

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4 (ii)

**COMMUNITY POLICY &
REVIEW PANEL**
15th June 2017

Councillor Mike Smith
Chairman of Community Policy and Review Panel
ON BEHALF OF THE RP REVIEW GROUP

Qamer Yasin
Head of Environmental Health & Housing Services

REPORT NO: EH1714

REVIEW OF REGISTERED PROVIDERS 2016/17

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report is to inform Members of the Community Panel on the outcome of the 2016/17 Registered Provider (RP) Review. The purpose of the review meetings is to continue to build good working relationships with our RP partners and scrutinise performance. This report gives an overview of the scrutiny process and for each of the RP's reviewed identifies:

- What is working well
- Causes for concern
- Issues to follow up

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Community Panel RP Review Sub group for 2016/17 comprised:

Members	Officers
Councillor Mike Smith (Chair) Councillor Charles Choudhary Councillor Rod Cooper Councillor Jennifer Evans Councillor Mike Roberts	Zoë Paine Sue Thornett.

2.2 RP's Reviewed in 2016/17 were:

Registered Provider	Meeting Date
Society of St James	23 rd November 2016
Sanctuary Housing Association	7 th December 2016
Thames Valley Housing Association	11 th January 2017
MOD	15 th February 2017

3 The Scrutiny Process:

3.1 Each RP is required to submit financial and performance information in advance of the meeting. This gives Members and officers the opportunity to consider the information in advance and to give structure to the questioning process.

3.2 Accompanied site visits prior to each meeting provide Members and officers with the opportunity to understand the location, nature and quality of the housing stock in the borough.

4 Key Issues explored through the review process:

- 4.1
- Quality of housing
 - Estate Management and Repairs
 - Performance Management
 - Customer Satisfaction
 - Anti-Social Behaviour
 - Impact of housing reforms, including the 1% rent reduction
 - Development Opportunities

5 Summary of Review Group findings

5.1 The Society of St James (SSJ) Rushmoor housing stock: 32 rented units

- SSJ manage provide supported accommodation at properties owned by Hyde Housing Association which are; Aspen, Mulberry Brighstone and Mills Houses. Since the review meeting they have begun to manage North Lane Lodge, the council's 9-bed hostel for street homeless men.
- Councillors visited the North Lane Lodge site and Brighstone House and were generally pleased with the quality of the current and proposed accommodation.
- During the meeting, SSJ explained their remit in more detail, we learned about the specialist drug, alcohol and offender integration work the organisation delivers.
- SSJ's performance information was considered in light of them acting as a specialist housing management company on behalf of another RP Landlord.

5.2 Sanctuary Housing Association- Rushmoor housing stock: 133 rented and 25 leasehold units

- Sanctuary are a large national RP with over 100,000 properties who manage 4 retirement schemes in the borough,
- Councillors visited Borne Court (Aldershot) and Shaftsbury Court (Farnborough) before the meeting, they were impressed with the approach of the on-site staff and raised concerns that the scheme manager role may be lost in the organisational restructuring.
- During the last review February 2015 Councillors raised concerns about the impact on elderly tenants of delays in resolving heating failure at Bourne Court. We were pleased to learn that this has been resolved and reassured that customers were reimbursed the additional electricity costs incurred through the use of temporary electric heaters

last winter.

- Councillors raised concern that Leaseholders are not required to have gas safety checks and the potential impact of this to the safety of block. The Sanctuary officer in attendance clarified that there is no legal obligation for leaseholders to have gas safety checks but would raise this.
- Sanctuary is currently undergoing organisational restructure and will notify RBC Housing Team when concluded.

5.3 **Thames Valley Housing Association – Rushmoor housing stock 445 social rent, 12 affordable rent, leasehold 270 properties and 8 market rent**

- TVHA are a medium sized RP with 15,200 properties.
- Councillors visited two schemes in Farnborough, Pipers Patch and Queensmead.
- TVHA are a pilot RP for the Right to Buy scheme, they have found that although interest is high in Rushmoor, from 40 enquiries there have been 2 properties sold because high property prices mean tenants cannot afford to buy even with the £77k discount.
- Councillors enquired about the difference in satisfaction levels between tenants and leaseholders and learned that, on the larger section 106 sites this can be due the service provided by a third party managing agent that delivers communal cleaning and grounds maintenance services.
- TVHA confirmed that they are keen to pursue development opportunities in the borough.

5.4 **Ministry of Defence- Housing stock approximately 2,000**

- Following the Review of Defence Estates the MOD will be moving away from providing married quarters looking to provide a housing allowance scheme, increasing housing choice for staff who will be able to rent or buy their own properties.
- Carillion Amey has delivered the estate management and occupancy management contracts from Liverpool for the MOD for 2 ½ years. The Committee of Public Accounts report showed that the quality of accommodation, repairs and maintenance as poor. We are assured that this was a national report and the local standards are within acceptable levels. New online repairs reporting and bidding systems have been introduced to streamline the processes.
- Approximately 8% *of the stock is empty to allow for troop movement which is currently being reviewed.
- MOD are improving the housing information they give to service leavers, however there is still a belief among soldiers that that council will house them when they leave.
- MOD are keen to work with RBC on the best use of surplus housing stock, initial discussions have taken place.

*The armed services allow up to 10% void stock to allow for troop movement.

6 **Conclusion**

The RP Review process continues to play an important role in developing good working relationships with the council's housing providers. The estate inspections and follow up meeting enable members and officers to improve their understanding of the location, condition and management of the affordable housing stock in the borough, they also provide a platform to hold open and candid conversations around any concerns and to work together to resolve any problems.

7 **Recommendation**

That Community Panel agree to the scheduling of an RP Review Programme during 2017/18.

Background papers:

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

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