customer virtually which enables them to send photographs of any repair issues so they can be resolved quickly. Contractor and recruitment

problems together with difficulty in obtaining materials has been an issue, these are currently sector wide issues.

- 5.3 Metropolitan Thames Valley:** Total properties in Rushmoor: 805 affordable housing properties, 468 general needs rent, 329 lease hold, and 8 market rent, consisting of houses and flats houses
- Since the merge of Thames Valley Housing and Metropolitan they have restructured and implemented their 'Right Side Up Initiative', with emphasis on putting their residents at the centre of their service. Local housing managers are covering smaller geographical areas and managing all tenures, to get know residents and have a positive impact on the communities. Their call centre has been upgraded to a housing hub introducing an upskilled assessment and support team to triage cases.
  - Members were pleased with MTV's excel at customer service, listening and engaging with their residents which has increased customer satisfaction. They are encouraging digital services but are mindful of face-to-face need for vulnerable customers. Focus has been on making sure residents are able to sustain their tenancies. MTV work in partnership with a variety of agencies to support people.
  - They have a Revenues Team who will provide support to residents, and an Empowering Futures and Assessment & Support Team. The focus is to ensure their residents sustain their tenancies and maximising their income.
  - Members complimented MTV on their climate change policy. They are no longer installing gas central heating boilers, these have been replaced with heat source pumps to meet zero emissions, also introducing installing electric car charging points in newbuild properties Their target is to make sure all their existing homes have an EPC rating of C by 2030 and all new homes will be built to an EPC rating of B or if not better.
  - MTV has launched a Sustainable Procurement Policy; this allows them to capture and report on the carbon footprint of supply chains. All suppliers will be required to report on their emissions, waste, and water use.
  - Members were reassured to hear of MTVs positive approach to anti-social behaviour, fly tipping and issues raised concerning communal areas, MTV were aware of the local issues Members raised and are acting to resolve these.
  - MTV's shared ownership team has introduced a shared ownership swap scheme for those needing to move on welfare grounds.
  - Members have on occasion found it difficult to communicate with MTV when representing residents. MTV has introduced a direct contact for councillors and MPs to report issues which will be dealt with by a dedicated councillor complaints team.

## **6 Conclusion**

The RP Review process continues to play an important role in developing good working relationships with housing providers operating in the borough. The meetings enable the council's members and officers to improve their understanding of the condition and management of the affordable housing stock in the borough. The process also provides a

platform to hold open and candid conversations about concerns so that they can be addressed and resolved, as well as the opportunity to see how the council and its RP partners can support one another in the delivery of their objectives.

Following consultation with the Chairman of the Review Group, it is proposed that a further programme of review is carried out in 2022/2023. The Review Group will agree the process and select the registered providers for review at its next meeting.

## **7 Recommendation**

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to:

1. Endorse the programme of work carried out in 2021/22.
2. Authorise the Review Group to prepare a programme of reviews for 2022/23

### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:**

- Minutes of the review meetings
- Supporting documents supplied by RPs.

### **CONTACT DETAILS:**

#### **Councillor Diane Bedford**

Chair of the Registered Providers Review Group

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